Modus Vivendi

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RHODES COLLEGE Sigma Iota Rho

Photo by Maya-Khalife-Hamdan '25

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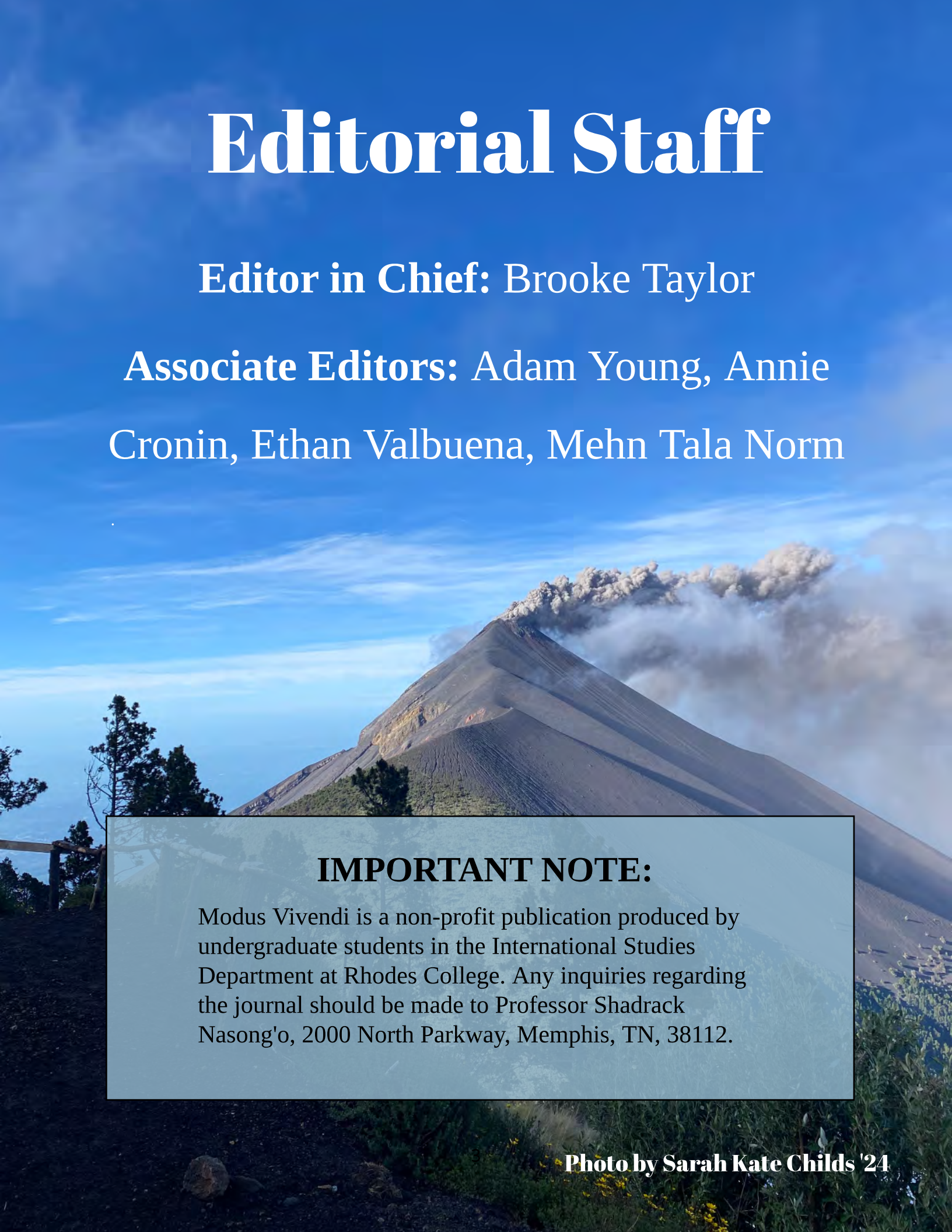

IMPORTANT NOTE:

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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 30th edition of Rhodes College's publication *Modus Vivendi*. The term "Modus Vivendi" originates in Latin, translating to "way of life." Our journal aims to embody this term, highlighting experiences and research from around the world that express how different people have engaged with and shaped their world.

This edition of *Modus Vivendi* would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of the Editorial Board, including Adam Young, Annie Cronin, Ethan Valbuena, and Mehn-Tala Norm. Furthermore, I would like to thank this year's advisor, Professor Shadrack Nasong'o, for his expertise and extensive support. Finally, I would like to thank the entire International Studies department, both peers and professors, for their help in advertising and distributing this journal to the broader Rhodes community.

It is our hope that you are able to take away something new from this edition, something that challenges your perspectives and makes you think differently about your reality and the world around you. We thank you for your support, and hope you enjoy.

