MODUS VIVENDI

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Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

On behalf of the entire editorial board, I am pleased to present to you the 29th edition of Rhodes College's publication of *Modus Vivendi*. Originating from Latin, the phrase *Modus Vivendi* roughly translates in English to "way of life." In light of this journals purpose, this term also refers to the act of opposing parties coming together to peacefully discuss their differences. In our view, that is what this journal intends to do, as it is the product of various actors and ideas converging in order to deepen and expand our knowledge of the world we live in. We are very proud to be one of the few undergraduate journals in the country. *Modus Vivendi* allows our students in the International Studies department to showcase the fruits of their labor and contribute to the wider discourse on important issues in the field of International Relations and Comparative Politics.

I would like to formally thank all those who made the publication of this edition possible. First, I would like to thank this year's advisor, Professor Shadrack Nasong'o, and our Departmental Assistant, Maya Robertson, for providing their support and expertise. Second, I would like to thank the International Studies Department and Sigma Iota Rho, for allowing us to continue this tradition. Lastly, I would like to thank my fellow students at Rhodes College for all of their time and effort they have dedicated as authors, editors, photographers, and readers.

It is our hope that this publication and the research contained within it will help challenge, educate, and inspire all those who have contributed to and consumed this year's edition of *Modus Vivendi*. We thank you for your support of Rhodes College's International Studies Department, please enjoy.

Sincerely,

Julia Seeds

Editor-in-Chief, 2023

Cairo, Egypt
Photo by Salma Abdulrahman '23

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Photo by Katie-Ann Miller '23

I. Technology Prefers Tyrants: How China Built its Mass Surveillance State and Created a Block of Technoauthoritarian Allies

Isabel Lopez '23

The belief that technological advancements—especially relating to the internet—would serve as a primary weapon in the fight against authoritarianism has been a misconception in the field of International Relations. While not disregarding that the rise of new technologies has led to more connected and informed citizenries, and in some cases has even been instrumental for mass protests to succeed, these technologies present authoritarian regimes with more avenues to expand the state's coercive capacities: the realm of surveillance.

This paper seeks to examine how China uses modern technologies to further cement authoritarianism. We contend that for authoritarian regimes, expanding surveillance capacities serves to solve the coercion dilemma, centralize the role of ideology, and increase their legitimacy through the export of surveillance technologies. We will examine the theories behind the expansion of mass surveillance along with evidence of how the Communist Party—particularly under the leadership of Xi Jinping—has used surveillance to stop collective action and establish ideological rigidity. Last, we will evaluate the dangers of the panopticon by analyzing the surveillance of Uyghurs in the Xinjiang region, concluding that a significant reason China is allowed to get away with such human rights violations is because it has the support of a bloc of authoritarian regimes who benefit from Chinese surveillance technologies.

Designing Coercive Institutions for Maximum Efficiency

Autocrats in power must decide whether to shield their rule from the risk of a coup or from the risk of a popular uprising: the "coercion dilemma" of authoritarian regimes. The dilemma lies

in that rulers cannot insulate from both threats since they require contradictory paths of action. Coup-proofing necessitates "fragmented and exclusive institutions" to prevent elites from harnessing strength and power, whereas guarding from mass uprisings requires "institutions that are unitary and inclusive" to win the hearts and minds of citizens (Greitens, 30). This theory on the origins of coercive institutions holds that autocrats will configure their coercive apparatus to address the dominant perceived threat.

The information asymmetry inherent to authoritarian regimes, however, creates a gap between the autocrat's perceived dominant threat and the actual dominant threat (Greitens). In hindsight, failure to identify whether the most pressing threats are from above or from below has been fatal for authoritarian regimes throughout history. Expanding a state's surveillance capabilities through the development of new technologies, therefore, is a natural course of action to correct the problem of information distortion. An example is

how the Internet engendered digital authoritarianism— "the use of digital information technology by authoritarian regimes to surveil, repress, and manipulate" populations (Polyakova and Meserole, 2019). In contrast to traditional practices in authoritarian countries, having mass surveillance lowers the necessity to resort to coercion to exert power. Modern technologies help to establish a more subtle, automatic and invisible type of state control.

In the case of China, mass surveillance minimizes the threat of collective action, which the regime perceives as a dominant threat (King et al., 2013). The government knowing all aspects of one's life is an incentive to self-sensor and conform. Considering the country's social credit system, the cost of rebelling is too high. Vigilance and data collection are so extensive that surveillance also curtails elite-driven threats. The vertical and horizontal integration of security mechanisms are so efficient that not even people within the state apparatus are exempt from

surveillance.

Ideology and the Culture of Fear

Authoritarian survival depends, in part, on how much the citizenry buys into the regime's ideological project (Wang, 2021). Autocrats can secure the public's support one of two ways: through repression, making people comply out of a sense of fear, or through normalizing authoritarian rule by ideological means. The former, repressive power, is actually a sign of authoritarian decay; forcing people to follow rules means they are actually disobeying them and are therefore a challenge to the regime. Normalizing power, on the other hand, is true power since the citizenry behaves the way the regime expects of them out of their own volition (Foucault, 1978).

To normalize authoritarian rule, a regime must achieve cultural hegemony by controlling the intellectuals, the education, and the factors that drive people to political action—the three realms of ideology. Controlling the cultural narrative allows autocrats to quash opposition at its root. Implementing surveillance technologies speeds up this otherwise much lengthier process. Mass surveillance, paired with indoctrination efforts at other levels of society, helps ensure people are adhering to the regime's expectations. Whether the surveillance is as rudimentary as a peer-to-peer reporting system, or as sophisticated as an interconnected national network of CCTV cameras, the threat of being punished for not behaving correctly pushes people to accept the regime's ideology and adopt the behaviors that come along with it.

Though some may argue that acting in response to a culture of fear is different from normalized power, the reality is that if surveillance is so widespread people will not let their guard down because anything—from a friend to their internet search history—can give their true beliefs away. With the pass of time, and especially so for younger generations who grew up indoctrinated, allegiance to the regime will become natural. They will be

operating in a new episteme where ideological adherence is unquestioned.

The Struggle for Legitimacy

Authoritarian regimes face internal and external challenges to their rule. With mass surveillance, these regimes can identify what (or who) the internal challenges are neutralize them before they result in revolutions or coups against the regime. While autocrats can surveil other countries' leaders and other specific operations, this intelligence is unlikely to prevent the real external threats that pose a challenge to regime stability: economic sanctions and trade wars, proxy wars, alienation in the international stage. For this reason, preserving legitimacy—and by extent, power—is an important goal of authoritarian regimes (Murakami, 2017).

But as authoritarian regimes improve their surveillance technologies—and thus become more authoritarian—the demand for these technologies increases in countries trying to fight extremism, lower crime rates, or even implement policies for environmental sustainability (Greitens, 2020). In this market for surveillance technologies, autocrats can thrive as suppliers. And if the liberal paradigm holds, then countries that trade with each other are less likely to enter into conflict or have frosty relations.

Governments across the globe—democratic and authoritarian alike—are trying to increase their capabilities for mass surveillance. By rising to meet this demand, authoritarian regimes are not only generating a source of income: they are creating networks of alliances to avoid being a pariah in the international stage.

Making of a Surveillance Society

The goal of surveillance states is to know as much about citizens as possible to identify who may be a threat—to public safety or the regime in general—and deal with them accordingly (Wood, 2017). To this end, Beijing has invested billions of dollars into expanding its mass surveillance program to reach every public space in China. Skynet, a joint program by the

Ministry of Public Security and the Ministry of Industry and Information technology aimed at installing a nation-wide network of CCTV feeds, is one of the most recognized initiatives. Skynet launched in 2005 and ten years later, officials boasted that the city of Beijing was "100% covered," while also celebrating there were over 20 million cameras in use nationwide (Polyakova and Meserole, 2019). This initiative was so successful, in fact, that government officials were confident they could cover all of China's public spaces and leading industries by 2020 (Polyakova and Meserole, 2019).

Skynet's efficacy also rests on the fact that artificial intelligence and algorithms evaluate the CCTV feeds instead of humans. Paired with facial recognition technology, Chinese authorities can identify and locate persons of interest in a matter of minutes. When the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong died down, students who were incriminated could not leave their houses because they knew that it would take seconds for the police

to find them and arrest them (Davies, 2021).

Furthermore, even non-militant protesters received calls—and in some cases, visits—from the police the day before protests took place. Since their electronic data belongs to the Chinese authorities thanks to agreements with cellphone and data providers, security agencies, with the help of algorithms, can predict a person's actions from just a couple of clicks; in fact, these institutions must prove they meet minimum surveillance requirements to be granted an operating license (Tai, 2010). Online surveillance is not exclusively carried out by algorithms, however. The Communist Party hires content creators, dubbed the 50 Cent Army for the amount they reportedly make per post, to monitor websites, post content friendly to the regime, and mark people who are talking about sensitive topics such as government leaders, the Tiananmen Square Massacre, Xinjiang internment camps, and Tibetan independence (Feldstein 2019). The mix of censorship and

surveillance in China's internet disincentivizes collective action because the self and state-imposed censorship complicates organizing and because Chinese authorities steer online discourse away from controversy. Skynet has evolved into the Sharp Eyes initiative—from the saying *the people have sharp eyes,* evocative of Maoist surveillance practices—which aims to link together smartphones, smart TVs, and surveillance cameras on phone apps individuals can use to monitor feeds and report suspicious activity (Polyakova and Meserole, 2019). While this proposition would certainly make it easier to report crimes and ensure safety, it also gets into the reason surveillance is a preferred tool of coercion by authoritarian regimes: "They're trying to make people self-censor themselves much more than they used to do ... you don't even need the policeman at the corner anymore because you're becoming your own policeman" (Davies, 2021). Through this initiative, the government aims to enforce the Beijing consensus of accepting economic freedom in

exchange for political obedience—because surveillance efforts in China have been as much about ensuring security and stability as they have been about preserving the ideology of the Communist Party (Wang,2021).

One Nation Under a National Social Credit System

Mass surveillance in China increased following Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms between 1978 and 1989. His policies to modernize the agriculture, defense, industry, and science sectors led to a period of prosperity (tenfold increase in GDP), peace, and stability (Yang, 2014). But by embracing capitalist principles, seen through his elimination of communes and leasing land to individual farmers, Deng Xiaoping's liberalizing reforms had the unintended effect of limiting the scope of the Communist Party, thus undermining the Party's ideological stronghold. Economic restrictions softened while surveillance and coercive measures hardened as China entered a period of struggle between privatization

(and by extent, the liberal worldview) and the state's ability to control the population (Yang, 2014). This struggle peaked during his crackdown on pro-democracy protesters across the country, most vividly remembered by the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989.

The culture of fear of previous surveillance mechanisms was no longer enough. For the Communist Party's ideology—and by extent, the stability of the nation—to prevail, there needed to be incentives inherent to the apparatus. The national social credit system implemented by Xi Jinping secures both angles. Though there is limited academic evidence on the extent of the surveillance from the national social credit system, several journalistic pieces describe the program in detail.

In 2014, the State Council announced a surveillance system which aggregates bank data, hospital records, geolocation, online activity, and other records into a score which indicates an individual's trustworthiness. The government is the only entity with unlimited access to the collected data, which allows them to "analyze and influence the behavior of a country's citizens, companies, and other institutions" (Andersen, 2019). This social credit system only allows full participation in a country's economy and society for those who have a good credit scoring and thus respect the rules and norms of the authoritarian regime. Behavior deviating from what the regime expects results in a poor credit score, which leads to economic or social disadvantages like loan conditions or lower job opportunities. Non-compliance can lead to the exclusion from any economic activities on the respective market activities, to ban on public spaces, to suspensions on travel (Feldstein, 2019).

While some may see the national social credit system as a way of upholding better standards of citizenry, Xi Jinping's creation is enforcing an unprecedented level of ideological rigidity since the days of Mao Tse-tung. Citizens are awarded points for using an app called Xi Jinping's Thoughts and completing daily passages (Davies,

2021). Many of the tasks that would increase a person's social credit score, like for example, donating sperm, have an ideological component. To donate sperm, work in the public sector, and in some cases obtain a loan, a person must first pass an ideological test (Davies, 2021).

The goal of China's social credit system, rather than backing the opposition into a corner and forcing them to conform to the regime, is to keep normal Chinese citizens from turning against the regime. Most people support—or at the very least, accept—the rule of the Communist Party. The regime has conflated being a good citizen with being ideologically obedient, a goal people strive to achieve to enjoy the benefits of having a high social credit score, like free vacations, the ability to take out loans without making deposits, bigger credit limits, and access to "elite" neighborhoods (Andersen, 2019). With this system of mass surveillance, Xi Jinping made ideology a central part of the regime once again.

Exporting Surveillance and

Authoritarianism

It is the Communist Party's goal that by 2030, AI will match every person who enters a public space to an ocean of personal data. Algorithms will be able to string together data points from a broad range of sources—travel records, friends and associates, reading habits, purchases—to predict political resistance before it happens (Greitens, 2020). The technologies Chinese companies have developed, thanks to government funding, are being sought after by regimes across the world.

China is the world's leading seller of AI-powered surveillance (Greitens, 2020). At least 18 countries currently use Chinese surveillance and monitoring systems, and at least 36 have help Chinese-led trainings on security and information management (Polyakova and Meserole, 2019). Companies like Huawei, HikVision, ZTE, and Yitu are selling high-quality products at cheap prices to developing countries across the world, putting China in a position to control those networks and their data. In South Asia, Malaysia and Singapore

have integrated Chinese facial recognition technology into their armed services (Wang, 2021). Further west, in Serbia, Huawei is helping set up a "safe-city system," complete with facial-recognition cameras and joint patrols conducted by Serbian and Chinese police aimed at helping Chinese tourists to feel safe (Andersen 2019). China's techno-authoritarian influence even reaches Latin America. In Venezuela, the Maduro contracted ZTE to implement an ID card, payment system, and nationwide surveillance database akin to China's social credit system (Polyakava and Meserole, 2019). China is currently helping Ecuador set up a national system of CCTV feeds for surveillance (Greitens, 2020). In Africa and the Middle East, countries like Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Angola have contracted Chinese companies for joint infrastructure and surveillance projects.

By exporting surveillance technologies, China has fostered a growing authoritarian bloc of countries in the world. These transactions are not only important in terms of securing new sources of revenue and data, but also for "generating greater strategic leverage vis-à-vis the West" (Greitings, 2020). China is leveraging information technology to gain strategic geopolitical influence and expand its foreign policy.

The Panopticon: Surveillance of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang

The Communist Party has long viewed Uyghurs as a threat. As an ethnically different, Muslim minority, Uyghur's religious beliefs pose a direct challenge to the regime since it is seen as "an alternative source of ultimate authority" (Hammond, 2019). If the Uyghurs maintain their cultural and ethnic identity, as well as their religious practices, the Chinese government believes they can potentially become a political threat.

In the eyes of the regime, this was not an unfounded fear. In 2009, after years of discrimination and lands confiscation, Uyghurs organized mass protests and rioting broke out in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang

(Andersen, 2019). The violence left 150 dead, the worst death toll since the Tiananmen Square massacre (Polyakova and Meserole, 2019). In 2014, militants from Xinjiang carried out five suicide bombings which killed 30 civilians. Therefore, in the name of cracking down on extremism, separatism, and terrorism, Xi Jinping directed Xinjiang's government to destroy mosques and trash Uyghur neighborhoods. More than one million Uyghurs were sent to concentration camps, or as the government calls them, reeducation camps, where they are undergoing indoctrination, forced sterilization, and forced conversions, amongst other types of tortures (Hammond, 2019). The mission of these camps is to "transform the Uyghur soul, mind and heart to be loyal to Xi Jinping and to Communist Party" (Hasan, 2019).

Those who did not go to the concentration camps became the guinea pigs for the most intense surveillance program conducted in history. Uyghurs were forced to download "nanny apps" which tracks their online activity, scans their messages and files for Arabic scripts, purchases, among other things (Hasan, 2019). Their every move is tracked: Uyghurs can barely travel a few blocks without running into one of the thousands of security checkpoints in Xinjiang. There, police check these nanny apps and go through phone call and chat logs to monitor the Uyghurs' activity, since they must take note of any changes (Hasan, 2019). A young Uyghur man who escaped a concentration camp and now lives in Germany said he had been taken away because he was in a group chat with a person who had gone to a mosque (Andersen, 2019). All it takes is one suspicious online interaction to warrant detention. And when a Uyghur reaches the edge of their neighborhood, an automated system takes note and tracks their movement through smaller checkpoints and CCTC cameras (Andersen, 2019). And since 2017, the Chinese government deployed small bird-like surveillance drone to cover the areas CCTV feeds did not track (Polyakova and Meserole, 2019).

