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The University of Glasgow's Student Strategy & Security Journal (3SJ) is proud to present the first issue of the second volume. The product of academic rigour and collaboration, this edition explores topics of foreign policy, international relations and conflict.

The first section dives into the theoretical structures of international relations which sets the scene for the topics to follow. Benedict Haldane starts by asking whether it is possible to conduct an ethical foreign policy, using IR theory and humanitarian intervention to argue his case. Katy Gillespie continues the theoretical path by evaluating how poststructuralism has unsettled IR’s epistemological and ontological roots, applying a poststructuralist lens to decisions taken by the global elite.

In line with 3SJ’s mission to challenge traditional narratives and bring voice to new ones, the second section incorporates two papers with different subject matters yet are bound together by the dynamics of narrative and legitimacy. Victor Mulsant creates a model of how actors compete for narrative dominance in socio-political conflicts, analysing the power dynamics at play in major political events. In turn, Alexander C. Olteanu conducts an in-depth analysis of the legitimacy erosion of the Good Friday Agreement, crafting a new narrative on the fate of deliberative consociationalism in Northern Ireland.

The third section moves on from theory to present conflicts in the post-Soviet region. Elene Janadze evaluates how the seemingly frozen conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan reignited in 2020, shedding light on the power dynamics in the South Caucasus. Nickolas Brütsch stays within the post-Soviet region by examining potential resolution scenarios of the territorial dispute surrounding the region of Transnistria, outlining the future of a frozen conflict.

Our last section explores defense and terrorism, two topics that continue to provide implications for both strategic studies and the implementation of defense policy. Daniel Desmond analyzes the United States’ 2019 Missile Defense Review and its Ballistic and Cruise Missile Threat Report and evaluates how the U.S. can maintain a defense policy responsive to technological advances. Jelena Jevtić
concludes this issue with a comparative analysis between the far-left terrorist group Action Directe (AD) and the Islamic State (IS), arguing that despite the developments since 9/11, there are significant continuities between ‘old’ and ‘new’ terrorism.

The editorial board wishes to extend a heartfelt thank you to our authors and peer-reviewers, without whom this edition would not have come to fruition. And an equally hearty welcome to our readers; we hope that this edition will offer new perspectives in an increasingly uncertain world.

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THEORY AND ETHICS OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

FOREIGN POLICY & POSTSTRUCTURALISM
IS IT POSSIBLE TO CONDUCT AN ETHICAL FOREIGN POLICY?

BENEDICT HALDANE

ABSTRACT

Ethical considerations are frequently used to justify or condemn foreign policy actions. This paper considers if it is possible to conduct an ethical foreign policy, and how ethical foreign policy is perceived across political and ethical frameworks. First, it is argued that across theories of International Relations, there is a recognition that foreign policy actions can be ethical. Second, this paper argues that the meaning of ethical foreign policy depends largely on the framework through which ethical action is understood. Humanitarian intervention is used as a case study to demonstrate how one issue is interpreted through different understandings of ethics. Third, this paper argues that foreign policy actions are inherently contradictory, but that these contradictions should be recognised as part of the decision making process.

Keywords: Foreign Policy, Ethics, Humanitarian Intervention, Nuclear Deterrence

INTRODUCTION

Foreign policy decisions and their ethical implications regularly feature in public and political discourses in the UK and around the world. As the UK government seeks to identify and define the country’s place in the world following its exit from the European Union, foreign policy decisions have been prominent in recent reactions to, and discourses around, the place of ethics in determining the UK’s actions on the world stage. Among the most pertinent of these issues are arms exports to Saudi Arabia amid the ongoing war in Yemen (Al Jazeera, 2021), sanctions on Chinese officials over human rights violations in Xinjiang (McGuinness, 2021) and reductions in the overseas aid budget (McVeigh, 2021). Beyond the UK context, there are also prominent international discourses around ethical foreign policy issues, including Sweden’s explicitly feminist foreign policy (Vogelstein and Bro, 2019), foreign interventions in the Syrian civil war (Tisdall, 2018) and multilateral attempts to limit Iran’s nuclear programme (Pourahmadi, 2021). The ethics of foreign policy thus appears to be a salient, contested issue which must be fully explored and understood. The fundamental question which these issues raise, and this paper seeks to address, is whether it is even possible to have a foreign policy guided by ethical considerations and, if so, how might this be formulated? As such, this paper will forward three primary arguments. First, it will argue that an ethical foreign policy is possible, and that this premise is supported across theoretical perspectives. This will be demonstrated with consideration of three prominent schools of thought in International Relations (IR) – realism, liberalism and feminism – which can be used to support the role of ethical considerations in foreign policy. Second, this paper will argue that, while an ethical foreign policy is possible, there is no consensus over how – or indeed, if – ethical frameworks should be applied to foreign policy decision making. This is an argument against moral universalism; depending on one’s position, the source of ethical actions and the implications for foreign policy vary widely. Three different perspectives on humanitarian intervention will be used to demonstrate how these disparate approaches can affect foreign policy choices. Finally, this paper will agree with Dan Bulley’s (2010) argument that ethical foreign policy decisions are intrinsically contradictory. Ethical considerations will rarely, if ever, be the singular concern behind foreign policy action, but this does not negate the ethical nature of such decisions. There will always be inherent contradictions in ethical responsibilities to...
different groups or interests, but this should be recognised and embraced as part of the foreign policy decision-making process.

ETHICAL FOREIGN POLICY & IR THEORIES

The question of ethics in political theory and IR is not new. For centuries, theorists and philosophers have debated the role of ethics in the political decision-making process. The first section of this paper will argue – through an examination of realism, liberalism and feminism – that a framework for ethical foreign policy can be drawn from all of these theoretical perspectives. Of course, these three perspectives do not represent the full spectrum of IR theory, but their breadth will demonstrate that ethical foreign policy is not restricted to one school of thought.

Realism is the theory of IR which is most often criticised for rejecting the role of ethics in international politics in favour of amoral considerations of power and self-interest. In the introduction to their edited work Ethics and Foreign Policy, Karen Smith and Margot Light (2001: 2) argue that policymakers are “steeped in realism” and “scoff at normative theory”. This implicitly positions realism as a framework which is antithetical to ethical considerations. Classical realism emphasises the centrality of power politics in the organisation of the international system, and often rejects the role of ethics entirely. That the name Machiavelli – whose ideas are foundational to political realism – is synonymous with unethical plotting and dishonest conduct is a case in point. Moreover, some prominent realist thinkers such as E. H. Carr (1946: 153) and Hans Morgenthau (1954: 9) explicitly argue that ethical standards are not applicable to actions between states. Furthermore, neorealism has also been criticised for being too bound to a rationalist-statist vision, which leaves no room for ethical considerations (Ashley, 1984: 238-240). However, a more nuanced reading of realism does, in fact, reveal a consideration of ethics which, despite often being presented as subordinate to structural pressures, is nonetheless present. While concerns over national interests and survival in the international system are central to realist theory, survival is rarely the singular motivation behind foreign policy decisions. As a result, many realist thinkers recognise the limits of power politics and the need to consider ethical dilemmas (Lebow, 2016: 34). Across the spectrum of realist theory, there is widespread recognition that certain ethical standards do apply to states, such as not committing extreme violence against civilians or other states (Donnelly, 2008: 151-156).

Alongside realism, liberalism has historically been the other most prominent perspective in IR. While liberalism’s long history and diverse strands make it difficult to define succinctly, it is widely understood to centre around a cluster of values and ideals, including freedom from oppression, egalitarianism, individual freedom and the fair rule of law (Richardson, 1997: 7-8). Whereas realism stresses the need to respond to the anarchic nature of the international system, liberalism is inherently more optimistic, arguing that “politics can be a force for good [and] that power can help bring about the good” (Vasquez, 2005: 310). In his work on moral and political philosophy, prominent liberal theorist John Rawls (1999) proposes a “Society of Peoples” – as opposed to a society of states – whereby peoples from around the world can interact with each other based on common principles. These principles develop liberal notions of justice and fairness and include human rights, independence, the right to self-defence and adherence to treaties. Peter Lawler (2005: 439) makes the case for classical liberal internationalism, which endorses the notion of the “Good State”. In the framework of classical internationalism, the “Good State” embodies an ethical stance in its foreign policy commitments to other states and the international system (Lawler, 2005: 441-442). Liberal internationalism thus ascribes the state with moral agency. It can thus be seen that, across liberal thinkers, there is a
recognition that ethical conduct is possible in foreign policy actions.

In recent years, feminism has become an increasingly influential perspective within international relations, as evidenced by the fact that since 2014, at least four countries have launched explicitly feminist foreign policy frameworks (Thomson, 2020). Feminist theories of international relations often ascribe a role for ethics in foreign policy, albeit in different ways. Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond (2016: 323) propose that feminist foreign policy is, by its nature, an ethical framework which is guided by cosmopolitan norms of justice and peace. To support this, the authors highlight Sweden’s feminist foreign policy which is committed to “ethical principles of inclusion and human security, gender cosmopolitanism, and empathetic cooperation” (Aggestam & Bergman-Rosamond, 2016: 326). Responding to the above argument, Fiona Robinson (2021) argues that a liberal, cosmopolitan approach to feminist foreign policy in fact reproduces existing power relations including gender and racial hierarchies. Robinson (2021: 20-30) instead proposes a “critical ethic of care” which would avoid culture blaming in favour of “situati[ng] practices and traditions in a broader, relational geopolitical and geo-economic context.” This approach rejects the equation of ethical foreign policy with universal, moral principles as antithetical to feminism, while still arguing that feminist foreign policy should be based on a more nuanced understanding of ethics (Robinson, 2021: 21).

Evidently, across the diversity of IR theory there is recognition that an ethical foreign policy is, indeed, possible. While there is vigorous debate within each of these schools of thought, the possibility of an ethical foreign policy is evidently supported across a variety of perspectives. With this premise in mind, it is now worth discussing how ethics is defined and understood with regards to foreign policy.

DEFINING ETHICS

The way in which ethics is defined has a significant effect on how foreign policy actions are understood and constructed. There are a variety of philosophical frameworks from which moral principles are drawn and ethical behaviour is, in turn, based. For instance, deontological frameworks prescribe adherence to a clearly-defined set of moral rules, which may be based on human reason, divine religious revelation, or another code such as the Kantian ‘Categorical Imperative’. Consequentialist frameworks determine ethical conduct by the outcome instead of judging specific acts as intrinsically ethical or unethical. For example, utilitarianism promotes actions which will have the greatest benefit for the greatest number of people (Brown, 2001: 20).

Discussions of humanitarian intervention demonstrate how one issue can be disparately understood in a variety of ethical frameworks. Interventions have raised some of the most significant ethical foreign policy questions in recent years, given the growing prevalence of interventions with cosmopolitan, humanitarian justifications since the end of the Cold War. Since the start of the 21st century, these foreign policy decisions have increasingly been framed in the language of Responsibility to Protect (R2P), which emerged following NATO’s controversial use of airstrikes in the former Yugoslavia in 1999 (ICISS, 2001). The R2P framework proposes redefining our understanding of sovereignty, such that states have a responsibility to protect their own citizens from extreme violence and oppression and, where unwilling or unable to do so, the international community has a responsibility to intervene, with the coercive use of force if necessary (Chesterman, 2021: 809-814). However, this has led to criticisms of justifying the neoliberal, neo-colonial policies of powerful, Western states (see Mahdavi, 2015; Mamdani, 2010). There is thus a conflict between liberal and post-colonial views as to whether or not humanitarian intervention is ethical.

Consequentialism offers yet another view of the ethics of humanitarian intervention. A
consequentialist interpretation assumes that an ethical outcome maximises human security and reduces suffering to the greatest extent possible (Heinze, 2009: 33). However, there is an inherent contradiction in intervening militarily, in that coercive military action will inevitably produce more short-term violence and death. Furthermore, intervention can produce unforeseen, long-term issues such as political instability and spillover effects into neighbouring countries (Pattison, 2011: 274-275). Therefore, based on consequentialist logic, intervention can only be ethically justified by the existence or likelihood of extreme suffering which is greater than the probable outcome of the intervention itself (Heinze, 2009: 34-35).

While constructivism generally shies away from normative propositions in favour of descriptive accounts, Ralph (2018: 174) proposes that “the constructivist emphasis on the historical and social contingency of a norm does not rule out ethical standpoints but suggests instead a ‘pragmatic’ ethic”. This pragmatist approach shares with the above consequentialist view a commitment to practical judgement and assessment rather than a stringent attachment to a moral principle. Applying this framework to the case of R2P in the Syrian Civil War, Ralph (2018: 192-194) argues that a pragmatic, constructivist approach would reject claims of certainty about the possible outcomes of intervention. The R2P norm was invoked by Western members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) essentially to mean regime change, and this led to a stalemate within the UNSC and ultimately to the lack of any meaningful action to stop atrocities and protect the Syrian population. This is not to argue that regime change would or would not have been the most ethical goal, but to argue that the R2P framework was invoked wholesale, rather than alongside a more pragmatic, historically contingent approach which could have led to a more ethical foreign policy outcome.

Besides this, assessments of humanitarian intervention could also be based on the ethical framework of just war theory. The just war doctrine proposes that while war is undesirable, if certain conditions are met prior to war (jus ad bellum) and during war (jus in bello) then it can be ethically justifiable. Nicholas J. Wheeler (2000: 33-34) proposes four criteria under which interventions can be considered ethical: just cause, last resort, proportionality, and high probability of success. In this argument we can see elements of deontological ethics (the cause of solidarity and responsibility is itself just) as well as consequentialism (the outcome must justify the means). The way in which ethics is defined thus has a significant impact on the interpretation of foreign policy decisions.

Finally, this paper will argue that ethical foreign policy decisions inherently involve political decisions and contradictions, but this does not negate the ethical nature of such actions. As such, this paper supports the argument of Dan Bulley (2010: 454), who states that ethical foreign policy is “no different from other areas of social life.” What Bulley means is that foreign policy decisions will always encompass competing commitments to different groups and interests. Even within the political and ethical frameworks discussed thus far, the question remains: to whom does the state have responsibility in its foreign policy actions? The view that foreign policy actions must be ethically “pure,” without any regard for self-interest, has been branded as “bizarre” given that it is not supported by any framework of political ethics (Brown, 2001: 23). The first section of this paper demonstrated that across the spectrum of IR theory, there is widespread recognition that it is possible for states to include an ethical component in their foreign policy actions. However, it would be reductive to understand any of these schools of thought as solely promoting ethical action at the expense of all other considerations. For example, the realist notion of prudence recognises competing interests and advocates picking the lesser evil in any given situation (Donnelly, 2008: 157-159). Furthermore, the liberal internationalism promoted by the New Labour government in the UK from...
1997-2010, which sought to project domestic political values onto foreign policy action, contains within it an "eternal moral dilemma" (Bulley, 2010: 452) between domestic and international commitments.

Thomas Doyle (2013: 160-163) has discussed the ethical argument surrounding whether or not liberal democracies pursue nuclear deterrence. The competing responsibilities of adhering to international disarmament obligations and of preserving the security of liberal democracy from adversaries present an intractable ethical dilemma. On the one hand, the international legal system is predicated on a set of norms to which, in order to cooperate, states must assume that other states will adhere. The norm of pacta sunt servanda, whereby states are obligated to adhere to their voluntary treaty commitments, is one such norm (Doyle, 2013: 163). If liberal democracies assume that other legal norms such as territorial integrity and adherence to trade procedures are inviolable, then overlooking commitments towards nuclear disarmament risks accusations of hypocrisy when promoting other norms of ethical conduct. However, arguments against nuclear proliferation assume that more weapons of mass destruction inherently make the world more unsafe and unstable. On the other hand, however, if we assume that the state can act in a moral capacity, then protecting the safety and security of its own citizens is perhaps the most fundamental ethical responsibility of a state. While the notion of self-interest is more pronounced in realism than other schools of thought, it is ethically incumbent upon those acting on behalf of the state to act in the interests of its citizens (Donnelly, 2008: 156). Therefore, the argument for preserving nuclear weapons as a deterrent can, similarly, be constructed as ethical.

As can be seen from this example, opposing positions can be accepted or rejected on the basis of ethical considerations. However, moral universalism, which argues that there is only one possible ethical outcome, is reductive and unhelpful to considerations of foreign policy. There is, in fact, a wide variety of ethical frameworks which must be considered if a nuanced reading of ethics and foreign policy is to be achieved.

**Conclusion**

This paper has forwarded three primary arguments to support the claim that it is possible to conduct an ethical foreign policy. Firstly, three prominent theoretical frameworks in IR – realism, liberalism and feminism – were used to demonstrate that across schools of thought, there is widespread recognition that an ethical foreign policy is possible. Despite mostly being associated with the rationalist-statist approach, a more nuanced understanding of realism reveals acknowledgement of ethical principles, even if subordinate to other considerations; liberalism’s commitment to the values of equality and fairness demonstrates an ethical element at the core of this school of thought; and feminism’s goal of gender equality and emancipation for women is an expression of a normative, ethical standpoint. Secondly, it was argued that different understandings of political ethics lead to disparate perspectives on what constitutes an ethical foreign policy. As a case study, humanitarian intervention demonstrates that the ethical frameworks of consequentialism, constructivist pragmatism and just war theory frame this foreign policy issue in very different ways. Finally, this paper argued that ethical foreign policy decision-making is a contested political process, but this does not negate ethics from being a part of the process. Foreign policy actions inherently contain competing ethical responsibilities to different interests and groups. In summary, it is possible to have an ethical foreign policy, but the plurality of ethical frameworks and considerations mean that the conduct of foreign policy cannot be judged in binary terms as ethical/unethical based solely on a singular ethical perspective.

**Bibliography**


HOW DOES POSTSTRUCTURALISM UNSETTLE TRADITIONAL IR THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS?

KATY GILLESPIE

Abstract
As a critical perspective, poststructuralism blurs the boundary between criticising the theory and practice of international relations. Poststructuralism is critical of the field of International Relations ("IR") in two distinct ways; it is sceptical of IR's state-centric level of analysis – advanced by liberal and realist IR theories – and is apprehensive of how these conventional conceptual lenses comprehend and explain the reasons behind states' actions. This paper explains and discusses how poststructuralism has unsettled IR's epistemological and ontological roots. Firstly, it applies the method of discourse analysis to global elite figures and their foreign policies. Secondly, it assesses Foucault's views on knowledge and power and shows how this unsettles IR theories' interpretation of the state and its centralised power. Lastly, it examines the concepts of deconstruction and genealogy to demonstrate how these have destabilised essential traditional representations and interpretations of the world and state within international relations. This paper provides illustrative examples revealing how poststructuralism has challenged IR’s dominant state-centric realist and liberal theoretical frameworks, commonly used to explain the actions taken by sovereign states; additionally, examples of how international relations, the use of foreign policy and global politics are practised in society, are also interwoven as points of analysis, critiqued through a poststructuralist lens.

Keywords: Poststructuralism; IR theory; Discourse analysis; State-centrism

HOW DOES POSTSTRUCTURALISM UNSETTLE TRADITIONAL IR THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS?

This paper reveals the ways in which poststructuralism deeply destabilises IR's most dominant theoretical frameworks, namely liberalism and realism, and illustrates its arguments with practical examples of how, in turn, this prompts us to question how state and non-state actors behave in practice in the political arena of international relations. Influenced by the work of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and other pioneers of the approach, such as Richard Ashley, Rob Walker and Jim George, poststructuralism emerged in the 1980s to “question how certain accepted ‘facts’ and ‘beliefs’ actually work [...] within International Relations” theories (McMorrow, 2018: 1). This approach destabilised IR's realist and liberal frameworks, regarded as the most prominent theoretical paradigms of the discipline (Genugten, 1999: 291). It challenged its positivist and seemingly fixed epistemological and ontological roots which were born out of the 1648 Treaties of Westphalia. Poststructuralism is critical of any analytical perspective that claims to know and explain an objective universal truth through one theory; the critical response perceives “truth and knowledge" as being “subjective entities that are produced rather [than] discovered” (McMorrow, 2018: 1). Seen as a critical approach rather than a distinctive theory, poststructuralism perceives theory and practice as interconnected, seeking to highlight alternative and excluded voices that have been marginalised in traditional IR theories (Zehfuss, 2012: 152). In turn, both the concept of ‘IR', relating to the discipline’s core theories, and ‘international relations', referring to the practice and implications of global politics, are used concurrently throughout this paper to help supplement its central argument. Since IR theories attempt to explain the practical behaviour of the state and non-state actors in the international arena, this paper draws upon the core assumptions advanced by realist and liberal IR approaches, as well as upon specific examples of foreign policy and international relations practices,
to demonstrate that poststructuralism troubles these theories by questioning not only the nature and dynamics of these actors’ practical interactions, but also our own perceptions thereof. Importantly, this approach engages with and rearticulates key concepts of knowledge and power, subjectivity and identity in IR. More specifically, poststructuralism challenges conventional IR perspectives in two distinct ways: it is sceptical of their state-centric level of analysis; and it is apprehensive of how IR’s realist and liberal conceptual lenses reflect and explain the reasons behind states’ actions. This paper focuses on how poststructuralism unmoors IR’s epistemological and ontology roots. Firstly, the discourse analysis method is deployed in relation to global elite figures and their foreign policies. Secondly, Foucault’s assessment of knowledge and power is mobilised so as to show how it unsettles IR theories’ interpretation of the state and its centralised power dynamics. Lastly, the concepts of deconstruction and genealogy are examined to demonstrate how poststructuralism has challenged essential representations and interpretations of the global community and its constituent sovereign states within both the field and practice of international relations.

**DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

This section demonstrates how discourse analysis has unsettled mainstream theoretical frameworks of IR, such as liberalism and realism, through questioning the traditional modes of thinking and beliefs within these conceptual lenses. Rendering these beliefs open to alternative forms of knowledge and truth, discourse analysis has destabilised the Euro-centric nature of the above-mentioned theories through challenging the historical assumption that the creation of the sovereign state – and its subsequent hegemonic power in society – indisputably emerged from the events of Westphalia in 1648. It has also interrogated the dominant modes of truth in the international arena, governed by political figures and their foreign policies; discourse analysis has shown that these seemingly fixed truths and static binaries of us / them and inside / outside are controlled and manipulated by the language and actions of these figures and of the wider institutions of government they direct. Consequently, they appear representative of this hegemonic mode of truth, marginalising alternative forms of truth and knowledge that are just as valid in the international realm.