Sincerely,

Brooke Taylor, Editor-in-Chief, 2024

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Marxism: A Critical Theory or Mainstream Approach to International Relations?

Sarah Kate Childs '24

As a leading traditional theory of international relations, structural realism seeks to identify objective truths about the nature of the international system, claiming the anarchic international system forces states to constantly compete for power and security (Keohane, 1986). Structural realism's all-encompassing explanations claim there is an inherent order to the international system; however, such an assumption neglects other factors that influence the trajectory of international relations. Critical theories consequently challenge realism by considering the broader social contexts underpinning the international system and uncovering potential driving forces of international relations. As a critical theory, Marxism highlights a significant realist limitation – ignoring the global economic context behind international relations. Marxism argues that international relations currently occur within a global capitalist structure which informs political and social behavior (Hobden & Jones, 2014). Marxism thus offers crucial insights to international relations by positioning the international system within a broader economic context to analyze the influence of capitalism on social and political developments.

Structural realism tends to sacrifice detail in its explanations to make systematic, predictable claims on behavior in the international system. Oversimplified explanations create especially deterministic

realist claims. Structural realists propose that in an anarchic international system, states must compete to gain security and power to expand their influence (Keohane, 1986). However, realists mistake observations of state behavior within the international system for its basic characteristics. Observing the central role of the state as gaining security and expanding influence in an environment without a higher arbitrator, realists conclude that anarchy and the central role of states competing for power are undeniable characteristics of international relations. Realism supports this argument by dating its philosophy to the fifth century when Thucydides first chronicled political relations as a series of rational calculations aiming to maximize power (Keohane, 1986). By citing Thucydides' description that predates modern nation-states, realists thus propose timeless, natural explanations of international relations. However, claiming a universal truth and inherent pattern of behavior in international relations ignores the changes and evolution of the international system over time.

The realist state-centric assumption holds that states are the most important actors in the international system (Keohane, 1986). State-centrism, however, neglects the influence of transnational actors and goals which transcend state interests. In viewing states as the main unit of analysis, structural realists overemphasize the importance of states by overlooking non-state actors and shared interests across state borders. Contrary to realist claims, states have arguably declined in their importance to international relations as globalization and transnational projects undermine state sovereignty (López et al.,

2015). The powerful “Sumak kawsay” movement (meaning quality of life in Kichwa) originated in Bolivia and Ecuador and expanded across Latin America, mobilizing Indigenous groups against the harms of transnational development projects (Macleod, 2016). Such a transnational movement has caught international attention and undoubtedly influenced international relations, yet realism would neglect the influence of such a movement and ignore its significance on state behavior. Thus, the realist, state-centric approach is insufficient to explaining the impact of transnational movements and the importance of non-state actors.

Furthermore, structural realists view states as black boxes, merely assuming that states are exclusively concerned with their power and position within the international system (Keohane, 1986). Such an assumption presumes that states are unitary actors and ignores the significance of within-state disharmony. Arndt et al. (2023), however, demonstrate how class cleavages influence international relations through the example of environmental policies. Within a society, low-income, working classes are disproportionately impacted by the costs of environmental protection; thus, environmentally friendly policies are “likely to receive concentrated opposition from the rural communities where local costs are incurred” (Arndt et al., 2023, p. 382). Hence, when most of the population in a country is dispersed throughout rural areas, it is highly unlikely that the state supports international environmental agreements because of the domestic political implications (Arndt et al., 2023). This domestic economic cleavage

also translates to the international arena as low-income countries tend to be disproportionately harmed and forced to incur environmental regulation costs, especially less-developed countries whose incomes rely on raw material exports (Arndt et al., 2023). Some states thus oppose the Western-led international environmental policies because they see such regulations as neo-colonialist (Arndt et al., 2023). These differing preferences cannot be explained by the simple realist assumption that states have unitary, independent interests; rather, it is evident that economic class cleavages are informing both domestic and international behavior.

As a critical theory, Marxism challenges the oversimplifying assumptions of structural realism, arguing instead for an analysis of the social and economic contexts underlying international relations. The primary assumption of Marxism is economic determinism, wherein the economic structure of a society informs individuals' behaviors (Baradat, 2005). Ontologically, this implies a shift from the realist focus on states within an anarchic system to the global economic structure instead. Marxism is thus a structural level theory, focusing on how the global economic structure shapes agents and their behaviors (Gamble, 1999). Specifically, Marxist analyses study both agents and structures – viewing history as a dialectical process in which structures limit agents, but agents can also resist and change the structures (Rupert, 2021). From this perspective, the realist description of the international system is not an inherent attribute but rather a product of the global economic structure which agents can

change.