The government calls these security stops "health checks" so they can extract data from Uyghurs' bodies (Hasan, 2019). From body measurements to blood samples and DNA swabs to voice recordings, the authoritarian regime stripped them of their bodily autonomy. Oftentimes women will be forced to take pregnancy tests and even undergo abortions (Andersen, 2019).

But not all surveillance in Xinjiang is digital. The Chinese government implemented a "big brothers and sisters" initiative which saw thousands of Han Chinese move into homes in Xinjiang to monitor Uyghurs' forced assimilation to mainstream Chinese culture (Andersen, 2019). They eat meals with the family, and "some big brothers sleep in the same bed as the wives of detained Uyghur men" (Andersen, 2019).

The "widespread and systematic" repression against the Uyghurs, a campaign of persecution, imprisonment, torture, enslavement, and forced sterilization, can be prosecuted as crimes against humanity by international law, yet the odds of this happening are very low since the economic interests of Western corporations are also at stake (Waller and Salazar, 2021). As of 2019, there are over 80 global brands and retailers across multiple industries that employ forced Uyghur labor (Lehr and Bechrakis, 2019). Between 2017 and 2019, more than 80,000 Uyghurs were transferred out of Xinjiang—some straight from detention camps—in government-organized work assignments to factories across China like the Haoyuanpeng Clothing Manufacturing Co. Ltd, a supplier for sportswear multinationals Adidas and Fila, the Qingdao Taekwang Shoes Co. Ltd, a manufacturer for Nike, and O-Film Technology Co. Ltd, a factory that makes components for Apple (Xiuzhong et al., 2020). The conditions in the factories mirror the ones in detention camps. The factory is equipped with watchtowers, barbed-wire fences and police guard boxes. Outside work hours, the Uyghur workers attend a school where they study Mandarin, sing the Chinese national anthem and receive "vocational

training" and "patriotic education" (Xiuzhong et al., 2020).

Constant surveillance follows the Uyghurs wherever they go in China. The Chinese authorities and factory bosses manage Uyghur workers by tracking them both physically, through work inspections and dormitory checks, and electronically by a central database developed by Xinjiang's Human Resources and Social Affairs Department that lists the medical, ideological and employment details of each laborer and extracts information from WeChat groups (Xiuzhong et al., 2020). If a Qur'an is found in one of their rooms, for example, the owner is sent back to the detention camps for 3-5 years (Xiuzhong et al., 2020).

Many Uyghurs have tried and failed to escape these circumstances since Chinese authorities have confiscated many of their passports. Others choose to stay in the country for fear that the police will retribute against their relatives and friends (Hasan, 2019). And those that manage to leave and start new lives must do so in faraway lands,

since Muslim-majority countries have arrested and deported Uyghurs back to Xinjiang to honor their relationship with China.

After the US led a bloc of 22 Western Countries in denouncing the concentration camps in Xinjiang, 37 other countries—including a significant number of Muslim-majority ones like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Algeria, and Pakistan—published a letter in defense of China, praising the regime's counter-terrorism and de-radicalization measures (Hammond, 2019). These Muslim-majority states cannot simultaneously acquire cheap surveillance technology from China and criticize its treatment of Uyghur Muslims; given that these countries' regimes also fall within the umbrella of authoritarianism, it comes as no surprise they chose to adopt China's authoritarian toolkit and expand their power at home.

Conclusion

Through the development of surveillance technologies, China has

managed to strengthen its authoritarian regime by using information to solve the coercion dilemma, centralizing the role of ideology, and gaining legitimacy by selling surveillance technology to a number of other authoritarian regimes. It is still too early to determine whether China's national social credit system will work on a nationwide scale; if it does, then this, too, is another system of authoritarian control China can export to its allies. One of the most concerning consequences of the expansion of techno-authoritarianism is that it silences condemnation of human rights violations since there is positive feedback loop between abusing surveillance and states refusing to denounce this since they, too, wish to abuse surveillance in their own borders.

Though the focus of this paper was the Chinese surveillance apparatus and its exportation of surveillance technologies to developing countries with poor human rights records, it is important to highlight that mass surveillance is a worldwide phenomenon that does not exempt Western democracies. In the United States, the Patriot Act expanded the government's ability to look at records on an individual's activity being held by a third parties as well as to search private property without the notice to the owner (Kerr, 2002). Whistleblowers like Edward Snowden have shed light on mass surveillance programs in the US, like PRISM, a program run by the National Security Association that collects interned data, taps phone calls of both US and foreign nationals (Sottek and Kopfstein, 2013). Snowden also revealed how the United Kingdom's Government Communications Headquarters was secretly intercepting millions of people's private communications in a program called TEMPORA, which was ruled unconstitutional by the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights in 2021 (Logan, 2021).

The allure of power (over people and information) that surveillance technologies offer is a cause of concern for democratic backsliding that warrants further research on how different

technologies are used for repression, and what—if anything—people can do to avoid it. In the meantime, it is important for human rights watchdogs and defenders to not just monitor the normalization of mass surveillance regimes, but also to reconceptualize privacy rights as defined in the 1992 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to include data rights.

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Dublin, Ireland
Photo by Sophia Adam '23

"Don't Say Gay:" LGBTQ+ Rights at Intersections of Political Discourse, Party Campaigns, and Public Policies in Poland

Vee Vyas '23

Introduction

The electoral victory of the right-wing conservative party, PiS (Law and Justice Party), in the 2015 elections in Poland, is attributed to its ability to appeal to the ideals of Polish national identity, state sovereignty, patriotism, and morality. However, PiS also achieved political success by capitalizing on an "opportunistic synergy" with the Polish Catholic Church (Graff and Korolczuk 2022). Poland's accession to the EU provided PiS an opening to position itself as a sponsor for "Polish Catholic norms" and enhance its political power. Integration into the EU exposed Polish society to progressive reforms such as gender mainstreaming and LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) rights. Nevertheless, this was perceived as a threat to Catholic doctrines, the sovereignty of state legislation, and Polish identity. PiS and the Catholic Church, thus, consolidated power by rejecting European individualism and secularization and by preserving the Polish nation-state from the morally depraved and unnatural Western "LGBT ideology." To meet their political agendas, PiS and the Catholic Church engaged in the "politicization of LGBT-phobia." In 2020, President Duda stated that "they [LGBTs] try to convince us that they are people, but this is just an ideology." Furthermore, the Church framed LGBT ideology as a "death of Polish families and civilization" and an "organized gang rape on the child's soul" (Graff and Korolczuk 2022). This state-endorsed dehumanization of LGBT groups, and the erasure of their Polish identity through an anti-LGBT discourse, concurrently, informed the erosion of Polish institutions and cultural pluralism and influenced Poland's

democratic backsliding. Therefore, this paper will answer the following question: *What factors drive anti-LGBTQ+ discourse in political campaigns and policymaking by the PiS and the Catholic Church in Poland?* I will argue that anti-LGBT discourse is shaped by the need of the PiS and the Catholic Church to advance their political power by constructing a homogenous Polish national identity and establishing a sovereign Polish state founded on Catholic values and Euroscepticism.

Discussion of Theories/Hypotheses

Stepan (2000) introduces the concept of "boundaries of freedom" to argue that democratization does not entail the "hostile" and "intrinsic" separation of the Church from the State. Primarily, he contends that, although democratic institutions and religious groups function as separate entities, they mutually reinforce democratic principles by engaging in the "rules of the democratic game." A dynamic and critical civil society maintains checks and balances on the government and generates political alternatives. Simultaneously, democratic institutions implement these political alternatives in political society, allow the pious the freedom to worship in private, grant citizens and religious groups the right to advance their interests in civil and political society given that they don't infringe on the liberties of others, and function autonomously without any constitutionally privileged influence of religious institutions.

Additionally, the twin tolerations thesis employs a multivocality argument to argue that religion can be interpreted in multiple ways depending on the regime and leadership of a state. Second, the theory posits that states develop their versions of democracy relative to their cultural resources and religious doctrines. Lastly, religious groups and states engage in "democratic bargaining" through negotiations and concessions. However, this theory is refuted in the Polish case as the PiS

and the Catholic Church continually violated "boundaries of freedom" to advance an anti-EU and anti-LGBT discourse:

H1: Parties and religious groups that seek to establish a sovereign, nationalist state grounded in traditionalism and hostility toward the "West/European Union (EU)" may demonstrate a greater use of anti-LGBT discourse in political campaigns and policymaking.

Instrumentalism defines nationalism as an instrument of state-building. The theory de-emphasizes nationalism as primordial or path-dependent, and rather "stresses the ways in which political elites manipulate the national idea" to fulfill their political agendas (Levinger and Lytle 2001). Instrumentalists argue that nationalism is an "invention of tradition" by political leaders who draw from a "repository of existing myths," social contentions, and religious cleavages, to mobilize polarizing rhetoric and, hence, maximize electoral gains and power" (Conversi 2007). Additionally, instrumentalism predicates that when elites recognize power disparities between groups in society as partially coinciding with cultural differences, they will seek to "ameliorate relative deprivation or maintain relative advantage by granting those cultural attributes political and moral significance as markers of ethnic identity" (Brown 2004).

Here, it is important to highlight that ethnic consciousness and elite rhetoric are subject to change as "ethnic communities may have fluid cultural boundaries and ancestries" (Brown 2004). Finally, instrumentalism argues that elites legitimize their pursuit of political gains by adding a moral dimension to existing political and ideological cleavages. PiS contributes to this argument as it builds its political capital and a Polish national identity by "othering" the LGBT community:

H2: Parties and religious groups that seek to construct an exclusive and internally homogenous national identity to enhance their political gains may demonstrate a greater use of anti-LGBTQ discourse in political campaigns and policymaking.

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Arguments

Nationalism, Catholicism, Euroscepticism, and the Construction of a Sovereign Polish State

Poland's accession to the EU coincided with the politicization of LGBT identities by the Catholic Church and right-wing parties. For the Catholic hierarchy, Poland's integration into Europe heightened anxieties regarding the continuity of the Church's monopoly and the secularization of Polish society. The Church, thus, attempted to consolidate and reassert its power by arguing that the diffusion of European norms that legislate LGBT rights and tolerance is "an assault on Christian morals" and, consequently, on the "Polish Soul" (Luxmoore 2019). This paper contends that the concept of the "Polish soul" is inextricably linked to the Catholic Church and its values that form "the immutable pillars of "Polishness" (Bratcher 2021).

The EU has historically pioneered LGBT rights by endorsing Pride parades and LGBT charters and recently inaugurating the "LGBTIQ equality strategy" (EU 2020). However, the Catholic Church perceived these pro-LGBT efforts as an incursion of the EU into "the Church, the Polish nation, and values of Poland's Christian heritage" (Hall 2015). The Church made broad claims about the threat of Western imperialism on Polish statehood to gain the support of right-wing parties such as the PiS. For instance, the Catholic Church argued that the "foreign import" of LGBT ideology "interferes with the Polish consciousness" as it imposes Western morals on the private lives of Poles and, thus, makes it the task of the Church and the state to protect "our one Poland, our common fatherland" (Weidemann 2021). Here, the use of the word "our" places the LGBT community outside the institutional and ideological borders of the Polish state. Nevertheless, the Church's argument is challenged by a survey that records younger (ages 18-34) Poles' views on the EU. 84% of the

respondents hold a favorable view of the EU (Pew Research Center 2020). In fact, a national survey documents that 60% of Poles mention "pedophilia of priests as one of the most serious problems facing the Church in Poland" with 93% agreeing that these priests should not work with children and 71% supporting their removal from the clergy (CBOS 2019). This emphasizes the irony of the Catholic Church's argument which preaches against "the predatory hegemony of the EU over 'ours'...for those [EU] who call out for democracy tend to be the least democratic. Those who propose egalitarianism tend to be the most ruthless elitists," while granting immunity and power to an elitist hierarchy that practices the very morally corrupt behavior it condemns (Żuk and Żuk 2019).

PiS capitalized on Catholic traditions of the family and cis-heterosexual biological reproduction to advance its policy agendas. These traditions are significant as, in the Polish context, the notion of the family and the notion of the nation are intertwined, and are, in turn, linked to the notion of the nation-state (Yermakova 2021). PiS stressed that the LGBT ideology poses a threat of "social engineering" i.e., "homosexuals and genderists" negate sexual binaries and gender complementarity, denaturalize and destruct traditional families, promote the "sexualization of children" through sex education policies and, thus, constitute a "threat to mankind" (Graff and Korolczuk 2022). Therefore, PiS used the arguments that "sovereign states have the ability to decide," "parents have the right to decide," and PiS, as the representative of the "pure", Catholic Polish nation, has the unilateral authority in "matters of family and the state," to legitimize its political hegemony while avoiding international scrutiny (Yermakova 2021).

PiS also argued that the threat of the LGBT "propaganda" on the "status of the Catholic Church in public life" is a concomitant "threat to Poland's

sovereignty" (PiS 2019; Weidemann 2021). The immutability of the Catholic Church from the PiS subverts the twin tolerations argument of "boundaries of freedom". Finally, PiS and the Catholic Church used the LGBT discourse to create a culture of fear against the LGBT ideology and its sponsors– the EU. The discource consisted of rhetoric that "homo/pro-LGBT lobby" occurred at the expense of local legislation, and it, therefore, represented "a foreign, dangerous, and overtly hostile innovation, marked with the covert label of 'LGBT'" (Bucholc 2019). ILGA-Europe has ranked Poland as the worst country in the EU for LGBTs for two consecutive years (2020, 2021). Moreover, only 36% of supporters of PiS show a positive opinion of LGBTs compared to a majority of 59% that do not support the party (Pew 2020).

Furthermore, PiS and the Catholic Church engage in a strategic exchange of power outside the "boundaries of freedom". The Church was an imperative force in PiS'

electoral success as it reached constituencies that were inaccessible to the party. In return, the PiS first made changes to the constitution to expand Church-state boundaries. Second, the PiS passed multiple bills that embedded Catholic doctrines in public policy while reversing other policies such as sexual education programs and the transgender recognition policy. Third, the PiS established state control over free media to further Catholic and right-wing propaganda. For instance, in a broadcast on the right-wing *Radio Marija*, Polish president Kaczyński asserted that "the Church and its doctrine are the foundations of Poland. Poland cannot exist without the Church. And the Polish Church will share our common goal" (Żuk and Żuk 2019). Finally, the PiS funded the Church using "subsidies, state-owned companies, and European funds controlled by the government" while withholding funds from organizations that were "perceived as politically or ideologically hostile to the PiS"

(Kinowska-Mazaraki 2021). This erosion of democratic institutions and the exclusion of LGBTs under the anti-LGBT discourse is reflective of Poland's democratic backsliding.

Pankowski (2020) argues that PiS, at par with the instrumentalist framework, exploited cultural resources and Poland's Nazi and Communist history, to develop an ideational framework of *Polak Katolik*, or, "all Poles are Catholics" and members of an "anti-communist, patriotic Polish family" (Ramme 2022). PiS strategically employed the "politics of memory" to reinstate the image of the Catholic Church as "a historical bulwark of freedom, independence, and Polish national identity" (Żuk and Żuk 2019). By highlighting the role of the Catholic Church in reimagining Polish identity, PiS contended that the LGBT ideology's rejection of Catholic values positions it at

parallels with communism and "Marxism 2.0". PiS rejected the LGBT ideology as totalitarian "colonization" that seeks to incite a sexual revolution to "gain full control of Poles' private lives" and brainwash Christian youth. Therefore, PiS and the Church pursued "a Polish brand of politicized religiosity, wherein Catholicism is equated with national belonging, while non-Catholics and LGBTQ are portrayed as un-Polish and enemies of the nation" (Graff and Korolczuk 2022). A 2018 Pew Research Survey shows that being born in Poland (82%) and having Polish ancestry (83%) is important to being "truly Polish."