Michel Foucault pioneered the concept of discourse analysis. He perceived discourses to “constitute the reality” of “what can be thought and said about the world” through linguistics (Tayyar and Çetindişli, 2019: 13). Foucauldian discourse analysis challenges IR by highlighting “the constitutive role of discourse in the creation of subject identities”, juxtaposing the historically fixed emergence of sovereignty and the state apparatus, previously regarded as the irrefutable and undisputed foundational truth of IR (Ashley, 1988: 231). Foucault perceives conventional forms of power – such as the powers of democracy in governmental rule, prisons, laws, the police and so forth – as being integral to discourses which constitute distinctive patterns of representational practise in which “meanings are produced, identities constituted, social relations established, and political and ethical outcomes made” through practices of language and speech (Campbell and Bleiker, 2016: 208). Hence, poststructuralists employ discourse analysis to readdress key concepts of representation, subject and state, showing how the theoretical premise, accounting for the creation of international relations in history – commonly associated with the Treaties of Westphalia – in reality, has no fixed foundation. The approach aims to move from “politics to the political”, where the first term denotes the “depoliticised” and normalised activities within given social structures; whereas “the ‘political’ refers to the overarching social framework in which politics takes place”, where social paradigms are constructed and vie for legitimacy (Edkins, 1999: 170). Poststructuralism re-frames this process and re-presents political communities as fictional: there is no “real community” – only “fictional communities that underpin political thought” (Ashley, 1988: 6).

Poststructuralist scholar Richard Ashley utilises discourse analysis to explain what he calls “the anarchy problematique”.

This term denotes the traditional scholarly IR discourse depicting anarchy as an irrational and undesirable construction, in opposition to the concept of sovereignty, described as rational and inextricably connected to domestic state structures (Ashley, 1988: 6). Ashley refers to this as “heroic practice”, a process that allows states to be perceived as the central source of power due to their social construction. Decrying realist IR theories that relate state origins to the Treaties of Westphalia, – reinforcing a Euro-centric bias of IR to explain the evolution and development of the international world (Acharya and Buzan, 2019) – Ashley contends that this was not a fixed universal historical event for international relations but “was a moment of openness, a political moment” where the “absence of one social order had not yet been succeeded by the presence of another” (Ashley, 1988: 8). It is within this unstable foundation of the political community where the concept of subjectivity emerges; subjectivity infers the construction of our identity as a subject and how this interrelates to our notions of “common sense” and governmental rule in international relations, validated by certain discourses (Solomon, 2016). This historicised subjective openness, where we attach meaning to our identities, is shaped – as emphasised by Foucault – by dominant discourses through the performative nature of speech and language which creates ideas of new societies and identities within it (subject / state) as being something which appears unavoidable, legitimate and definitive – simply part of a natural historical practice (Ashley, 1988: 8).

Prior to the 1648 Treaties of Westphalia, this subjective openness, encouraging humans’ interrelated identity with the state, was evident in the history of Ancient Greece. The writings of Aristotle detailed references to the “polis” or “city-state”, seen as a form of association whereby individuals in the whole community from different class systems of the peasantry, middle and upper elite, share cultural, religious, political and economic wants, which could be met through their relationship with this loose association, providing their material and social desires (Miller, 1998). Aristotle believed that this association was inextricably tied to the development of morality in the human character, and was “a certain ordering of the inhabitants of the city-state” (Miller, 1998). He perceived this constitution as coming into effect with an individual ruler, seen as ‘the sovereign power’ controlling this loose structural relationship. This individual – being from a position in high office, and being likened to the role of a craftsman in producing material goods – would become a “lawgiver”: bound with the duty of overseeing the general well-being and happiness of community populations (Miller, 1998). From a poststructuralist lens, Aristotle’s writings and observations of the historical events of Greece throughout this early period reinforced distinctive discourses of the individual subject and their dependable relationship to this early state-like formation (Miller, 1998). The classical writings of Aristotle largely validated and informed the formation of European political institutions; exemplifying the importance of written discourses in creating certain identities, such as the (subject / state) as being something which appears inevitable in history. Influential scholar Christian Reus-Smit’s (1999) research provides a thorough analysis of how different state systems animated by distinct purposes and objectives have emerged throughout history to govern interstate relations. In relation to the ancient Greek city-states system – and indeed several other more recent European communities of states – he emphasises the pivotal role played by unique cultural and historical settings in determining why different forms of governance emerge and are adopted at specific times in distinct places (Reus-Smit, 1999). Overall, his work, in alignment with a poststructuralist vein of thought, unsettles our traditional theoretical and empirical understanding of the emergence of the nation state, debunking conventional theories of IR which still dominate the field.

Poststructuralists have shown how the discipline of IR has been manipulated and controlled by certain forms of dominant discourses and individuals, as exemplified in the language used in global politics by elites who appear to represent “the regime of truth"
Foucault, 1977) hegemonic at that time and place. This Foucauldian concept refers to the language deployed by elite figures who are representative of state actors, hence, government leaders and its members – among others – who perpetuate distinctive meanings of truth and representational power that go unquestioned by most members of the societies they preside over, commonly serving these elite individuals’ interests and those of their respective political parties (McMorrow, 2018). This idea contradicts a core facet of liberal IR theory in its moral argument that the state and its governmental leaders and interrelated figures play a distinctive role in preserving the rights and wellbeing of citizens in society, protecting their liberty against an unchecked and authoritarian political system (Haar, 2009: 20). This ‘utopian idea’ directly contradicts the traditional behaviour of several monarchs and their associates throughout the Victorian period who were known for their selfish and cruel governance, often side-stepping their citizens’ desires and critical needs (Gold and McGlinchey, 2017). In turn, Foucault’s concept challenges liberal IR theory by contradicting its optimistic view of the state and its relationship to the individual in society.

Various dominant discourses are illustrated in the foreign policies and political rhetoric used after the events of 9/11, during the so-called War on Terror (WOT), and in the interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan of the United States (US) and its allies. The language employed by leading Western politicians, such as US President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, reinforced the ‘us’ vs. ‘them’ dichotomy between Western and non-Western states, perpetuating a Euro-centric notion that Western states are representative of the most developed, peaceful and ideal nation state formations. Bush regarded Iraq, Iran and North Korea as constituting ‘The Axis of Evil’, thus castigating these countries as “international pariahs in contrast to the innocent […] United States and its allies” (McMorrow, 2018: 2). The language employed by these powerful figures was endorsed by various media platforms that exaggerated the negative portrayal of Middle Eastern countries and “heightened the emotions of fear and anxiety” (McMorrow, 2018: 3) of individual figures in the international realm – both political elites and individual citizens in society – during the WOT. Poststructuralists argue that such representations of enemy states and their civilians are strategically employed by Western politicians to legitimise their foreign policies and subsequent violence through forms of military intervention (Zehfuss, 2012: 155). In turn, these examples – revealing the practical implications of foreign policies and behaviour of states – show that the international environment is not anarchic by nature, with states being unchanging and fixed apparatuses throughout history, as is suggested by some IR realist theorists (Bull, 1977; Wendt, 1991). Instead, poststructuralism troubles these theoretical assumptions, revealing how the global anarchic political environment is not a static or unvarying environment, as advocated by conventional realist IR theory; rather, it is sustained and created through the explicit and implicit actions of states and secondary actors – evidenced in the dominant discourses employed throughout the WOT. Hence, poststructuralists draw upon these dominant discourses of IR theory and how they interplay with the practical behaviours of state actors of foreign policies, aiming not to justify the atrocities that terrorists have committed, but rather to reveal how these continual international portrayals and categorisations of terrorists make “certain reactions and foreign policy actions more amenable” (McMorrow, 2018: 3) and instantly exclude any other forms of measures occurring in response to terrorist attacks.

Furthermore, poststructuralists reveal how contingent and unstable discourses are in international relations, unsettling the discipline's dominant theories and modes of truth-telling. This is evident in the shift of US presidential discourses in the WOT. The 2003 US intervention in Iraq led to mass dislocation and civilian casualties. Consequently, this propelled a backlash of American citizens demonstrating against the violent means of intervention employed by the US. In response to these demonstrations and societal pressures,
President Barack Obama used different military strategies and avoided using similar language as his predecessor to avoid explicitly announcing a state of war with the Muslim world (McCriskin, 2011). In other words, President Obama’s leadership style differentiated itself from that of President Bush. From a poststructuralist perspective, this reveals an alternative public discourse in international relations which, alongside the array of anti-war protests after 9/11 and during the WOT, shows that “a plethora of discourses can coexist and craft the view of international relations that we are offered” (McMorrow, 2018: 4). This contradicts the dominant discourses and theories that appear representative of IR’s primary framework of truth and knowledge, perpetuated by core realist and liberalist assumptions. Realism regards the international environment as a space of unchanging anarchy, where the state represents the ultimate power and often engages in war and conflicts with other state actors to preserve its survival. Liberalism views the international arena as a platform for positive global state collaboration and considers “coercion and violence [as being] counter-productive” (Owen, 1994) to achieve this universal aim. It perceives the role of the state and non-state actors, such as international organisations, as playing valuable roles in formulating this cooperative framework and in striving to attain peaceful outcomes and to avoid armed conflicts. However, both realist and liberal IR lenses reflect the image of the state as a dominant and perennial foundational power that governs the social reality of the world around us across time and space. Both theories do not directly challenge the existence of the state but instead, perceive it as simply a part of a transhistorical reality (McGlinchey et al., 2017). In opposition to this view, poststructuralism challenges these re-presentations by showing how several competing discourses are in play within international relations – evidenced in the examples of the WOT above – which aim to relativise and weaken the discipline’s hegemonic statist discourses (McMorrow, 2018: 4).

**POWER IN POSTSTRUCTURALISM**

Another way that poststructuralism unsettles IR theory is through its approach to issues of power. Poststructuralism rejects traditional theories of IR that view power as something “that can be possessed” (Tayyar and Çetindişli, 2019: 12) and which derives from the state or individuals. Instead, poststructuralism views power not as something which exists inherently and can be harnessed, but as something which only exists because of and within relationships between entities. Foucault pioneered this alternative perspective on power. His analysis attempted to show how “there is no power”, only “power relations” (Tayyar and Çetindişli, 2019: 12). He argued that “power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategic situation in a particular society” (Foucault, 1977: 93). Foucault’s analysis of power and knowledge largely disrupts IR’s traditional realist paradigm which explains power as being centralised within the state and its military capabilities (Morgenthau, 1951). Poststructuralism’s assessment of power also challenges classical liberal theory’s assumption that power is “established by a social contract” (Tayyar and Çetindişli, 2019: 1) between the state and its citizens. Instead, the approach deconstructs this traditional mode of thinking and perceives power as something that is neither centralised nor can be tangibly possessed (Tayyar and Çetindişli, 2019: 13). Foucault contended that knowledge and power are relational, they have a symbiotic relationship: “knowledge is inextricably bound up with power” (Merlingen, 2013) and is seen as representational power. Thus, when certain institutions or governmental members represent themselves as having the most appropriate knowledge to handle a certain situation, poststructuralists argue that they are exerting ‘representational power’. Influential poststructuralist Jacques Derrida commented after the events of 9/11, that we need to be critical of international relations and governments’ response to the events as their views claim to be definitive, legalising and legitimising a distinctive “interpretation that best suits [their interests] in a given situation” (Derrida, 2005). Poststructuralists contend that we need to look at the excluded and marginal responses to events like 9/11 to gain a more comprehensive
understanding of its overall meaning and impact in wider societal spheres (McMorrow, 2018).

Additionally, Foucault coined the term “disciplinary power”, a concept used to explain the process by which people only know something through “what it is not” (Campbell and Bleiker, 2016: 208). IR and state structures’ ability to create and entrench false dichotomies such as self vs. other, us vs. them, and external vs. internal world is only possible through this disciplinary power which “produce[s] a certain political subject” within societies through organising what people know and see as distinctive truths in opposition to “the marginalisation [and] exclusion of other identities and histories” (Campbell and Bleiker, 2016: 208). According to Foucault, power is not regressive but is productive; it “produces by structuring the possible fields of action” (Calkivik, 2017: 9). In turn, this process creates different practices of power within IR that deviate from conventional theories of sovereign state centralised power. Foucault locates past instances of historical sovereign power through its ability to control death; he contends that it has “a right of seizure: of things, time, bodies, and ultimately life itself” (Foucault, 1990: 136). This perspective troubled modern liberals’ view of the contemporary state as a positive enabling apparatus, concerned with protecting and “ensuring the right of an individual person to life, liberty and property” within society (Meiser, 2018). Hence, in contemporary IR, poststructuralism regards state power as being composed of relationships of power, such as disciplinary power and biopower. Defined by Foucault, biopower is a distinctive form of political power that is in operation in multiple ways across populations worldwide. At the level of the individual, it focuses on controlling the body, its health, hygiene and general livelihood. However, on a public platform, complex practices of IR which are evident in institutions such as the army, schools, prisons, hospitals, and government policies attempt to control the public in diverse ways – and view populations as “mass […] coexisting beings” (Calkivik, 2017: 9) – beings capable of control and global production.

From a poststructuralist lens, the current Covid-19 pandemic typifies a poignant example of the controversial nature of how nation states across the globe have exercised this form of biopower to suppress the spread of the virus. The language and rhetoric used by political figures, alongside the implementation of stringent policies controlling peoples movement across borders, has imposed various forms of responsibility and sacrifice on citizens worldwide. The speeches of many of these leading political figures have “positioned [individual people] as a key cause of, and solution to the problem” of alleviating the detrimental impact and spread of the virus (Sjölander-Lindqvist et al., 2020). This modern trans-boundaries’ means of governance employed throughout the pandemic exemplifies this form of biopower in action, evident in the explicit relationship created “between the state and the individual” to protect communities worldwide by means of ever-tighter tools of control (Larsson, 2016). Consequently, many have criticised and questioned this exercise of power, arguing that it is an abuse of political power, representing an infringement of wider international principles on basic human rights of people applicable in all societies. Through these concepts of disciplinary knowledge and biopower, poststructuralism unsettles IR theory by troubling realism’s conventional perception of power and by suggesting that power is a repressive, enabling tool central to the function of the state and its underlying material conditions. Instead, as suggested in the previous examples, poststructuralism shows how multiple public institutions – which are functionally separate from state control – are representative of distinctive forms of power which explicitly and implicitly control how societal populations function in the international environment. Poststructuralism thus unsettles IR realist theories – and, to a lesser degree, liberal perspectives as well – which primarily view the state as being the sole platform of power and authority endowed with agency in the international arena.
Another way that poststructuralism troubles IR's conventional paradigms is by deploying conceptual tools of deconstruction and genealogy. IR's dominant realist paradigm is embedded in logocentrism which is the belief that universal truths can be gained through forms of logic and reason (Edkins, 1999). However, poststructuralists reject this traditional assumption of knowledge and destabilise conventional forms of understanding concepts and norms within IR theory. Derrida pioneered the notion of deconstruction, an approach focused on assessing the implications of speech, language and meaning within writing which is significant in shaping dominant discourses and relations of power. Derrida's concept of deconstruction includes the strategy of double reading, a method used to "reread Western thought to give voice to which has been systematically excluded and silenced" (Tayyar and Çetindil, 2019: 8). Thus, deconstruction unsettles IR as it reveals how "dichotomies are dangerous" (Devetak, 2005) and seeks to unsettle how these binary oppositions operate within IR theory – thus showing how they are “never neutral” and involve relations of power and “hierarchy” (Tayyar and Çetindil, 2019: 10). In turn, poststructuralism, through its concept of deconstruction, unsettles liberal and realist IR theories in their conventional, and often one-dimensional representations of the international arena and of the state actors composing it. Derrida contended that such binary concepts, involving two comparisons of people, states, organisations, countries, and so on, are “political manifestations” (Zuckert, 1991: 341), often privileging the first concept in comparison to the latter. The former concept commonly denotes notions of purity, rationality, power and favour against the latter term, seen as inferior and marginal. These binary concepts are at play within IR theory in the discipline's distinctive views of the world. For example, poststructuralists argue that IR's realist theoretical notions of state sovereignty reinforce the inside/internal space – representative of the western state, order and rationality, in contrast to the outside world – typified by anarchy and conflict. These two interpretations of the world mutually inform and re-shape one another.

Hence, deconstruction is a useful approach to demonstrate how IR's static binary representations of the international and national produce harmful discursive interpretations of the world through constructing their identities (Campbell, 2013: 235). This is apparent in international relations' traditional representation of Africa, often marginalised in mainstream IR theories which concentrate “on the great powers” embodied by western nations (Brown, 2006: 121). Many poststructuralists have drawn attention to the visual imagery and political rhetoric concerning famines and crises in Africa. These images are embedded with distinctive ideas of a fictional geography where representations of the ‘civilised/barbaric’ and ‘developed/undeveloped’ are evoked (Campbell and Bleiker, 2016: 213). Focusing on the historical emergence of certain representations of peoples and nations is a critical approach adopted by poststructuralists, called genealogy.

Historically, western images of famines in Africa often focus on representations of starving women and children, typified by their passivity, innocence and hopelessness. Poststructuralism reveals how these images and discourses create an “established understanding of famine” without representing the true nature and experiences of famine zones. Poststructuralists relate this distinctive representation to western nations’ colonial past which portrayed Africa as “a site of cultural, moral, and spatial difference populated by ‘barbarians’ [and] ‘savages’” (Campbell and Bleiker, 2016: 215). The dominant concepts of IR theory advanced by realist and liberal perspectives, such as rationality, the state, and sovereignty rooted in the Treaties of Westphalia, as well as alliance / conflict dynamics within the international environment, are troublesome when applied to Africa. These Euro-centric and mainstream theoretical assumptions cannot explain and often do not acknowledge the historical specificity of the African experience, which predates the Treaties of Westphalia. Various historians and academic scholars have provided
evidence showing that “long before the imposition of the state structure, the African peoples had their modes of organising society, which were phased out because the continent did not have any choice but to adopt the Westphalian structure designed by European powers” (Ofuho, 2000: 106). Consequently, as mainstream realist and liberal IR theories cannot adequately explain the African experience within the traditional paradigms of Euro-centric IR theory, Africa is often represented as an ‘alien form of rule’ through its weakness and absence of hegemonic, centralised state structures. In turn, these representations in traditional IR theory largely influence how European public discourse chooses to represent Africa as a space that is inextricably bound with loose domestic control through the absence of a strong domestic state, enduring constant societal issues of starvation, disease and unorderly behaviour.

Poststructuralists question these representations, especially as Africa’s history does not fit neatly into mainstream IR theories; often regarded as a reason explaining why the academic discipline of international relations has historically chosen to ignore understanding the complex nature and history of African societies. Instead of perceiving Africa as a fragmented continent that deviates from the western norm, poststructuralists encourage the practice and theoretical assumptions of IR to create a more open understanding of “African participation in the international system as a way to open up avenues to a more historically-oriented theory of” (Brown, 2006: 127) IR. Poststructuralism importantly highlights how this continual representation perpetuated in IR theories and modern politics has harmful implications in promoting a negative portrayal of Africa to the wider world. The critical lens troubles IR through denaturalising conventional representations of different societies to show how these representations are not fixed and timeless but could have been different and therefore require “explanation” (Zehfuss, 2012: 154). Poststructuralist scholarship is important in showing how we need to move beyond “the representations [and] speak outside of the discourses that have historically constructed the North and the South” to ensure that we do not become complicit in the consequences of these problematic representations (Doty, 1996: 170-171).

**POSTSTRUCTURALISM AS PRACTICE**

This paper shows how poststructuralism unsettles traditional IR theories – still commonly associated with realist and liberal perspectives – and the subsequent practice of international relations in multifarious ways. By re-addressing key concepts of the state, subjectivity, identity and power, this approach deconstructs traditional theoretical methods to re-explain and re-describe IR’s foundations and epistemological roots. In adopting a discourse analysis methodology, poststructuralists have challenged IR’s seemingly fixed historical origins and demonstrated how IR has created distinctive perceptions of the world and reality through its very own construction of dominant modes of discourse (Campbell, 2013: 235). Additionally, in providing alternative ways of addressing issues of power, poststructuralists have delegitimised IR’s conventional representations – perpetuated by realist and liberal frameworks alike – of power and its hierarchical centralisation of the hegemonic state. Instead, poststructuralism demonstrates how power is relational to knowledge and is achieved through the relational manipulation of dominant discourses over time. Through the concepts of deconstruction and genealogy, poststructuralism has importantly outlined how IR theory has created and moulded distinctive paradigms of power/knowledge and power relations – sustained through exclusion and marginalisation of distinctive actors and frameworks. For example, a way that the discipline could attempt to address this issue is if conventional IR theory incorporated the history of the African experience to ‘revise’ the discipline’s dominant realist and liberal paradigms, enriching and destabilising its still-dominant Euro-centric and state-centered theoretical model (Brown, 2006). Poststructuralism views itself as a critical positive approach which deploys distinctive meta-theoretical questions and thereby seeks to expose how traditional theories of IR have excluded “alternative accounts in the
process” – thus triggering serious implications for the practice of international relations, state actors, and foreign policies within the global arena (Campbell and Bleiker, 2016: 216). This is how poststructuralism dramatically unsettles IR’s hegemonic realist and liberal theoretical lenses – both through re-analysing and re-presenting different interpretations of global politics and by providing important opportunities to engage with hitherto discounted, marginalised, and even silenced alternatives.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

NARRATIVE AND LEGITIMACY

SOCIO-POLITICAL NARRATIVES & THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT
ABSTRACT
In any given societal structure, actors compete over which narrative should be mainstream and dominate the public sphere. This paper seeks to establish a model that explains the power relations and dynamics between the various actors of narrative dominance. Building on this, the paper attempts to evaluate the two main categories of sources of narrative legitimacy: structural and theoretical. Structural sources are authority, and the challenging of authority. Theoretical sources are truth and morality. The paper concludes that while crucial, the asymmetrical conditions of power do not inherently define what narrative will be accepted by the target audience, as theoretical sources of legitimacy must not be underestimated.

Key words: Conflicting narratives, asymmetrical relations of power, narrative legitimacy

INTRODUCTION
In the beginning of 2003, millions marched to oppose the possibility of their countries going to war against Saddam Hussein. In the United Kingdom specifically, the public sphere found itself partitioned between the pro and anti-war movements, the pro-war movement being supported by Tony Blair’s government. A lot was written about the conflicting roles of media actors in the run-up to the war (Robinson, 2010). The pro-war media proposed a narrative of fighting terrorism and dictatorship, putting an end to the ruthless rule of the autocrat and establishing a democracy. The anti-war movement rejected the baseless conception that Iraq possessed Weapons of Mass Destructions (WMDs) and argued that any invasion would result in the loss of thousands of lives of innocent civilians. This specific case is actually a counterexample: while the overall British target audience rejected the narrative proposed, the UK went to war regardless (Elliott, 2016). However, in most democracies, governments tend to follow public opinion, regardless to the extent to which they shape it (Burstein, 2003). Hence, the narrative that ends up dominating the public sphere is likely to be the one determining public policy.