The Marxist economic determinism assumption demonstrates that because individuals engage in a “compulsive toil” to fulfill their basic needs of shelter, food, and clothing, for example, the economic structure by which they acquire these necessities informs political and social behaviors (Baradat, 2005, p. 163). Marxism divides societies into two fundamental components: the economic base and the superstructure (Hobden & Jones, 2014). The economic base includes both the means of production (i.e., the land, labor, and capital used in an economy) and the relations of production pertaining to the social classes and roles emanating from the means of production (Baradat, 2005; Hobden & Jones, 2014). The other societal component for Marxists, the superstructure, includes non-material aspects such as the political, social, and cultural institutions. Economic determinism holds that changes in a society’s economic base produces changes in the superstructure; thus, those with the power and control in the economic base also shape the superstructure (Hobden & Jones, 2014). A second key Marxist assumption, dialectic materialism, views history as a process of change resulting from tensions and challenges between the dominant classes of one economic structure and the new, emerging classes of another (Baradat, 2005). Dialectic materialism illustrates that struggles between the previous dominant classes (the thesis) and the new, advancing dominant class (the antithesis) produce changes and improvements in society (Baradat, 2005). Thus, Marxism’s main unit of analysis is class. Karl Marx largely focused his work on critiquing the capitalist

economic structure for creating extreme divisions between classes (Baradat, 2005). Specifically, capitalism drives massive inequalities between the capitalist elite (the bourgeoisie owners of the means of production) and the working-class proletariat majority (Hobden & Jones, 2014). Because the capital owners accumulate the benefits of the laborers' work, Marxists warn of the dangers of capitalism as it "distribute[s] its bounty to a few wealthy people, thus artificially perpetuating the enslavement of the masses" (Baradat, 2005, p. 163). Capital owners become societies' dominant actors because their economic advantages allow them to shape political and social outcomes (López et al., 2015). Marxism thus argues that capitalism is inherently exploitative as it concentrates social, political, and economic power into the hands of the bourgeoisie minority who acquire their wealth from the labor of the proletariat majority.

Although a Marxist analysis focuses on social and economic classes, Marxism is by no means a state-level or domestic theory. In fact, Marx himself acknowledged the global stretch of capitalism as it transcends state boundaries (Gamble, 1999). Because national identity separates working classes from each other despite sharing experiences of class and exploitation, Marx argued nation-states "were only artificial separations designed to reinforce the capitalist system" (Baradat, 2005, p. 175). Different from the realist state-centric approach, Marxists view states as extensions of the dominant class's interests and tools to legitimize and consolidate capitalism. The extreme wealth of many political leaders supports this Marxist

argument as such individuals make decisions on behalf of entire states; however, these elites often have interests far different from the working classes because of their varying economic statuses (Robinson, 2000).

Scholars building off the work of Marx argue today's international economic, social, and political institutions all reinforce capitalism (Gamble, 1999). Perhaps most notably, Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems theory (1974) analyzes the divisions between the so-called core and periphery countries. In Wallerstein's theory, the core is composed of industrialized countries owning most of the global capital, while the periphery is made up of countries exploited by and dependent on the core (as cited in Hall, 1996). Directly applying Marxism to the international system, the world-system perspective argues core countries accumulate excess capital by paying the periphery producers minimally (Hall, 1996). For example, capital drives the unequal relationship between periphery countries in Latin America and core countries like the United States through extractive projects (López et al., 2015). Extraction involves exporting raw materials from Latin America to the core at extremely low prices, disregarding the costs to the local populations who endure harm from environmental destruction and labor exploitation (López et al., 2015). Furthermore, capital-owning transnational organizations also exploit the periphery. Latin America's shift to neoliberalism required countries to adopt capitalist, free market economies which allowed transnational corporations to move their projects to the region and exploit the low labor costs (López et al., 2015).

Consequently, surges in capital flew from bourgeoisie in the core to extractive projects in the region, exacerbating the unequal and dependent relationship between Latin America and core corporations (López et al., 2015). These projects were detrimental to the working classes in the region, destroying their land and exploiting their labor; however, the bourgeoisie within countries in Latin America benefitted by receiving portions of the profits from the extracted exports (López et al., 2015). Marxist scholars thus argue neoliberalism was implemented by the alliance of transnational organizations, bourgeoisie elites throughout the region, and core countries like the United States receiving the exports (López et al., 2015). A Marxian approach can thus analyze how capitalism enforces class inequalities, as represented by the dynamics between both the bourgeoisie and proletariat as well as the core countries and periphery, which lead to exploitation and contentious relations between the classes.