Yet, the PiS engaged in enemy-making and the "othering" of LGBTs to generate an irrational fear of the LGBT ideology while instituting itself "as the only protector of the nation who can ensure the "biological continuation of Poland" (Mazaraki 2021). Moreover, PiS epitomized the LGBT community as both an external

enemy representative of the larger threat of the EU, and an internal "enemy of the [Polish] family" (Yermakova 2021). This established LGBTs as not only an enemy but a traitor. Thus, while LGBTs in Poland are ethnically Polish, they are depicted as incompatible and antithetical to "true Polishness" which influences their marginalization from Polish society. This state-endorsed exclusion of an ethnically analogous group is a reflection of Polish antisemitism because the narrative of the enemy, which was historically imposed on the Jewish community, was now performed by the LGBT community. This led to the proliferation of the phrase "in Poland, gays are the new Jews" (Hoeferle 2022). PiS also engaged in instrumental power-seeking by using an "Us" vs "Them" rhetoric, characterizing "them", the LGBTs, "as worse than communism and nazism put together" (Sierakowski 2014).

Furthermore, PiS advanced the naturalization of a heterosexual, familial model to sustain "whiteness', a common 'biological' ancestry, Catholic religious affiliation, and an anti-communist mindset" in the imagined Polish identity (Ramme 2022). This was demonstrated in PiS' 500+ program which granted 500 PLN to a family per month and per child. The 500+ policy illustrated the messianic role of the PiS in protecting the Polish identity against the hostile "ideological war" posed by the LGBT ideology. This argument has two imperative implications. First, notions of warfare and nation-state monopoly "are fundamentally grounded in both popular imaginaries and international relations" (Bucholc 2019). Second, the rhetoric of war generates a moral panic that can induce transformative change in society through the use of legal instruments. This was exemplified in the ratification of the *Charter of the rights of the family* by President Duda in 2020. This charter aims to protect the innocence of children, "the constitutional marriage between a man and a woman, and the privacy and autonomy of the family"

(Government of Poland 2019). Furthermore, PiS introduced the "Stop pedophilia" bill to defend Poles from the moral deprivation imposed by the LGBT ideology (ILGA Europe 2021).

Lastly, PiS sanctioned the development of LGBT-free zones. These zones foster Polish identity within "a Podlaskie land and community, deeply rooted in Christianity and concerns about the good of its own society, families, and children" (Bratcher 2021). These zones, additionally, highlight PiS' instrumentalization of anti-LGBT discourse as a means to enhance electoral gains. The BTI (2022) country index reports that in the 2019 elections, "hate speech against LGBTs was a prominent element of PiS's public discourse" which was later intensified then de-escalated. This exclusion via discourse has a negative impact on Polish LGBT groups as only 27% of Polish LGBT Poles have been open about their identity, 42% faced harassment in the last year, and 68% claim that intolerance against LGBT

has risen compared to the relative scores of 47%, 38%, and 36% respectively in the EU (EU-FRA 2019). The Atlas of Hate Map shows that a total of 88 zones are set up in Poland. These zones territorialize a collective national identity that symbolically and institutionally excludes LGBTs from conceptions of Polish identity, culture, and nationhood. This allows the state to effectively delegitimize LGBTs' claims to full citizenship, potentially even denying them citizenship as a whole (Yermakova 2021).

Conclusion

This paper highlights that alliances between the Polish Catholic Church and the PiS were imperative in shaping and mobilizing an anti-LGBT discourse. Both PiS and the Catholic Church sought to maximize their power and moral hegemony by establishing a sovereign Polish state that is rooted in Catholic values, nationalism, and Euroscepticism, and by constructing a national identity that privileges internal ethnonational homogeneity. The Church and PiS

justified their crackdown on LGBT groups as a "moral war" waged against the existential threat of LGBT ideology and as a mechanism to protect Polish identity, state sovereignty, and Catholic public life. However, these justifications were employed to conceal the Catholic Church and PiS' violation of democratic principles and "boundaries of freedom", thus, accelerating Poland's democratic backsliding. This analysis provides avenues for future research on the PiS and Catholic Church's response to migration flows, the government's "heterowashing" and "whitewashing" of Polish history to legitimize its imagined victimhood as a political strategy, and an intersectional perspective on the role of ethnic minorities, LGBT groups, the Jewish diaspora, and non-Catholics in resisting Catholic hegemony and reimagining Polish identity and borders.

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Ourika Valley, Morocco

Photo by Julia Seeds '23

Unmasking the Facade of US Intervention: Counterterror Policy-making in a Post-9/11 World from Bush to Obama

Julia Seeds '23

Introduction

"Our war on terror begins with Al-Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated."
-George W. Bush

The 9/11 al-Qaeda terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, the epochal symbol of Western capitalism and American economic power, and the Pentagon, the emblem of the United States military supremacy, ultimately shook the US's unipolar, 'untouchable superpower' identity to its core. The abovementioned quotation, declared in the immediate aftermath of the attacks by former US President George W. Bush, architect of the 'War on Terror,' is an emblematic statement of his administration's aggressive foreign policy conduct in a post-9/11 context. The events of 9/11 and the subsequent US response, launching the war on terror (WoT), are so profound in the history of American foreign policy and have undoubtedly transformed the international security environment. The purpose of this research paper is to foreground the importance of this critical point in history in the making of US foreign policy, specifically counterterrorism (CT) policy, along with the causal factors which have influenced the trajectory of the ongoing WoT. The overarching empirical puzzle of this paper concerns the question of what factors have influenced the US's divergent counterterror strategies employed across the Bush and Obama administrations. The central argument being presented here is that changes in the circumstances surrounding the global distribution of power and the orientation of the perceived locus of threat are two major factors that have helped shape US foreign policymakers' decisions on counterterrorism policies

in the war against terrorism in the Middle East and North Africa.

Research Question

The primary topic focus of this paper is centered around the US's foreign policy ventures in the Middle East and North Africa in a post-9/11 world. The empirical puzzle guiding the research considerations of this paper concerns the nature of US foreign policymaking, particularly in the realm of counterterrorism, and the various theoretical perspectives that have contributed to the discourse on this topic. This puzzle takes into account questions over the major changes that occurred in American CT policy, which saw a shift from direct military intervention in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, to a more indirect approach to CT intervention after the first decade or so of the WoT. Thus, the specific research question that this paper seeks to answer is: What factors explain the US's divergent counter-terror intervention policies in the Middle East in a post-9/11 context? In answering this question, this paper

will analyze the evolution of US counterterror policy in the Middle East and how changing circumstances linked to polarity and orientations of the perceived locus of threat have influenced foreign policy-makers decision process.

The rationale behind posing this research question is that not only is the topic of the war on terror a widely debated issue amongst the social science community, but it is also a question that concerns the lives and livelihoods of the people that have suffered at the hands of US foreign policy. Hence why the US's conduct in the war on terror over the past two decades has been such a highly contentious topic, which encompasses a multitude of dimensions, ranging from human rights, power politics, the legitimacy of the American liberal tradition, ideological 'clashes,' and identity. The fact of the matter is that the US-led global war on terror has left a devastating impact on the world on many fronts, and will continue to extract costs for at least the foreseeable

future, as the US's misguided strategy has only exacerbated the terrorist threat and created a staggering global humanitarian crisis.

Argument/Theories

The proposed independent variables (IVs) of this project are the polarity/the global distribution of power and the orientation of the perceived locus of threat to the referent, which will be used to demonstrate that a causal relationship exists between these two IVs and the DV, US counterterror policy. The basic hypothesis of this paper is that the polarity of the international system and policymakers' orientation of the perceived locus of threat are two major factors that influence policymakers' foreign policy decisions. In regards to the specific research focus at hand, US policymakers' decisions on CT strategies in the Middle East in a post-9/11 context can be explained by analyzing the US's relative power position on the international stage and the orientation of the perceived locus of threat.

Furthermore, the proposed directional hypothesis, drawn from this causal relationship, is as follows: when the strength of the US's unipolarity is characterized as high, meaning that the global distribution of power is in its favor, policymakers are more likely to pursue an aggressive CT policy. This is because, not only are they in the optimal power position to do so, the US's identity as a strong unipolar power entails certain behaviors. In regards to the second IV, when the orientation of the perceived locus of threat is comprehensive in scope, policymakers are more likely to pursue a CT strategy focused on a broad-based approach.

The second proposed directional hypothesis of this paper focuses on the opposite scenario, when the strength of US unipolarity is characterized as low, policy-makers are not only more constrained by the balance of power politics, but the US's identity also changes, most likely resulting in a more scaled back intervention strategy. At the same time, when the

orientation of the locus of threat is narrow in scope, policy-makers are more likely to pursue a more directed approach to the CT strategy.

The causal factors that help explain US state behavior in regard to the divergent approach to CT policy in the WoT, the global distribution of power and the orientation of the perceived locus of threat, are jointly supported by various theoretical frameworks. The theoretical undertaking of this project will cover more nuanced, critical theories such as constructivist theory and the Copenhagen School to securitization theory, which both provide an additional explanatory dimension to the dominant IR paradigms, such as neorealism. The motivation behind outlining these theoretical frameworks is not limited to providing support for the IVs and arguments of this paper, but the motivation is also to contribute to a wider web of debates engaging in discourse over the driving influences of state behavior.

The International Relations community has witnessed a resurgence in scholarly dependence on the theoretical perspectives that focus on the role of power politics in the shaping of state behavior, due in large part to the impending rise of China and other potential great powers who are antithetical to US hegemonic stability. Despite being a dominant paradigm in the study of IR, neorealism is limited in its explanatory capacity to fully account for the complexity of the causal relationship between polarity/the global distribution of power and US counterterror policies. Constructivism is an inherently critical theory of IR that draws attention to the shortcomings of the statist nature of traditional paradigms such as neorealism, which relies to heavily on its proposed 'lawlike' assumptions.

Constructivism focuses on the social construction of reality and the importance that shared ideas, norms, and beliefs play in influencing actors' behavior. Even the explanatory influence of normative concepts such

as 'power politics' are socially constructed, rather than just simply existing and operating as part of the nature of the system. Constructivism offers alternative understandings to many of the central concepts important to the IVs and arguments of this paper, such as "the meaning of anarchy and the balance of power, the relationship between state identity and interest...and the prospects for change in world politics" (Hopf, 1998). Wendt argues that 'anarchy is what states make of it,' meaning that its salience and explanatory value can be interpreted in different ways based on the importance that actors assign to it (Wendt, 1992). One of the major contributions of the constructivist theory that provides an important dimension to both IVs is its "account of the politics of identity" and how a state's (or actor's) identity constitutes its interests and actions (Hopf, 1998).

Furthermore, the concepts of agency and structure "are mutually constituted," where agency relates to an actor's ability to act and structure

relates to a "set of relatively unchangeable constraints on the behavior of states" (Hopf, 1998). In this way, the US's military interventions in the war on terror can be understood in terms of its identity as a great power, and by "engaging in the "enabled" action of intervention, the [US] reproduced its own identity [as a great power], as well as the structure that gave meaning to its action" (Hopf, 1998). The particular interests of a state, in constructivist thinking, are the direct product of that state's identity. The US's identity as a great power "implies a particular set of interests," such as power maximization or power projection, which differ from those that identify as small states, who are more focused on survival (Hopf, 1998). Another major tenet of constructivist theory is the idea that identities are always undergoing construction due to the constantly evolving circumstances of social reality. The US's identity as a unipolar great power, over the past two decades, has undergone significant changes due to the shifting structure of

the international order, which appears to be moving towards a multipolar distribution of power.

The 9/11 al-Qaeda "attacks on the powerful state in the system...brought home the realization that real security threats now exist that are not statist in nature" and can emerge from the "transnational activity of nonstate terrorist groups" (Press, 2004). The emergence of al-Qaeda represented a unique challenge to the traditional conception of security, which identifies the locus of threat as the military capabilities of other states in the system. The deterritorialized nature of al-Qaeda and its institutions of violence that operate outside of the international system which is "founded upon state-centric principles" serves as a pervasive threat to US great power authority and international security as a whole (Löwenheim, 2010). The threat environment has fundamentally changed, as the security challenges posed by nonstate actors threaten the state-centric nature of the

international system that the US seeks to uphold. The realization that the US's immense military capabilities were not enough to "deter small actors from attacking the US homeland" challenged "the sense of ontological security of the peoples in the West" (Löwenheim, 2010). The US's grand strategy in the first decade of the WoT has demonstrated that the goal is to "shift the game back to the interstate playing field...[a] game it knows how to play" (Press, 2004). The US's initial targeting of 'rogue states' as a counterterror strategy indicates that the perceived locus of threat was still being interpreted in a traditional security framework.

The Copenhagen School of Securitization and constructivist theory both provide a critical lens to the orientation of the perceived locus of threat in US security policy. The Copenhagen School, a critical approach to securitization theory, spearheaded by scholars Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, places emphasis on the idea that threats and security are

socially constructed concepts (Buzan, 1983). Inspired by constructivism's focus on the intersubjective nature of reality, the Copenhagen School discusses how threats are not objectively contrived but are subjectively constructed by social reality (van Munster, 2012). This school of thought suggests that security should be understood as a speech act, where the question is not over whether threats are real or not, but rather what ways a certain issue can be constructed as a threat (Buzan, 1983; van Munster, 2012). Securitization is defined as a speech act that must fulfill the three following criteria: (1) "claims that a referent object is essentially threatened," (2) "demands the right to take extraordinary countermeasures to deal with the threat," and (3) "convinces an audience that rule-breaking behavior to counter the threat is justified" (Buzan, 1983; van Munster, 2012). Traditional security studies do not take into account the threat of non-state actors, which have proved to be relatively formidable

agents in the international system.

The US Military Invasion & Occupation of Iraq Under Bush

When the United States-led coalition of forces invaded Iraq on March 20, 2003, the US was already at the height of its unipolarity and thus sought to project its power and authority onto states deemed 'rogue' or a threat to this international order. The war in Iraq is an interesting case for many reasons, one being that it was a preventative war rather than a preemptive war and thus was condemned by the vast majority of the international community who viewed the aggressive military operation as immoral, unjust, and illegal (Surlis 2003). For this reason, it is well worth studying the case of the US's invasion and occupation of Iraq, specifically the motivations behind the Bush administration's push for a preventative war in light of the 9/11 attacks and its implications on the US's power and authority as the 'global hegemon.' Within this context, there is an important distinction between

preventative war and preemptive war. Preemptive war "is when another country is poised to strike and action is taken against them" (Surlis, 2003). In contrast, preventative war is "when another group or power might become a danger to us, so a decision is made to strike them first," meaning that they are "a potential danger rather than an imminent danger" (Surlis, 2003). The latter scenario describes the case pushed for war in Iraq by the Bush administration.

The Bush administration built the case for war in Iraq around the presumption that Saddam Hussein possessed, or could possess, weapons of mass destruction which the administration feared could potentially end up in the hands of the al-Qaeda terrorists. The administration "successfully framed the war in Iraq as an extension of its response to September 11 and the [WoT]," as at the time, "the [Iraq-as-the-war-on-terror] frame was available, believable and understandable to a country [and an international community] scarred by [the events of 9/11]" (Gershkoff, 2005). The administration's defined orientation of the locus of threat, which took a very comprehensive and broad-based approach, heavily influenced the counterterrorism strategies that policymakers constructed.

IV1: Polarity/the Global Distribution of Power

In a unipolar system, "the extent to which the nature of the international order is shaped and molded by the interests and normative agenda" of the sole pole is more clearly observable (Press, 2004). At the outset of the Bush administration's declaration of the war on terror, the US had already experienced a decade of unipolarity and was believed to be at the top of the global power configuration, which provided policymakers with a considerable degree of freedom to pursue an ambitious foreign policy. In the

construction of an American counterterror strategy, policymakers under the Bush administration abandoned key balance-of-power considerations in exchange for aggressive pursuance of power maximization and a liberal international order aimed at reshaping the world in the US's own image (Mearsheimer, 2019). The neoconservative agenda of the architects of the WoT under the Bush administration was one that favored power maximization over power preservation, where an offensive realist foreign policy was prioritized over a defensive realist one. Furthermore, these neoconservatives advocated for an "offensive [realist] military posture dedicated to…extending America's newfound unipolar moment" by taking preventative measures to "preclude the emergence of rival powers," and in essence, argued by Charles Krauthammer, the US "sought to remain…the single pole of world power" (Press, 2004).