To understand the power dynamics and struggles that exist between competing narratives, and how legitimacy revolves around them, one first needs to understand what a narrative is. While the word is well known, the extent of its signification is much less so. Mayer (2014) says narratives are ‘stories’ that humans are hungry for. Wibben (2010) argues narratives are the framework we build to share a common conception of the world. Patterson and Monroe (1998) say they are both. Barthes and Duisit (1975) talk about an ‘infinity of forms’. Narratives are stories, frameworks, ways of viewing and conceiving the world. They enlarge our understanding of things, but also restrict it (Wibben, 2010). They can be rooted in historical events or shaped by values; the one thing that is common for all of them is that they are crucial to the lives of the people that concern them.

In order to understand the extent to which competing narratives in asymmetric positions of power are equally legitimate, one first needs to understand how narratives compete with each other, and how asymmetric relations of power are created in the process. This paper will consider in the first part how narratives gain or lose legitimacy by considering various case studies and theoretical arguments. In the second part, it will argue that there are two different types of sources of legitimacy for narratives: structural and theoretical. This paper will argue that the legitimacy of narratives depends...
more on the intrinsic ability of narratives to convince the audiences rather than the asymmetric conditions of power.

**PART 1: MAPPING COMPETING NARRATIVES**

In any given system of competition between narratives, there is a dominant narrator, an authority. In a typical national setting, this will be a government. In the case of pre-Iraq War United Kingdom, this was Tony Blair’s government. The authority, as the mainstream narrator (MN), dominates the mainstream media sphere (MMS). This is what academics like Gramsci and Foucault have defined as the ‘hegemony’ (Molden, 2016). This is also what schools of securitisation refer to as macro-securitisation (Buzan and Wæver, 2009). Essentially, it is the established mainstream understanding of the conceptualisation of narratives and their logic. Here, the mainstream media sphere is not just the accumulation of media platforms but rather the intangible web of knowledge sharing that validates narratives. Within the MMS dominated by the narrative of the rightfulness of the War on Terror and the necessity of the fight against the Axis of Evil, the narrative of cooperation between Iraq and Al-Qaida can be validated even though it is not factual. To some degree, the MMS is the reflection of the extent to which an idea or a narrative is commonly accepted, particularly by the elite that has the capacity to turn narratives into action. The MMS not only reflects the narrative pushed forward by the MN but also, although less so, the narratives of the major competing narrators (MCNs, see Figure 1). While the MCNs only challenge the superiority of the mainstream narrator’s narrative inside the mainstream media sphere, they usually dominate secondary media spheres (SMSs).

SMSs are webs of knowledge sharing which are not dominated by the mainstream narrator, they are numerous and diverse. Their diversity reflects the accumulation of many narratives emerging from a multitude of independent narrators (INs) through relays (See Figure 1). The relays can also be diverse in their nature, but they usually are both formed by and support the narratives of NGOs, activists, and knowledge groups (Herath, Schulz and Sentama, 2020). Essentially, the media spheres are the platforms through which the different narrators attempt to convince the audience of the superiority of their narrative. The nature, scope and power of audiences can vary. An audience can be the entire population, the voting population, or an elite in power at some level. Indeed, it happens that non-majoritarian narratives are maintained as dominating because of their targeting of powerful elites, just like the Apartheid in South Africa remained the dominating narrative despite it only being accepted by a fraction of the population. The processes used by narrators within the media spheres are comparable to the Copenhagen School of securitization’s concept of speech acts as securitizing methods: the different narrators, within media spheres, use speech acts to convince an audience of the superiority of their narrative. It could be argued that this understanding of audiences assumes their homogeneity. However, what it actually argues is that the composition and diversity that can exist within audiences does not matter so long as the audience accepts or rejects a narrative. Identitarian factors may very well define whether particular groups within the audience will reject or accept a narrative, however this paper leaves to public opinion studies the role to explain why they would do so, and how audiences altogether chose.
The competition model clearly highlights the structural and asymmetrical power differences between the narrators. The MN is advantaged since its narrative will systematically be favoured by the MMS and thus more intensely heard and accepted by the audience. To a lesser extent, so are MCNs. However, the game is rigged against independent narrators that not only must rely on the support of relays but also are disadvantaged by smaller coverage. Yet, there can never be a definitive winner of the game. Besides, the model is limited in that a new version must be conceptualised for each audience. There will always be larger and smaller audiences for which the actors will change.

For instance, within Israel, the Israeli government and Parliament are the mainstream narrator and support a narrative in which the occupation of Palestine is legitimate, legal, and non-harming (Burrell, 2003). The major competing narrators would be the Palestinian authorities (the PLO and Hamas), and arguably the Arab Israeli representatives; and independent narrators would be NGOs, private citizens’ voices and research-oriented academic networks. Even if the current narrative favoured by the Israeli audience and validated through elections may be that propagated by the government and endorsing the legitimacy of colonisation, such narrative is not ensured to last indefinitely, and can only be valid within the Israeli setting. The same competition of narratives within the Palestinian territories, or across the international community, will have different actors, slightly different narratives and different outcomes (Rotberg, 2006). Within the West Bank, the PLO and Hamas will act as MN instead of MCN and are likely to dominate the local MMS.

**Part 2: Sources of Narrative Legitimacy**

We have determined how narratives systematically find themselves in asymmetrical conditions of power. Are they then systematically unequally legitimate? To answer this question, one must find out how narratives become legitimate. This paper argues that there are two different kinds of legitimacy affiliated to narratives: the first one is structural, and the second kind is theoretical.

Building on Bourdieu’s work in their ethnography of the politics of rituals in Timor Leste, Población and Castro (2014) argue that within a given structure, narrators compete for ‘narrative capital’. While the concept of the struggle for ‘narrative capital’ is what the Competition model seeks to show, it does not insist on the inherent legitimacy of authority. Within a perpetual game of ‘authority and discredit’, Timorese narrators challenged each other to structural societal roles -honorary titles- which possess inherent legitimacy.
While Población and Castro’s research focused on the role of rituals, the idea that societal hierarchy signifies a difference in narrative legitimacy is not surprising.

Based on a study of USA Congressional debates about the non-profit sector, Sobieraj (2007) concluded that US Congress members (jointly constituting the mainstream narrator) attempted to push forward a new narrative situating them in the “central and heroic character position”. They did so because they possessed the institutional capacity to take such action; and they partly succeeded in their attempt to do so because of the embedded privileges they disposed of as members of Congress. This illustrates that the mainstream narrator does not usually seek to offer viable alternatives to the audience, but rather fights the existing narrative alternatives because they oppose the mainstream narrator’s interests as the central, hegemonic actor of that polity’s governance ecosystem. If the mainstream narrator was actually interested in the wellbeing of the audience, it would not seek to limit narrative opportunities available to the audience; to the contrary, it would provide them with a viable platform.

Two key implications for the main argument of this paper emerge from this argument. Firstly, the MN does indeed seek to limit or silence alternative narrators, not just compete with them. Going back to Israel and Palestine, one can argue that the use of both physical and institutional violence against alternative narrators did lead to a loss of legitimacy of the mainstream narrative (Rouhana in Rotberg, 2006). It can be argued that being the MN did not intrinsically add legitimacy to the narrative, which may be because the mainstream narrative led to the systematic oppression of alternative narrators who did not agree with its supremacy. Yet, that is not entirely true. As argued previously, different settings of competing narratives enframe different actors and different outcomes. Although the abuse of power by the dominating MN did lead to a loss of legitimacy within the Palestinian and international narrative battlefields, this had only a slight impact within the Israeli theatre of operations (Ibid).

The second implication results from the first. As Mainstream Narrators abuse their superior power and control tools, MNCs experience definite legitimacy gains. In their study of public support for insurgencies, and examining the cases of Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, the Kurdish PKK and the Nepali Maoists, Davis and colleagues (2012) have found that insurgencies gained legitimacy systematically because of the perceived ‘duty’ of fighting the abusive superior actor. The narrative of the freedom fighter fighting for a just cause appears to be found legitimate by audiences, but only if there is perceived abuse from the hegemonic actor.

Yet, this paper does not argue that MCNs are at an advantage against the MNs, for the sole reason of the usual significance of difference in means available. The War on Terror is probably the most suitable example. In the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attack, one tool which the MN had at its disposal but was not available to compete narrators was the domination of media spheres, particularly with visuals. The importance of images is crucial to the audience’s choosing of a narrative over another (Shepherd, 2008). We commonly say that an image is worth a thousand words; this certainly is true when it comes to shocking people. For MCNs and INs alike, contesting the visual MSs is extremely challenging. That is because while violence is easy to represent visually, peace is not. Once frightened, an audience will more easily choose a narrative of revenge over a narrative of de-escalation. This is demonstrated by the fact that the solution found by alternative narrators was not to challenge the visual violence of the tools presented by the MN but rather to show violent images of their own, committed by the MN (Ibid).

For INs, being heard is an almost impossible task during a time of crisis. To an extent, their influence over the MSs can only appear either in peaceful times or when the crisis is reaching its end point. We only hear about ‘collateral damage’ years after it happened, particularly because the collective voices of the INs could finally challenge the mainstream narrative (Gregory, 2019). It is unfortunate that the INs are muted during crises because they often are the best equipped to promote peace. Johan Galtung,
the father of Peace Studies, argued that in order to build positive peace, lasting peace, justice and reconciliation were key (Galtung and Webel, 2017). Because of their nature, independent narratives often are voiced by individuals, or smaller groups of people. They are centered around individual stories and emotions, in opposition to generalisations, and their goal is usually to put an end to human suffering (Burrell, 2003). They could be linked to the concept of Human Security, in opposition to more traditional views of security (Kaldor et al, 2007).

Because of their individual-centered objective, independent narratives are often perceived to be more legitimate than their counterparts since their validity rests on the plausibility of their reality instead of an accumulation of value-systems, intergroup relations, and political agendas. An example can be the tragic death of 3-year-old Aylan Kurdi in 2015 on a Turkish shore, relayed by a photo gone viral. While the photo did not single-handedly transform migration policies in Europe, the tragedy shocked many, much more than a vague intangible conception of the phenomenon of human migration possibly could have (Greenslade, 2015). This brings us to the other source of narrative legitimacy, which this paper calls theoretical.

There are two theoretical sources of narrative legitimacy: truth and morality. Whilst clashes between narratives, especially narratives of conflicts, are common occurrences, so are moral condemnations of crimes and abuses. Given existing standards of human rights and international and national laws, one could argue that narratives defending violations will systematically lose legitimacy when clashing with narratives critical of those very violations. Garagozov and Gadirova (2019) demonstrated that even during ethnic conflicts, enemies on different sides reacted emotionally to the narratives of suffering of the opposite side, leading to a questioning of the mainstream war-prone narrative. The examples of mainstream narratives losing legitimacy because of accusations of human rights violations are numerous: the US invasion of Iraq, the US presence in Afghanistan, the NATO intervention in Libya, the genocide committed by the Myanmar military against the Rohingya population, of the systematic oppression of Uighurs in Xinjiang. But the phenomenon of legitimacy-loss goes further. In some places, indirect involvement of MNs, like the sale of weapons to partners committing atrocities may be enough to challenge the mainstream narrative, as has been seen in Europe, and particularly in Germany and the UK after allegations of crimes committed by the Saudi military against the Yemeni population (Sabbagh, 2021).

The second theoretical source of narrative legitimacy, which is particularly relevant during a pandemic like Covid-19, is truth as a norm. While one could argue that all narratives are systematically legitimate whether they be true or false because they represent the perspectives of individuals, the dissemination of false information has negatively impacted the legitimacy of the narrators responsible for this. The results of the 2020 US presidential and congressional elections may be attributable to precisely this factor (CNN, 2021). However, the reality is more complex than this. Unfortunately, truth is something hard to quantify, for discourses are often full of partial truths, lies, and silences.

Mayer (2014) demonstrates how MCNs opposing the narrative of the human causality of climate change, which is scientifically proven, have nonetheless gathered enormous capital and legitimacy within specific population groups. If one wants to use a more conflict-oriented example, the Israeli-Palestinian struggle once again provides valuable insights. Burrell tells us of Israeli audiences that reject the truth of the oppression of the Palestinian people because it would not fit their own narrative of being the victims (2003). How could one be both a victim and a perpetrator? Besides, the complexity of conflicts often makes it virtually impossible to authoritatively distinguish between objectively true and false claims. The competition of narratives over the abuse of chemical weapons in the Syrian civil war is such an example: such weapons were allegedly used by both the Syrian government and opposition forces, whilst both camps equally denied doing so. During military conflicts, figuring out the truth is even more complex, and thus its effect on the legitimacy of narratives will be limited until the conflict is resolved and the INs are in a position to effectively diffuse narratives not yet widely heard.
CONCLUSION

This paper’s main objective was to map out the power relationships between competing actors attempting, within a specific context, to dominate a public policy narrative. It argued that within any given political or social context, the mainstream narrator (usually powerful political institutions) dominates the mainstream media sphere, while mainstream competing narrators (either less powerful institutions, or political opposition, or elements of civil society) struggle to convince the audience to accept their narrative of the events over that of the mainstream narrator’s. At the same time, the mainstream competing narrators dominate secondary media spheres, often unaffected by the influence of the mainstream narrator. Within secondary media spheres, independent narrators attempt to generate via relays new narratives by proposing more authentic visualisations focused on individual, human stories.

Besides this attempt at mapping out such relationships, this paper aimed to explain the origins of the legitimacy of narratives. It argued that legitimacy emerges both from the possession of authority and the challenging of it. Besides, legitimacy is also the result of the perception of a narrative as being moral, or truthful. This paper is limited by its inability to consider quantitative data in order to attempt at generalising what is very much a theoretical theory of narrative power relations. It would be interesting to complement this approach by studying the factors that are prevalent in causing shifts in mainstream narratives, or the absence of shifts. Attempts should also be made to connect securitisation, public opinion and intergroup conflict studies together to both make sense of the diversity of concepts and to ascertain whether or not they are compatible in their approaches of narratives, public opinion, and change and adaptation factors. As disinformation becomes a political tool of international relations that directly impacts foreign policies and warfare, it is crucial to understand how narratives that shape public opinion and thus policy, compete and how they gain legitimacy. The difference between a narrative of security and one of compassion in how asylum seekers are regarded is quite literally a matter of life and death.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT, THE CIVIC FORUM AND THE FATE OF DELIBERATIVE CONSOCIATIONALISM IN NORTHERN IRELAND

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Abstract

The 1998 Good Friday Agreement gave Northern Ireland the hope of peace and the prospect of democratic government, within a wider European framework of governance. Today, this Agreement is on life-support as Northern Ireland has become a central battlefield of the post-Brexit UK-EU conflict. This paper argues that the origin of the GFA’s legitimacy erosion is rooted much earlier in time than Britain’s exit from the European Union – namely in the failure of leading Northern Irish political parties and their respective state sponsors to fully implement the complex deliberative consociational architecture of the Agreement, centered around its innovative Civic Forum. After outlining in its introduction the Civic Forum’s transformative Project, this paper discusses, in its three main sections, the Civic Forum’s immanent Promise as the linchpin of the Agreement’s deliberative consociational architecture, its actual practice during its brief existence as it engaged with its “constitutive outsides” – the Northern Ireland Assembly and the grass-roots civic society, and its preliminary post-mortem commenting on the causes and consequences of its institutional demise. In conclusion, this paper will sound a hopeful note by making an optimistic prediction – forecasting the eventual rebirth of complex deliberative consociationalism in Northern Ireland.

Keywords: Good Friday Agreement, Northern Ireland, Civic Forum, multi-level governance, European Union, consociationalism, tribune parties, citizens’ assemblies

“The Civic Forum is a new space which regards itself – and not infrequently defines itself – as guarding against any collapse into the camps that the formally elected chamber more carelessly replicates in its version of democracy. Its commitment to inclusivity across camps is integral to its call to the future.”

Vikki Bell (2004b: 414)

PROJECT: THE GFA’S CIVIC FORUM AS VANISHING MEDIATOR

On Saturday, 30 March 2019, forty-nine individuals representing a cross-section of Northern Ireland’s population converged on the Clayton Hotel in Belfast. They had agreed to participate in a one-day citizens’ assembly aiming to discuss the various political avenues leading to Irish unity in the post-Brexit era. To see how participants’ attitudes towards the two main constitutional options for a future united Ireland might change as a result of a “thoughtful and considered process of learning and deliberation”, an academic team led by Prof. Brendan O’Leary, Northern Ireland expert, facilitated this experiment (Garry et. al, 2020: 433). The results were startling. The questionnaires the participants completed at the start of the day showed a pronounced preference for the first alternative, the Devolved option - a united Ireland where the bargain struck between the key stakeholders of Northern Ireland, including the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom, as part of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement (‘GFA’) would remain intact, thus preserving a Northern Ireland Assembly (the Assembly), albeit under Irish sovereignty and within the European Union (‘EU’). At the end of the day, participants’ preference for the second alternative, the Integrated option - a united Ireland where Northern Ireland would be fully absorbed within the institutional structure of a unitary Irish State, had pulled even with the first option (Ibid.: 424).
The most pronounced shift in preference from the Devolved to the Integrated option occurred primarily among the assembly's Protestant participants, who justified their change of perspective as grounded in an enduring ‘anti-politics’ feeling and a pervasive sense of disenfranchisement. These were illustrated by three key conclusions they reached at the end of this citizen's assembly: first, the Devolved option would not represent a major change with existing arrangements and therefore would satisfy neither Nationalists nor Unionists; second, it would be confusing to retain different political systems in Belfast and Dublin to decide on similar policy matters; third and most importantly, preserving current power-sharing arrangements in Northern Ireland would not work, as the consociational governance model designed by the GFA over two decades ago had not worked in the past, was not working effectively now and would not work well in the future (Ibid.: 442-3).

This loss of faith of the Protestant members of the citizens' assembly in the legitimacy and effectiveness of a consociational system of governance in Northern Ireland stands in stark contrast with the statement made almost simultaneously by the father of consociationalism, Arend Lijphart. During a 2019 symposium on “The Importance of Consociationalism for Twenty-First Century Politics and Political Science”, Lijphart confidently opined that “[c]onsociationalism is now the default option for divided societies" because it is “the best solution to ethnic conflict” (Boogards et al., 2019: 350). Such a marked discrepancy between average citizens' and expert elites' perspectives on the capacity of consociational arrangements of governance to bridge historic ethnic antagonisms in post-conflict societies and bring about peace, pluralism, participation and prosperity to all affected parties and communities deserves closer investigation.

This paper will inquire why complex consociational constitutional arrangements often fail to bridge the critical adoptability/sustainability divide: that is, to complete the critical transition from theoretical elaboration and acceptance as part of grand inter-communal negotiated bargains to actually successful and sustainable implementation and practice over the medium- to long-term. In doing so, it will focus on a particularly important variation of complex consociationalism, described by Ian O'Flynn (2010) as deliberative consociationalism, and examine its implementation within the context of Northern Ireland's GFA. This paper will demonstrate, through a close analysis of this specific case-study, that a legitimate, effective, resilient and sustainable deliberative consociational ecosystem governing a deeply divided society is “an immensely subtle institutional construction” (McGarry and O'Leary, 2004: 281) requiring all its constituent elements to be implemented and function in synchronicity. Consequently, it can ultimately attain its primary long-term objective of successful conflict resolution only by creating and embedding in the short term, and preserving and promoting in the medium term, a diarchic dialectical tension between all institutions composing both its conceptual organizational and immanent relational architecture.

To demonstrate this, our analysis will focus on a relatively neglected element of the GFA institutional constellation, namely its innovative Civic Forum. It will show how its participative potential as a “call to the future” (Bell, 2004b: 412) as well as a “vanishing mediator” (Balibar, 2004: 233) attempting to navigate the difficult passage from a sovereignty-centred to a multi-level governance ('MLG') system was degraded and ultimately destroyed by Northern Irish sectarian political parties and their respective ethno-guarantor states (Byrne, 2001: 330). These made common front in refusing to countenance the successful implementation of transformational change in the practice of democratic politics across the British Isles. Having referred in its introduction to the Civic Forum's transformative Project embedded at the very core of the GFA, this paper will proceed to discuss, in its three main sections, first the Civic Forum's immanent Promise as the linchpin of the GFA's deliberative consociational architecture, second its actual Practice during its all-to brief existence as it engaged with its “constitutive outsides” – the Northern Ireland Assembly and the
grass-roots civic society (Bell, 2004b: 580), and third its preliminary Post-mortem commenting on the causes and consequences of its untimely institutional demise. In its conclusion, this paper will sound a hopeful note by making an optimistic PPrediction – namely, the eventual rebirth of complex deliberative consociationalism in Northern Ireland as the more adoptable and sustainable alternative not only to the present post-Brexit status quo, but also to both the devolved and integrated united Ireland options briefly outlined above.

**Promise: The Civic Forum’s Immanent Potential**

The dynamics of consociationalist practices across diverse ecosystemic paradigms. Before diving into our Northern Ireland case study, it is important to map out the main features of consociationalism as a set of institutional designs particularly suited for bringing about stability, fairness and democracy to deeply divided societies (McGarry and O’Leary, 2009: 50ff). Lijphart (1977: 42) defines consociational democracy as a method of constitutional design aiming to make societies more thoroughly plural “at least initially” by explicitly recognizing segmental cleavages and turning them into “constructive elements of stable democracy”. It aims to achieve this paramount objective by deploying two primary techniques of governance – executive power-sharing and group autonomy – as well as two secondary ones – proportional representation and minority vetoes (Lijphart, 2001: 39). Most importantly, Lijphart (1977) conceives of consociational institutions as dynamic models of governance for plural societies that adapt over time: they arise as a result of specific socio-political circumstances in order to address and resolve acute governance problems over the medium term and can evolve and even wither away over the long term when no longer appropriate to changing realities.

McGarry and O’Leary (2009: 23, 83) proceed to refine the concept of consociationalism by identifying three primary forms: corporate, liberal and complex consociationalism. O’Flynn (2010: 581) importantly adds a fourth category as a distinct subset of complex consociationalism – namely deliberative consociationalism. These forms of consociationalism progress or regress along two axes: an agency axis reaching from coercion and control to toleration, cooperation and reciprocity and encompassing forms of normative legitimation such as representative and participatory democracy; and a structural axis of functional change connecting the preservation of the institutional status quo with incremental and even transformational change (Fig. 1 below). The competing paradigms of the agency axis are those of Liberal Democracy and Deliberative Democracy, whilst those of the structural axis are those of state-centric sovereignty and of a post-Westphalian system of polycratic multi-level governance (Linklater, 1998) “that can place democracy within this emerging global-national-local paradigm” (McCall and Williamson, 2001: 368). As McGarry and O’Leary (2009) explain, liberal consociationalism represents a significant normative advance from corporate consociationalism’s aims of sectarian hegemonic control and maintenance of the status quo towards inter-ethnic toleration and incremental change, whilst complex forms of consociationalism - those that include federal, confederal, and pluri-territorial techniques of constitutional design - improve on liberal consociationalism by empowering the emergence of genuine cross-sectarian cooperation and acceptance of long-term aims of transformational change.