The rise in power of transnational corporations also supports the Marxist critique of state-centered analyses. Specifically, Marxists argue that globalization has decreased the importance of state-centered analyses as state sovereignty has declined relative to the power of transnational elites, transnational corporations, and global capitalism (López et al., 2015). For example, Latin American states are losing authority over transnational corporations as corporate entities surpass the states in terms of their wealth and power (López et al., 2015). States throughout the region adopted their own, unique development models in attempts to independently bolster their

their economies; however, regardless of their national economic strategies, countries in Latin America still rely on transnational corporations exporting raw materials to the core for economic growth (López et al., 2015).

Considering globalization's impact on the nature of the international system and the decrease in importance of a state-centric approach, it is likely that Marxism will rise in its importance as a theory of international relations in the near future. Marxism is especially crucial to understanding the impacts of capitalism and the recent changes to dynamics in international relations. While Marxism may not be applicable to every study of international relations, it certainly lends itself useful to effectively analyzing the international system and supplementing the voids of the mainstream approaches like structural realism (Baradat, 2005). Therefore, even if Marxism does not acquire the title of a mainstream approach in the years to come, it is highly likely that it will still become a more commonly applied critical theory at the very least.

A challenge for Marxist scholars in the coming decades will be overcoming the political reservations held by many non-Marxists. Specifically, a key Marxist prediction is the eventual proletariat uprising to challenge the bourgeoisie and topple the capitalist structure (Hobden & Jones, 2014). Marx envisioned this eventual change to socialism as a necessary step to eliminate class conflict by allowing individuals to engage in collectivist principles instead of exploitative individualism (Baradat, 2005). However, attempts to establish such socialist states (or, rather, states' claims to implementing

Marxism) have failed dramatically. For instance, the imposition of Marxism in the Soviet Union by Lenin challenges the theory's acceptability, both socially and academically (Baradat, 2005). Apprehension to Marxism in recent decades can largely be attributed to the consequences of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union which intertwined Marxism with "Leninism" – the elite enforcement of a communist party in the Soviet Union (Gamble, 1999, p. 129). It is thus crucial for Marxist scholars to separate themselves from Leninism in order for Marxism to rise to its potential as a mainstream theory (Gamble, 1999).

Moving away from the revolutionary, politically contentious aspects and instead adapting systematic approaches to studying the influence of capital on social and political developments will provide Marxism the opportunity to rise as a mainstream approach to international relations in the coming decades. One way in which Marxism can ensure it distinguishes itself from Leninism and the Soviet Union is by deemphasizing the revolutionary aspects of Marxist approaches, which are often critiqued for not being politically neutral or objective (Hobden & Jones, 2014). Although an emancipatory focus is an important component of critical theories, it is nonetheless crucial that scholars remain neutral in their analyses and strive to be objective where possible. Marxism can instead focus on tracing the influences of capitalism in international relations; however, doing so does not require the theory to separate from its liberating intent. In fact, critical theories add to traditional approaches of international relations by providing insights that "potentially lead to

emancipatory edge while still being objective by emphasizing that the structure of the global economy is not a fixed characteristic.

Marxism presents a critical perspective on international relations, demonstrating not only how economic structures inform agent behaviors, but also how agents can change these structures. Marxism allows individuals and scholars alike to challenge the ideas and perspectives which they take for granted and instead consider the impact and influence of capitalism on social and political outcomes (Rupert, 2021). As a critical theory, Marxism provides a challenge to the overarching claims of structural realism holding that an inherent nature of international relations exists; instead, Marxism argues that international relations are the consequences of dynamics in the global economic structure which agents can change. Thus, regardless of whether Marxism rises to a mainstream theory or remains a critical approach, it is crucial that Marxists continue to explore the underlying influence of capitalism on international relations and not concede that the structure of the international system is unchangeable.

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Photo by Adam Young '24

How The National Women's Service (Servicio Nacional de la Mujer, SERNAM) Positively Impacted Domestic Violence Policy Reform in Chile.

Lily Resha '25

Introduction:

Globally one in three women report that they have experienced gender-based violence according to the United Nations. (Wilson, 2014) Gender-based violence is experienced to varying degrees with femicide being defined as the most extreme form of violence based on gender equality that occurs. Researchers have defined as femicide the "the assassination of women for reasons associated with gender...it has also been described as the misogynist killing of women by men." (Wilson, 2014) Latin American women experience violence at higher rates in comparison to other developed regions. (Wilson, 2014) Researchers attribute higher rates of gender-based violence in Latin America to cultural norms, such as *Machismo* that are deeply engrained in society. *Machismo* is defined as, "the belief that women should be subordinate to the needs and desires of their male partners, taking care of them, providing them pleasure (either as wives or partners or as approached in predatory fashion by men who would not consider marrying them), and bearing their children..." (Wilson, 2014) Certain cultural norms that exist in Latin America might be able to help explain the disproportionate instances of gender-based violence in the region compared to other similarly developed regions. Among the population in Latin America, it has been reported that

instances of gender-based violence affects the lives of one in four Latin American women. (Velásquez, 2020) Given the harmful nature of this phenomenon some countries like Chile have taken steps at the governmental level to combat high rates of gender-based violence. Chile's women's policy agency has been an active participant in the designing and promotion of domestic violence laws. The actions of Chile's women's policy agency such as supporting female advocacy groups, increasing public awareness, and their direct influence on the executive agenda positively impacted domestic violence policy reforms in Chile. (Franschet, 2010)