The Bush administration's foreign policy objectives in the war can be interpreted as an "attempt to save and enhance the international order that has been under threat since the events of [9/11]," an event that exposed the "vulnerable points in the structure of [American] power" (Press, 2004; Löwenheim, 2010). The aggressive American response to the al-Qaeda attacks during the early years of the WoT resulted in a foreign policy disaster which served as a warning of the "inevitable problems that face a single preponderant power when it tries to maintain or reshape" the international order (Press, 2004). Based on the normative objectives of the neoconservative WoT architects, which were to reassert American great power authority, pursue geostrategic interests, and prevent the emergence of a potential great power rival, their orientation towards foreign policy fits firmly in the neorealist tradition, though theirs was not one based on BOP realism (Press, 2004).

The events of 9/11 were

interpreted by the Bush administration as a window of opportunity to pursue their foreign policy objectives in the Middle East that preceded the attacks. However, it was this misguided strategy, coupled with the lip service of pursuit of liberal hegemony, that prompted the US to intervene militarily in the region, which planted the seeds of its own demise. The cracks in the facade of US great power authority are becoming more apparent as multipolarity looms over policymaker's heads; as stated, BOP politics are always playing out, even in unipolar systems, because dissatisfied actors who suffer from the status quo seek its revision and serve as a counterbalance to the great power in the system (Mearsheimer, 2019). According to the figure below, displaying the global GDP outlook, it can be shown that during the first decade of the WoT, there were no existing rival powers to US economic superiority and thus the US's unipolarity, at the time, could be considered strong. This unequaled strength was recognized by the Bush administration in the 2002 National Security Strategy, which stated that "the [US] possesses unprecedented and unequaled strength and influence in the world" (The 2002 NSS). The 2002 NSS furthers that the "great strength of this nation must be used to promote a balance of power that favors freedom," alluding to the administration's objective to use this great strength to pursue a liberal agenda in its foreign policy.

The US's identification of itself as a strong unipolar power played a major hand in the decision-making process for foreign policymakers, so when al-Qaeda emerged as a transnational terrorist organization and inflicted a devastating blow to the most powerful state, it ultimately undermined great power authority and the very basis of the Westphalian order (Lowenheim, 2010). This challenge elicited a strong American response, not only because it undermined the US's great power authority, but it also brought to the forefront the idea that

"the huge military potential of a superpower is not enough to deter smaller [non-state] actors from attacking the US homeland" (Lowenheim, 2010). This idea challenges the very basis of the realist nature of the international system, in that states, are the dominant actors on the world stage and hold a monopoly over the use of force, so when the attacks occurred, it "brought home the realization that real security threats now exist that are not statist in nature" and are not bound to international norms and laws (Press, 2004). And as a consequence, "the US reaction since the events of [9/11] have been to try to shift the game back to the interstate playing field," a game it knows how to play, and "in practical terms that has meant shifting the focus from an initial emphasis on the terrorist organizations themselves to a focus on the states the support or may support them" (Press, 2004).

Humiliated and shocked by the attacks, the Bush administration sought to reassert the US's great power authority and did so through direct military intervention. The US's interventions in the WoT in the years following 9/11 "can be interpreted as a clear expression of America's absolute dominance and its unilateral management of the international system" (Press, 2004). The perceived strength of the US's unipolarity during this period allowed policymakers to abandon key balance of power considerations, which was then replaced by an ambitious strategy to pursue a liberal international order and assert the US's power and authority as the sole pole. However, this 'grand strategy' of pursuing liberal hegemony in the Middle East to fight Islamic terrorism proved to be a misguided strategy that not only failed to win the war on terror but also created new threats and intensified pre-existing threats. Spreading liberal democracy, as history has demonstrated, often requires direct military intervention, followed by military occupation and often a state-building mission, which

invariably leads to mass casualty, instability, and resentment.

IV2: The Orientation of the Perceived Locus of Threat

Following the events of 9/11, as highlighted in the 2002 NSS, "terrorism [surged] to the top of the ranking of threats to American security," but what is particularly unique is the way in which the Bush administration framed this threat (Quinn, 2015). Rather than focusing on al-Qaeda itself, as a terrorist organization, the Bush administration extended its identification of the threat to encompass the states who were believed to have aided and provided safe haven for this organization. The administration's framing also contained ideological undertones, which pointed to Islam as a religion and an ideology, as a threat to American values and civilization. The threat that the Bush administration constructed was one based on what Esch claims are a "political myth," which made use of the myths of American Exceptionalism and Barbarism vs. Civilization to make the significance of the terrorist threat and to justify direct intervention in the WoT (Esch, 2010). American Exceptionalism refers to the US's self-constructed identity of being a "shining city on a hill" and the "chosen nation" that "represents the forces of good against evil," and like all political myths, it has been adapted over time to "apply to changing circumstances and to provide for various narratives" (Esch, 2010). The Barbarism vs. Civilization myth's "central dichotomy appeals to identity and makes it powerfully intuitive" (Esch, 2010). The Islamic threat was constructed in such a way that allowed the US to identify its contrasting image of itself, in a classical "us" vs "them" and "civilized" vs "uncivilized" fashion. The Barbarism vs. Civilization myth is derived from Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* thesis, which constructs a civilizational conflict between the Islamic world and the West, where Islam represents an inherent threat to Western identities of

civilization and democracy (Huntington, 1993).

The way in which an issue or a threat is framed is an important dimension of foreign policymaking, and in many cases, "the most powerful political rhetoric makes use of existing myths and taps into widely held, underexamined beliefs" in society (Esch, 2010). The *Clash of Civilizations* has provided the ideological foundation for US foreign policymaking in a post-9/11 context, as when the attacks occurred, the Bush administration had a ready-made explanation for the attacks on America and its civilization. The Bush administration heavily relied on the problematic assumptions set forth by Huntington and Lewis, in order to provide justification for direct US military intervention in the Middle East, through the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

In an analysis of the lexical triggers of both the 2002 NSS and the 2006 NSS, as well as many of Bush's speeches, words such as "mission, call/calling, role, responsibility, indispensable, rightness/righteous, and the phrases of freedom defender and defend freedom" appeared repeatedly (Esch, 2010). In fact, the 2002 and 2006 reports made use of the word "freedom" 46 and 80 times, respectively (Quinn, 2015). In a speech on September 13, 2001, Bush stated that "these people can't stand freedom; they hate our values; they hate what America stands for," and in this way, Bush heavily appealed to identity, an enduring feature of the WoT discourse. In this way, the Bush administration "has employed absolute dichotomies in a way that has imbued "who we are" with a sense of duty," and "who they are," with a sense of alarmism (Esch, 2010). The administration manipulated a politics of fear and a Manichean discourse in order to construct a binary evil 'other' vs a righteous 'us' (Kellner, 2007).

Furthermore, the American CT

policies under the Bush administration, "like that of all liberal democratic states, is the result of a calculated decision-making process," which is constructed around three basic components: defining the threat, setting goals, and choosing the appropriate strategies (Ganor, 2014). At the same time, the decision-making process is also "influenced by the decision makers' worldview" and by "considerations and constraints that stem from domestic and international systems" (Ganor, 2014). In this respect, policymakers under the Bush administration were not only influenced by the polarity of the international system but were also influenced by a moralistic worldview that saw the US as a global watchdog of human rights and liberal values.

The first component of constructing CT policy is "understanding the nature of the threat and defining the enemy," however, "a distorted perception of the enemy and the threat could negatively affect the entire decision-making process by focusing efforts on an irrelevant enemy or granting too much importance to a marginal threat" (Ganor, 2014). In this regard, the Bush administration identified the enemy as more than just al-Qaeda's core group, it also included a second circle of threats which were the "countries and governments that provided protection, aid and shelter" to the terrorist organizations (Ganor, 2014). The administration heavily focused on this second circle in its framing of the war in Iraq, which focused on the threat that the Saddam Hussein regime posed.

The next step, after the threat has been defined, is to also "define the goals that [the decision-makers] seek to achieve against the enemy and vis-a-vis the concrete threat" (Ganor, 2014). Since the Bush administration took a comprehensive approach to define the threat, it also took a comprehensive approach to defining its CT policy goals, which were to defeat terrorist organizations with global aspirations and also to "free the

world of fear and apprehension from terrorism," translating into the goal to pursue American democratic and liberal values abroad (Ganor, 2014). In the final component, after the threat and the goals have been defined, "[decision-makers will now have to choose the most appropriate tools for combatting terrorism and achieving [their] defined goals" (Ganor, 2014). In accordance with his broad definition of the threat and his comprehensive approach to defining the US's goals in the war, Bush's strategy was to intervene militarily wherever deemed necessary to not only counter the terrorist threat, but also topple the regimes believed to be antithetical to the US's liberal order.

US Counterterrorism Policy in Syria Under Obama

When the Obama administration took office in 2009, nearly 8 years after Bush and his administration made up of neoconservative war hawks "termed the existential threat of international terrorism" and subsequently declared a

'Global War on Terror,' which rapidly extended its interventions beyond the war's original scope (McCrisken, 2011). Operating in a global threat environment that has evolved over years of protracted US military intervention into faraway lands, the prevalence of terrorist activity and al-Qaeda-affiliated networks have spread like wildfire across the world. Obama's election presented an opportunity for change in the trajectory of US foreign policy, but despite these high hopes, the administration appears to have retained, and even in some cases expanded, much of the counterterrorism (CT) policies and philosophies of the final two years of the Bush era. However, there are some critical differences in the Obama administration's approach to CT policy, which will be exemplified in this case study on Syria.

Given the numerous continuities between the administrations, the main difference lies not in the substance of their CT policies, but rather in their

packaging. Within this framework, the Obama administration's CT strategies in Syria differed from that of the Bush administration in Iraq, in terms of the orientation of threat and the constraints posed by the global distribution of power. In the 2010 National Security Strategy (NSS) report, the Obama administration outlined its desire to "move away from the "distorting lens" of terrorism and launch a broad-based engagement effort with the Muslim communities of the world" (Lynch, 2010). The administration's guiding foreign policy agenda demonstrates a more restrained approach to intervention, signifying a tilt away from the confrontational policies that defined the earlier years of the Bush era (The 2010). Nevertheless, the imminent threat to US interests that the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) posed, alarmed Washington, which prompted the Obama administration to modestly overcome its hesitation to intervene. However, policymakers, informed by the failures of the previous administration and constrained by the new threat environment, designed the US strategy in Syria around a defensive realist framework, which prioritized strategies such as selective engagement and offshore balancing.

The Obama administration's divergent strategy in Syria to counter ISIS, which focused the US' CT efforts on targeted killings, drone strikes, and building the capabilities of regional partners (i.e the Syrian Kurds), can be explained by factors such as the shift in the global distribution of power and the change in orientation of the perceived locus of threat. In light of the changing global circumstances surrounding the Obama era, the administration has redefined the threat by drawing the focus away from "militant radical Islam" and the pursuance of regime change in rogue states. Additionally, the Obama administration's national security strategy recognizes the looming rise of rival superpowers and what this inevitable shift in polarity means for American great power authority. The

marriage of these two influencing factors helps explain the Obama administration's divergence from the Bush era's 'grand strategy' in the 'Global War on Terror,' which sought to assert the US' unipolar power and reshape the world in its own image.

IV1: Polarity/the Global Distribution of Power

From the beginning of the Obama administration's tenure in office, policymakers were directly confronted with the reality of a looming multipolar international order and a tarnished image of US legitimacy and moral authority, which would prove to be a major thorn in the side of American power preponderance. As described in the 2015 NSS, the shifting power dynamics vis-à-vis the rise of Russia and China, which requires a defense posture shaped around the balance of power considerations and serves as a constraint to US power projection in regions of strategic importance (The 2015). The two rising adversaries to US interests and great power authority,

Russia and China, maintain important geostrategic stakes in the Middle East, and thus, its conflicts. The escalation of the Syrian Civil War and the expansion of ISIS "[poses] an increasingly stark threat to regional stability," and as a consequence, the conflict has evolved into a proxy war between multiple interested actors, with the US and its allies on the opposition side, while Russia and Iran (and to a degree China), are on the side of the Assad regime (Allison, 2013). Russia, Iran, and China are jointly motivated by a desire to challenge US dominance in world affairs and prevent further Western intervention in the region. This regional challenge has contributed to the Obama administration's hesitance to deploy boots on the ground in Syria to combat ISIS, as looming multipolarity has forced the US to abandon the offensive realist military posture of the previous administration. Instead, the administration has preferred a CT policy that would keep US troops offshore for as long as possible, which

would avoid the risk of sliding down the slippery slope into a large, protracted military conflict (a defining feature of the Bush era).

In contrast to the magnitude of US troop deployment in Iraq, the US under the Obama administration has dedicated a limited number of active military personnel to Syria. The main priority of this troop deployment is also notable in that American military personnel were not active combatants in the conflict. Their task, respective to the strategies outlined in the 2010 NSS, was to provide training and assistance to the Syrian Kurds and the Arab opposition fighters, in order to bolster local capabilities in countering ISIS (The 2015 NSS).

Compared to the 157,800 American troops deployed in Iraq in 2008, the US only sent around 2,000 ground troops to Syria in 2015, after many years of holding out on deploying boots on the ground in new conflicts (Belasco, 2009). While conceding that "the use of force is sometimes necessary," the administration assures that "[the US] will exhaust other options before [resorting to direct military intervention]" and if it is necessary, the US will "do so in a way that reflects [its] values and strengthens [its] legitimacy" (Quinn, 2015). Reiterating notions of American power preponderance, the Obama administration reasserts the US' commitment to exercise its military force whenever need be, to balance out a threat. However, unlike the offensive realist posture of the Bush administration, Obama's policies "in principle [bring] together [all] the instruments of national power in a concerted strategy" (The 2010 NSS). This strategic approach goes beyond a reliance on military capabilities as a means of power projection, as it diversifies the tools that the US can use to pursue its interests which are vital to avoid inter-state conflict within a multipolar order. Underlying the administration's counterterrorism approach is a "vision that goes beyond the war on terror and draws the partners of a re-imagined [US], less

powerful but still indispensable, into a shared push for greater prosperity and security" (Desch, 2010).

As stated, "the rise of China is the most strategically significant event unfolding in the world at the present," and within this context, "the ideal outcome for US leaders is that China becomes a responsible stakeholder in the existing liberal order" (Ganor, 2014). The administration's declaration of a 'pivot towards Asia' has required a "rebalancing of US global commitments," which in practice, limits the priority of aggressive democracy promotion abroad (Ganor, 2014). In regards to how this policy pivot affects counterterrorism, the promotion of democracy no longer serves a central role in the US' CT strategy. In a looming multipolar world, the main priority of the US is to maintain the status quo of the norms and institutions of the established liberal order, rather than pursue a grand strategy of global liberal hegemony.

A signature theme in this new era, as outlined in the 2010 NSS, "was a move away from framing the [US] as an unabashedly proactive agent of transformative change abroad" (Ganor 2014). Rather than attempting to depose the Assad regime through military force, the Obama administration practiced restraint in its policy interventions in Syria, a move that stands in stark contrast to the Bush administration's invasion and occupation of Iraq. The normative constraints associated with a multipolar distribution of power necessitates a balance of competition and cooperation between great powers in the system, which has obliged the US to cultivate cooperation in areas of mutual interest, such as in counterterrorism policy.

IV2: The Orientation of the Perceived Locus of Threat

During his presidential campaign, Obama "portrayed himself as an antidote to the excesses of the Bush administration" and promised that his leadership would reorient the focal point of the US counterterrorism

strategy away from Bush's 'war on ideals' against 'Islamic radicalism' (The 2010). The 2010 NSS declares that the US is not at war with a tactic (terrorism), nor is it at war with religion (Islam), but rather, the US is engaged in a war with specific terrorist networks (The 2015 NSS). The Obama administration also recognized that "power is shifting below and beyond the nation-state," indicating that the security environment has evolved beyond the inter-state realm of the traditional conception of security, as non-traditional security threats (i.e transnational terrorist organizations) have proven to be formidable agents of change (Allison, 2013).

As previously established, the decision-making process in constructing counterterrorism policy is a multifaceted process, as it contains many components, but ultimately, it is the early identification of the enemy that shapes the nature and scope of CT strategies. The Obama administration took a relatively narrow approach to identify the enemy, defining it as the specific terrorist organizations and their affiliates (Ganor, 2014). The administration illuminated the nature of this threat, which it identified as the violent extremists who use terrorism as a tactic against the US at home and abroad. Obama's definition of the enemy and identification of the nature of the threat is fundamentally different than that of the Bush administration, which defined the enemy in very broad terms and pointed to the nature of the threat as being rooted in Islam as an ideology. In Obama's Cairo speech in 2009, he demonstrated a clear rejection of the previous administration's identification of Islam as an inherent threat and clarified that Islam is not the enemy. The Obama administration's key critique of Bush's CT policy is that "it allowed itself to be distracted from the 'real' war on terror" by incorrectly identifying the threat, and this failure to recognize the real threat led the administration to pursue misguided goals and through ill-advised and reckless strategies

(McCrisken, 2011).