Deliberative consociationalism, as elaborated by Ian O’Flynn, represents an important form of complex consociationalism that aims to answer corporate and liberal consociationalism’s centripetal and transformative critics (Horowitz, 2001; Taylor, 2006) and to reach beyond the basic tenets of consociationalism itself - from a conception of democracy as the blunt power of the ballot box to one rooted in the rational triumph of the best argument, and from a notion of diversity as the recognition of various communities’ ethnic differences to one attempting to structure “the terms of political engagement, first and foremost,
around a requirement of reciprocity” squarely focused on a larger, shared public interest (O’Flynn, 2010: 574-6). As a result, the relational practice of deliberative consociationalism is carried out through a variety of institutions characteristic not only of more restrictive types of consociationalism that necessarily represent actual facts on the ground and existing sectarian power relationships, but crucially also through creative, innovative, disruptive new institutions. Such institutions are designed specifically to advance the process of normative and structural transformation of governance practices from managing the current realities of deeply divided societies towards a long-term future where such divisions would be neither ignored nor erased, but rather bridged and held in productive dialectical tension (Fig. 1 below).

Balibar (2004) defines institutions endowed with such an immanent transformational potential as “vanishing mediators”, enabling “an imaginary of the new during the process of transformation of a society, as the old gradually fades away” (Isin, 2013: 17). Such an “externalization process” constantly integrates new relevant actors, arenas of action, influential allies, and activism resources into a complex relational ecosystem (Waterbury, 2017: 228ff) pointing towards a future model of governance that has “not yet” fully coalesced, but is perhaps still to “come” (Derrida, 1992: 76-78). The ultimate objective of such an institution of governance defined as a vanishing mediator, whose life-span is inherently transitional and finite, is utterly paradoxical: its ultimate success in bringing about the desired conflict resolution through social transformation inevitably results in its metamorphosis as a tool of governance into a new, yet-to-be defined participative practice of pluralism in the public interest, representing the successful mutation of the sovereign-centric governance paradigm into a post-Westphalian, polycratic multi-level governance paradigm. The struggle for the dynamic evolution of the normative conceptualisation and factual practice of any deliberative consociational ecosystem is therefore fought primarily around these institutions acting as vanishing mediators, whose untimely vanishing would inevitably result in triggering a process of regression from complex, deliberative forms of consociationalism to statist forms of liberal consociationalism and even sectarian hegemonic versions of corporate consociationalism. Sovereignist elites aiming for exactly such a regression in order to safeguard their hold on political power by continuing to monopolise the allegiance of their ethno-culturally defined constituencies will therefore attempt to degrade and destroy these vanishing mediators. Polycratic leaders of civic society movements whose objective is the institutionalisation of deliberative consociationalism in a decentralised, multi-national multi-level system of governance will do their utmost to ensure the vanishing mediators’ survival and success. Transitionalists favouring conceptually a lengthy process of slow, incremental change pointing towards future transformational change without however wishing to jeopardise in practice current elite power dynamics rooted in national identities, will tolerate vanishing mediators’ continuing existence and activities but will attempt to limit their disruptive, transformative impact in the short- to medium-term.

Origins and mission of the GFA’s Civic Forum. The nature and structure of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement has been the subject of numerous academic books and articles over the past two decades; it was expounded on with particular clarity by John McGarry and Brendan O’Leary (2004) in their influential volume entitled The Northern Ireland Conflict: Consociational Engagements. However, existing literature on the role of civic society stakeholders in the negotiation and implementation of the GFA in general and of the genesis and activities of the Civic Forum in particular is remarkably scant (Nolan and Wilson, 2015: 18). Sean Byrne (2001) mapped out consociational and civic society approaches to peacebuilding in Northern Ireland, whilst Bernadette Hayes and Ian McAllister (2012) addressed the issue of gender and consociational power-sharing. Vikki Bell (2004a; 2004b) discussed in two seminal articles the early experiences of the Civic Forum as a method of civic participation in the years following the adoption of the GFA. Lone Singstad Palshaugen (2005) focused on the connection between the Civic Forum and a transformed politics of recognition in Northern Ireland, where citizens and
communities would confer on each other “due recognition” going beyond mere toleration and creating deepening relations of respect and a sense of interdependence. Cathal McCall and Arthur Williamson (2011) attempted to draw key lessons on the role of the voluntary and community sector after the GFA, with a particular focus on the record of the Civic Forum, over a decade after its inauguration on 9 October 2000 (O’Leary, 2020, v. 3: 200). Finally, two research papers – one by Ray McCaffrey (2013) for the Northern Ireland Information Service and the other by Paul Nolan and Robin Wilson (2015) on behalf of the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust set out in detail the history of the Civic Forum and the lessons to be derived from its activities and eventual suspension, whilst situating it within the larger context of similar bodies in the UK and across the EU (McAffrey, 2013: 13ff).

Whereas it is generally acknowledged that SDLP leader John Hume played a leading role in the 1990s in the conceptual elaboration and practical negotiation of the GFA, the Civic Forum was not an integral part of his initial vision for how Northern Ireland should be governed. Both Bell (2004a: 566) and McCall and Williamson (2011: 373) acknowledge that the existence of the Civic Forum was secured by the small but influential Women’s Coalition party as a way of engaging civil society to actively participate in the governance of Northern Ireland outside of the dominant Nationalist-Unionist political duopoly and to contribute in efforts to bring about transformative change beyond the entrenched sectarian divide (Bell, 2004b: 414). The GFA’s text only briefly describes the Civic Forum as “a consultative mechanism on social, economic, and cultural issues” and delegates all decision-making regarding its membership, objectives, powers, resources and responsibilities to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister of the Northern Ireland Assembly. Its creation was inspired in part by the Republic of Ireland’s National Economic and Social Forum, considered at the time to represent “a leading example of democratic innovation along participation and social partnership lines” (Ibid.: 374) that pursued a path of incremental change towards more decentred, grass roots, participatory forms of political action.

As a representative of the voluntary and civic communities of Northern Ireland —sectors that had acquired increasing relevance and influence prior to the negotiation of the GFA by championing “[a] new politics of participatory democracy and transformational conflict resolution that empowers the grass roots” (Byrne, 2001: 338) — the Civic Forum was unique among all other institutions and bodies set up by the GFA, such as the Assembly, but also the various trans-territorial North-South and East-West bodies, all of which remained resolutely state-centric, situated squarely within the ambit of the Sovereignty paradigm.

Fig. 1 maps out these institutions in a matrix displaying the GFA’s conceptual organizational architecture, structured along its two agency-structure axes. It shows how these organizations are shaped by the key variables of functional change - in tension between the Sovereignty and MLG paradigms, and of normative legitimacy - in tension between representative and participative legitimacy (McCall and Williamson, 2001: 366-7). It is the organic, decentred, and diverse overall nature of this constellation of institutions including elements of liberal consociationalism, federalism and confederalism, representative and deliberative democracy, as well as infra-state, state, and supra-state actors that invested the GFA with a unique immanent potential to develop and implement “a multimodal, multilevel contingency approach to peacebuilding and conflict settlement in Northern
Ireland” (Byrne, 2001: 327) and thus to heal its communities’ and citizens’ past wounds, deal with their present realities and work towards a vision for a better future shared by them all. The GFA represents, in the words of McGarry and O’Leary, “an immensely subtle institutional construction” (2004: 281) attempting to combine both consociational and civic society approaches by “not placing emphasis solely on elite bargaining to the exclusion of all else, but instead... seeking to resolve the Northern Ireland conflict at all levels and all points” (Byrne, 2001: 341).

In particular, it takes on board centripetalist critiques of consociationalism (Horowitz, 2001) and adapts them to the specific context of Northern Ireland: it strives to build connections across identitarian divides without directly challenging them by favoring traditional cross-ethnic parties spanning the left-right political spectrum since such political organizations have historically failed to attract the votes and loyalty of local citizens.

The Civic Forum as a “Technology of Peace”. The Civic Forum’s immanent potential as a consultative institution resided not in a mission to compete for legitimacy with the elected Assembly as a de facto rival Second Chamber, but to complement its work by creating attention around key issues of critical concern to members of Northern Ireland’s civic society such as the fight against poverty, the need for life-long learning, the edification of a peaceful, plural society and an emphasis on sustainable development. Singstad Paulshagen (2005: 150) best explained this role by contrasting the “parity of esteem” arising from vertical relationships between government and diverse communities, and the equally important “due recognition”, deepening horizontal relations of respect and interdependence between citizens and communities across traditional sectarian divides. According to him, generating parity of esteem was consociationalism’s primary aim and could best be accomplished by the Assembly; whilst contributing to the emergence of due recognition capable of breaking down entrenched divisions and creating a new political culture within a newly formed public space was a trust-generating task of deliberative democracy best suited for the Civic Forum (Ibid.: 154). Bell adopted a complementary approach when she described the Civic Forum as both a “technology of Belonging” meant to give ordinary citizens the feeling that they could play an active part in the development of government policy (2004a: 571) and as a “technology of Peace” capable of voicing “a performative call to the future, a call for a new spirit” (2004b: 403) as part of a “new mode of governance” that the Belfast Agreement 1998 and the Ireland Act 1988 sought to make possible” (Ibid: 422). What emerges from these two perspectives is a vision of the GFA’s relational institutional architecture aiming to replace both the centralised, hierarchical, hegemonic Westminster Direct Rule of Northern Ireland and the controlling, coercive, Stormont Home Rule by a dominant, entrenched Protestant elite, with a multiplicity of actors interacting in a complementary manner across the three dimensions of space, time, and function. The GFA also aimed to empower Northern Ireland’s civic society itself by institutionalizing its capacity to act in an unmediated manner upon existing political levers of government, as well as to directly influence and hold to account its elected representatives in the Assembly.

The GFA effectively grouped the spatial dimension of the emerging network of governance for the British Isles into three zones: the Irish Power Sphere, the British Power Sphere – which is subdivided into a Central Government area, a Regional Britain area, and a Northern Ireland area – and a Global Power Sphere. Second, it created a dynamic institutional structure that was not intended to remain rigid and static over time, but to change and evolve in alignment with the needs and objectives of the peoples of the British Isles, over the short, medium, and long term. Third, it did away with the binary inside/outside Sovereignty divide (Walker, 1993) by acknowledging the existence of six distinct functional political public spaces, each with its own actors and action hubs, within which actors could interact, cooperate, and learn from one another outside the hierarchical structures of the sovereign nation-state and its rigid lines of command and control. Thus, at the infra-national level we had, in Northern Ireland, eleven local councils that could cooperate directly with those county and city councils across the Irish border they shared common objectives and challenges with, without having to pass
through their respective national governments first, whilst still capable of enlisting the financial and institutional help of both the newly devolved Belfast assembly, and of the London and Dublin central governments.

At the infra-state level, it devolved significant powers and resources from Westminster to a Northern Ireland Assembly structured in accordance with consociational power-sharing principles between the province’s two main communities. At the intranational level, it established the Civic Forum as well as four new action hubs allowing actors from different spatial and functional levels to interact in a balanced system based on common concerns and objectives: the British–Irish Council, the British–Irish Intergovernmental Conference, the North–South Ministerial Council and the North–South Implementation Bodies, to which was added subsequently another key arena – the North-South Inter-Parliamentary Association. These three levels were joined by the classical inter-state level, where sovereign states such as Ireland, the UK, Canada and the USA evolved as ethno-guarantors, facilitators and mediators; a regional level with institutions such as the EU and NATO that played key roles in preserving and promoting peace, pluralism and prosperity not only across the Euro-Atlantic area, but also across the significant Irish Diaspora spread throughout the world; and finally the global level represented by the United Nations (UN), where important transnational epistemic communities in relevant fields such as minority rights, migrants and refugees protection, gender equality and sustainable development coordinated their strategies and actions both globally and locally (Galbreath and McEvoy, 2009). The Civic Forum was thus “not only part of the [Northern Ireland] Peace Agreement but also part of the United Kingdom's experiment in producing improved democratic structures” (Bell, 2004b: 416). Northern Ireland thus became, in the early years of the 21st century, “a testing ground for new concepts like social partnership and new modes of governance that push the boundaries of the model associated with the modern nation-state” (McCall and Williamson, 2001: 367).

This emergent innovative and transformative MLG system designed to function and to evolve across a three-dimensional arena structured by space, time, and function variables was constructed around one foundational pillar containing the system’s three key actors, whose capacity to interact and perform their assigned tasks was critical to the survival of the entire enterprise. The first actor was an empowered, active Northern Ireland civic society having as main tasks to legitimate the new system and to provide it with continuous feedback on its performance. The second actor was a power-sharing, collaborative Northern Ireland Assembly whose assigned objectives were the judicious administration of the province through vertical interactions with levels of government both below and above it as well as through horizontal interactions with other UK levels of government similar to it, such as the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly. The third actor was a dynamic and effective Civic Forum whose objective was to directly involve the citizens of Northern Ireland in the coordination of all levels and spheres of governance and the supervision and guidance of the entire new system as it performed and changed over time, so as to ensure that its envisioning, performative, and evolutionary capacities were nurtured and developed in full alignment with the wishes and desires of the people of North Ireland in whose name this work of transformational change had been undertaken in the first place.

**Practice: The Civic Forum’s Actual Performance**

*The Civic Forum and its ‘Constitutive Outsides’.* The Civic Forum’s task of defining its own role as a civic participation mechanism bridging the adoptability/sustainability gap between the ideal developed by the Women’s Coalition party and sparingly spelled out in the GFA and its actual implementation proved to be difficult (Bell, 2004: 580). It had to fashion its mission and role as a ‘consultative’ assembly by mapping out its relationship with its two constitutive outsides making up the GFA’s foundational institutional pillar – namely, the elected Assembly and the Northern Irish civic society at large.
The Civic Forum attempted to amplify and publicize civic society's diverse unheard voices in front of the Assembly, as well as attempting to be the Assembly's critical representative in front of civic society members and organizations. In doing so, it took on the arduous task of both acknowledging deep diversity in Northern Ireland and pushing to go beyond it, towards public interest issues cutting across entrenched sectarian divides (Singstad Paulshagen, 2005: 150).

It thus aimed to contribute to the emergence of a new political culture by acknowledging specificity through an exploration of Northern Ireland's full plurality, by authorizing viewpoints in an inclusive and future-oriented manner capable of 'performing peace', and by endorsing practices crossing departmental issues without getting entangled in overtly political controversies. The Civic Forum's ultimate objective was to be seen as an alternative to party politics (Bell, 2004b: 409) capable of institutionalising a deliberative, consensual, reasonable approach to issues based on lines of division other than nationalist and unionist (Singstad Paulshagen, 2005: 161-4). It aimed to both deal with existing divisions and have more transformative effects resulting not merely in more meaningful civic participation but in “a wider movement away from conflict” (Bell, 2004b: 412). For such a strategy to succeed in practice, the Civic Forum's members had to develop “a sense of achievement and enthusiasm for the task” arising out of “the confirmation that their work was being taken seriously on both sides, by the ‘wider public’ to whom they are trying to give voice and, more so, by the Assembly who were in position to make public policy innovations and changes” (Bell, 2004a: 576).

The Civic Forum's Aim to Reach Beyond Diversity. The First and Deputy First Ministers decided, upon the advice of a Civic Forum Study Group, that the Civic Forum would be composed of 60 non-elected individuals, drawn from ten sectors representing the voluntary, civic, and business sectors of Northern Ireland, some of which – at the insistence of the Democratic Unionist Party – opposed the GFA. These members were appointed on a voluntary basis for three years and were supported by a secretariat with a budget of £370,000 per year – representing approximately one per cent of the Assembly's budget (Nolan and Wilson, 2015: 29). The Civic Forum's long-delayed initial meeting took place on 9 October 2000, but the Assembly finally agreed on its mandate four months later, on 6 February 2001 (Singstad Palshaugen, 2005: 155). Thereafter, it met in plenary format six times a year for a total of eleven sessions – half of the time in Belfast and half in selected locations across Northern Ireland, until 14 October 2002, when devolution was suspended (Noland and Wilson, 2015: 8).

The Forum's Chair, controlling its agenda, was appointed directly by the First and Deputy First Ministers and reported back to the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (‘OFMDFM’). The Forum was organised into three Internal Issues Committees – General Purpose, Communications, and Key Issues – and five advisory groups: the key Programme for Government Group designed to assist it in fulfilling its official duty of providing advice to the Assembly, as well as four additional groups – Anti-poverty, Life-long learning, Peace building (renamed Towards a Plural Society), and Sustainable development. The Forum's members decided to avoid voting on issues and instead debate key topics to try to reach a consensus (Singstad Palshaugen, 2005: 156). Before devolution was suspended, it produced, in addition to responses to the devolved Programme for Government, two key advisory reports on Life-Long Learning and on Anti-Poverty Strategy that enjoyed the support of the main social partners. Nolan and Wilson (2015: 4) opine that “[t]he social issues which the Forum selected to address on its own behalf – including sectarianism, social exclusion and sustainable development – have proved enduring. This could be said to reflect a failure on the part of the Assembly and Executive to come up with effective solutions unaided”. Singstad Palshaugen (2005: 164) claims that the Forum’s main achievement before suspension was to attempt to institutionalise “an opportunity for debate and cooperation in the context of a wider diversity and based on lines of division other than nationalist and unionist”. Bell (2004b: 419-420) notes, however, that Northern Ireland's citizens were “too little aware of its existence
to consider it a route to greater participation in governance” and therefore, that “[t]he potential good of the Civic Forum... did not spread beyond its boundaries, so that its benefits tended to accrue predominantly to those who participated in it”.

**The Civic Forum’s Five Key Challenges.** From the inception of the Civic Forum, both academic observers and some of its designated members understood that if the Forum was to succeed, it had to be taken seriously by politicians and citizens alike. However, many elected Assembly members did not believe in the Forum’s potential to bring about a more deliberative and cooperative style of governance to Northern Ireland. In fact, they actually felt threatened by the Forum’s official mandate to critically exercise its consultative duties (Singstad Palshaugen, 2005: 158-9). In particular, Anti-Agreement unionists such as the DUP and its vocal leader, Ian Paisley, were hostile to the Civic Forum’s very existence from the start, on the grounds that “people involved in decision-making processes should be accountable to an electorate” (McCall and Williamson, 2001: 375). Paisley regularly attacked the Forum in the media and variously referred to it in a derogatory manner as a “monster quango” (a quasi-autonomous non-governmental organization supported by public funds), “an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy” and “a waste of space and a waste of resources”, warning that it would end up exercising “influence without accountability” (McCall and Williamson, 2001: 375-6; Bell, 2004b: 408).

Opposition to the Forum came, however, not only from DUP Assembly members, but also from other elected representatives on both sides of the sectarian divide, who resented the visibility and legitimacy accumulated by the voluntary and community sector since the introduction of direct rule, were determined to see their own political parties claw back the power and influence they had lost to said sector during this time (McCall and Williamson, 2001: 365), and were opposed to doing anything more than pay lip service to the Forum’s activities, whilst deploying all means available to minimise its actual role and impact. First, the Assembly restricted the Forum’s purpose to a strictly advisory function in response to proposed and actual decisions of the Assembly, whilst taking away from it all latitude of engaging in pro-active work or of addressing controversial political subjects, such as the 2001 Holy Cross school incident. Second, it ensured that, in the name of representativeness, anti-GFA members would be selected to participate in the Forum’s activities and have the opportunity to disrupt its quest for concerted collaboration and consensus. Third, some Forum members came to believe that the Assembly would not allow the Forum to be “real” by exercising too much control from above, thus in effect managing it to fail by disempowering it (Bell, 2004a: 571-3). Fourth, the very limited budget allotted to the Forum – amounting to just one-hundredth of that of the Assembly — the minimal staff of its secretariat, and the appointment of a Chair accountable not to Forum members themselves but to the OFMDFM, all ensured that the Forum would not dispose of the administrative, financial, and leadership capacities necessary to publicly and effectively assert its relevance in the eyes of the electorate and to threaten in any way the Assembly’s capacity to dominate Northern Ireland’s political scene. Finally, and perhaps most consequentially for the long term, Forum members were well aware not only that, due to their own very limited advertising budget, they lacked the financial means to adequately publicise their projects and activities throughout the wider Northern Irish civic society, but also that their organisation’s sponsoring department, the OFMDFM, was unable or unwilling to assist them in this endeavour and to promote their work. For the Civic Forum to truly become a legitimate and effective technology of Peace, its members “needed, in effect, to ‘market’ Peace. But they had no effective advertisement campaign” (Bell, 2004b: 420.) Consequently, as Bell (2004b: 417) accurately noted, Northern Ireland’s political elite could rest secure in the knowledge that “[w]ith its powers and resources, the Civic Forum could never pose any real threat to the Assembly”.

**Post-Mortem: The Civic Forum’s Untimely Demise**

**Internal Limitations.** By the time devolution collapsed in October 2002 and the Civic Forum was effectively mothballed, this fledgling institution faced two concurrent existential political crises – one internal to
its own workings, one coming from the outside. The internal political crisis was accurately described by McCall and Williamson (2001: 378) as the "representativeness versus effectiveness dilemma". The Forum was faced with two conflicting pressures as a democratic participative institution: the ethical requirement to allow 'unheard voices' to be heard by including them all within the Forum's membership, and the pragmatic requirement of ensuring that the most active and effective citizens of Northern Ireland's voluntary and community sector would be selected so as to effectively develop the practice of participative democracy. The definition of ‘unheard voices’ was itself in question: intuitively, it referred to underprivileged and socially excluded communities; but it could just as well refer to ignored political voices that did not fit into the dominant unionist – nationalist diarchy, or even to those who voted against the GFA and wanted to speak out in support of an entirely different vision for Northern Ireland than the one promoted by the GFA and its constellation of institutions. The members thus selected in the name of inclusivity ran the risk of being affected by the ‘burden of representation’ – that is, of being pigeonholed as the exclusive voices of the specific groups they were drawn from and of having their contributions evaluated purely from such a perspective - thus closing off the Forum's real openness to difference (Bell, 2004a: 574-9). McCall and Williamson (2001: 377) rightly point out that since "representativeness and inclusion appeared to be the goals of the First and Deputy First Ministers in deciding sectoral composition and subsequent nominations" to the Civic Forum, there was significant concern that such an approach to staffing the newly created deliberative body "may actually diminish the potential effectiveness of the Forum by sacrificing quality on the altar of representation". The fear was therefore voiced that “the Civic Forum could become a “tokenist” institution, incorporating as many of the socially excluded groups as possible without regard to the analytical and communication skills of individual members” (McCall and Williamson, 2001: 377) and therefore to their capacity to establish the Civic Forum as a legitimate and effective exponent of participative democracy in Northern Ireland, capable of fulfilling in practice its immanent potential as a technology of Belonging and of Peace. Throughout its brief existence, the Civic Forum was unable to resolve this fundamental dilemma, damaging both its image as an inclusive institution and its reputation as a credible exponent of participative democracy in action, raising serious concerns about its inclusion as a governance institution within the GFA.