The National Women's Service (*Servicio Nacional de la Mujer,* SERNAM):

The institutionalization of a women's policy agency within the executive branch of the Chilean government allowed the agency to play an active role in the designing and proposing of domestic violence policy. The centralized nature of the Chilean government has played a role in the success of their 2005 domestic violence law, but more notable is the key role played by their National Women's Service (*Servicio Nacional de la Mujer,* SERNAM). The National Women's Service (SERNAM) is a women's policy agency that was created in 1991 with the purpose of combatting gender inequality in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. (Franceschet, 2010) In the 1990s women's issues were not treated as a national priority in Chile and women's therefore policy agencies dedicated to women's issues were under resourced.

Additionally, these agencies lacked any significant institutional influence over other departments therefore hindering their political power. (Franceschet, 2005) Much of the existing scholarship on women's policy agencies suggests that their scope of power is directly influenced by political dynamics within a state. This is true in Chile as their most successful women's policy agency SERNAM was created under a center-left government that endowed it with institutional stability, adequate resources, and administrative capacities. (Rios Tobar, 2009)

Chile's SERNAM is a part of the executive branch of government giving it the power to put women's issues on the national agenda. The importance of SERNAM's presence within the Chilean executive branch cannot be understated because it allows the agency to wield significant political influence on behalf of women's issues. In addition to their direct influence on national legislation scholars have noted that being institutionalized means that "Gender equality advocates elsewhere---in civil society and in congress---have been compelled to create a working relationship with SERNAM in order to further their policy goals...As a result advocacy groups, and progressive legislators have a key "insider" ally." (Franceschet, 2010) Along with its executive status the director of the SERNAM is granted ministerial status meaning that they are permitted to participate in cabinet meetings. (Franschet, 2005) The success of the 2005 domestic violence legislation can be attributed to the executive status of SERNAM that has allowed the agency to create space for women's issues within the national government.

The role of SERNAM in the passing of the Intrafamily Violence Law in 1994:

The first instance of SERNAM's influence on domestic violence policy began with the passing of the Intrafamily Violence Law in 1994. The law passed after extensive debate between legislators and SERNAM. The debates discussed possible legal punishment for abusers and to what extent the gendered nature of domestic violence should be reflected in the law. Conservative legislators in Chile were primarily concerned with reconciling families through counseling and therapy while SERNAM representatives argued that in order to decrease instances of domestic violence abusers must be criminally prosecuted for their actions. The official law that passed in 1994 included provisions for family reconciliation and declared domestic violence a civil offense rather than criminal. The primary issues with the 1994 law were the lack of criminalization, victim services, and adequate court systems to carry out the law's provisions. This prompted criticism from female legislators, feminists, and SERNAM instigating a combined effort for policy reform. The leadership role of SERNAM in the context of the Chilean government is they have, "The capacity to design and propose; legislation, as well as to lobby directly the executive, which have led advocacy groups to rely on the agency's support in seeking policy change." (Franceschet, 2010) The most mobilizing issue of the 1994 domestic violence policy was the emphasis on the reconciliation process and its incorporation of domestic violence under the civil code. Instead of criminal repercussions for domestic violence abuses perpetrators were rarely punished and instead merely faced fines or

compulsory therapy. (Franceschet, 2010) Additionally the original 1994 law was ineffectively implemented, and the Chilean court systems were overwhelmed by impending domestic violence cases. In addition to lengthy waiting periods there was an absence of family court systems in Chile meaning family law judges and lawyers were scarce. (Franceschet, 2010) While waiting for trials, victims experienced inadequate access to resources such as legal support, medical services, or counseling. Most detrimental was the fact that there were no places where women fleeing abusive households to seek refuge and access resources while they awaited legal assistance.

After the passing of the 1994 law, SERNAM monitored the policy's effects, created victim services, and most importantly used their resources as an executive agency to educate the public on the severity of domestic violence in Chile. (Franceschet, 2010) SERNAM was able to use its resources to carry out comprehensive research on the effectiveness of the 1994 law. Their research was shared to the public through newspapers, NGO campaigns, and national reports that gave public visibility to the prevalence of gender-based violence against women in Chile. The SERNAM website reported accurate figures for instances of domestic violence indicating that national complaints increased, "From 38,200 in 1995 to 95,829 in 2006." (SERNAM, 2006) Additionally in the year 2001 SERNAM published a study that stated, "Almost half of all married Chilean women reported suffering some kind of violence, either physical or psychological, in their lifetime." (Franceschet, 2010) These figures in turn proved useful for women's

advocacy groups who could use SERNAM data to lobby the government for public policy reform. The result of SERNAM's research was increased public awareness to gender-based violence and the mild legal repercussions for abusers afforded by the 1994 law. (Franceschet, 2010) Public awareness created by the publication of research done by SERNAM's leadership led to increased public support for the proposed reforms to the 1994 domestic violence law, specifically the criminalization of domestic violence offenses.