The Obama administration's goals, in regard to its identification of the real threat, were "to disrupt, dismantle and defeat [terrorist networks and their affiliates]," while also seeking to rebuild America's moral image and reconcile relations with the Muslim mainstream (Lynch, 2010). A major component to achieving the goal of countering the terrorist threat lies in US efforts to isolate extremists and curb their recruitment of new militants. The strategy that the Obama administration used to achieve this goal was to, first and foremost, reject the 'war on ideas' and reconstruct the 'war on terror' narrative which linked the struggle to a Western war against Islam. The administration recognized the "urgent strategic need to prevent consolidation of a clash of civilizations narrative that [would] empower extremists" and draw recruits to their cause (Lynch, 2010). Another major strategy used to achieve this goal was to "[focus] on "violent extremism" as a

common enemy of both the [US] and mainstream Muslim communities," as well as "launch a broad-based engagement effort with [these] Muslim communities" (Lynch, 2010).

Generally, the goals established by the Obama administration can all be tied to a direct confrontation with the enemy, the terrorist organizations. The 2010 NSS forwards the comprehensive CT strategy of the US, which "denies [terrorists and their affiliates] safe haven, strengthens front-line partners, secures our homeland" and pursues a campaign that adheres to America's core values (The 2010). The reorientation of the locus of threat under Obama had a clear impact on the CT strategies that the US employed in Syria (Ganor, 2014). Rather than distracting itself from the real threat, the Obama era of counterterrorism policy marked a clear break from the Bush administration's misguided focus on rogue regimes, democracy promotion, and a 'clash of civilizations.' This led policymakers to construct a strategy

that was more focused, appropriate, and effective because it put the threat and the means in the proper perspective (Lynch, 2010).

The four pillars of the Obama administration's CT policy were: global Muslim engagement, countering violent extremism, kinetic counterterrorism, and rule of law, all of which were designed to "work together in a mutually reinforcing way" (Lynch, 2010). A key component to this CT policy in Syria was the 'kill-not-capture' strategy which relied on unmanned drone strikes and targeted killings to limit civilian casualties, infrastructure damage, troop deployment, and nation-building missions. The Obama administration learned from the previous administration's mistakes and has thus reconfigured its counterterrorism policy to better target the actual locus of threat, the terrorist organizations. The drone strike campaign in Syria has proven to be more effective at killing targets than the deployment of ground troops, as

the "killing of confirmed militants rather than civilians in these attacks has been substantially higher (approximately 80%) than under Bush (55%)" (McCrisken, 2011). However, this tactic is morally dubious and appears to undermine the administration's goal to adhere to its moral principles. In addition, even though drone strikes are highly effective at killing their targets, "dead men tell no tales," meaning that when these targets are immediately killed, the US misses out on an opportunity to gather intelligence on terrorist networks (McCrisken, 2011).

Conclusion

According to Brown University's "Costs of War" project, it has been revealed that over "20 years of post-9/11 wars has cost the US an estimated $8 trillion and have killed more than 900,000 people" (Costs of, 2021). This death toll, however, only takes into account those who "were killed as a direct result of war, whether by bombs,

bullets or fire," it does not take into account the indirect deaths "caused by way of disease, displacement, and loss of access to food or clean drinking water" (Costs of, 2021). Neta Crawford, a co-founder of the project, has stated that "the deaths we tallied are likely a vast undercount of the true toll these wars have taken on human life" and pointed out that it is critical to "properly account for the vast and varied consequences" of the US's counterterror operations since 9/11 (Costs of, 2021). Many of the unintended outcomes of these operations, aside from these humanitarian issues, include the environmental damage wrought by war, the creation of ungoverned spaces vulnerable to extremism, failed states and power vacuums, the exacerbation of anti-Western sentiment, an unprecedented global refugee crisis, and the spread of many new and existing terrorist networks. This raises the question, what has the US truly accomplished in the WoT, and at what price?

In regards to the argument of this research paper, the direct counterterror interventions under the Bush-Cheney administration have contributed to the weakening of US unipolarity and drawn into question the legitimacy of the American liberal tradition and its moral authority. The decision to take unilateral action in the conduct of a preemptive war in Iraq was the fatal consequence of a distorted image of the nature of the threat and America's identity as a liberal great power. This misguided strategy was influenced by an overly ambitious objective to counter the terrorist threat through the toppling of 'rogue' regimes, such as that of Saddam Hussein. And through this, it would effectively prevent WMDs from ending up in the wrong hands and rescue the Iraqi people from evil. However, the ground-level reality proved otherwise, as Iraq quickly disintegrated into chaos and

lawlessness, which destroyed both the physical and bureaucratic structures of the country, resulting in sectarian violence, insurgency, and widespread humanitarian crises. It was within this context of a failed state in Iraq, that the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria emerged and monopolized on the instability created by the US's invasion and occupation.

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Colonia del Sacramento, Uruguay
Photo by Roma Pirnie '23

Rising Secularism in Uruguay

Maya Khalife-Hamden '25

With the European colonization of Latin America in the 1500s, the region became endowed with Roman Catholicism. Today home to over 425 million Catholics, Latin America accounts for nearly 40% of the world's Catholic population (Pew Research Center). Uruguay, however, stands out in the region for its lack of religious participation. Since Uruguay's 1918 constitution, the state has undermined the Church by declaring itself secular and providing extensive services for citizenry. Given the state's secularism, the population experiences low rates of religiosity, with over one-third of the population identifying as secularist (Da Costa).

Uruguay's low religiosity rate is anomalous in the religiously dominated Latin America, where nearly 70% of adults identify as Catholic (Pew Research Center). Such abnormality leads to the question of what has led to secularism in Uruguay. Throughout this paper, I argue that the inactivity of the dominating Catholic Church fails to promote religiosity among citizenry given its lack of amenity. Uruguayans are further demotivated from seeking religious membership since the secular state provides citizens with stability and welfare, meaning that they do not need to resort to religious membership in order to obtain comfort.

Uncertainty/Social Identity and Securitization Theories

Uncertainty-identity theory suggests that people turn to religious institutions in times of societal or personal uncertainty, such as an economic crisis or unemployment. Hence, there exists a correlation between socioeconomic/political uncertainty and the rise of religiosity

around the world. Similarly, social identity theory applies social psychology to justify that being part of a "group" helps one make sense of the world. The theory defines social identity as a sense of oneself based on group membership, since a sentiment of superiority against the opposing "out-group" is developed.

In connection, secularization theory argues that secularism becomes the norm in state institutions upon modernization. Politics under empires were defined by religion since kings operated through religious legitimacy in order to rule. Yet religion declined with modernization in order to appeal to the greater population. Today, states adopt secularism in order to strategically compete with one another for rational interests, such as resources and dominance.

Uruguay is one of the most developed nations in Latin America, exercising high GDP rates and substantial welfare services. As the uncertainty and social identity models would argue, citizens of stable states do not need to define themselves by religious membership, as their secure environment allows them to already have a strong established sense of identity and community. On the other hand, secularization theory suggests that secularism has become the norm as Uruguay modernized, especially in the realm of its state services and economy. In combining the uncertainty-identity, social identity, and secularization theories, I argue that Uruguayans have turned away from religious practice given the stability and modernity of their nation.

The Religious Economy Thesis

Religious economy models suggest that religious institutions gain the most socioeconomic power in religiously pluralistic environments. Religious organizations do not receive state funding under religious pluralism, hence forcing establishments to compete with one another for socioeconomic prosperity. As a result, religious institutions offer quality services and benefits to their members in order to attract more

followers.

Catholicism has long been the dominant religious institution within Uruguay. Although other establishments, such as Protestantism, do operate, Catholicism is most pertinent, accounting for 42% of the country's population. The Protestant Church — the second most dominant religion — barely accounts for 14% of the population (Pew Research Center). Based on the Religious Economy model, I hypothesize that the Catholic Church's inactivity as a monopoly fails to promote religiosity, as the institution has no amenity nor benefits for Uruguayan citizenry.

A Developed Nation-State

Uruguay is Latin America's most secular nation-state, with 37% of the Uruguayan population reporting that they have no particular religion or are atheist or agnostic (United States Department of State). In no other country in Latin America do the religiously unaffiliated make up even 20% of the population. Little under 29% of Uruguayans report to pray daily, and only a meager 13% claim to attend religious services on a weekly basis. In neighboring Brazil, on the other hand, an overwhelming 61% of adults pray daily, and 45% of Brazilians attend services weekly (Pew Research Center).

Uruguay has been a secular state since 1918, when its constitution declared that citizens are free to worship the religion of their choosing and that the state doesn't support any religion (Da Costa). The Catholic Church had a negative reaction to this constitutional tenet, and threatened to fight back. In order to undermine the Church, Uruguay established a robust welfare program with the goal of achieving high development indicators and integrating indigenous and immigrant populations within Uruguay (Allende and Angeles). Uncertainty and Social Identity models would predict that the marginalized and underprivileged are the most likely to seek religious membership. However, in this case, secular Uruguay

identified the country's most vulnerable populations and sought to aid them (Da Costa). And as the secularization theory would further suggest, this modernization within the state reduced the need for religious membership among citizenry, as citizens became satisfied with the provisions of the secular government.

Uruguay has since established very strong development. As of 2021, Uruguay is one of the most economically prosperous states in Latin America, with a GDP per capita of 16,190.1 (UN Data). Furthermore, Uruguay spends more on social programs than any other government in the region, with over 25% of the state's GDP dedicated to the cause (Amarante et al.). As the Secularization Thesis suggests, the need for religious group pertinence has declined with ongoing modernization. Uncertainty-Identity models claim that individuals are most attracted to religious membership when experiencing hardship and crisis — yet Uruguay is stable and substantially

provides for citizenry. Consequently, individuals form connections and self-identity independently, and do not need support from religious institutions. One Uruguayan explains their personal experience in not seeking religious membership:

Always needing to cling to something is a weakness, the product of human vulnerability, and maybe that's what makes us deny other things that can be valid and enriching. If we close ourselves off, we deprive ourselves of that. . . . But if I refuse to acknowledge that someone else believes in something else, it's impossible for us to live together, impossible for us to get along. That happens when we believe we have a monopoly on something . . . (qtd. in Da Costa).

Social-identity theory predicts that people appreciate the sense of in-group and the opposition towards "out-groups" that religious membership provides. Yet Uruguayans want independence from religious restrictions; they want to hear and learn from others. This distinction is due to the stability and development that Uruguay has achieved. Citizenry does not seek comfort and support from religious institutions since they are comfortable within the state.

Individuals are consequently able to interact with people of diverging backgrounds. In fact, according to the World Values Survey, 97.1% of Uruguayans claim they would not mind having neighbors pertaining to a different religion (Inglehart et al.). In comparison, only 48.7% said that they would not mind having heavy drinkers as neighbors (Inglehart et al.). Hence, the general Uruguayan population does not discriminate against opposing religions, as they prioritize behavior over personal faith in their interactions.

The uncertainty-identity, social-identity, and secularization theories prove that the lack of religiosity among Uruguayan citizens stems from the nation state's modernized development. As Uruguay secularized in 1918, the state also experienced modernization, and hence encouraged secularity among citizenry as well. With their needs satisfied by the state, citizens are able to independently develop their proper self-identity and communities, and do

not seek to gain a sense of community and superiority from religious membership.

A Demotivated Religious Monopoly

Catholicism is the most prevalent religion in secular Uruguay, accounting for approximately 42% of the state's population. Although present, Protestantism is rather marginal, with less than 14% Uruguayans identifying as such (Pew Research Center). Interestingly, however, 64% of present-day citizens were raised Catholic as children, yet only 42% chose to remain Catholic as adults — this results in a net-change of -22 (Pew Research Center). Uruguayans are purposefully abandoning their religious membership and adopting secularity. One former Uruguayan Catholic reflects that they abandoned the religion because they felt no advantage from membership:

I went there for a while and everything was money, nothing else, they ask you for money . . . depending on how you are dressed. . . . But God and Jesus, as I see it, never looked at how someone was dressed or anything. You know that you go to any church and you have to be well dressed, but Jesus never looked, on the contrary, he looked at the poor people, people who really had problems (qtd. in Da Costa).

As a monopoly, the Church is inactive and hence fails to promote religiosity among citizens. Rather than recruiting underprivileged members through the provision of services, the Uruguayan Church instead requests monetary donations, as they are not concerned about losing followers to other establishments. Consequently, members do not feel community nor support within the institution. In response to the World Values Survey question of whether the basic meaning of religion is "to follow religious norms and ceremonies" or "to do good to other people," over 75% of Uruguayans assert that religion truly signifies "to do good to other people" (Inglehart et al.). As shown in the statement of the former-Catholic secularist, individuals are dissatisfied with the materialistic lens that the Uruguayan Church operates as a monopoly.

Nonetheless, such decrease in religiosity leads to the question of why no other religious organization has replaced the Catholic Church. In neighboring Brazil, for instance, the Evangelical tradition responded to the inactivity of the Catholic Church by providing widespread services and targeting the underserved. Yet no other religious institution in Uruguay has taken such steps. Such difference is due to the socioeconomic contexts of the states. Brazil is one of the most economically unequal nations (ranked #9 in the world), with a Gini Index of 53.4 (World Population Review). Many Brazilian communities are underserved and hence seek refuge within religious institutions. Uruguay, on the other hand, experiences significantly lower wealth inequality, with a Gini Index of less than 40 (World Population Review). Religious Economy models suggest that operating in a monopoly weakens the Catholic Church's appeal to citizens. And no other religious institution has

emerged — contrary to Evangelicalism in Brazil — as citizens are already accommodated and served by the state, and are hence not attracted by the strict religious identities nor services that come with religious membership. Consequently, religious establishments remain inactive due to societal secularization.

Conclusion

Secularity among Uruguayans extends beyond religious ideology. The Uncertainty, Social Identity, and Secularization theories prove that secular Uruguay has modernized to ensure stability and security, hence diminishing citizens' need to seek refuge in religious institutions. Moreover, the Religious Economy Thesis proves that the monopolistic Catholic Church has no incentive to attract individuals. Since citizens are satisfied with the status of Uruguay, they are consequently unsatisfied with the materialism and lack of benefits that the Church offers. Citizenry's desire for community is not found in religious establishments, but through inter-relations of people from different backgrounds. Secular Uruguay undermined the Church by substantially providing for its citizens. And the Uruguayan population consequently secularized in these conditions, hence decreasing their appeal towards the inactive Church — and all religious establishments.