External Resistance. The Civic Forum’s external political crisis had two key components that could accurately be described as the Ethnic outbidding gambit and the Enforcement abdication strategy. Although it is outside the purview of this paper to examine in detail the nature and consequences of these two processes, their combined impact on the implementation and working of the GFA in general and on the demise of the Civic Forum in particular requires us to outline them in broad brush strokes. Intra-group ethnic outbidding, where a party within the same ethnonational bloc undercuts the legitimacy of its in-group rivals by representing itself as the true defender of the group's position (Gormley-Heenan and MacGinty, 2008: 45), occurred in Northern Ireland on both sides of the sectarian divide. Over the course of a decade, from 1998 to 2007, the DUP was able to supplant the UUP as the most trusted Unionist party (Hayes, McAllister, and Dowds, 2005), whilst Sinn Féin overtook the SDLP as the party of choice of the Nationalist community (McGlinchey, 2019). Remarkably, both challenging parties were able to do so whilst simultaneously undergoing processes of modernization that allowed them to maintain hard-line, even intransigent positions on issues of identity and vital constitutional demands whilst moderating their stances on less salient resource-related matters (Mitchell, Evans and O'Leary, 2009) and even displaying a large measure of pragmatism regarding institutional arrangements (McGarry and O'Leary, 2009: 57). On the Unionist side, the DUP opposed the very existence of the Civic Forum from the very beginning. This was partly due to the DUP’s strategy to undermine the credibility of UUP’s leader and Assembly First Minister, David Trimble, who had spoken positively thereof “as part of a new ‘inclusive democracy’ important for the success of the [Good Friday] Agreement” (Bell, 2004a: 568). Both Sinn Féin and the DUP succeeded eventually in transforming
themselves into “ethnic tribune parties” capable of consolidating their respective communities’ votes behind their banners to the largest extent possible (Mitchell, Evans and O’Leary, 2009: 402-3). This required that any Civic Forum attempts to transcend the sectarian divide through the deployment of deliberative democratic processes on matters of common concern to both sides be weakened and neutralized. This double ethnic outbidding gambit resulted in the undermining of the deliberative consociationalism model of the GFA and led to a steady regression towards statist, corporatist versions of consociationalism, enabling each tribune party to increasingly assert hegemonic control over its ethnic community.

The Enforcement abdication strategy was deployed by the ethno-guarantor states of both Unionists and Nationalists, respectively the UK and the Republic of Ireland, when they did not seek to enforce the clear provisions of the GFA despite the UUP’s deliberate infringement of its provisions by deciding to “withdraw periodically from the process, until republicans made further moves in relation to decommissioning” (Hayes, McAllister, and Dowds, 2005: 150). On the contrary, the UK accepted the collapse of devolution, unilaterally suspended the GFA’s institutions and proceeded to re-institute direct rule from London, in direct violation of the GFA and of the ensuing international treaty signed with Ireland, whilst the Republic of Ireland itself failed to formally challenge this British decision to brush aside its legally binding treaty obligations (McGarry and O’Leary, 2009: 35). In doing so, the two tribune parties of Northern Ireland and their respective ethno-guarantor states effectively hollowed out the MLG paradigm upon which was founded the GFA’s deliberative consociational model and starkly re-asserted the primacy of the Sovereignty paradigm and its centralizing, hegemonic, statist ethos founded upon exclusivist ethno-national identities. As McGarry and O’Leary (2009: 35-36) explain, the UK in particular amply demonstrated through its willingness to unilaterally suspend the Assembly not only once, but on four occasions in total in order to help diffuse “UUP leader Trimble’s difficulties with his party and the unionist public”, that from the perspective of the British government, “according to the doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty, every element of the Agreement – including the portions unionists strongly like – is revisable, and alterable, according to the will of the current or any future Westminster parliament”. This demonstration of Britain’s dismissive attitude towards the GFA and its network of institutions was reinforced by Ireland’s tacit acquiescence to such actions. The combined effect of the two countries’ attitudes regarding the implementation of the Agreement had a profound effect on the viability of the Civic Forum when devolution was eventually restored in Northern Ireland, in 2007.

Indefinite Suspension: De Facto Corporate Consociationalism. The catalyst to the Civic Forum’s untimely demise was the collapse of devolution in October 2002 and the re-introduction of direct rule from Westminster by the British Government in blatant violation of its legally binding international treaty obligations, with little if any protest from the Republic of Ireland. When the devolved government returned, in 2007, the OFMDFM launched a new review of the role and future of the Civic Forum, taking “into account the changes in civic society during the intervening years and the wider concerns emerging from the Preparation for Government Committee debate”.

As Nolan and Wilson (2015: 11) indicate, “[m]ore than 60 responses were made to the consultation, but the results of the review were never published”. The final nails in the Civic Forum’s coffin were struck in April and November 2013, when the SDLP proposed in debates in the Assembly that the Forum be reconstituted and when it proceeded to press this case at a meeting with the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Implementation of the GFA in January 2014. “There was support for the idea from Sinn Féin and the Alliance Party, but in the face of implacable Unionist opposition it is accepted that the Forum is unlikely ever to return” (Nolan and Wilson, 2015: 11).

The demise of the Civic Forum as the GFA’s “vanishing mediator”, alone endowed with the immanent transformational potential to embody a technology of Belonging and Peace capable of going beyond
diversity without however suspending it and of re-creating a shared notion of public interest on issues of common concern not only to Nationalists and Unionists but to all communities and citizens of Northern Ireland, had a profound regressive effect on the very nature of the GFA. Paradoxically, it also rendered Northern Ireland potentially more stable in the short term, after the restoration of devolution in 2007 under the joint leadership of Sinn Féin and of the DUP (Shirlow, 2007). This is due to the fact that the diarchic dialectical tension between all institutions composing the GFA’s conceptual organizational and immanent relational architecture as a deliberative consociational post-sovereign, multi-level system of governance has been, for all intents and purposes, ruthlessly dismantled by the statist actors who had the most to lose from the ultimate success of such a transformational agreement. As McGarry and O’Leary (2009: 26) correctly observed, “consociation was a necessary, but insufficient, requirement” for the long-term stability, sustainability and success of this “immensely subtle institutional construction” as originally designed, in 1998. The GFA exemplified a unique form of complex consociationalism, described by Ian O’Flynn (2010: 581) as deliberative consociationalism, capable of holding in creative tension, through its constellation of institutions, two types of normative legitimacy – consisting of both representative and deliberative democracy – as well as two types of structural change – incremental change embedded in the Sovereignty paradigm, and transformational change emerging out of the polycratic, Multi-level governance paradigm. The Civic Forum was the embodiment of this complex organic ecosystem – its most creative, innovative, and potentially transformative institution. This is why the two most successful ethnic tribune parties of Northern Ireland, Sinn Fein and the DUP, who both wished to entrench and preserve their increasingly hegemonic dominance over their respective communities, as well as their ethno-guarantor states, the UK and the Republic of Ireland, who each saw it in their national interest to forestall a paradigm shift from statist sovereignty to polycratic multi-level governance – the former in order to maintain its control over Northern Ireland, the latter in order to speed up the process of Irish unification – all worked in tandem from the very birth of the GFA, in 1998, to degrade and destroy the Civic Forum as the GFA’s institutional linchpin and thus to ensure that the immanent participative and transformative potential it represented would never come to fruition. What remains today of the GFA increasingly resembles the very same coercive corporate consociationalism mode of ethnic diversity management it originally sought to forever abolish, more than two decades ago.

**Prediction: The Rebirth of Deliberative Consociationalism in Northern Ireland**

Deep in the heart of Derry, history buffs who stroll along the seventeen-century unbroken wall still surrounding the old city can discover three identical public statues crafted in 1987 by famous British sculptor Anthony Gormley and placed at key locations along the wall’s perimeter. The sculptures represent two generic human beings standing straight upright, back-to-back, arms widely outstretched in a cross-like position. Their double faces stare far ahead in opposite directions – one towards the walls and the city’s past, the other towards the majestic river Foyle and its future – personified by the iconic Peace Bridge, connecting the unionist east bank with the largely nationalist west bank. Gormley wanted to portray with these rigid bodies forged in metal the city’s two dominant ethnic communities, “turning away from each other but paradoxically joined as one body, separated by their religious, cultural and political differences, but united in their Christianity and their shared location” (Gormley, 1987). But those who have lived in Derry and befriended both unionist and nationalist locals know that this is no longer the case. Although tensions undoubtedly remain in hotspots such as the unionist tenements stretching along Fountain Street, or at particularly confrontational moments such as that of 8 May 2019 – a day of demonstrations and riots in the city’s Creggan area that witnessed the senseless and tragic murder of young journalist Lyra McKee — the two communities have learned to live next to each other, to tolerate each other, and to comingle peacefully in the same
public spaces. The sculptures themselves, mired in opposing visions of past, present, and future best represent now Northern Ireland’s dominant ethnic tribes, the DUP and Sinn Féin, who retain a shared vested interest in keeping alive the historic sectarian divide. This enables them to maintain hegemonic control over their respective communities in order to monopolise the political power that comes with being the main elected representatives of the Unionist and Nationalist electorates in the Stormont Assembly, to which devolved government was restored in January 2020, after its most recent, three-year suspension due to policy disagreements between these two political organizations.

With the restoration of devolved powers to the Assembly two years ago and new elections scheduled to be held by 5 May 2022 at the latest, the GFA seems to be back on track, and the consociational arrangements finally accepted by both the DUP and Sinn Féin appear to be alive and well. But as the conclusions of the citizens’ assembly organised in Belfast’s Clayton Hotel by Prof. O’Leary in March 2019 clearly demonstrated, such a superficial view does not represent the deep and pervasive anti-political feelings of disenfranchisement prevailing on the ground among both communities, but particularly among Protestants. The assembly’s participants only confirmed what previous academic research already clearly indicated: this disenchantment of the civic society in general and of the unionist community in particular was primarily triggered not by the deliberative consociational system of governance originally brought to life in 1998 by the GFA, but rather by the unwillingness of both ethnic tribe parties and of their respective predecessors to work together in a fair and effective manner so as to make the GFA’s institutions function as they were intended to, in the general, public interest. As Hayes, McAllister and Dowds (2005: 164) have demonstrated, “the dysfunctional operation of the Assembly and Executive has been of more importance in eroding unionist consent than the precise nature of those institutional arrangements. The new political institutions, if they had been seen to have functioned in the manner of a consociational ‘grand coalition’, might therefore have generated popular support for the Agreement and helped to ameliorate communal conflict. Their failure to operate efficiently has been a major underlying cause of Protestant disillusionment.”

Now that the UK has finally exited the European Union after four long years of acrimonious negotiations where the fate of Northern Ireland in a post-Brexit Europe played a key role in the often tense discussions between the British delegates and their EU counterparts, the multi-level governance paradigm and principle of deliberative democracy that constituted a vital and integral part of the deliberatively consociational GFA negotiated and adopted in 1998 is unlikely to be revived in the short term. Yet the final victory of the statist, sovereigntist paradigm should not be celebrated too early. In an article published in 2018 in The Belfast Telegraph, Malachi O’Doherty resuscitates the vision of an effective and legitimate Civic Forum, which in his view was left to wither and die by the big parties but remains capable of reconvening as “a consultative body that could dilute the factional ardour of the big parties - if given a chance” (O’Doherty, 2018). The Irish journalist accurately notes that “fractional parties don’t want their ardour diluted. We inherited from the agreement a standing deadlock between Sinn Fein and the DUP” who “are effectively in competition for the top job” following the changes wrought to the GFA by the October 2006 St. Andrews Accords whose provisions resulted in “voters being incentivised to support the biggest party in their community and dispense with the smaller ones” (O’Doherty, 2018). He goes on to accurately articulate one of the main conclusions of this paper – namely that “[p]erhaps the Civic Forum was never really sold to us. Its potential was never explained - let alone developed. And it was, even by prescription of the agreement, at the mercy of the First and deputy First Ministers, who would always have the power to squash it if they didn’t like what it was doing” (O’Doherty, 2018). Yet O’Doherty remains optimistic about the future of Northern Ireland, despite the deep freeze of Britain’s post-Brexit environment. In doing so, he represents perhaps the silent majority of the citizens of Northern Ireland who support neither the status quo of coercive corporate consociationalism enforced from London, nor a unitary Irish State – since both these outcomes would consecrate the triumph of the rigid and outdated sovereignty paradigm. Instead, O’Doherty looks with hopeful realism into the medium future, past the Brexit blues, to a time where deliberative consociationalism embedded in a multi-level system of governance might well make a
well-deserved comeback as the optimal pathway leading to a peaceful, prosperous, pluralist and participative future of all citizens and communities of North Ireland and, more generally, of the British Isles as a whole. It is a view this article wholeheartedly subscribes to and which merits to be quoted in full:

“We have a system of government which tends towards deadlock. It rewards contention. Parties that confront each other across the factional divide grow stronger, garner more votes for being awkward. It may be that this simple fact of political life here means that power-sharing has already come to an end. But, if it can be restored, it will have to be in some way protected against its own toxins, its own inherent tendency towards deadlock and breakdown. And the Civic Forum can contribute to that by calling the parties back to informed, rather than imprompted, debate” (O’Doherty, 2018).

BIBLIOGRAPHY


The paper investigates the reasons behind the reoccurrence of the conflict in 2020 by delving into the scholarly literature that covers the causes of the conflict between the two countries. The paper identifies key gaps and analytical pitfalls in the scholarly debates that, on the one hand, no longer provide a relevant theoretical framework for analysing the reemergence of the fighting in 2020 and, on the other hand, fail to grasp the increasingly transforming nature of the current Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The paper focuses on domestic political undercurrents in Armenia and Azerbaijan as well as on new power dynamics in the South Caucasus, with a special emphasis on Turkey and Russia, to explain the factors that have paved the way for the emergence of the recent heavy fighting.

**Keywords:** Ethnic conflict, Caucasus, Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia, Azerbaijan

INTRODUCTION

The paper investigates the reasons behind the reoccurrence of the conflict in 2020 by delving into the scholarly literature that covers the causes of the decades-long dispute to understand whether the current analytical frameworks can account for it. To provide an adequate explanation for the large-scale escalation of the conflict in 2020, the central proposition of this paper will revolve around the combination of the following arguments:

a) The recent transformations in Armenia’s domestic politics led up to the change in the geopolitical power balance in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and

b) The new geopolitical dynamics, such as Turkey’s open support to Azerbaijan and Russia’s reluctance to help its traditional ally in the region, played in the hands of Azerbaijan and motivated the latter to launch a long-awaited military strike. This paper argues that the dispute can no longer be seen through the lenses of ‘post-Soviet’, given its complex geopolitical dimension and long-standing domestic political undercurrents in both Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The paper provides a brief background of the Velvet Revolution in order to demonstrate how the events of 2018 led up to Armenia’s path towards a new democracy (Freedom House, 2020). The analysis then proceeds by focusing on how the democratic turn in Armenia contributed to the worsening of Armenian-Russian relations on the one hand, and to Moscow’s move closer to Azerbaijan on the other. Additionally, this paper argues that Turkey’s emerging role in the conflict has become another significant factor adding up to Russia’s constrained involvement in the conflict. Eventually, the article brings forward how the outcome of the 2020 fighting weakens democratic aspirations of the South Caucasus countries (Armenia, Georgia) and paves the way for Russia and Turkey to advance their self-aggrandising political agendas.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) gave rise to ethno-nationalistic and almost chauvinistic independence movements in the post-Soviet republics of the South Caucasus.
The “ethno-culturally emancipated model of the Soviet Union” brought about the dominance of violent conflicts on ethnic grounds (Ghazaryan, 2013). The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is one of the oldest unresolved disputes of this kind in the post-Soviet space, which has claimed the lives of more than 20,000 people and left nearly one million others displaced (de Waal, 2019b). From the Azerbaijani perspective - mostly supported by international law (UN General Assembly, 2008) - Nagorno-Karabakh and several districts around the region are occupied lands that the country lost when it emerged as an independent Azerbaijani republic in the early 1990s. In contrast, Armenians look back in history and argue that the ethnic Armenians of Karabakh have been deprived of the right of self-determination by totalitarians in the 1920s (Broers, 2015). The two sides of the conflict are often seen as representing two opposing international principles - territorial integrity, asserted by Azerbaijan, and the right of peoples to national self-determination, claimed by Armenians (Suny, 2020).

Revisionist historians on both sides of the conflict have engaged in pseudo-academic scholarship, manipulating historic facts and denying the heritage of the other side on the disputed lands. In fact, it was through these texts that Armenian and Azerbaijani scholars had driven the further development of the nationalistic narratives around the conflict in order to justify claims of their respective countries over the Nagorno-Karabakh territories. For example, Armenian nationalist authors like Zori Balayan deny the Azerbaijani heritage of the Armenian controlled lands through linguistic manipulations, portraying the remaining mosques in Yerevan and some parts of Karabakh (notably the town of Shusha) as ‘Persian’, thus refuting its historic links with Azerbaijan (de Waal, 2019a). Conversely, Azerbaijani nationalist author Zia Buniatov launched almost a fictional historical argument in the 1960s, claiming that Azerbaijanis were the descendants of Caucasian Albanians (de Waal, 2019a) – the medieval Christian people who lived in what is now Azerbaijan and who almost completely disappeared into other people over the course of history (Suny, 2000).

Soon after, the “Albanian argument” became dominant in the Azerbaijani public discourse, attributing authentic Armenian scripts to Albanians and erasing Armenian historical traces (de Waal, 2019a).

A critical takeaway of the analysis is that the enduring ‘history wars’ that seek to provide a factually correct answer to the question of ‘who was there first’ is a lost cause. The truth is that both Armenian and Azerbaijani tribes co-existed in these territories centuries before the conflict emerged in its modern shape. A more important question for this research is, however, whether or not historical causes of the conflict can provide an adequate explanation for the recent reignition of the conflict.

2020 FLARE-UP OF THE CONFLICT

The long-standing conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh erupted in late September 2020, after cross-border clashes in summer 2020 that killed nearly twenty people, including a general from the Azerbaijani side (Global Conflict Tracker, 2021). The recent fighting not only claimed the lives of more than a thousand soldiers and civilians but also drastically changed the status quo of the conflict. Despite pressures from the United Nations (UN), the United States (US) and Russia, the two countries refused to end hostilities and respect cease-fire agreements negotiated successively by Russia, France and the United States. Azerbaijan achieved a decisive military victory in what came to be called “the Six-Week War” (Kramer, 2021) by not only taking control over all seven districts around Karabakh (occupied by Armenian forces since the early 1990s) but also by regaining parts of the Nagorno-Karabakh territory. The conflict ended with the truce deal signed by Russia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan on November 9, which marked almost a full capitulation of the Armenian side and a major change of the status quo in favour of Azerbaijan.

Even though there were regular sniper attacks throughout the ‘frozen period’ of the conflict, the scale of the fighting in 2020 was unprecedented for the local nature of the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute.
Both Armenia and Azerbaijan used powerful, heavy weaponry and long-range artillery while Azerbaijan deployed sophisticated attack drones. Additionally, Turkey provided direct support to Azerbaijan — its ethnic Turkic ally in Russia's historic sphere of influence — thus adding an apparent regional dimension to the dispute (Kramer, 2021). Moreover, the conditions of the Russian-brokered cease-fire agreement enabled Moscow to strengthen its influence over the conflict.

UNDERLYING CAUSES OF THE CONFLICT

The majority of authors (Zürcher, 2007; Suny, 2000; Beacháin, 2015; Cheterian, 2001; De Waal and von Twickel, 2020) follow a comparative analysis approach when examining the conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh. They place the dispute in the group of post-Soviet conflicts, thus emphasising their common origins. The causes of the dispute are predominantly attributed to modern Armenia and Azerbaijan due to powerful nationalist sentiments that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union (de Waal, 2003). However, the existing research has many problems in representing the differences between the conflicts of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Chechnya and Karabakh today. Indeed, all the above-mentioned conflicts have experienced a distinct transformation over the past few years, and even though their common post-Soviet dimension stands, it no longer provides a valid analytical frame for explaining the numerous evolving differences. Some authors have addressed this trend as a "widely circulating conceptual deficit" (Broers, 2015). Arguably, some of the factors that have shaped the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the 1990s are no longer useful in explaining why the war reignited in 2020. The dispute has transformed from post-Soviet to contemporary (Broers, 2019) with its unique power dynamics, heavy weaponry, long-range artillery, domestic changes in both countries and complex great power geopolitics. This paints a very different picture from other Eurasian conflicts of its generation (Broers, 2015).

Another analytical paradigm often attributed to the Eurasian conflicts is the concept of the “frozen conflict” (Ortung and Walker, 2015). The notion entered the vocabulary of international politics in the 1990s and is still widely used in media, policy and academia (Smetana and Ludvik, 2019). The term indicates an unresolved conflict that is temporarily stopped but can easily slide back to violence. Several authors have criticised this terminology (Smetana and Ludvik, 2019; Broers, 2015; De Waal and von Twickel, 2020) as vague and misleading. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has seen numerous escalations and rising tensions over time, raising questions about the applicability of this analytical framework even before 2020 (Broers, 2015). Now that the dispute escalated into heated fighting, a new approach is needed for addressing the reoccurrence of the conflict in 2020. Indeed, understanding the unprecedented scale of the 2020 fighting and the emerging regional dimension of what used to be a local, interstate conflict requires a new analytical approach.

TOWARDS THE REGIONALIZATION OF THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT

The 2018 Velvet Revolution in Armenia not only brought about significant political changes within the country but also, and perhaps more importantly, drastically transformed the geopolitical power balance in the Karabakh conflict. Russia’s fear of the Colour Revolutions made the country reluctant to support democratising Armenia, thus providing momentum for Azerbaijan to pursue its long-standing military ambitions. Additionally, unlike Armenia, Azerbaijan was supported by Turkey - its historic ally. This has shaped a new geopolitical power balance in the region, favouring an authoritarian Azerbaijan over a more democratic Armenia.