The influence of SERNAM on the reemergence of the women's movement in Chilean society:

The National Women's Service influenced domestic violence policy reforms by mobilizing and providing resources to feminist activists and Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to lobby the government and promote public awareness. Scholars argue that SERNAM, "Altered the institutional context in which women's movements act...affected both the shape of the movement and strategies that different segments employ to pursue their interests." (Franceschet, 2003) Feminist movements in Chile have been politically active since the military dictatorship of the 1970s, but most of those movements demobilized during the transition to democracy in the late 1980s. After the authoritarian period, women resumed their domestic roles in society and the male dominated political and civil society reemerged under democracy. (Franceschet, 2003) Some of these demobilized women's activists found their way into newly instituted bureaucratic agencies like

SERNAM to continue their fight for gender equality while other groups converted into non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Researchers have explained that the reemergence of the women's movement in Chilean society can be partially accredited to the support of SERNAM, "The last few years have seen the emergence of a number of important network organizations that link up previously dispersed women's groups. More importantly, these organizations are pursuing strategies that are shaped in large part by the existence of SERNAM..." (Franceschet, 2003) As a national institution SERNAM cannot carry out projects, instead they are charged with "proposing and creating public policy for other ministries or agencies to implement" therefore alliances with other organizations are crucial to the successful implementation of SERNAM policies. (Franceschet, 2003) Further civil society participation in the development of equality and democracy in Chile is a notion accepted by both state and societal actors.

Therefore, one goal of SERNAM is to increase women's political participation. In order to achieve this goal SERNAM created the Participation Program and Civil Society Fund in 1997. The Civil Society Fund allowed organized women's groups to apply for resources that allowed them to implement programs, complete projects, and increase their influence on the policy making process. (Franceschet, 2003) Women's groups who have benefitted from the Civil Society Fund reported that, "Resources from the Fund enabled their group to continue functioning as well as enjoy a sense of achievement from collectively designing a project and securing the financing to implement it."

(Franceschet, 2003) These examples illustrate that SERNAM officials have impacted women's groups positively by helping them receive funding and encourage significant political participation. The financial support of SERNAM allowed women's organizations in Chile to reemerge as influential political actors under democracy.

Another way SERNAM has impacted the women's movement in Chile is by providing women's rights discourse that has helped activists mobilize their supporters. (Franceschet, 2003) Officials at SERNAM educate activists on women's rights discourse using (Women's Rights Information Centers) there women can participate in public awareness campaigns and workshops on how to claim their rights. (Franceschet, 2003) SERNAM's education includes both in-person events, television and radio programming, and print media. SERNAM's direct investment in women's rights awareness has been recognized by scholars for the impact it has made on Chilean women, "SERNAM's strategies of publicizing issues important to women such as domestic violence is having some impact. Survey data reveal a greater concern among Chilean women with women's rights and equality." (Franceschet, 2003) Another example of SERNAM encouraging the political participation of Chilean women was after the passing of the original Equal Opportunity Plan (1994). SERNAM officials sought to include both women citizens and women's groups in the creation of the new Equal Opportunity Plan (2000). They did this by hosting town hall meetings where women could organize to voice their concerns directly to policy developers at SERNAM. As stated in the

organization's mission statement, they were created to "propose and create" public policy not necessarily interact directly with women on behalf of their concerns. The inclusion of female citizens in the reformed Equal Opportunity Plan and the investments in the Civil Society Fund illustrate how SERNAM's efforts have reenergized the women's political participation in Chile under democracy.