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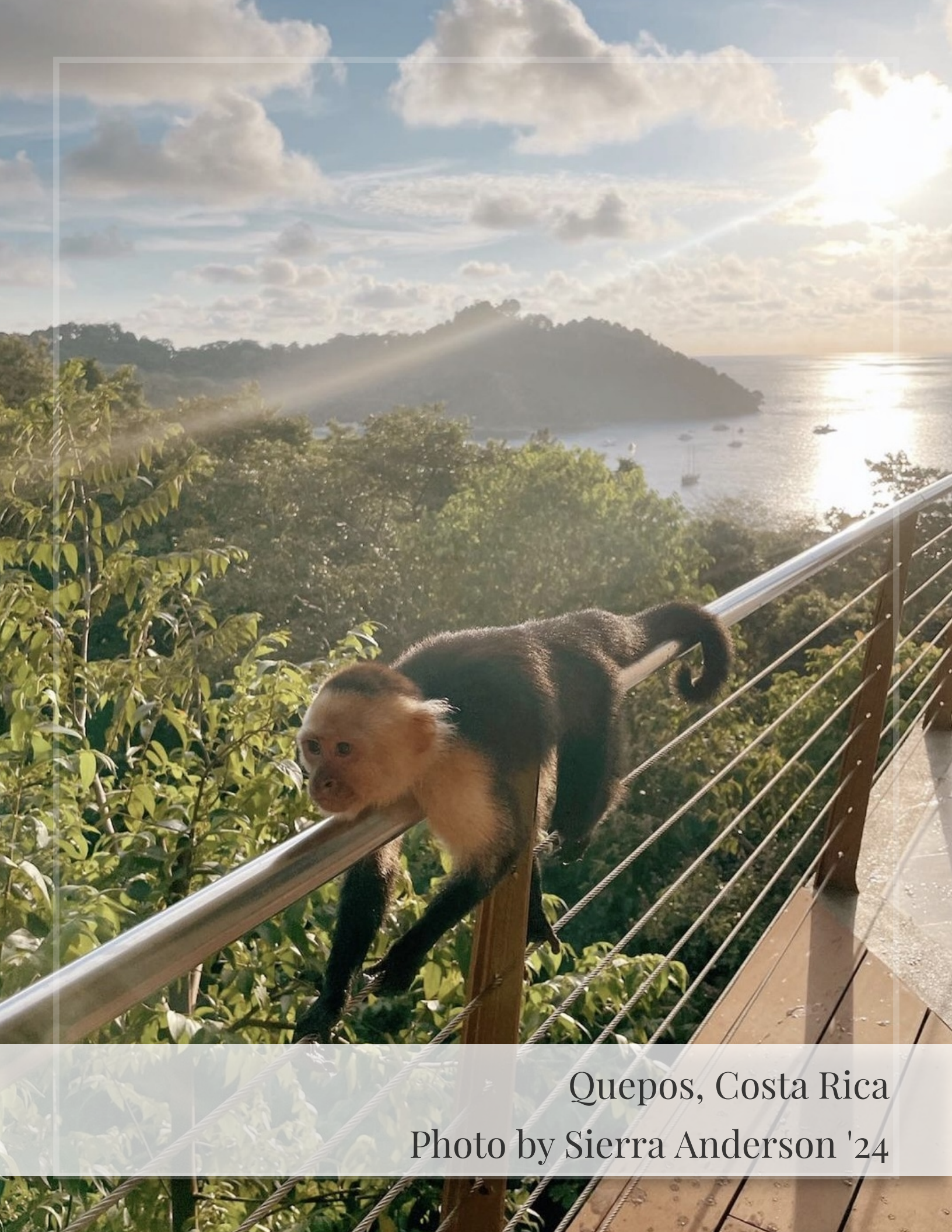
Quepos, Costa Rica

Photo by Sierra Anderson '24

Murder Monks: Explaining Buddhist Nationalism

Molly O'Connor '24

The southeast Asian nation of Myanmar - interchangeably called Burma in this paper - was most frequently in the news for violent conflicts between Muslims and Buddhists in the northwestern Rakhine province and beyond, prior to the 2021 military coup that radically changed its politics. Much of this religious violence has been attributed to the incendiary rhetoric of Buddhist monks; the most famous of which is U Wirathu "The Face of Buddhist Terror," and the political movements they spurred (Beech, 1). These movements (969 and Ma Ba Tha) have been extremely successful and included both laypeople and individuals involved with religious orders (Walton and Hayward, 13). There are two leading theories that explain why these movements have been so successful in Myanmar in preaching violence despite the contradictory ideas of the Buddhist doctrine. The first follows the Globalization-Secularization Theory that attributes their growth to individuals seeking security in the face of growing global instability. The second follows a gradual path of Organizational Radicalization on the part of these monks the way that they speak and interact with the public. Using a congruence analysis, this paper will find that the former theory is closer to the objective reality of what is happening in Myanmar, however, only when placed in context by the latter theory.

The Globalization Secularization theory acknowledges that in our modern world, little seems predictable, sensible, or safe. The core of insecurity doctrine is that "it is a world where many people feel intensified levels of insecurity as the life they once led is being contested

and changed at the same time," (Kinvall, 742) It assumes that as the world is changing, individuals will begin to feel insecure in their place in it. As a result, individuals will cling harder to group memberships that help to solidify their identities. Thus, increasing power and influence of the leaders of that group. Religion and nationality are the most commonly attributable identities to this theory because they are the easiest to attach the notions of stability and safety to (Kinvall, 742). The motivations of these insecurities are fears of "losing religion, language and culture" at the hand of the outgroup, often exemplified with rhetoric of replacement or being relegated to minority status in one's one country (Gravers, 3).In turn, that outgroup must be villainized at minimum to maintain the narrative that the chosen ingroup provides a safety blanket against the chaos of the world at large (Kinvall, 762). The cost of maintaining that sense of security can rise to violence against the outgroup in extreme cases. The theory expects that as insecurity increases, membership, the

intensity of that membership, and attacks on respective outgroups will also increase.

Furthermore, the Organizational Radicalization model assumes that political organizations follow a series of rational choices that lead previously non-radical organizations to radicalize over time. It first assumes that the group does not have a monopoly over the entire population and that "the presence of religious/ideological competition increases the importance of obtaining active followers," for that group (Gill, 405). Adding and maintaining followers is essential for the continued survival of these groups because "membership loss forebodes declining sociopolitical influence for the [institution]," (Gill, 412). In the face of this competition, groups are presented with the choice of changing or staying the same. It is more often than not in the interest of these organizations to move towards a stricter or more radical interpretation of their values because "strictness makes organizations stronger and

more attractive because it reduces free riding,"(Iannaccone, 1180). In this radicalization process, the group condenses and consolidates further perpetuating the cycle that takes a nonviolent organization deeper into radicalism. This theory explains why most terror movements don't strictly adhere to religious texts but remain deeply religious (Jeurgensmeyer, 6). Additionally, this process is more likely to occur in areas where religious plurality is high and therefore there is more religious competition. This model expects that when faced with competition religious groups will become more radical in order to obtain and maintain their follower base.

Historical background and political caveats must be discussed before this paper dives deeper into how these theories are applicable to the radical Buddhist monks of Myanmar. This case study reviews information prior to the globally condemned military coup in Myanmar that replaced the government with a military regime. In addition, "since 2012, many people in Myanmar have perpetrated and committed targeted acts of full-fledged violence against the Rohingya," a primary Muslim minority ethnic group in Myanmar (Khan, 820).This study also assumes that acts of targeted violence are contradictory to typical Buddhist teaching. Finally, despite the lack of a regular census, the most recent data suggests that one-third of the population of Rakhine state is Muslim (Walton and Hayward, 19).This is important to our analysis as the majority of the anti-Muslim violence occurs in the Rakhine state.

Out of the three prongs of Globalization-Secularization theory, insecurity, powerful leaders and villainizing the "outgroup," two are fully met and one is partially met. It is apparent that Myanmar has not been particularly stable in recent years. The nation has experienced movement from colony to military regime to quasi-democracy and again to military regime in its recent history. What makes this instability notable is the

fact that it has been entirely blamed on the Muslim community. Monks have cited "that their purpose is to protect and promote Buddhist values and traditions in the midst of the country's transformation and as it opens up to the modern world," (Walton and Hayward, ix). The first component is most clearly seen in the fact "the growth of these Buddhist groups has coincided with and contributed to what appears to be a new (or intensified) climate of anti-Muslim sentiment, "(Schonthal and Walton, p. 82). The 969 and Ma Ba Tha leaders are "[depicting] Islam as culturally inimical to Burmese values," and therefore having no place within the nation (Walton and Hayward, 2). These "deeply held anxieties about the fate of Buddhism," are directly leading to the violence being incited (Walton and Hayward, 5). Typically, when looking that these acts of violence, "the riots started with rumors of an alleged rape of a Buddhist girl or woman by a Muslim. Matters quickly turned ugly when demonstrations led by monks ended in mob killings, the looting of shops, arson, and the destruction of mosques," (Gravers, 11). While U Wirathu has denied responsibility for the riots using "the Buddhist idea that the lack of intention removes culpability," and have instead shifted the blame onto Muslims themselves, their rhetoric of "portraying the Rohingya as the other, and violently terrorizing them," is evident of the third prong (Walton and Hayward, 28-29) (Khan, 817). The increasing intensity of membership is only seen within robed communities, with the average Burmese citizen not increasing in religiosity. This is seen in "Myanmar's monks and nuns hav[ing] responded to the political transition in ways that have ... driven conflict and bolstered exclusionary attitudes that feed violence," (Walton and Hayward, 10).While there have been few notable secular inciters of violence, these leaders have received government support (Schonthal and Walton, 85). Going even further, the state has acted in accordance with their preaching but has not been superseded in influence

by governmental actors (Khan, 817) (Khan, 835). It is evident that insecurity is playing a role in the Myanmar case and that radical Buddhist actors have taken advantage of individuals clinging to their word. While personal religiosity has not increased, several high-profile monks have been using their state support to attack who they view as the most threatening out-group to their positions.

Both of the two prongs of the Organizational Radicalization model, active recruitment as well as stricter, more radical actions, were each met. The second has already been addressed above with the radical and genocidal actions incited by monks since 2012. The first is met through an analysis of the early history of Buddhist groups in Burma. The recurrent "trope of Buddhism-in-danger" can trace its origins to divide and conquer tactics enforced by the British during their colonial occupation of the territory (Foxeus, 661). The British brought Muslim Indian migrants into the region to be used for labor leading to a

resentment response against them (Foxeus, 667). This is the example used by many Burmese Buddhists "of how Islam has displaced Buddhism in the past," (Walton and Hayward, 17). The Young Men's Buddhist Association was formed to protect the culture and the language in 1906 along with countless others (Foxeus, 665). It quickly evolved to conflate a Burmese identity with a Buddhist one, marking the first sign of radicalization. These resentments became political in the early twentieth century with "concerns about who will profit and who will be left behind in the midst of these vast changes," rising to the forefront (Walton and Hayward, 4). This was a result of "the economic success of some members of the Myanmar Muslim community, who historically comprised the mercantile class and so enjoyed financial success," (Walton and Hayward, 14). The second decision towards radicalization was made by the monks who "viewed the colonial order as a moral disorder and thereby found it was legitimate to intervene in the secular world," who

did nothing to stop the Indo-Burmese riots in the 1930s (Gravers, 8). Still today "Burmese Buddhists still have a sense of inferiority vis-à -vis the Indian minority (today the Muslims) that is perceived to be more affluent and powerful, especially regarding success in business and in marriage affairs, but also in political matters," (Foxeus, 685). The perceived competition in the economic and political field for almost 130 years is part of what is spurring the increasing radicalization. Considering that "the strength of strict churches is neither a historical coincidence nor a statistical artifact," this corroborates the model (Iannacone, 1180). The context of British colonialism and the early introduction of monkish grievances make the explanation more possible.

Each of these theories work in tandem with the other to produce the closest mirror of reality. While Organizational Radicalization has 100% congruence based on my analysis and Globalization-Secularization only has partial fulfillment. These theories complement one another in the context of the nationalist element of this case study. As the labels "Buddhist" and "Burmese" became synonymous, "Buddhism became the core of ethnic Burman nationalism and was involved in the identity politics," (Gravers, 8). This namely took the form of "nationalist monks...implicitly or explicitly, exclude[ing] [Muslims] from, and contrast them to [Buddhists]," (Foxeus, 678). The global insecurities are exacerbated by the historical decisions that led to organizational radicalization. This manifests in the doctrines of 969 and Ma Ba Tha expressing themselves in religious rhetoric with a spin towards "notions of Burmese Buddhist national identity and traditional ideas about the fragility of Buddhism and its teachings that have circulated within Theravada Buddhist societies for centuries," (Walton and Hayward, x).The Pali word *sasana* encompasses this idea of the interconnection between the success of the state and the success of the religion that exists in Theravada and informs the rhetoric of these

monks. As defined by Wirathu it is equivalent to combined conception of Buddhism, Burma, and ethnic Burmese population (Walton and Hayward, 22).It connects the struggle in Myanmar to global narratives to the global war on terror with fears of Muslims being inherently violent towards other populations and therefore worthy of violence against them. Another element of this is that the radical organizations have been the only ones claiming this intrinsic connection and therefore have "no significant rival claimants to the mantle of protecting Buddhism in Myanmar, " (Schonthal and Walton, 102). As the sole protectors they get final say and are able to portray themselves as "defenseless victims of the Muslim minority" and explains their willingness to use fringe interpretations of Buddhist doctrine (Foxeus, 685). Which in turn loops back into Globalization-Secularization as a reaffirmation of a threatened identity (Kinvall, 742). The theoretical framework that best explains the reality of radical and violent Buddhist monks is the long colonial history of Burma leading to the gradual radicalization of organizations that fell into violent traps as a result of insecurities explained by global trends.

Murderous monks would typically be seen as an oxymoron; however, they exist in multitudes in Myanmar. Advocating for the genocide of a minority group on dehumanizing grounds their continued existence and influence over the nation demands to be investigated. While "religious bias and misunderstanding are common, especially in communities that have lacked access to information," there are two theories that when combined explain this (Walton and Hayward, 7). The first accounts for the significant amount of political instability in the nation and the impact that has on the religious reliance of its citizens. The second places these modern insecurities in the context of much older ones that still plague Buddhists and Muslims alike. Together they answer the question of why this Buddhist Nationalism remains prevalent in Myanmar.

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Kathmandu, Nepal
Photo by Jay Chatterjee '23

Sam Nujoma: How an Exiled Leader Instituted Namibian Nationalism

Ethan Valbuena '24

Sam Nujoma, coined as the Father of the Namibian Nation, served as Namibia's founding president from 1990 to 2005. Nujoma combined his charismatic and transformational attributes as a leader to champion Namibian independence and forge a new democracy in the country despite the challenges posed by its colonial legacy.

At the time of his birth, Namibia was still a territory of South Africa which was gained through an order of the League of Nations. Nujoma's interest in politics and his anti-colonial spirit emerged during his early years when he moved around the country to seek better educational and occupational opportunities, which exposed him to the world of politics and the independence struggle.

Through his work for the South African Railway, he learned of the harsh labor contract system instituted by the South African regime where he experienced their racist apartheid policies. This system is elaborated on by Allan Cooper, stating that:

"under the contract labor system, the government of South West Africa served as an official employment agency through which Africans sold their labour and White employers could obtain African workers" (Cooper, 122).

Workers were subjected to meager wages and harsh conditions under this system of labor. In the 1950s, as his political interest was growing, Nujoma became involved in trade union activities to give Black Namibians a voice in their employment. He led several organized strikes and demonstrations against South African apartheid in Namibia. As a consequence, his employer discovered that he was partaking in political activities and dismissed him from his job.

In 1967, Sam Nujoma and a band

of other influential independence leaders founded the Ovamboland People's Organization (OPO), the predecessor of the South West People's Organization (SWAPO), which was an organization that originally functioned as a trade union for contract workers. In 1967, Sam Nujoma alongside other leaders founded the Ovamboland People's Organization (OPO), which originally functioned as a trade union for contract workers. As President of the OPO, As the President of the OPO, Nujoma played a pivotal role in the planning and orchestrating of the Old Location Uprising, a resistance movement to the forced removal of black Namibians from Windhoek's Old Location to the newly established Katutura community on the outskirts of Windhoek. During these protests on December 10, 1959, police forces fired into the crowds of peaceful demonstrators which resulted in thirteen fatalities and nearly 50 injured protestors. The events of the Old Location Uprising led to the arrest of Sam Nujoma, whom security forces deemed as the orchestrator. However, a more important outcome of this event was that it became a symbol of national independence for Namibians. Nujoma, after being released from jail to await trial, fled into exile in 1960 and later that year he became President of SWAPO, founded on April 19, following the disbanding of OPO.

At the organization's first congress in 1960, elected leader Nujoma established SWAPO's headquarters in Tanzania and the organization enjoyed the support of anti-colonial activist and Tanzanian prime minister, Julius Nyerere. The South West Africa People's Organization, founded as the political force fighting for Namibian independence, in 1966 launched an armed struggle against South Africa under its armed wing, the People's Liberation Army, after several years of petitioning the United Nations to pressure South Africa to relinquish its control over South West Africa. Nujoma infamously proclaimed to his

people, "we must at once begin crossing the many rivers of blood on our march towards freedom" (Vigne, 90). During his time in exile, South African propaganda was constantly produced to change the Namibian's minds about Nujoma, however, his dedication shone through these attempts and his support remained as did that of SWAPO.