THE VELVET REVOLUTION - BACKGROUND

In 2018, what started as a modest student movement transformed into a mass protest that mobilised masses of people against the administration of former president
Serzh Sargsyan and the entrenched political elite in the country. After the Velvet Revolution, Armenia has experienced a significant democratic transition under the Kremlin's shadow (Paul and Sammut, 2018). Subsequent parliamentary elections forced the governing Republican Party of Armenia (RPA) out of office, and Nikol Pashinyan rose to prominence. His positioning against the corrupt political establishment voiced the concerns of thousands of people, paving the way for his unexpected rise to the leadership of Armenia. Nikol Pashinyan's Alliance “My Step” received an overwhelming mandate (70.4% of the votes) in the December 2018 elections, allowing him to assume the position of prime minister.

Nikol Pashinyan is the first Armenian leader in two decades who does not hail from Karabakh (Paul and Sammut, 2018). This mere fact inherently made his positioning on the conflict different from the radical political stances of his predecessors. Prior to the re-emergence of the conflict, Prime Minister Pashinyan continuously emphasised the importance of the conflict resolution, stating that the outcome should have been “acceptable for the peoples of Artsakh Armenia, and Azerbaijan” (Freedom House, 2020). This has raised hopes about the negotiations towards a peaceful resolution of the long-running dispute. In December 2019 the USC Institute of Armenian Studies observed that the year ended as the most peaceful in 25 years of the ceasefire in terms of war-related deaths (USC Institute of Armenian Studies, 2019). However, Pashinyan’s political agenda required him to prioritise his domestic promises. This meant dealing with systemic corruption, opaque policymaking, a flawed electoral system, and the weak rule of law (Freedom House). Numerous systemic problems in the country hindered him from focusing on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue and instead shifted the prime minister’s focus to domestic reforms. Subsequently, the country had to leave the status quo in Nagorno Karabakh (Delcour, 2021).

REGRESS IN ARMENIA-RUSSIA RELATIONS

The Velvet Revolution did not inherently possess a strong geopolitical element (Giragosian, 2021). Some authors have emphasised that Pashinyan’s movement shared relatively little with the post-Soviet Colour Revolutions (Ohanyan, 2018). Indeed, unlike the Rose, Orange and Tulip revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, the Armenian revolution emerged through the country's institutions and was driven by non-elites (Ohanyan, 2018). Even though there was neither involvement of third countries nor signalling of a strategic change in Armenia's geopolitical direction (Giragosian, 2021), the very nature of the revolution ideologically distanced democratising Armenia from Russia's orbit. Indeed, Moscow has a troubled history with the Colour Revolutions. In 2005 Russian Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov addressed the trend of exporting the revolution “no matter what colour” as a national threat to Russia (Ambrosio, 2010). Russia not only sees these revolutions as encouraged by the West but also fears that the Rose, Orange and especially Tulip revolutions demonstrated an immense inclination of democratic contagion that would eventually reach the Kremlin. Russia proceeded with creating a counter-narrative in response to the peaceful “electoral revolutions”, declaring the changes as undemocratic and “extra-parliamentary” (Ambrosio, 2010). Consequently, the domestic threat of revolutionary uprising became synonymous with Western military intervention and regime change for Moscow.

Some authors argue that the 2018 Velvet Revolution had little effect on Armenia’s foreign policy challenges (Giragosian, 2021). In contrast, the underlying argument of this paper is that Pashinyan’s rise in power seriously damaged Armenia–Russia relations and led to the Kremlin’s reluctance to support Yerevan in the 2020 fighting. Russia’s support has always had a huge weight in the country’s national security (Kasapoglu, 2017). Armenia depends on Russian military and economic backing through the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). The country has a security treaty with Moscow and maintains Russian military bases on its soil (Kasapoglu, 2017).
Armenia’s immediate geopolitical context is extremely complex for a small country of 2.9 million people (Giragosian, 2021). Therefore, Nikol Pashinyan tried to exclude foreign and security policy from his immediate agenda (Paul and Sammut, 2018). However, his parliamentary bloc submitted legislation to withdraw from the Eurasian Economic Union as early as 2017 (Paul and Sammut, 2018). Additionally, his mixed comments around launching “special relations” with the West raised alarms in the Kremlin. While reassuring President Vladimir Putin about the importance of the strategic relations between the two countries, Pashinyan’s reforms sought to diversify the country’s foreign policy sector. Armenia’s democratic aspirations soon materialised in the country’s changed positions on the Russo-Georgian conflict. Armenia consistently followed Russia’s footsteps and voted against the return of refugees to Abkhazia and South Ossetia at the UN General Assembly sessions. However, after Pashinyan came to power, the country has refrained from voting and declared friendly neutrality to Georgia (Kobakhidze, 2020).

There are a number of international law constraints in place that hinder Russia from openly engaging in the conflict. Russia has signed a security agreement with Yerevan, urging it to guarantee Armenia’s territorial integrity through military support. However, the agreement only applies to the territory of Armenia. According to international law, Nagorno Karabakh is de jure part of Azerbaijan. At the same time, Russia is the co-chair of the Minsk Group as a neutral facilitator of the negotiations. Moscow’s open support to Armenia would undermine the country’s image as an objective arbiter and potentially push Azerbaijan towards Ankara even more (Zakareishvili, 2020). However, this paper argues that it was mainly due to the political changes in Armenia that Russia started questioning its historical ally. Indeed, international law has hardly stopped the Kremlin from advancing its offensive political agenda when occupying and annexing Georgia and Ukraine.

In full contrast with the democratic turn of Armenia, President Ilham Aliyev’s regime managed to consolidate deeper authoritarianism in Azerbaijan (Freedom House, 2020). The country came out humiliated from the 1994 military confrontation. Since then, Azerbaijan has dramatically increased its military spending and prepared for regaining its territorial integrity. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Azerbaijan spent more than $24 billion on arms between 2008 and 2018 (Yavuz and Huseynov, 2020). The Azerbaijani regime skillfully used the territorial question for advancing its political interests (Cheterian, 2010). In the hands of the country’s authoritarian leadership, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict became a daunting weapon to securitize politics, exclude opposition and justify the absence of reform (Broers, 2014). Prior to the 2020 escalation of the conflict, Azerbaijan managed to achieve relative military success in the 2016 fighting. The event has emboldened the Azeri regime, allowing President Aliyev to enjoy a marked increase in the public approval ratings (UCDP, 2020). Consequently, as the Armenian side prevailed in the 90s, Azerbaijan took military action to reverse that defeat and recover lost lands on September 27 (de Waal, 2020).

The ongoing processes in Armenia have brought Azerbaijan and Russia closer together. Historically, Russia has been one of the major arms suppliers of Azerbaijan. Thanks to oil extraction, the regime does not require foreign patronage and has a self-sufficient economy. The Azerbaijani government has never had democratic and pro-Western aspirations, which made Russia’s attitude towards the country less hostile. Unlike Pashinyan’s Armenia, Azerbaijan emerged as a stable autocracy, sharing Russia’s fears about the export of “Colour Revolutions”. Indeed, President Ilham Aliyev adopted a similar ‘anti-revolution’ rhetoric as Russia (Al Jazeera, 2020). This way, the regime managed to send a message to the Russian authorities that this time it is not just a fight against ‘aggressor’ Armenia, but against Pashinyan’s project of revolution. In an interview with Al Jazeera on October 3, 2020, he called the 2018 events in Armenia a “so-called revolution” and expressed apparent dissatisfaction with Nikol Pashinyan’s figure.

AZERBAIJAN - MILITARY BUILD-UP
He emphasised that Armenia and Azerbaijan made progress in resolving the conflict during the leadership of the former Armenian president Serzh Sargsyan and that everything changed for the worse after Pashinyan came to power.

Azerbaijan received substantial military assistance from Ankara, including high precision cruise missiles (Molenda, 2018). Some scholars argue that a new Russian-Turkish condominium marked the regionalization of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict (Broers, 2021). Unlike Russia's historical involvement in the conflict, Turkey's emerging role was another unprecedented dimension of the reignited conflict (Kucera, 2020). The increasingly more authoritarian Turkey under Erdogan's leadership emerged as a significant regional player not only in the Middle East but also in the post-Soviet space (Freedom House, 2020). Turkey's mounting assertiveness in Russia's historic sphere of influence played a significant role in the outcome of the fighting. Arguably, direct Turkish involvement in the recent Karabakh War contributed to Russia's disengagement from the conflict. As Turkey is a member state of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), any direct military confrontation between Turkey and Russia risks destructive escalation.

A new regional power balance emerges as Armenian and Azerbaijani states are faced with the aftermath of the Second Karabakh War. Azerbaijan stands at a critical moment in its history as the country finally manages to regain control of the strategically significant territories (Broers, 2021). Armenia, however, is experiencing a political crisis caused by a devastating military defeat. Losing the war puts Armenia's young democracy to the test, while Aliyev's regime might come out from the conflict stronger than ever. With the United States (US) and the European Union (EU) occupied with their internal problems, Russia emerges as a peacemaker in the conflict. The Russian-brokered truce marks the end of the military confrontation. However, the new agreement cements Turkey as a power in Russia's traditional sphere of influence, creating a new geopolitical balance in the region (Foy and Pitel, 2020). Emerging power balance enables two external autocratic neighbours – Russia and Turkey – to further increase their influence in the South Caucasus region.

CONCLUSION

This paper has explained the flare-up of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict in 2020. The paper engaged with scholarly literature covering the causes of the conflict. It demonstrated a number of analytical and conceptual pitfalls in the existing research, signalling the need for new theoretical approaches. Existing accounts fail to grasp the changing nature of the Karabakh conflict, thus providing little basis for explaining the reignition of the conflict in 2020. The article argues that the Velvet Revolution in Armenia had a significant influence on the change in the power balance of the conflict. The political changes and a democratic turn of Armenia weakened historical ties between Moscow and Yerevan. Russian disengagement coupled with Turkey's unprecedented support to Baku provided Azerbaijan with a unique opportunity to launch a long-awaited military strike against Armenia.

THE OUTCOME OF THE CONFLICT

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THAWING OUT A FROZEN CONFLICT: WHY DID THE CONFLICT OVER NAGORNO-KARABAKH REIGNITE IN 2020?

(JANADAZE)

INTRODUCTION

Transnistria is an unrecognised state sandwiched between Moldova and Ukraine on the eastern bank of the Dniester River (See Fig. 1). For a little over thirty years, the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic (PMR) has functioned as a de facto independent state. In this paper, the PMR will be used to refer to the government of Transnistria, while Transnistria will be used to refer to the region itself. The dispute between Moldova and the PMR is often described as a frozen conflict. This paper will examine three potential resolutions to the conflict through the lenses of the three main actors in the conflict: Moldova, Russia and the PMR (Gherasimov, 2021). The purpose of this paper is to illuminate why this conflict continues to remain frozen over 25 years. To do so it will argue that while the three resolutions of re-integration with Moldova, integration with Russia and Pridnestrovian independence are potentially viable, but the status quo is likely to persist because the on-going stalemate is not only stable but also profitable.

The Transnistrian conflict, while at first glance seems similar to other post-Soviet conflicts, such as Abkhazia and South Ossetia, it remains distinctive because of the economic, historical and political factors at play. Additionally, the history and fate of the Republic of Gagauzia, which also attempted to break away from Moldova in the 1990s, will only be touched upon to reinforce the position that the PMR takes against re-integration with Moldova.

RE-INTEGRATION WITH MOLDOVA

One of the potential resolutions to the Moldovan-Transnistrian conflict is the eventual re-integration of the PMR into the Republic of Moldova. Joining NATO is currently impossible for Moldova as it has not only committed itself to permanent neutrality, but also territorial integrity is a requisite for NATO membership (Devyatkov, 2012: 55). Additionally, EU membership for Moldova is also predicated on a resolution to the conflict. Re-integration is therefore the only option on the table for Chisinau (de Waal, 2020: 38). In 2016 the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) brokered a package of
eight practical measures to build confidence (OSCE, 2016). So far six have been successfully implemented (ibid, 17) which has included the reopening of the Gura-Bicului Bridge, international recognition of graduates from the university in Tiraspol and international travel using Transnistrian licence plates (ibid.: 146). Another crucial element that fosters the possibility of re-integration is the economic opportunities that Moldova provides for Transnistrian manufacturers. The Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) between Moldova and the EU has benefited Moldova as well as the PMR by allowing Transnistrian companies to register in Moldova and trade internationally (Ó Beacháin, 2020: 4). On the other hand, Moldovan, Ukrainian, and Transnistrian elites also benefit from the smuggling made possible by the unrecognised status of the PMR and their participation in the criminal economy may hinder the resolution of the conflict. At this junction, it is necessary to question whether these elements are enough to sustain the momentum towards gradual and de facto integration. As it stands, the re-integration of the PMR to Moldova is the best outcome for Moldova given that the alternatives are unacceptable. However, this does not mean that there are no serious reservations in Chisinau about re-integration because the influx of all the new generally pro-Russian voters would completely rearrange the political balance in Moldova (de Waal, 2020: 39).

Moldovan president Maia Sandu made it clear, however, that resolving the conflict would not be possible without Russian support due to the Russian peacekeeping force still present in the country as well as the high level of influence Moscow enjoys in Tiraspol (Wolff, 2020).

The Russian stance towards the re-integration of the PMR with the Chisinau government is at face value a favourable one. Throughout the entirety of the conflict, Russia has supported the territorial integrity of Moldova. The closest the conflict has come to a resolution was as the result of the 2003 Russian sponsored Kozak Memorandum (Ó Beacháin, 2020: 5). The memorandum itself would have given the PMR a strong veto capability in a new federalised system. The memorandum was rejected at the last minute by the then socialist president of Moldova Vladimir Voronin. His rejection came at the insistence of Moldova’s Western partners. While Russia supports the re-integration of Transnistria into Moldova it does so on terms that are favourable to Russia, specifically those envisaged by the 2003 Kozak Memorandum (Kosienkowski, 2020: 191, 201). Through its support for Transnistria, Russia is able to leverage politics in both Moldova and the PRM. While this leverage is limited (Voronovici, 2019: 296), Russia considers both the PMR and Moldova as part of the wider “Russkii Mir” or “Russian World” (ibid.: 296; O’Laughlin et al., 2017: 764).
As a result, tensions arise when the Russian view on how the region should develop differs from that of the EU and Moldova (Gherasimov, 2021). Another angle of Russian influence is the contingent of Russian military and peacekeeping troops stationed in Tiraspol. It is unclear if Russia would remove its troops in the event of Transnistrian re-integration with Moldova. It is however clear that the military contingent is a visible and tangible show of Russian influence in the PMR (Ó Beacháin, 2020: 3). Moreover, the removal of Russian troops is non-negotiable for Moldova and the Sandu government (Necsutu, 2021). Russia also stands to gain significant political influence in Moldova if the citizens of the PMR are as pro-Russia as some sources suggest. Integrating the citizens of the right bank into the Moldovan political system could steer the country away from Europe and into the “Russian World” (Voronovici, 2019: 291).

Conversely, one must question what the position of the PMR is on re-integration. The biggest points of contention when the conflict began were language and culture. The divide can be considered a “civilisational gap” that yawns across the Dniester river (Belitzer, 2015: 46). The entire identity of the PMR is built upon the historical narrative that leans upon the Soviet era and, more recently, the defence of the right-bank and creation of the multi-ethnic political entity. When it comes to re-integration with Moldova, questions of identity need to be taken into account, though it is difficult to know how the population in Transnistria feels (Cojocaru 2006: 269). A good indicator, however, is the fact that most Transnistrians have Moldovan passports; this allows them to leave the PMR and move and work in Moldova or even further west (de Waal, 2020: 39). Furthermore, approximately one in three of the population are pensioners, which in turn leads to the political reinforcement of traditionalist views and scepticism towards Moldova (ibid.: 147). Part of this scepticism is founded in the example of Gagauzia, an ethnically Turkic republic in southern Moldova. While Transnistria fought for its independence in the early 1990s,

Gagauzia sought a federal approach to maintain its autonomy. The Chisinau government has failed to uphold its agreement with Gagauzia, which is now integrated into Moldova (ibid.: 144). Given this political reality, it is not unreasonable for Transnistrians to be sceptical of re-integration with Moldova. From Tiraspol’s perspective, the political status of the PMR is not up for discussion (Devyatkov, 2017: 21). As it stands, the on-going stalemate benefits all those involved (Gherasimov, 2021). Moreover, the status quo of the Transnistria conflict is likely to persist as there is no resolution that all parties can agree on.

In short, while re-integration with Moldova is the outcome that is favoured in Chisinau, Tiraspol would oppose this outcome for political, economic, and historical reasons. However, Moscow might reap unexpected political benefits from Moldovan re-integration.

INTEGRATION WITH RUSSIA

The Moldovan perspective on the annexation or integration of Transnistria with the Russian Federation (RF) is a simple one. This resolution to the conflict is unacceptable to Chisinau as the territorial integrity of Moldova is non-negotiable (Albulescu, 2019: 244). That being said, the conflict between the two has kept Moldova economically stagnant (Gherasimov, 2021). Regardless of the current political environment, the Russian integration of Transnistria might produce a few of the following outcomes. It would immediately scale back the level of Russian influence over Moldova (Kennedy, 2010: 76). With a new definition of territorial integrity, Moldova would find it much easier to join the EU. This in turn could lead to a stronger economy and a resolution of the political woes that have come to define the Moldovan government (University of Central Arkansas, 2021). On the other hand, this may not solve any of the issues that Moldova faces. A fragile economy, a continuous emigration, and corruption scandals are unlikely to be resolved by joining the EU.
In fact, doing so might make the situation worse for Moldova, especially in terms of outward migration. Another possible outcome of the PMR being integrated into the RF is it might facilitate Moldova to re-integrate with Romania (Goltsov, 2020: 165; Devyatkov, 2012: 55). Despite close ties between Bucharest and Chisinau, this form of re-integration seems unlikely under the presidency of Maia Sandu (Luca & Nescutu, 2018). On the whole, it seems that, even ignoring the outright refusal of Chisinau to entertain the notion of ceding the right bank of the Dniester to Russia, the possible outcomes are not positive for Moldova. Here the status quo seems a much more favourable outcome.

At first glance, possible Russian attitudes to integrating Transnistria seem clear cut. Russia supports the PMR culturally and economically and therefore integration would make this support simpler. The Russian position is more complex, however, as it is grounded on two political realities. Firstly, through the entirety of the conflict Russia has expressed support for the territorial integrity of Moldova (Goltsov, 2020: 161-162). Secondly, despite its vital economic support, Russia has not officially recognized the PMR, which can be seen as the highest political goal for a breakaway republic (Ó Beacháin et al., 2016: 443). At a time when the conflict was closest to being resolved, Russia made its intentions clear with the 2003 Kozak Memorandum which envisioned Transnistria integrated into Moldova, not Russia. One of the motivations for this is that Russia would lose out on the advantages it currently gains from its relationship with Transnistria (Rogstad, 2018: 59). This comes in the form of Russia’s ability to leverage Moldova, for example by preventing it from joining the EU. Another aspect of this is undermining the Europeanization efforts of western countries in what Russia considers its sphere of influence (Kosienkowski, 2020: 7). If, by some change in policy in Moscow, Transnistria were to be integrated into the RF, there are two further concerns that would need to be addressed. First of these is the inevitable financial burden of integrating and modernising Transnistria. If the integration of Crimea is taken as an example, integrating Transnistria could have significant economic repercussions (Ballard, 2019). A speculative total cost of Russian subsidies to Transnistria in 2017 was approximately $500 million (Devyatkov, 2017: 20). The subsidies Moscow paid to Crimea in the first five years after its integration into the RF ranged between $1 and $2.5 billion (Ballard, 2019). Transnistria is much smaller than Crimea and has no strategic infrastructure, it is not unreasonable to assume that it too would need a significant overhaul on top of the existing subsidies, a significant part of which goes to paying pensions (de Waal, 2020: 147). The second concern would be the international backlash of integrating Transnistria in light of the 2014 annexation of Crimea. Regardless of Russian intention, anti-Russia analysts in the West would exploit this as evidence supporting their views. Taking all this into account, it seems for Russia the status quo would likely be the preferable option.

What then of the Transnistrian perspective on integration with Russia? Remaining a part of the Soviet Union and later Russia was fundamental to Transnistrian identity and the creation of the PMR. Pro-Russian views among the elites in Transnistria have not changed (Potapkina, 2020: 123-124). Former President of the PMR Yevgeny Shevchuk maintained that integration with Russia is the inevitable future of Transnistria (Shaw, 2016: 178). In 2006 the PMR held a referendum that reflected the positions of the Smirnov government of either independence or integration with Russia (Albulescu, 2019: 246). Despite withholding official recognition of the republic, Russia supplies it with vital and non-replaceable economic and material support as well as the power symbol of Russian military forces in Tiraspol (Kosienkowski, 2020: 12). Transnistria is no mere Russian puppet but has its own interests (Devyatkov, 2017: 17-18). By integrating with Russia, the PMR would lose its unrecognised autonomy. Additionally, by becoming part of Russia, the PMR would irrevocably sever ties with Chisinau and the West, from which it is currently profiting via both the
DCFTA and through the grey economy enabled by its unrecognised status. On the other hand, integration with Russia offers a vision of stability and by extension continuity of the political narrative the PMR was founded on (Cimmino, 2019: 16-17). From a Transnistrian perspective, the benefits do not seem to outweigh the costs of joining the Russian Federation. However, when considering the Moldovan and Russian outlooks, it becomes clear that all sides in this conflict stand to gain more from leaving the situation on the right bank of the Dniester as it is. Put simply, integration with Russia is staunchly opposed by the Chisinau government and is unlikely to provide tangible benefits for either Moscow or Tiraspol.

**PRIDNESTROVIAN INDEPENDENCE**

A third possible resolution to the Transnistria conflict would be independence for the PMR. From a Moldovan perspective this presents many of the same issues as in the discussion of integration with Russia. Moldova insists that the PMR has no right to international recognition (Devyatkov, 2012: 57). There are, however, a few further elements worth noting here. First of these is that Moldova has committed itself to peaceful resolution of the conflict (de Waal, 2020: 143). This could mean that if the PMR were to gain recognition as an independent state, Moldova would not allow the conflict to violently re-ignite. Another element is that successive governments in Chisinau have had no comprehensive strategy for resolving the conflict. Coupled with a volatile political situation in Chisinau characterised by a dysfunctional government and parliament, the inertia of the situation is unsurprising (Gherasimov, 2021). This inertia is compounded by a third factor. Transnistria is not a pressing political or social issue in the popular discourse in Moldova (de Waal, 2020: 38). While the problem of Transnistria burdens the government of Moldova, the issue is not important to most Moldovans (ibid.) Without political pressure from the citizenry, there is no impetus to change the status quo. Moreover, approximately one fourth of the population of Moldova has emigrated in recent years and accurate data on public opinion is difficult to quantify (Gherasimov, 2021). Some research suggests, however, that there is resistance in Moldovan society to any engagement or legitimisation of the PMR (de Waal, 2020: 40). Taking all this into consideration, it is likely that the status quo will continue to persist.