The support of SERNAM allowed women's organizations to launch successful campaigns on behalf of women's rights in the years leading up to the 2005 domestic violence law. The national campaigns instituted by SERNAM during this period sought to rally public support in favor of the criminalization of domestic violence with slogans such as, "This is a crime! What would you do not to repeat it?" and "Battered Bodies, never again!" (UN report, 2009) In conjunction with national campaigns, women's organizations such as the Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Network joined the campaign "For Women's Life, Not a Death". In October of 2004, women's groups held a meeting that had a significant impact on the movement called "Action of symbolic reparation for women victims of femicides in Chile." (UN report, 2009) On November 25, 2005, 165 women's organizations across the country participated in a nighttime march with the slogan, "We women say ENOUGH." This demonstration garnered broad participation from women's organizations and civil society and it was covered by the national media. (UN report, 2009)

The role of SERNAM in the passing of the Domestic Violence Law in 2005:

The advocacy of women's organizations and SERNAM led to the passing of the 2005

domestic violence law that enacted far-reaching reforms to the original 1994 law. This new law added domestic violence offenses to the criminal code in addition to "habitual mistreatment" and made provisions for victim protection systems. (UN report, 2009) The new law also removed the reconciliation process as an obligatory first step in addressing domestic violence. (Franceschet, 2010) The success of nationwide women's movements and the nationalization of domestic violence issues by SERNAM campaigns influenced the timely domestic violence reform of 2005.

The positive impact of the National Women's Service (SERNAM) in Chile is evident in the institutions efforts to educate the public on women's rights issues, financially support women's organizations, and partner with women directly to address their concerns at a national level. The efforts of SERNAM in the advancement of women's rights in Chile, and in specific domestic violence policy have illustrated how women's policy agencies can use the executive power they possess to significantly influence politics. Researchers have reflected on how SERNAM has used their executive status saying, "Although SERNAM initially was provided a weak position in government through its lack of funding and legislative powers, it has gained enormous influence upon the discourse over women's policies to be pursued by NGOs and government policies." (COHA, 2008) The successful passing of the 2005 domestic violence policy reforms in Chile can be attributed to the influence of SERNAM, but most importantly its alliances with women's organizations.

Conclusion and how SERNAM can improve:

Since their success with the 2005 domestic violence legislation, officials at SERNAM have been critiqued more recently for their exclusions of marginalized groups of women in Chile such as indigenous communities. These critiques call for SERNAM to consider more inclusive domestic violence legislation that protects all women, "SERNAM's failure to address specific Mapuche (indigenous) women's issues suggests that it excludes certain sectors of women's movements from its action plans, leading to the notion that it continues to be unrepresentative of certain segments of popular society." (COHA, 2008) These limitations are important to note in the evaluation of the impacts of this state institution because for the agency to continue using its emerging political influence on "combatting gender equality" they must represent the concerns of all Chilean women. While domestic violence policy is an issue that affects the lives of all women, the agency can continue to impact Chilean women positively in other policy arenas if they can expand the scope of their representation of political issues. Overall, executive level women's policy agencies such as SERNAM in Chile increase political opportunities for women through public awareness initiatives, investments in civil society, and the passing of women's rights legislation. The example of domestic violence policy is just one policy area that organizations like SERNAM can impact through their programs and advocacy. The structure of SERNAM as it functions within the executive branch of government should provide a model to other developed countries. For context, issues like domestic

violence are relevant issues to many countries but within the normal legislative structure they might not have to time to dedicate to working with the public to create a comprehensive policy solution. This is where organizations like SERNAM when implemented with adequate resourcing can assist government leaders in creating policy solutions that are well thought out responses to societal problems. In the normal legislative structure that has is made up of elected representatives while their proposed policies are often aimed at combatting social problems they are often not well understood among the general population. Policy agencies provide governments with the ability to better educate the public on policy solutions which can play an integral role in its success. Further reforms can be developed more efficiently as in the case of the domestic violence reform of 2005 which was a swift response to areas where the original law was lacking based on information collected by SERNAM. Based on these suggestions the domestic violence law passed in 2005 was able to better serve the public. Therefore, the successful passage of domestic violence law in Chile provides an example to other democracies for the benefits of having well-resourced policy agencies within the executive branch. When policy agencies are utilized, they have the potential for positive policy outcomes that can improve the lives of citizens.

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Photo by Annie Cronin '24

The Effects of the United States Drug Policy in Mexico

Sarah Kate Childs '24

Introduction:

During the Bush Administration in 2008, the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy vowed to “disrupt the market for illicit drugs” in the United States by “reducing the scale and impeding the flow of drug profits to the criminal organizations and terrorist groups that benefit from them” (2008, 5). At the time, Mexican drug trade organizations (DTOs) were the largest suppliers of US-consumed cannabis, heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine (Mercille 2011). Thus, as a part of national drug policies, the US enacted a bilateral agreement with Mexico, the Mérida Initiative, which aimed to decrease the flow of illicit drugs over the southern border and weaken the power of DTOs. Since signing the initiative in 2008, the US has allocated approximately 2.8 billion USD to Mexico to combat DTOs (Balaam and Dillman 2019). However, despite the aid and collaborative efforts between the two countries, the quantity of illicit drugs pouring into the US has been unwavering, and DTOs’ strength has not lessened. Such seemingly contradictory results thus beg the question: What are the effects of the US drug policy in Mexico?