Much of Nujoma's time in exile was spent petitioning world leaders to support a resolution to achieve Namibian independence and for example, he attended the All-African People's Conference in 1960 in Ghana hosted by Kwame Nkrumah. As President of SWAPO, his party was also recognized by the Organization of African Unity as the only lawful representative of Namibia and Nujoma attended its founding meeting in 1963. There, Nujoma met with leaders like Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, who inspired his Pan-Africanist perspective. Later, he traveled to the United States where, as previously mentioned, petitioned before the United Nations for a resolution to end South Africa's occupation of Namibia. Western media and politicians were hesitant to support the Namibian independence movement because they viewed Nujoma as a leader who sought to consolidate his power under a one-party system, thus working against the potential democratization. In addition, these Western powers were also hesitant to work with Nujoma due to his blunt nature which was not like that of a natural politician. They believed that the exiled members of SWAPO did not represent the internal desires of the movement, however, the exiled members vehemently stood in solidarity with the party in Namibia to prove their commitment to the united struggle for independence.

After proving the merit of the movement, Sam Nujoma began working with "The Western Five," which was comprised of the UN Security Council members Britain, the United States, France, West Germany, and Canada, in order to develop a

resolution for Namibian independence. He led negotiations between this group and the surrounding African neighbors to develop a plan for his independence movement. After nearly twenty years of Nujoma's tireless petitioning efforts, in 1978, the UN adopted resolution 435 which called for an end to the illegal occupation of Namibia by South Africa and established a United Nations Transition Assistance Group for the purpose of aiding in the Namibian transition to national independence. However, the plan was delayed for almost a decade due to actions by the Reagan administration and tactics by South Africa to avoid adhering to the resolution.

After more than a decade, South Africa finally accepted the resolution and agreed to end its colonial rule over South West Africa (Namibia). The United States mediated this deal and South Africa agreed to it under the condition that Angola and Cuba would withdraw their troops from the region. This agreement was monumental, as it granted independence for Africa's last colony, allowing Sam Nujoma to return after thirty years of fighting for Namibian independence while in exile. The UN held supervised elections in 1989, which the South-West Africa People's Organization won with a 57% majority of the votes, beating out the South African-supported opposition party, DTA. Thus, Sam Nujoma was unanimously elected by the parliament as Namibia's first president. In his speech to the body following his election, he called for all Namibians to work together and unite behind their government for peace and democratic stability. Sam Nujoma would go on to serve as the Namibian President for three terms from 1990 up until he peacefully stepped down from power in 2005.

Nujoma played an influential role in the drafting of a national constitution and he laid the groundwork for a successful democracy. Much of this foundational work was done in his first term, such as his Electoral Act of 1992 followed

by the institution of the Electoral Commission, which serves as an independent entity that conducts free and fair elections in Namibia. The Constitution he drafted created a multi-party democratic system in the country. He also pursued a policy of decentralization, which localized government for Namibians and provided for the institution of a system of checks and balances on the national party. Under Nujoma's leadership, SWAPO adopted the concept of freedom in Namibia's government characterized by the right to life and personal liberty, the right to the freedom of movement, and expression, conscience, worship, speech, press, assembly, association, as well as other pillars of individual liberty. Nujoma's government recognized and encouraged participation from opposition political groups, which he has demonstrated through his appointments of the opposition and of White members to government positions. While SWAPO held a large majority throughout Nujoma's three terms in power, the opposition was never suppressed under his leadership which further reinforced his dedication to a democratic transition in Namibia following independence.

Another notable character trait of Nujoma's government was it's relatively high levels of citizen participation in elections. This exemplifies the accountability aspect of a healthy democracy because the power to govern was decided by the Namibian people rather than dictated by the political elites Hence, civilian participation rates in elections averaged an astounding rate of 84%. During each election cycle, SWAPO increased its number of seats in parliament, demonstrating the continued satisfaction of the electorate with Nujoma's government and policies. As opposed to the opposition parties which primarily garnered the votes of a particular ethnic faction, SWAPO was able to appeal to the interests of a variety of groups and won the votes of all the different

ethnic and racial groups in the country. This further goes to show that Nujoma was not only an independence leader but he was also a national icon who was genuinely dedicated to ensuring the prosperity and national unity of his country. In fact, he even coined the phrase "One Namibia, One Nation" to title his goal of national unity. Sam Nujoma's plan for national reconciliation in the country after decades of brutal rule under South Africa's apartheid regime was just one of his many successes as leader. Upon Namibia's independence, White and Black Namibians had been divided by decades of racist policies and propaganda of the South African regime. The day following his election, Nujoma gave a speech in which he proclaimed his intent for this plan. He stated "SWAPO wants to reassure the nation that it will stand by its policy of national reconciliation. In this connection, we re-state our readiness to cooperate with all sectors of our society, including those in business, the Public Service, the farmers, and the workers in moving our society forward" (Balch and Scholten 91). Nujoma elaborated on this goal by mentioning that two of his brothers were killed during the battle for independence and that he has no intention of hunting down their killers because the country must move forward and leave its history of division in the past. One way this plan was actualized was through the integration of police squads. Nujoma ordered that former liberation fighters and South West African counterinsurgency fighters exist and work together for the newly independent Namibia. These efforts were successful in uniting Namibia under a common national identity and this nationalism superseded racial and ethnic divides that were exacerbated by apartheid rule.

Sam Nujoma also brought many social successes to Namibia during his presidency. Nujoma's democratic framework also provided high levels of civil society and free media. This was especially important because when

there is one ruling party, accountability can be hard to achieve, but Nujoma's government recognized the necessity of a strong civil society to maintain a functioning democracy. Even the state-owned public broadcast radio is able to freely engage in criticism of the government. By the end of his presidency, Namibia was ranked as the 42nd most free press in the world, which received a higher ranking than several Western states. Non-governmental organizations also operate freely within Namibia because of Nujoma's constitution. These mediums' freedom further portrays the success of Nujoma's constitution and how it contributed to a strong and engaged civil society, as well as building a concerted national identity.

Unfortunately, however, economic successes were difficult to achieve for Nujoma due to the legacy of colonial rule in Namibia, but he was still able to make economic strides. In the years leading up to independence, South Africa began privatizing industries in the country in order to continue to profit from them. Nujoma inherited a declining economy with a decreasing real GDP and staggering levels of economic inequality between White and Black Namibians, which presented a daunting task for the newly elected leader. After independence, he joined the Organization of African Unity, the Southern African Customs Union, and the Southern African Development Coordination Conference. Originally, the coastal city of Walvis Bay remained in the possession of South Africa, however, Nujoma was able to secure the key economic region for Namibia in 1994. These were all necessary actions if Nujoma was going to turn the tide of the Namibian economy around.

Nujoma decided to put aside the Marxist economic policy that SWAPO ran on and instead, he pursued more conservative economic reforms to unite the labor force and reduce reliance on the economy of South Africa. He also emphasized redistributing state funds to support

the impoverished populations of Namibia. He combined conservative and liberal economic policies to ensure rights for workers, while also attracting direct foreign investment. This led to an increase of 33% in direct foreign investment between 1990 and 1996 (IMF, 1997). The economy remained highly dependent on mining and agriculture, however, the share of mining to GDP fell from an average of 22.7% to 11.9 by 1998. This demonstrates that Nujoma was able to reduce to economy's dependence on mining in some respects. Nujoma also established export processing zones in Walvis Bay to diversify the economy through manufacturing, which yielded modest success. He also orchestrated the construction of the trans-Kalahari highway which linked Namibia's land-locked neighbors to the deep-water port in Walvis Bay. Overall, Nujoma enacted policies to help achieve economic independence for Namibia, but the yields during his presidency were modest.

In terms of healthcare, Sam

Nujoma delivered huge advancements for Namibia. At the time of independence, the life expectancy for White Namibians was 20 years older than that of Black Namibians. Nujoma focused his efforts on increasing access to healthcare for the rural and poor populations of Namibia. By 2001, he was able to triple the number of care points available in the country and ensure that 80% of Namibians lived within 10 km of a healthcare center (Karlesky, 124). Unfortunately, the AIDS epidemic drastically affected Namibia and reversed many of the advancements that Nujoma had made for his people. In 1999, his government instituted a rigorous plan to address the epidemic, which set preventative and treatment goals. By 2007, prevalence declined and the number of Namibians receiving treatment increased, which speaks to the success of this ambitious plan.

Nujoma also dedicated specific efforts to improve education, especially for Black Namibians, who had historically received an inferior

education due to apartheid laws in the country. His first budget in 1990 allocated 41% of spending to healthcare, education, and housing, which was a three-fold increase from the South African administration's budget allocation the year prior. (Freeman, 39). Nujoma combined the eleven education administrations of education into one national education administration and created a Namibian curriculum as opposed to a South African one. In his first decade in office, Nujoma constructed 300 new schools and created schedules that maximized students' learning, while working with the obstacles presented by a teacher staffing shortage. This led to increases in both primary and secondary enrollment. Nujoma made huge strides in terms of education in Namibia, especially for rural populations who had been systematically oppressed for decades prior to independence.

Another pillar of success that Nujoma instituted was his conservation efforts. In 1998, Sam Nujoma received the Gift to the Earth Award, which is widely considered the highest award in conservation. The award recognized Nujoma's conservation efforts and commitment to rural people. Under Nujoma's constitution, Namibia became the first country in Africa to provide constitutional protection for the environment. He instituted the first four conservancies in the country, which also provided jobs for local Namibian communities. This groundbreaking effort to conserve Namibia's natural beauty is regarded as one of Nujoma's greatest successes.

Despite the founding president's many successes, he also has his share of shortcomings and failures. The most notable of these failures was during his second term when he worked alongside his party to change the constitution to allow him to run and serve for a third consecutive term. His reasoning was that the first UN-supervised elections were not direct elections, therefore he could be exempt from the constitutional term

limits rule. This was a considerable failure because it put the democratic framework of the country at risk, which had the potential to lead to a crisis. Fortunately, Nujoma stepped down after his third term when Pohamba was elected president.

Another one of his failures was that some of his economic policies failed to materialize their predicted outcome. This includes Nujoma's policy of land reform, which was intended to equalize the unequal distribution of land between White and Black Namibians. In the end, only 35,000 Black Namibians were settled on redistributed land. The policy required the government to buy land from White landowners but due to high land prices, the government was unable to buy the amount of land needed to achieve the intended outcomes of the policy. While this policy was great in theory, its failure to materialize led to persistent economic inequality between Black and White Namibians.

Nujoma also presented social

failures during his tenure. These failures were not plentiful, but their impact was influential and targeted toward certain populations in the country. Despite leading one of the most progressive governments, during his third term, he announced purges against the LGBTQ+ community demanding that they be arrested and deported. This rhetoric was also reciprocated towards White Namibians and foreigners in Namibia. His rhetoric damaged the progressive legacy of the country and went against his previous message of national unity regardless of perceived differences. His second social failure was his refusal to investigate claims that SWAPO had brutally tortured prisoners and suspected foreign agents during the independence war. He defended his stance by denying the claims and by arguing that the country must move forward from the atrocities of the war if it wanted to achieve national unity. These were Nujoma's most apparent social failures during his tenure as the founding president of

Namibia.

In conclusion, Sam Nujoma can be characterized as both a transformational leader and a charismatic leader. During the independence movement, his charisma and integrity as a leader allowed him to maintain the support of his country, even while he was in exile. The Namibian people recognized the dedication of their leader and refused to waver in their support of him, despite extensive propaganda efforts by South Africa to demonize Nujoma. Upon independence, Nujoma created the first democracy of his country and instituted a successful multi-party democracy with high levels of participation, civil society, and a free press. He created a national identity among the people of Namibia that helped mend the wounds created by decades of apartheid rule by South Africa. He transformed healthcare and education within Namibia and shortened the gap between White and Black Namibians regarding these infrastructures. Finally, he made conservation a pillar of Namibia's constitution, making it the first of its kind in Africa. All of these factors contributed to Sam Nujoma's characterization as a transformational leader in Namibia. In all , Sam Nujoma displayed his charismatic and transformational leadership through his thirty-year fight for Namibian independence and his transformative agenda as the founding father of Namibia

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Seville, Spain

Photo by Katherine Ryan '23

The Moderation of Islam: How the UAE Utilized Religion to Appeal to Western Actors

Elayna Davis-Mercer '24

Introduction

The United Arab Emirates is a unique country in terms of wealth, population, and religion. Although their state religion is Islam, they have made a strict effort to promote "moderate" Islam and separate from any form of extremism. In this paper I will pose the question: What factors have led the government of the United Arab Emirates to promote moderate Islam following the Arab Spring? First, I will introduce the topic and what I have found throughout my research, then I will pose two hypotheses based on theories prevalent to the case. Then, I will test these hypotheses with research and empirical evidence. Finally, I will conclude my key findings from the research provided.

Throughout my research I have found that this moderation aims to establish a separation between religion and government like those in western countries; however, it is not as widely accepted domestically as it is globally. Additionally, this separation is in hopes that their Western allies and neighbors will continue to provide stability and security on a global scale. My research highlights the importance of foreign policy to the Emirati government which has been a motivating factor in their shift to a moderate Islam movement, and away from any form of extremism.

Hypotheses

First, I hypothesize that the inclusion-moderation theory suggests that to gain recognition globally, the United Arab Emirates has emphasized moderation of Islam and in doing so has shifted to a more centrist position. The inclusion-moderation theory states that since most voters are centrist and do not want radicalization,

religious parties will move towards a political center to gain more support. Ultimately, they will secularize. Within this country case study of the United Arab Emirates, it is the one that will shift towards the center to gain support, not on a domestic scale, but within the international political realm. Second, I hypothesize that the social movement theory suggests that the United Arab Emirates will create an organized movement to promote tolerance of varying religions and the idea of moderate Islam within their country. The social movement theory claims that a movement will make organized, sustained, and collective efforts that make claims on behalf of a group. These movements aim to challenge, defend, and raise consciousness on either broad or narrow issues.

Evidence

To test the inclusion-moderation theory in this case study I analyzed the reaction of the United Arab Emirates government to the rise of the reformist group Al-Islah. Specifically,

how the governing bodies shifted towards a moderate Islam after the uprisings of the Arab Spring. An article on inclusion-moderation within Islam states that, "the term [moderate] is most often used to describe those who don't rock the boat: moderates may advocate for democratization, for example, but ultimately they accept limited reforms that protect the power bases of the current elites" (Schwedler). This aligns directly with the politics of the United Arab Emirates which is made up of seven Emirates that are governed by hereditary rulers. Since there are no political parties there is no chance of Democracy, the seven rulers of the Emirates are political elites who then elect a President from their group. The moderation of Islam that this governing body is proposing will do nothing to suspend or take away any of their power but promote a tolerant and inclusive image to the rest of the world. Due to this political climate, there is no opportunity for democracy and the people have no say in who governs their respective

Emirates or the country.

The country is also unique as only 11% of the population are citizens, the rest are expatriates from surrounding countries. Al-Islah, also known as the Reform and Social Guidance, was an Islamist movement in the United Arab Emirates that called for a more representative political system within the country (Hakala). Originally, it was a civil society organization that was on good terms with the state officials. However, it soon developed a political reform agenda that was inspired by the values of moderate political Islam. In his article titled, "Exploring Divergent Responses to the Arab Spring" David Roberts writes, "As Islah's footprint grew so did it's appetite for influencing society through petitioning the federal government for changes or fomenting social pressure." (Roberts). This was one of the first organizations that garnered enough attention to pose a legitimate threat to the current political system in the UAE. With the eruption of the Arab Spring the Emirati government began to fear that Islah would take control of their country; in response they "launched a full-fledged attack... against the Muslim Brotherhood... locally and regionally" (Roberts). However, Islah maintained that they had no direct link to the Muslim Brotherhood and they promoted non-violent methods (Hakala). The group was eventually shut down by the Emirati government through numerous arrests.

The governing body of the Emirates was threatened by the uprising of the Islah group as they called into question the political legitimacy of the current government. Not only did this group call it into question but they sparked questioning from the population as well. In response the UAE turned to the global political realm to secure their position. Speaking to the aftermath of the Arab Spring, Panos Kourgiotis writes, "the government announced the creation of four new ministries—Tolerance, Happiness, Youth and Future—reflecting the country's

'success story' in spite of the upheavals surrounding it." (Kourgiotis). The UAE grasped this opportunity to shift their political and religious messaging to gain a stronger support system within the international community. This shift in messaging emphasized their views on "moderate" Islam. They started promoting a move towards Islam that focuses on, "personal spirituality, is against violent interpretations, and which is present on the public scene but does not interfere with the political and economic choices of rulers" (Townshend-Denton).