The position of the Russian Federation on Pridnestrovian independence is as clear as that of Moldova, albeit less explicit. Russia continues to support the PMR but refuses to recognize it as an independent state. In a 2011 interview, the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs Lavrov announced that “no international institution supports the independence of Transnistria” (Devyatkov, 2012: 57). Very little is likely to change without the consent or support of Moscow. The continued lack of recognition and support for independence makes for distinct indicators of the Kremlin’s intent. As it stands, the 2003 Kozak Memorandum is the closest all parties came to a resolution. Moreover, the memorandum is emblematic of the Russian approach to PMR independence and Transnistria as a whole. Russia prefers for the PMR to be an unrecognised client state and with it retain the political leverage in Moldova (Ó Beacháin, 2020: 7). Discounting for a moment the Russian stance toward Pridnestrovian independence, an independent PMR would provide a staunchly pro-Russian buffer state in the “near abroad” (Toucas, 2017; Cimmino, 2019: 16). This begs the question of how much influence Russia would still exert in an independent PMR. Russia has the means and opportunity to change the situation in Transnistria, if it were to choose to do so. The fact that the conflict has remained frozen for close to 20 years is a strong indicator that Russia prefers the status quo.

Since its very inception, the PMR has had independence as one of its goals. Reinterpreting history, the PMR has created all the trappings of statehood and unified an
ethnically diverse population into a state (Voronovici, 2019: 299). To this day, the PMR "maintains a full complement of parallel institutions" (Cimmino, 2019: 16) which allows it to function the way any other state would. The one key missing component is international recognition. Even its Russian patron does not officially recognise the PMR as it does with other client states, such as South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Ó Beacháin et al., 2016: 448-449). Even if Russia were to recognise the PMR, there is no guarantee that other nations would do the same. The recognition of Russia alone does little for the independence of the PMR. An additional consideration is that independence would bring with it a heavy financial burden. Furthermore, the economy in Transnistria is caught in the stranglehold of the Sherriff conglomerate, which dominates both the economic and political landscape (Devyatkov, 2020: 58, 148). The RF currently supplies the PMR with vital support that is propping up the economic and social stability of the PMR (Devyatkov 2012: 58). This support is manifested in natural gas supplies in the value of above $6 billion since 2009, as well as financial aid as loans and grants at a value of $100 million annually(Koskienkowski, 2020: 12). If Russian support were to dry up as a result of independence, the PMR could likely implode. This financial reality would make independence untenable. It becomes apparent then that for all the rhetoric and the foundation myths, the financial and political situation is better suited to maintaining the status quo in Transnistria. In brief, the PMR desires independence but might well collapse under it, while Russia and Moldova continue to signal their opposition to independence. 

CONCLUSION

This paper has explored and evaluated three possible resolutions to the Transnistria conflict and in doing so presented the maintenance of the status quo as the most probable outcome. Viewed from the perspectives of the three main actors involved, the nuance and difficulty of finding a resolution become clear. There is a culture of pragmatism in the region, and when mutual interests align, a solution can be quickly reached (de Waal, 2020: 155). This evaluation has made clear that a political resolution to the conflict remains deceptively simple on the surface. As long as the parties involved maintain their political and economic positions, the situation will not change (de Waal, 2020: 137). This is augmented by the fact that all three actors profit from the current stalemate (Goltsov, 2020: 165). Going forward, both Moldova and Russia are likely to muddle through without doing much to change the situation in Transnistria (Devyatkov, 2017: 21). There is a possible avenue from which change might come in the future. Eventually, the ageing population of Transnistria will die and the next generation of Transnistrians who have never experienced life outside of the PMR will have a dominant voice in the future of their country (Gherasimov, 2021). It is unclear if those who remain in Transnistria will lean towards Europe, Russia or even support independence. Like Moldova, Transnistria suffers from depopulation due to economic migration to both the East and the West (Kolosov & Crivenco, 2021: 270). Worsening economic and societal conditions may produce the conditions for radical change, until then the fate of Transnistria is unlikely to change. The continuation of the status quo might seem like a disappointing result, however, a peaceable dispute is better than a war.

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DOES THE INTERIM NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY SUFFICIENTLY ADDRESS U.S. MISSILE DEFENSE?

DANIEL K. DESMOND

ABSTRACT
This paper provides an analysis of the United States’ 2019 Missile Defense Review and 2020 Ballistic and Cruise Missile Threat Report to validate that the vision established by the 2017 National Security Strategy was appropriately reflected in the reports. The Trump Administration published a clear and comprehensive National Security Strategy in 2017 that drove the research for these subsequent reports. The description of the ballistic and cruise missile threats facing the United States as well as the air and missile defense capabilities developed to combat these threats are clearly articulated for the development of an updated national strategy. The Biden Administration maximizing the data and intelligence in these reports to develop their own official National Security Strategy would increase the efficiency of the United States’ response to the identified threats.

KEYWORDS:
Missile, Threat, Security, Strategy, Defense

INTRODUCTION
As the threats of conflict and insecurity progress, the weaponry and national defense requirements have also evolved in turn. The development of modern weapons systems has increased the capabilities of military forces, allowing them a broader spectrum of offensive options to choose from. The problem that the United States faces is maintaining a deliberate and advanced defensive structure that is responsive to these technological advancements. The vision expressed in the Trump Administration’s 2017 National Security Strategy drove the research of the Ballistic and Cruise Missile Threat Report and the Missile Defense Review.

The Biden Administration has failed to identify the gravity of the missile defense threat in their Interim National Security Strategy of 2021 and should reference these reports prior to publishing the official NSS of the new administration.

NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY (2017)

OVERVIEW
The National War College describes the National Security Strategy (NSS) as, “the design and application of ideas for employment of means as well as the orchestration of institutions and instruments of national power (diplomatic, informational, military, and economic) to achieve viable ends that protect or advance national interests” (Heffington et al., 2019: 1). The President, who is ultimately responsible for the priorities within the NSS, utilizes a strategy that is described best by Harry Yarger when he writes, “the art and science of developing and using the political, economic, sociopsychological, and military powers of the state in accordance with policy guidance to create effects and set conditions that protect or advance national interests” (Yarger, 2006: 65-66). The elements and instruments of national power are reflected in the document. A key instrument of national power is the military, and as discussed already, the key platform for the military is the expansion of offensive and defensive missile capabilities.

The 68 page 2017 NSS provides guidance and a comprehensive overview of America’s threats and strategies to combat them - specifically in relation to missile threats and fostering a defensive strategy.
The Trump Administration’s NSS identified that “many actors can now field a broad arsenal of advanced missiles, including variants that can reach the American homeland” (Trump, 2017: 3).

The administration continued by articulating their priority as, “first, our fundamental responsibility is to protect the American people, the homeland, and the American way of life [...] A layered missile defense system will defend our homeland against missile attacks” (Trump, 2017: 4). The Interim National Security Strategy Guidance (INSSG) published under the Biden Administration only mentioned the term “missiles” once, in reference to North Korea. The INSSG failed to incorporate the same sense of urgency related to the growing ballistic and cruise missile threats that the Trump Administration’s NSS covered. Due to the guidance the 2017 NSS provided to U.S. agencies concerning missiles, the 2019 Missile Defense Review and 2020 Ballistic and Cruise Missile Threat Report were researched and published. These reports provide data concerning the significance of the missile threats to the U.S. as well as the United States’ ability to defend itself.

**2020 BALLISTIC AND CRUISE MISSILE THREAT REPORT OVERVIEW**

The Ballistic and Cruise Missile Threat Report (BCMTR) provides the Biden Administration with detailed analysis to assist with their understanding of the scaling missile threat and their official NSS development. The BCMTR confirms the reliance of modern nations on missile technology by stating, “with the relatively low operating costs, potential to penetrate defense systems, and value as a symbol of national power, ballistic and cruise missile will continue to be the offensive weapons of choice for many nations” (Defense Intelligence Ballistic Missile Analysis Committee, 2020: 39). The BCMTR provides unclassified data on the array of threats the United States faces.

These weapons systems are symbols of national power, “especially when those systems are armed with weapons of mass destruction” (Defense Intelligence Ballistic Missile Analysis Committee, 2020: 2). State actors and diplomatic agencies often attempt to reduce the threat of weapons of mass destruction through sanctions and coalition efforts; the irrefutable truth is that adversarial governments to the United States’ national interests continue to use these cost-effective means to increase their status on the world stage.

Missiles are not strictly used for posturing by these opposing nation states. “Ballistic and cruise missiles present a significant threat to US and Allied forces overseas, and to the United States homeland and territories” (Defense Intelligence Ballistic Missile Analysis Committee, 2020: 4). These ballistic and cruise missiles have been used effectively in the past several decades, specifically in the Russian kinetic conflicts with Chechnya, Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine (Defense Intelligence Ballistic Missile Analysis Committee, 2020: 4). The ability of the United States to learn from these conflicts and recognize that ballistic and cruise missiles are being used tactically and not solely as a symbol of international status is crucial to how seriously they focus on their air and missile defense infrastructure.

**2019 MISSILE DEFENSE REVIEW OVERVIEW**

The Missile Defense Review (MDR) compliments the BCMTR but focuses more on the United States’ actions to counteract the threats identified by the Defense Intelligence Ballistic Missile Analysis Committee. As the Biden Administration begins to formulate ways to defend against the threats identified in the BCMTR, understanding the current capabilities of the United States Forces from the MDR will help generate realistic options. The MDR seeks to arrest the technological and strategic advancement of the capabilities and deployment of the missile programs of the opponents of the United States in three areas.
These include the US’ adversaries “increasing the capabilities of their existing missile systems, adding new and unprecedented types of missile capabilities to their arsenals, and integrating offensive missiles into their coercive threats, military exercises, and war planning” (Shanahan, 2019: 3-4).

Due to the low cost of production for offensive missiles in foreign nations, the MDR reflects the US strategy that “operations supporting missile defense will degrade, disrupt, or destroy an adversary’s missiles before they are launched” (Shanahan, 2019: 16). Disabling the enemy’s ability to launch their missiles on a target is a critical task under the MDR in order to prevent the radar scope from becoming overly saturated with enemy tracks and diminishing the on-hand missile inventory (Shanahan, 2019: 44).

In 2019, the House Armed Services Strategic Forces Subcommittee pushed for the U.S. Army to, “bring options to Congress for a low-cost interceptor to be used in the Raytheon-made Patriot system. That is because the most updated variant is roughly $5 million a shot” (Judson, 2019: 1). Due to offensive ballistic missiles being cost-effective compared to the high cost of defensive interceptors, this tactic is efficient and economically supportable (Defense Intelligence Ballistic Missile Analysis Committee, 2020: 2). The information from this review, as well as the recommendations concerning how to counteract enemy tracks, should be used in developing the United States National Security Strategy as it pertains to missile defense.

MISSILE DEFENSE REVIEW NESTED IN NSS

The NSS published by the Trump administration provides guidance and priorities to government agencies to focus their efforts. The priorities and strategy prescribed in the NSS instructed the Department of Defense on their research and publication of the MDR.

Secretary Shanahan begins the introduction to the MDR by explicitly stating, “This 2019 Missile Defense Review (MDR) is consistent with the 2017 NSS” (Shanahan, 2019: 3). The Biden Administration needs to provide a clear vision and additional guidance to U.S. Air and Missile Defense leaders in their own NSS based on the content of this report. A particular example of the necessity for a clear missile defense strategy and the United States’ role is illustrated in the heightened tensions of the Pacific-Asian region.

The 2017 NSS addresses Pacific-Asian concerns and specifically promises to “cooperate on missile defense with Japan and South Korea to move toward an area defense capability” (Trump, 2017: 47). The Trump Administration also pledged, “we will maintain our strong ties with Taiwan in accordance with our “One China” policy, including our commitments under the Taiwan Relations Act to provide for Taiwan’s legitimate defense needs and deter coercion” (Trump, 2017: 47). Secretary Shanahan deliberately covers each of these broad stroke commitments in detail when discussing how the Department of Defense was coordinating their missile defense coverage with US allies and partners (Shanahan, 2019: 65-77).

The US’ pledge to defend Taiwan was reaffirmed by the Biden Administration in the INSSG, “we will support Taiwan, a leading democracy and a critical economic and security partner, in line with longstanding American commitments”, but fell short of the specific commitment made by the previous administration to provide for Taiwan’s defense needs (Biden, 2021: 21). The failure to detail the level of support the U.S. would provide in the INSSG directly influences the Defense Department’s ability to project the disposition of their assets and soldiers. The critical differences between the 2017 NSS and the 2020 INSSG include the 2017 NSS’s guidance to “provide for Taiwan’s legitimate defense”, “deter coercion” and “cooperate on missile defense” rather than the 2021 INSSG’s guidance to “support Taiwan”.

The NSS published by the Trump administration provides guidance and priorities to government agencies to focus their efforts. The priorities and strategy prescribed in the NSS instructed the Department of Defense on their research and publication of the MDR.
These differences in specificity become critical when other nations breach the guidance provided as China did in the fall of 2021. On 1 October 2021, the Chinese People’s Liberation Army “flew fighter jets, bombers, and other warplanes”, over Taiwanese airspace, making it the largest incursion by China to date (Buckley and Myers, 2021: 1). Buckey and Myers (2021: 15) have reported that “some advisers and former officers in China argue that the United States no longer has the will to send forces if a war were to break out over Taiwan”. China has always sought to develop and advance itself into self-reliance by the manufacturing of arms (Bitzinger & Char, 2018: 193).

The MDR also reflected that “China is also developing missile capabilities intended to deny the United States the capability and freedom of action to protect U.S. allies and partners in Asia” (Shanahan, 2019: 4). China has consistently indicated it would “retaliate swiftly and immediately to any indication the U.S. had deployed military forces to Taiwan” (Shinkman, 2021: 1). These threats provide a significant variable to providing military support to Taiwan and Asian-Pacific allies. Taiwan, being an island, would require support by either ship or air, both of which would be put at risk by approaching the island in the face of the missile capabilities being developed by China. Additionally, the threat of a response from the Chinese military against the United States’ homeland or U.S. interests would be severe. The situation in Taiwan provides the Biden Administration with one clear example that other nations are not slowing down for the administration to have the opportunity to catch up.

**Ballistic and Cruise Missile Threat Nested in NSS**

When the Trump administration published the 2017 NSS, the MDR was able to begin providing the necessary data and analysis on foreign ballistic and missile threats.

The Biden Administration has the benefit of this report being available prior to their official NSS development and should use the threat analysis provided in the BCMTR to address those threats in their strategy. The current INSSG does not address these threats in detail or appropriately provide a National response to them.

The NSS identified four major ballistic missile threats to the United States. The Iranian regime was identified as, “developing more capable ballistic missiles and has the potential to resume its work on nuclear weapons that could threaten the United States” (Trump, 2017: 26). North Korea was specifically noted for having “pursued nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles in defiance of every commitment it has made. Today, these missiles and weapons threaten the United States and our allies” (Trump, 2017: 26). Russia, firmly established as a nuclear power with a robust military arsenal of ballistic missiles, is still “developing advanced weapons and capabilities that could threaten our critical infrastructure” (Trump, 2017: 8). Finally, the most prominent rising threat in Asia - China - is “building the most capable and well-funded military in the world, after our own. Its nuclear arsenal is growing and diversifying” (Trump, 2017: 25). These four threats were exhaustively researched and reflected in the BCMTR which clearly proved the nesting of the report with the NSS. The BCMTR reflects their “key findings” through reports on North Korea, Iran, China, and Russia. Each includes a summary of their different ballistic missile capabilities as well as their latest tests of their developing missiles (Defense Intelligence Ballistic Missile Analysis Committee, 2020: 2-3).

**MDR and BCMTR Value Assessment**

The value of both of these reports cannot be overstated due to the aggressive advancement of these weapons systems and their impact on the United States influence internationally and national defense.
The diversity of this system being capable of engaging the short, medium, and intercontinental ballistic missiles kinetically striking it in flight, whether in or out of the earth's atmosphere is nothing short of world-leading. There are currently seven active THAAD batteries in the US Army. The analysis is currently being conducted concerning how many active THAAD batteries are necessary to support the strategy for a “layered missile defense system that will defend our homeland against missile attacks” (Trump, 2017: 4). The concern driving this analysis is that the seven batteries have provided proof of concept and employability for specific strategic points around the world, but to manufacture the equipment and train additional personnel to defend a homeland as vast as the United States would require an incredible amount of funding.

The second major missile defense asset the United States employs is owned by the US Navy. The Aegis Sea-based Missile Defense is a ship outfitted with an Aegis Weapon System (AWS). The AWS utilizes “the SM-3 and SM-6 guided missiles to provide protection at sea and ashore against regional ballistic missiles” (Shanahan, 2019: 48). The mobility of these ships provides the United States with a unique capability to transport air defense assets to different theaters as needed. Today, the United States has “38 operational multi-mission Aegis BMD-capable ships divided between the Pacific and Atlantic Fleets, with plans to increase that number to 60 by the end of FY 2023” (Shanahan, 2019: 49). The capability that the AWS provides was deemed successful enough to develop an “Aegis Ashore” system that utilizes the intercept missiles and technology of the ship on a land-based system. There is one Aegis Ashore site in Romania currently operational and one in Poland still under construction (Shanahan, 2019: 50).

The fourth ballistic missile defense system fielded by the US Army is the PATRIOT system. The mobile, land-based system defends against SRBMs, cruise missiles, air breathing threats (planes and helicopters), as well as unmanned aerial systems (UAS) (Shanahan, 2019: 50).
The Army only has eight battalions stationed in the United States (including one test battalion that does not deploy) which can field 33 Patriot batteries (Shanahan, 2019: 50). There are seven more battalions stationed forward in the Republic of Korea, Japan, and Europe which includes another 27 batteries. The Patriot Batteries are all going through modernization upgrades and have an arsenal that includes the Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) missile and the Missile Segment Enhancement (MSE) interceptors (Shanahan, 2019: 50).

The final part of the United States’ Air Defense assets is the human dimension: the soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen who are tied to these systems and create an additional consideration for the employment of these systems. On the 19th of November, 2020, CSM Grinston, Sergeant Major of the Army, held a symposium with non-commissioned officers from 1-7 ADA, 3-4 ADAR, and the 108th Air Defense Artillery Brigade Headquarters in order to better understand the increased mental health issues coming out of the Air Defense community (Nalley, 2020: 1). “Air Defenders and Air Defense organizations’ support personnel, who have seen what seems like an exponential rise in demand for their skill sets in forwarding environments” have become mentally worn out (Nalley, 2020: 1). Air defense soldiers have a higher deployment cycle than any other branch of the United States Army, including Special Forces. The average air defense soldier receives 1.18 days home for every day deployed before they are expected to be deployed again. Providing ideal coverage of the globe without taking the realism of the human factor into account is shortsighted and would require more funding for both personnel and equipment to be sustainable.

**CURRENT AIR AND MISSILE DEFENSE THREATS**

The United States faces many specific threats in the realm of ballistic and cruise missiles. One of the key differences in these munitions that is hard to distinguish without prior intelligence is the type of warhead affixed to the missile. There are two standard classifications for warheads on these missiles: conventional and nonconventional. Conventional warheads are used for specific purposes; an example of a conventional warhead would be a munition designed to cause a large crater in the middle of a runway resulting in planes being unable to take off or land. Nonconventional warheads include nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons (Defense Intelligence Ballistic Missile Analysis Committee, 2020: 6). The ballistic missiles these warheads are affixed to can be launched from “silos and other fixed facilities, on submarines, surface ships, road – and rail – mobile launchers, and on aircraft” (Defense Intelligence Ballistic Missile Analysis Committee, 2020: 8). As the Biden Administration begins considering how to counteract the growing threats the U.S. is facing, it is important to understand that any ballistic missile may have a conventional or nonconventional warhead affixed to it. In order to properly plan a defensive strategy, every missile should be assumed to be nonconventional, as this is the most deadly possibility and defended against as such.

The adversarial countries identified in the 2017 NSS that have been growing their ballistic missile arsenals as a method to increase their instruments of national power have continued to test and exert this power on the geopolitical stage. During the month of September 2021, North Korea tested a variety of weapons systems successfully. North Korea “test fired two cruise missiles, which flew figure-eight and oval patterns in North Korean airspace for 1,500 km before striking their targets” (Byung-joon & Seok-min, 2021: 1). North Korea also “test fired two short-range ballistic missiles from a train, which travelled 800 km before landing in the sea within Japan’s exclusive economic zone” (Wonju, 2021: 1). Later in the same month, North Korea also launched a “hypersonic missile” which clearly demonstrates their continued effort to increase their ballistic capabilities (Dahlgren, 2021: 1).
However, North Korea is not the only adversary continuing to test its latest ballistic innovations. “Russia’s defense ministry announced its first and second flight tests of a Zircon hypersonic missile from attack submarine Severodvinsk (K-560)” (Department of Information and Mass Communications of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, 2021: para 1.). The missiles were launched from the submarine’s surfaced and submerged positions successfully which now provides a new level of sophistication to the Russian missile capabilities.

North Korea is not a singularity in their hypersonic missile advancement. China and Russia have both successfully tested their hypersonic missile technology. As Copp notes, “A hypersonic missile that China launched into space this summer ‘did circle the globe’, a U.S. official confirmed to Defense One, and the Pentagon is still working through the implications of the surprise test” (Copp, 2021). When questioned about the Chinese missile launch the Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs Gen. Mark Milley said, “I don’t know if it’s quite a Sputnik moment, but I think it’s very close to that. It has all of our attention” (Copp, 2021). The pressure for the Biden Administration to provide an answer concerning these advanced missile tests was increased when Russia successfully launched their own hypersonic missile. Vladimir Putin described Russia’s hypersonic weapon’s stating, “they could hit almost any point in the world and evade a U.S. build missile shield” (Soldatkin, 2021: para. 5). These growing threats are substantial and it is the responsibility of the Biden Administration to publish a strategy that the Department of Defense and government agencies can enact.

CONCLUSION

The Trump Administration provided a clear and comprehensive NSS for the Department of Defense to enact. The results of the former President’s vision were clearly reflected in the MDR and BCMTR. These documents both articulated the vision of the NSS from which they received their guidance and should be used by the current administration to develop their own official NSS. The vision of different administrations may change but the analysis accomplished by these reports provides the data necessary to begin focusing the efforts of the Department of Defense against modern threats that are not subject to political partisanship. The Interim National Security Strategy that was published by the Biden Administration is insufficient in providing adequate guidance to the Department of Defense or U.S. government agencies on how to respond to the escalation of adversarial missile capability and development of the United States' defenses against them. The U.S.’ adversaries around the world are increasing their instruments of national power, specifically through the economically efficient growth of ballistic missile technology. The United States’ current defensive arsenal must be very deliberately deployed in support of the national strategy. Knowing that national strategy is only possible once it is developed and published by the current administration. The reality is that it is always going to be easier to build and utilize offensive ballistic missiles than it is to defend against them. However, the government and those who serve in the government have accepted the responsibility to defend the citizens of their nation. Defending the citizens of the United States against the growing missile capabilities is a mission that never ends, but always needs to be fought. The United States’ ability to strategically manage what is defensible and what is left vulnerable to enemy attacks is going to be a necessary dilemma that leaders must be willing to decide, but it all begins with the President’s vision and National Security Strategy.
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ABSTRACT

The unprecedented 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States gave rise to an academic debate on “old” versus “new” terrorism. On one hand, proponents of “new” terrorism argue that the rise of this type of terrorism actively replaced the elements of “old” terrorism. On the other hand, skeptics view “new” terrorism simply as an evolutionary continuation of “old” terrorism. To explore the debate further, this paper conducts a comparative analysis of Action Directe (AD), a French far-left “old” terrorist group from the 1970s and 1980s, and the Islamic State (IS), a “new” Jihadi terrorist organization that has been executing terrorist activity across France since the 2010s. Applying Martha Crenshaw’s (2008) framework, this paper compares the goals, means, and organizational structures of AD and IS, taking into account the shared French context. The conclusions from the comparative analysis underline that, while an immense transformation of terrorism is undeniable, the rise of “new” terrorism is a radical extension of “old” terrorism rather than its replacement.

KEYWORDS: terrorism, France, comparative approach, Islamic State, Action Directe

INTRODUCTION

Broadly, the nuances of modern terrorist activity encompass four distinct waves. A “wave” of terrorism is a time-bound cycle of terrorist activity characterized by a common ideology (Rappoport, 2003). A series of transformative political events or phenomena create a prolific zeitgeist for a “wave” to emerge.

Since the late 1800s, terrorist activity has been driven by four core ideologies: Anarchist, Anti-Colonial, New Left, and Religious “Waves,” respectively (ibid.). Arguably, religion, the fourth “wave” of modern terrorism, represents the birth of “new” terrorism (Simon and Benjamin, 2000: 59). The unprecedented terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001 (9/11) in the United States displayed novel elements of terrorism that emerged during the 1990s (Gofas, 2012: 18). The ongoing debate vis-à-vis the conceptualizations of “old” and “new” terrorism is convoluted, making the conceptual definitions of “old” and “new” terrorism fluid. This debate reflects two pertinent schools of thought. On one hand, proponents of “new” terrorism argue that the rise of this type of terrorism actively replaced the elements of “old” terrorism. On the other hand, skeptics view “new” terrorism simply as an evolutionary continuation of “old” terrorism (Crenshaw, 2008: 117-119).

To explore the debate further, this paper conducts a comparative analysis of Action Directe (AD), a French far-left “old” terrorist group from the 1970s and 1980s, and the Islamic State (IS), a “new” Jihadi terrorist organization that has been executing terrorist activity across France since the 2010s. Firstly, this analysis highlights the historical background and evolution of AD and IS in France, capturing the mutual French political context. Secondly, the essay outlines the characteristics of “old” and “new” terrorism, drawing on examples from AD and IS. Moreover, it examines the similarities and differences between AD and IS via the following variables: 1) goals, 2) means, and 3) organizational structure (Crenshaw, 2005: 122-133).
France's never-ceasing engagement with terrorism is unparalleled (Gregory, 2003: 124). After World War II (WWII), the 1970s and 1980s were the most violent decades of terrorist activity in Europe. France was no exception in this regard. Within only one year (1985-1986), France was the target of approximately 13 domestic terrorist attacks (Gaub, 2017: 1). The brutal political context of France in the 1960s and 1970s precipitated the outburst of domestic political violence, with workers’ strikes and student riots inundating French politics. The widespread unrest of the late 1960s created a fertile ground for local grievances. Germany and Italy faced similar challenges which resulted in the rise of powerful and violent domestic terrorist groups such as Red Army Faction (RAF) and Red Brigade (BR), respectively.

Although there were small-scale terrorist events in France, the government circumvented the rise of domestic terrorism out of student revolts during the 1960s. In the 1970s, the French government still perceived only “imported” terrorism from the Middle East as a threat (Karmon, 2005: 133).

By the 1980s, France also became and remained a target of Islamist terrorism in part due to its provocative stance against religion and laïcité. France’s perplexing relationship with terrorism has been further exacerbated in the 2000s. The pivotal 9/11 terrorist attacks on U.S. soil called upon France to join the U.S.-led “Global War on Terror” (Gregory, 2003: 124). In addition to France’s role in mitigating the international terrorism threat, France’s colonial history also set the stage for French involvement in contemporary Middle Eastern (ME) affairs. France has been a powerful actor in the past and ongoing events in the Middle East such as the Iraq War, the Arab Revolutions, and the Syrian civil war in the 2000s and 2010 (Bindner, 2018: 4).
The birth of the Islamic State (IS) emerged as a direct consequence of these disparaging conflicts wherein France was actively involved. The tensions between “religiosity and modernity,” accompanied by Islamic militancy, created favorable circumstances for the IS popularity (Oosterveld and Bloem, 2017: 5). Although the IS emerged in Iraq and Syria, it has not remained a regional terrorist group. In 2015, the IS expanded “into a network of branches, supporters, and affiliates” in at least eight other countries, including France (Wilson Center, 2019).

There are three main reasons why France was a prime target for international terrorism, namely the IS. The root of these reasons lies in France’s colonial past. Firstly, the IS condemns France’s unique culture and the constitutional principle of laïcité as “anti-Muslim” with the purpose of continuously humiliating the population of French Muslims, which account for approximately eight percent of the countries population (Daguzan, 2016: 120). Secondly, the IS draws on French military interventions in Mali, Iraq, and Syria as France’s waging a war against Islam. Thirdly, the IS perceives French society as “weak and divided” as a result of colonialism, making it a desirable target for ensuing fear and chaos. The IS capitalized on the vulnerabilities of French society to infiltrate itself into the French context. Moreover, the IS successfully recruited and exploited French citizens instead of sending Iraq- or Syria-based terrorists to French soil. The incomplete integration of French Muslims (predominantly of North African origin) into French society has contributed to the issue of homegrown Jihadists in France. The IS sympathizers went to Syria to train with the IS and returned to France espousing the IS ideology. The gap in intelligence-sharing within the Schengen Zone in Europe presented an opportunity for the IS to execute small-scale and large-scale terrorist attacks on French soil since 2015 (Hecker and Tenenbaum, 2017: 4). The IS-staged November 2015 Paris Attacks, in particular, have been the deadliest terrorist attack in French history (Brisard, 2015: 5).

Notably, these terrorist attacks were a coordinated Islamist effort that killed at least 130 and injured more than 350 people. The threat of the IS’s terrorist activity on-ground in France and the vulnerability of the French society persist to-date.

The terrorist operations of AD, an “old” terrorist group, and IS, a “new” terrorist group, emerged under different political circumstances and “waves” of terrorism. They attempted to derail the French status quo in different time frames and contexts. The comparison of AD and IS will be divided into three sections, highlighting the 1) goals, 2) means, and 3) organizational structures of both groups (Crenshaw, 2008: 122-133). Each section aims to set up a theoretical framework for the broad comparison of “old” and “new” terrorist groups, fixating on the terrorist experiences of AD and IS. While the two groups are vastly different, AD and IS also have a few points of convergence.

GOALS OF AD AND IS

This section answers the question of why AD and IS engaged in terrorist activity in France and what they sought to accomplish. More broadly, the waves of modern terrorism explain the distinction in motivations of AD and IS. Since the AD and the IS belong to two different waves of terrorism, “New Left” and “Religious” waves, respectively, their ideologies are dissimilar (Rapaport, 2003). Distinctly, the AD is a far-left terrorist group with a “revolutionary vocation” (Dartnell, 1990: 457), whereas the IS is a terrorist organization with a religious motivation. Notably, different perceptions of persisting threats and France as an actor are at the root of the distinction in AD and IS motives. To illustrate, both AD and IS, in entirely different time periods, condemned the ongoing French military interventions in the ME and Africa. On one side of the coin, the AD perceived the interventions and French foreign policy as neocolonial and imperialist. On the reverse side, the IS viewed similar events as the French war on Islam.
These perceptions point to a different source of motivation for these terrorist groups, although anti-Westernism seems the be the common denominator. The distinction in motivations of “old” and “new” terrorist groups resulted in their contrasting goals.

Generally, “old” terrorist groups have specific and attainable political goals and are willing to engage in negotiations to achieve their aims. “New” terrorist groups, in contrast, often have ambiguous strategic goals and do not address their grievances to the government because they are not tied to a territory (Crenshaw, 2008: 123). The AD had both domestic and international concerns, but its early operations (1978-1980) had a more localized focus. They were inspired by the Italian BR, German RAF, Third World liberation movements and student revolts in the late 1960s. AD’s early ideology was a mixture of anarchism and Maoism with nuances of Marxism; it denounced the capitalists and employers and criticized the colonial and imperialist French state with an emphasis on French African policy (Dartnell, 1990: 457). The radical ideology of the IS, in contrast, “set inalterable objectives: to enslave whole nations and intimidate the world” (Crenshaw, 2008: 123). Moreover, the only international issues that AD regarded as exiguous in its early phase were those causing the plight of African immigrants (Karmon, 2005: 135).

In the early 1980s, the AD underwent an ideological radicalization. The crisis of the early 1980s enabled the internationalization of American capitalism, which helped reorient AD’s ideology. In 1982, AD published two large ideological documents which showcased its transformation and redirection: “Pour un project communist?” and “Sur l’impérialisme américain” (Dartnell, 1990: 466). New goals were set. Generally, the text urged unity among revolutionary groups to support a social movement of overthrowing the bourgeoisie (ibid.).

The domestic goals, mainly addressed in the first ideological text, were to cause a communist revolution. However, the second document was rooted in anti-Americanism seeking to counter the U.S. as the main global imperialist power (Karmon, 2005: 137). As a result of this ideological change, AD became a variant of a Euro-terrorist group. After this point, AD based its attacks on a struggle against the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the “Americanization” of Europe (Dartnell, 1997: 33). AD’s reorientation towards destroying military structures required more violent means and high-profile targets (Tschantret, 2019: 935). Their political goals and calls to action were specific. It appears that AD took the path of revolutionary struggle looking to dismantle the status quo and orchestrate a new social class order.

The goals of IS, on the other side, are associated “with a revision of the status quo” and “the establishment of a new religious world order” (Crenshaw, 2008: 124). France has been the most active European Member State in Syria during the civil war, launching airstrikes against IS (Muro, 2015: 2). When the IS ideology and activity hit France, the IS’s goal was reprisal for airstrikes against its fighters and insults against Islam’s prophet (ibid.). Although their goals are ultimately different, both groups pursued a new world order. The IS’s aims are to create an Islamic state and take control of Muslims worldwide (Blannin, 2017), whereas the goals of AD were to dismantle capitalism and engender a revolution (Aubron, 1996). Seemingly, these goals do not converge, but their nature does. Although “new” terrorists, the IS included, typically pursue largely unattainable goals, the AD anarchist-communist ideology is also difficult to achieve because it would require the disappearance of capitalism (Crenshaw, 2008: 125). A converging point of AD and IS in this regard is their pursuit of unrealistic large-scale goals. Interestingly, the AD also held international objectives, such as a pro-Palestine, anti-Zionism, and anti-American imperialism, which are similar to the IS’ goals to destroy Israel and expel Western troops from the Middle East.
The AD also held a belief that “global armed action against ‘slave trader and imperialist countries’ was not only justified but was actually regarded as a revolutionary obligation” (Karmon, 2005: 151).

Notably, France is one of the main IS targets precisely because of its involvement in the ME. Both AD and IS approve of retaliation against France as a result of its policies. In conclusion, the motivations and goals of “new” terrorism have a foundation that is present in the motivations and goals of “old” terrorism, highlighting the importance of the French context in this analysis.

MEANS OF AD AND IS

The assumption of the conceptual comparison of “old” and “new” terrorism is that the means and methods of “old” and “new” terrorist groups are radically different. The “old” terrorist groups generally identify and attack specific targets, resorting less to terrorizing civilians. The “old” terrorist groups are in pursuit of a political agenda and want a seat at “the bargaining table.” In other words, they carefully tailor their attacks to deliver a message to the selected audience. Moreover, they act to get people to watch and hear the message; they do not want people dead. In turn, the attacks of “new” terrorist groups occur in more populated areas, resulting in substantial casualties. Simply put, the distinction between the means and ends of “new” terrorist groups is often unclear. Again, “new” terrorist groups often do not seek public support or negotiations to materialize their political agenda. Since the ideology of “new” terrorist groups has a religious base, the main audience to “impress” is the deity itself (Crenshaw, 2008: 128). “New” terrorist groups do not execute their lethal attacks to satisfy their political demands; they pursue attacks that lead to societal destruction and mass casualties (Gofas, 2012: 18). Members of “new” terrorist groups are willing to sacrifice even their own lives to cause mass casualties and “earn their spot” in paradise as defenders of Islam (Crenshaw, 2008: 128).

The common feature of the means among “old” and “new” terrorism is violence, but the degree of violence is drastically different. While there are exceptions to this framework among “old” and “new” terrorist groups, this premise majorly holds in the case of AD and IS.

For instance, the AD believed that violence was a direct consequence of the struggle for power between the bourgeois and proletarians (Dartnell, 1990: 463). The AD, in its first 1978-1980 ideological stage, however, executed attacks on symbolic material targets, not people. Given that the AD's primary domestic concerns were the unemployment rate, inflation, and oppression, its main targets in 1979 were institutions related to labor such as the “Association of French Industrialists, the Ministry of Labor, and the Department of Social Security,” to name a few. In March 1980, the AD planted a bomb near the French Security Service offices in Paris along with a message from the immigrant neighborhood Barbès that the threat to France's national security stems from its neo-colonial foreign policy. Three days after the attack on security services, the AD attacked the French Ministry of Cooperation for its activity in Chad and the Central African Republic. After a radical change in its strategy in 1982, the AD also started to carry out anti-Zionist operations. During that same year, AD executed eight attacks against Israeli or Jewish targets in Paris during the culmination of the Lebanese War (Karmon, 2005: 140). The further radicalization of the AD resulted in more violent attacks against not only property, but also political officials and military structures (Tschantret, 2019: 935). As presented, the AD's targeted attacks and symbolic messages were the main means by which the AD wanted to instigate a communist revolution.

Unlike the operations of the AD, the attacks of the IS were less strategic and more tactical. The 2015 Charlie Hebdo attack, namely a terrorist attack aimed at the offices of the French satirical newspaper, could also be regarded as targeting a symbolic property.
However, this attack has also killed or hurt civilians. Here we see a drastic increase in violence and IS’s lack of concern for the consequences. The November 2015 Paris attacks are an example of “new” terrorism. The IS conducted three simultaneous attacks on the French Stadium, the Bataclan concert hall, and multiple Parisian restaurants via suicide bombing and automatic weapons, killing 130 and wounding hundreds of people. Organized and coordinated by European-born jihadists with origins in North Africa, this attack makes it uncertain whether lethality and mass destruction were the IS’s means or ends (Brisard, 2015: 5). Here, the difference between the means of achieving goals is crucial: the AD was sending targeted messages to their audience and the IS has been using lethality as the means and ends of its terrorist activity. The methods of AD and IS are also different, likely due to the available technology and weaponry. The AD, relevantly, considered the spread of technology as “evil” and sought to destroy computers at corporations (Dartnell, 1995: 459). On the other hand, IS has been utilizing social media and technological advancements to showcase its brutality, disseminate propaganda, and attract foreign fighters to join the “cause” (Robillard, n.d.). To deliver the message behind the attack, both organizations publicly claimed their attacks. For instance, AD left notes and published texts to justify its actions to the government and society. Similarly, IS took responsibility for their attacks on French soil - the 2015 Charlie Hebdo attack and the November 2015 Paris attacks - among a few others. While they both want to be noticed and send messages to the audience, the AD had specific asks from the government and society, whereas the IS simply pursued revenge without any justifications.

Hence, the structures of AD and IS vary. Generally, “old” terrorist groups rely on a centralized model with a strict hierarchical structure restricted by geographical location (Gofas, 2012: 22). They operate under a “well-defined command and control apparatus” (Hoffman, 1997: 45) and comprise collections of individuals who had been trained in terrorist tactics. “New” terrorist groups, in contrast, adopt a loose structure of transnationally connected cells and support networks, subscribing to the decentralized model. This model allows for more independence of the organizational subunits. In the absence of the firm top-down approach, the diffusion of terrorist activity via the “new” model makes “new” terrorism inspirational rather than directed on the strategic level. Indeed, the breadth of “new” terrorist networks is not as threatening to security as the appeal of the strong ideology which can spark cross-border activity (Crenshaw, 2008: 132). On tactical and operational levels, the loose organizational units still have a well-defined chain of command, implying that direction is not entirely absent from “new” terrorism.

Both AD and IS organizational orders fit some of the aspects of the “old” and “new” structure, respectively, but not all. The initial AD apparatus of command and ideology were weak. Moreover, the AD started out as a loosely organized compilation of small groups of far-left ideology sympathizers who were “young, unemployed, and educated” (Dartnell, 1990: 458), suggesting a fluid hierarchical structure. The AD capitalized on the defunct revolutionary organizations and their human capital. Therefore, it recruited young people from “Proletarian Left – New Popular Resistance (GN-NRP), the Internationalist Revolutionary Action Groups (GARI), the Armed Cells for Popular Autonomy (NAPAP), and the International Brigades (BI)” (Karmon, 2005: 134). Besides recruiting like-minded revolutionaries, the AD also preyed on the immigrant community. Most of the AD leaders lived in Parisian slums surrounded by Turkish and Algerian immigrants who had grievances against the government institutions.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES OF AD AND IS

Terrorist groups, whether “old” or “new,” adopt diverse organizational styles. The general frames of operation of “old” and “new” terrorist groups imply a difference in organization structures.
Some of them were even AD members (Karmon, 2005: 136). Similarly, the enabling factor of Islamic terrorism in France in the 1990s were dual nationals (mainly from North Africa) and young people from immigrant families (Hecker and Tenenbaum 2017: 4-6). French policies have often “cornered” French Muslims, negatively impacting the integration of Muslim immigrants into the French society. It has been rather easy for the IS members to highlight France as the prime target due to its domestic and foreign policies ostensibly “aimed” at Islam. Thus, the IS ideology may have set the foundation for the IS presence and organizational structure in France. Although the IS Caliphate follows a hierarchical structure, its transnational network is, indeed, more unstructured. In fact, IS has been widespread precisely because of the “attractive” ideology and loose, extensive network of sympathizers. The links between the ME-based IS leaders and the coordinated terrorist attacks in France in the 2010s are unclear (Glenn, 2015), implying that the IS has functioned as an independent subunit of the network with a common ideology.

While the IS has the “spider web” structure, the AD operations, on the other hand, were largely focused on France. They were channeled from two cities within France - Paris and Lyon. Once AD re-asserted its power after the release of its leaders from prison, clear divisions between the Paris and Lyon wing became apparent, implying not only a fragmented ideology, but also a weaker hierarchy (Dartnell, 1990: 458). The Paris AD wing, led by Rouillan and Méningon, focused on international issues, whereas the Lyon AD leadership, controlled by Olivier, embraced a domestic orientation (ibid.). In addition, the AD members, given their prior experience in revolutionary organizations, were also trained in terrorism techniques and tactics. In contrast to AD which recruited already trained terrorists, IS provided training for the IS sympathizers (Robillard, n.d.).

Tens of thousands of foreign volunteers worldwide have travelled to the heart of the IS to get trained as fighters of the IS and defenders of Islam, especially after the start of the Syrian civil war (Bindner, 2018: 2). French citizens make up a large proportion of foreign fighters (Brisard, 2015: 6). After receiving a series of training and brainwashing, foreign fighters return to their home countries and enable the spread of the ideology and execute terrorist activity (Bindner, 2018: 4). Access to technology has been key in the IS recruitment process, which was also the case in France.

CONCLUSION

In answering the research objective, this analysis faced certain limitations. The most evident limitation of this paper is the lack of profound analysis of the “old” vs. “new” terrorism debate. Another limitation of the paper is the scope which has not allowed for an elaborate analysis of both AD and IS before comparing them. This has led to certain generalizations in the analysis of goals, means, and organizational structures of AD and IS. There are also significant questions that this paper further raises for researchers. How will France more effectively monitor homegrown Jihadists who go to the ME as foreign fighters and return to France? How will the IS activity continue to evolve in France?

As presented above, the comparison of AD and IS was conducted via Crenshaw’s (2008) “old” vs. “new” terrorism framework of three characteristics: 1) goals, 2) means and 3) organizational structure. Firstly, the goals of AD were to cause a communist revolution and dismantle imperialism while IS aims have been to retaliate for French policies and form the Islamic State. Convergingly, the extreme goals of both organizations are likely unattainable and have called for a new world order. Secondly, the means of AD and IS were different; AD targeted symbolic institutions while avoiding casualties, whereas the IS strived to kill lots of people and instill terror.
However, the common feature of the attacks was violence and sending a message to the audience. Thirdly, AD, more or less, had a traditional hierarchical structure, whereas the main structural component of the IS has been the ideology itself. Interestingly, both groups maximized the lack of integration of French Muslims into the society.

Given Crenshaw’s framework, the conclusion is that the goals, means, and organizational structures of “old” AD and “new” IS are, indeed, radically different, implying that “new” terrorism may be separate from “old” terrorism. However, relying solely on this conclusion would be superficial. Crenshaw’s comparison of dozens of terrorist groups produced a solid set of comparison characteristics, yet failed to provide contextual analysis of terrorist groups. It was precisely the common French context that highlighted the systemic challenges that have been creating a fertile ground for “old” and “new” terrorism in France in the past 50 years. Despite the evident difference in goals, means, and organizational structures of AD and IS, there were still numerous similarities. This overlap points out that the roots of “new” terrorism reside within the scope of “old” terrorism, especially in instances where terrorist groups operated in different time periods, but in the same context. This paper, therefore, concludes that “new” terrorism is an extension of “old” terrorism rather than an entirely new phenomenon.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


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