With the moderation of Islam, they also promoted the equality of women to a strong extent and the building of religious buildings for those of differing religions (Kourgiotis). This shift away from traditional Islam was a response to uncertainty brought forth by the Arab Spring and the Islah reform group. For the governing body of the Emirates to gain more support from the international community they appealed to a broader audience and shifted themselves to a more centrist position. This upholds the inclusion-moderation theory as the Emirati government understood that the international community was primarily centrist and would be supportive of a more moderate Islam, especially after the world was just privy to the Arab Spring and effects of the Muslim Brotherhood.

To test the social movement theory in this case study I analyzed reactions to the movement by citizens of the United Arab Emirates. In the case of the UAE, the government aimed to reverse their religious attitude following the Arab spring. Following the UAE shutdown of the Islah (Brotherhood-affiliate group) the governing bodies aimed to dispel any forms of extremism. They sought to reinterpret Islam based on "tolerance, openness, interfaith dialogue, and moderation" (Kourgiotis). They built places of worship for those of other religions on public land and they promoted the empowerment of

women. The governing body of the United Arab Emirates saw what might happen if a group such as the Islah gained power and in hopes of dispelling these groups promoted moderate Islam and religious tolerance. As the social movement theory claims this movement was not part of the normal political process but an attempt to "recompose" following a form of disorientation that remained after the Arab Spring (Tarrow). It is important to remember that only 11% of the UAE population are citizens, the rest of the population are expats and are not granted citizenship. Out of the population of citizens more than 85% are Sunni Muslims and the remainder are Shia Muslims. There are those of other religions living in the UAE as well, such as Christianity (9%), and other groups such as Hindus and Buddhists. The social movement that the Emirati government portrayed to the international community was promoted to the population as well.

In the spirit of religious tolerance, the Pope visited the country and gave a speech to thousands of people that complimented the Emirates for "looking forward" (Kourgiotis). This portrayed a strong message of religious tolerance in a country whose state religion is Islam. In addition, the country constructed new places of worship for those who are non-Muslim, "all on land donated freely by ruling authorities" (Kourgiotis). The Emirati government also has complete control over domestic media; a tool in which it used to promote their "religious coexistence" (Kourgiotis). Although these efforts were beneficial to the Emirates on the global stage the domestic reaction was not positive. A public opinion poll conducted of the citizen population concluded that two-thirds of the population disagree that "we should listen to those among us who are trying to interpret Islam in a more moderate, tolerant, and modern direction." (Pollock). In addition, 47% say that their government is "doing too much" in "promoting opportunity and equality

for women" (Pollock). Finally, the poll found that one third still had a "somewhat positive" attitude toward the Muslim Brotherhood.

These findings prove that the social movement the Emirati government attempted failed to mobilize the population for their cause. The Emirati government is instead appealing to international actors as well as expats living in the country to build support and promote their message of tolerance. This poll shows that moderate Islam has not been accepted by the citizens of the United Arab Emirates, however, the governing body might not need their support. Since they only compose 11% of the population the government can disregard this dissent and instead focus on gaining support from groups who can provide it stability and security. This includes the large population of wealthy expatriates as well we global political allies such as the United States and other countries. Speaking on the relationship between the United States and the UAE, Annelle Sheline writes,

"When a regime like the UAE claims to represent moderate Islam and paints any alternative expression of Islam as extremist, the United States is more likely to ignore human rights violations against "terrorists" and continue offering military and financial partnership." (Sheline). The Emirati government does not need the support of its citizens when it is not a democracy, as the people have no say in the government. There is no path for the citizens to voice their dissent through politics and instead must go to great lengths to try and form a reform group. Although the government attempted a social movement domestically it failed in organizing the citizens for a common cause.

Conclusion

Analyzing the case of the United Arab Emirates has allowed for a greater grasp on the factors that led to such a strong promotion of moderate Islam following the Arab spring. We can conclude that inclusion-moderation theory

accounted for the reasoning behind the country's promotion of moderate Islam within the international community. The Emirati government aimed to gain support on the global scale and centralized their positions to do so. On the other hand, the country failed to organize their citizens in a social movement that promoted religious tolerance, however they were still able to gain international and expatriate support from this movement. Since the UAE is not a democracy it does not need to appeal to their citizens in the same way that other countries do. Instead, it looks towards the international community in which it can gain further support and security.

The promotion of moderate Islam was not just a shift in religious ideology but a way in which the country could forward their global political goals as well as strengthen their political legitimacy. The timing of this shift was very important; the UAE took advantage of the unrest and world view that was on Arab countries following the Arab spring and rise of the Muslim Brotherhood. By taking such a stark stance against extremism it positioned itself with Western ideals and even promoted the separation of Church and state. However, the official religion is still Islam and there are no democratic structures in place to maintain or enforce any separation of church and state. The strongest factors that allow the Emirates to promote moderate Islam on a global scale, despite disagreement from their citizens, is the majority expat population as well as the fact that it is a federal presidential elective constitutional monarchy. Ultimately, if the current political system is maintained the citizens will not have an opportunity to voice their opinions or speak up against the promotion of moderate Islam for the political benefit of the governing body.

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Paros, Greece

Photo by Sage Martin '23

Preserving the Privilege of the Catholic Church

Sarah-Kate Childs '25

Introduction

Catholicism was first established in Guatemala in 1524, and for over three hundred years the religion dominated without a challenge (Samson). Evangelical Protestants, however, began to pose an immense threat to Catholic privilege beginning in the 1960s with the start of the country's civil war. Guatemalan Catholics faced heavy repression throughout the civil war (Samson). Catholics were murdered, persecuted, and even forced to convert to Protestantism to "save their lives" (Steinberg 456). However, the Catholic Church has maintained its domination in Guatemala. Even in the post-war society, the nation's constitution grants special privileges to the Catholic Church. It specifically "recognizes the distinct legal personality of the Catholic Church through a concordat with the Holy See" ("2020"). Thus, this begs the question: How has the Catholic Church preserved its power in Guatemala amidst widespread resistance and oppression? By studying the history of Catholicism within Guatemalan society, it is evident that the Catholic Church in Guatemala has earned the trust of citizens and has firmly established itself within the country's national identity, making it a dominant power even during times of oppression.

Discussion of Theories/Hypotheses

The first theory that could explain the domination of the Catholic Church in Guatemala is the Religious Economy Model. This theory uses the basics of supply-side economics to explain how religious competition generates an increase in religiosity. The Religious Economy Model states that when religious pluralism exists, religious organizations must compete

to attract more followers. A religious organization could recruit members when there is competition if they set themselves apart from the other religions – whether that be by services or a unique ideology. For example, an increase and improvement in a variety of services, such as schools, charities, or healthcare, would attract new members to a religious organization. Proactive recruitment is also achieved by supplying the religious market with a diverse range of religious interpretations and thus providing a religion suiting almost anyone's needs. Thus, this theory would predict that if Guatemalan Catholicism was faced with religious competition from Protestants, the Catholic Church would retain its status by attracting members through an expansion of services and/or a unique ideology. Further, Guatemala as a whole would become more religious in the wake of this Catholic-Protestant competition as both organizations actively recruit new members and expand their influence. The second possible explanation for

the continuing power of Catholicism in Guatemala comes from a combination of Historical Institutionalism and Ethno-religious Nationalism. Historical Institutionalism claims that state institutions are very hard to change once they are established because they are designed to promote and protect the state. Thus, a path dependency is created, as it would be very costly to change an established institution. Religion is a particularly influential state institution. Once national religion is established, a state will rarely disassociate from that religion, one reason being that establishing a state religion creates Ethno-religious Nationality. Citizens will heavily associate their national identity with their religious one, and the two become essentially interchangeable. Thus, when put together, these theories predict that as the Catholic Church becomes intertwined with Guatemalan national identity, a dependency will be established on the Church that will be nearly impossible

to disentangle. Further, if the Catholic Church is well established in Guatemala and receives societal trust, these theories would hypothesize that it would have immense power in society even amidst resistance.

The Religious Economy Model

It was not until the 1960s that any other religious group had enough power to challenge the dominance of the Catholic Church in Guatemala. Though the first Protestant arrived in Guatemala in 1882 and various indigenous religions already existed, no religion came close to the membership size and societal power of Catholicism (Samson). However, beginning in the 1960s, Guatemala fought a devastating 36 year long civil war that presented the opportunity for Protestants to gain following in Guatemala (Samson). Throughout the civil war, Catholics were associated with Communism because of their promotion of Liberation Theology. The Catholic Church, for example, called for redistribution of land, which was deemed especially Communistic (Cobb 2). Catholicism was thus quickly associated with left-wing guerilla groups, and the state began to violently repress Catholicism (Samson). Clergies were harassed and even assassinated in an attempt suppress Catholic influence (Steinberg 454). Further, the state encouraged conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism throughout the war (Bennett 2). Many Catholic Guatemalans were directly pressured to convert to avoid persecution (Penyak 145). Further, a destructive earthquake in 1976 required expansive relief work (Samson). With over a million people homeless because of the natural disaster, relief work was readily available for evangelical Protestants. Protestants used this service opportunity as a simultaneous missionary opportunity and began to convert massive numbers of Guatemalans. Thus, because of Protestant relief in the civil war and earthquake, by just 1982, twenty percent of the nation identified as Protestant. (Penyak 138)

As evangelical Protestants began to accumulate power, they preached both acceptance and compliance with the governmental state, and thus began to replace the previous Catholic alliance with the state (Penyak 145). Protestant churches even assisted the government in uncovering guerilla sympathizers (Cobb 4). Protestant influence was evident when the nation was led by its first ever Protestant president, President Ríos Montt (Penyak 131). Catholic persecution greatly increased with the presidency of Ríos Montt. Under his rule, from March 1982 to August 1983, President Montt promoted the idea that "a breakdown of moral values" created the nation's political chaos; Montt proposed a Protestant agenda instead that assisted the poor and ended guerilla resistance (Penyak 138). Montt's presidency justified the persecution of Catholics with this moral argument. They did so, for example, by prohibiting international aid from Catholic agencies; meanwhile, Protestant aid was gladly welcomed (Jacobson 379). However, the authenticity of Montt's Protestant agenda came into question when President Montt proceeded with the execution of five men despite a hand-written plea from Pope John Paul II (Penyak 142).

In response to these atrocious crimes, the Catholic Church began to take an even stronger stance against the government. Catholics in Guatemala "denounced the social order because they realized an 'apolitical' Church merely assured the continuation of the status quo" (Penyak 143-4). Catholicism became a symbol for resistance against the government, and those who condemned the brutal acts of violence that were taking place throughout the war found allegiance with the Catholic Church. Catholics promoted civil rights and became advocates for the poor throughout Guatemala (Penyak 143). Thus, even in the post-war Guatemalan society, the Catholic Church poses itself as a competing power to the government. The Church condemns the state for its

human rights violations and still calls attention to the horrors that occurred throughout the civil war (Steinberg 465). For example, "The Catholic Church consistently plays the role of state 'moral conscience' because its members and clergy were persecuted during the conflict" (Steinberg 454).

Moreover, Catholicism became a "church of the poor" (Jacobson 379). Catholic bishops began service projects in underdeveloped communities and began to provide aid to those particularly harmed by the political state (Cobb 4). Thus, the Catholic Church was able to change its role in society in the face of Protestant challenge. No longer was Catholicism an addition to the state; that became the Protestant role. Instead, the Catholic Church served as an opposition to the violent state and was able to maintain a large following by promoting peace (Samson). Competition between Catholics and Protestants left Guatemala with a highly religious country as now there is a church that will align with any individual's belief (Samson).

Historical Institutionalism

Before the Guatemalan civil war, the Catholic Church was deeply intertwined with the Guatemalan state. Catholicism was first established in Guatemala through Spanish colonialism in 1524, and for over three hundred years the Church's religious authority was unmatched (Samson). In fact, "the state gratefully accepted the Catholic Church as the sole legitimate religious authority" (Penyak 143). For example, the Catholic Church supported a military coup in 1954 that overthrew President Arbenz who sought to redistribute land (Penyak 144). Catholics supported the coup because Arbenz intended to change the status quo, which simultaneously challenged the Church. One Catholic bishop even encouraged Guatemalans to fight against the "barbarity of Moscow" and engage in the coup (Penyak 144). The Church preserved the state, and the state returned the favor. The state was the ruling government, the Church provided the

nation with a "moral mission", and neither challenged the other (Penyak 143). This gave Catholicism centuries to establish itself within Guatemalan national identity during years of critical nation-building before it even faced opposition from other religions.

Likewise, because of its close alliance to the state, no religious organization could challenge the dominance of the Church (Samson). Thus, Catholicism became a large part of Guatemalan identity as it was the sole national religion for over three hundred years. Unlike Protestant opposition, Catholicism had an established history that supported its status of national privilege. Because of this history, the Catholic Church "assumed a high profile" during peace negotiations following the civil war, and thus got a significant say in the post-war society structure. Catholic bishops specifically focused on inequalities and promoted a "firm and lasting peace" for the new society. (Samson) Thus, the Catholic Church provided stability during the political

and societal turmoil of the nation's civil society, making it an even more essential part of Guatemalan society.

The Catholic Church earned the trust of Guatemalans through its historical legacy, its provision of security, and its balance of power on the government. Because of the historical turmoil and continued oppressive regimes, many Guatemalans lost faith in the government. 42.3% of Guatemalans indicated they have no confidence at all in the government, and an additional 48.6% said they had very little (Haerpfer 26). On the contrary, 43.9% of Guatemalans indicated they have a great deal of trust in church, in addition to 26.6% who said they have "quite a lot" (Haerpfer 24). Thus, the Church has a more significant amount of trust than the state and has consequently been heavily involved in political decisions. The Christian Democratic Party of Guatemala, for example, is a major national party rooted in Catholic ideology (Samson). Further, Catholics have been very

active in their advocacy of civil rights and environmental protections ("2020"). Because of its historical role as being intertwined with the state and national identity, the Catholic Church has naturally become very influential in Guatemalan politics.

Conclusion

The Catholic Church has maintained its dominance in Guatemala through its historical legacy, role in Guatemalan nationalism, and response to religious pluralism. And while the Catholic Church still faces some resistance today, it has remained the most influential religious organization in the nation. Its dominance has consequently been both a positive and negative force for Guatemala. On one hand, the Catholic Church in Guatemala today is still involved in the promotion of human rights. For example, when a budget was passed that cut funding to the human rights office, the Catholic bishops in Guatemala were some of the greatest advocates in calling for President

Giammattei (the current Guatemalan president) to veto the bill ("2020"). As a result of the Catholic Church's positive religious influence, most of the current population of Guatemala is Catholic, with 48.9% of the country identifying as Catholic in comparison to the 35.3% of Protestants (Haerpfer 96).

However, the Catholic Church has also been a leading force in the conservative policies that are harmful to many minority groups. The Catholic Church has gained even more power by aligning itself with conservative Protestants. With more than 84% of the nation identifying as Christian, conservative policies are widely supported (Samson). For example, Guatemalan Congress passed the "Life and Family Protection" bill, which greatly violated international human rights laws ("World"). Provisions in the bill relating to marriage exclude transgender people and it further criminalizes abortion by making it a crime to even participate in the "promotion of abortion" ("World"). Although President

Giammattei eventually vetoed the law, he extended his support for it during his election campaign ("World"). The "Life and Family Protection" bill exemplifies the widespread support for conservative policies in the nation – despite the harmful impact they have on minority communities.

Catholics emphasize the importance of traditional family structures and extend this idea into the public sphere (Samson). Consequently, the LGBT+ community is not protected by legislation in Guatemala today and is often subjected to violence, discrimination, and police brutality ("Guatemala"). Additionally, 44.1% of Guatemalans disagree with the statement that homosexual couples make just as good of parents as other couples (Haerpfer 16). Further, "the first openly gay man to enter Congress was elected in 2019; in 2020, he was the target of attacks and homophobic messages from fellow legislators" ("Guatemala"). These traditional values impede on women's rights as well, as they face immense labor inequality in

both pay and unpenalized sexual harassment. Likewise, only 19 percent of the current Guatemalan Congress is female. ("Guatemala") Thus, while the Catholic Church has been a driving force for many positive changes in Guatemala, it is also important to note the harmful effects the Church's power has on various groups. Regardless, it is evident that the Catholic Church has successfully retained its privilege and dominance in Guatemala as it is instrumental in forming these conservative policies and implications.

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