The rising power of Mexican DTOs continues to be a crucial topic in US politics, especially regarding the potential for spillover of illicit drugs and criminal violence across the border

(Luna-Monsivais et al. 2020). The US Department of Justice Drug Enforcement Administration labeled Mexican DTOs “the greatest criminal drug threat in the United States” (2018, vi; hereafter DEA). Many politicians remain concerned with Mexico’s ability to suppress DTOs; for example, some politicians denounced Mexico as a “failed state” in the early 2000s because it had yet to gain control over DTO activities (Luna-Monsivais et al. 2020, 244). Thus, when newly elected Mexican president Felipe Calderón vowed to crack down on the drug trade in 2006, US politicians jumped at the opportunity. Immediately following his election, President Calderón declared a Mexican war on drugs with great support from the US (Lindau 2011). In their first meeting, President Bush “promised to provide training, weapons and funding” to President Calderón for the Mexican drug war (Luna-Monsivais et al. 2020, 243). Talks of the Mérida Initiative to increase collaboration between the US and Mexico thus began in 2007; the initiative was quickly signed by June 2008 (Ingram and Shirk 2010).

The overarching goal of the Mérida Initiative was “to support the capacity of a wide variety of Mexican security and justice sector institutions… to combat and prosecute transnational criminal organizations,” which was to be accomplished by the US providing “equipment, training, and capacity-building programs” (“Five Key Points” 2021). However, such aid was contingent on Mexico’s continued compliance with US drug policies, requiring Mexico to share intelligence and surveillance with the US to bolster its goal of disrupting the supply of illicit drugs (Mercille 2011). The effects of

the US drug policy in Mexico can thus be evaluated by comparing the operations of DTOs in Mexican society before the Mérida Initiative, from the early 2000s until 2007, to those after the initiative, from 2008 to 2022. Such a comparison illustrates that the US drug policy in Mexico worsened the issue of illicit drug trafficking because the policies expanded DTOs, increased violence throughout Mexico, and failed to address the underlying forces of the illicit drug market. Dependency theory suggests that on the macro-level Mexico was obligated to enact these ineffective drug policies because it needed to continue receiving US aid. At the micro-level, dependency theory also demonstrates such policies were unsuccessful because of DTOs' reliance on the lucrative American market and the unwavering US demand for illicit drugs.

As the US continues to enforce its firm, top-down approach to drug policy both domestically and abroad, it is essential to thoroughly evaluate the consequences of policies implemented thus far. Despite the Mérida Initiative, Mexican DTOs remain responsible for more than 70% of the illicit drugs imported by the US (Balaam and Dillman 2019). Likewise, the initiative did not weaken the DTOs; instead, according to the Institute for Economics and Peace, the organized crime rate in Mexico rose more than 48.1% between 2015 and 2022 (2022; hereafter IEP). Furthermore, the US is currently facing a drug overdose epidemic as "Drug poisoning deaths are the leading cause of injury death in the United States…every year since 2011, [they] have outnumbered deaths by firearms, motor vehicle crashes, suicide, and homicide" (DEA 2018, v). The concerning spike in overdoses has been attributed to the

significant increase in fentanyl smuggling by DTOs (“Criminal Violence” 2023). In fact, more than 90% of fentanyl consumed in the US comes across the US-Mexico border (IEP 2022). Thus, it is imperative that the effects of the US drug policy in Mexico be better understood so that more appropriate and effective policies can emerge to address the pressing issue of illicit drug use.

Literature Review and Overview of Theories:

Studies on the effects of the US drug policy have been dominated by security concerns. Realist perspectives, for example, argue that DTOs pose direct threats to state security (Burger 1999). Scholars following realist thinking have even referred to drug traffickers as “terrorists” (Englund 2020). Consequently, realists see DTOs as “anti-state” entities which need to be dealt with through enforcement mechanisms, such as greater policing or harsher penalties (Burger 1999). Realism thus suggests that a successful US drug policy will weaken DTOs and contain the threat they pose to the state. Most commonly in US policies, criminal organizations are weakened by capturing the groups’ leaders, a tactic known as the kingpin strategy (Beittel 2022). Realists promote this policy, believing that capturing a leader indicates weakening DTOs; realism assumes that leaderless organizations are easier to defeat in the long run and pose a lesser threat to state security than a group run by powerful individuals (Beittel 2022). The US State Department, for example, described the Mérida Initiative as a success because it led to the arrest of many DTO leaders, indicating an increase in the security of both states (Beittel 2022).

Similarly, institutionalism conceptualizes DTOs as security threats that can be mitigated by state force. Building off realist assumptions, institutional arguments hold that successful drug policies rely on the state's capacity to suppress DTOs (Balaam and Dillman 2019). Institutionalism claims that the lack of success of the US drug policy in Mexico (as demonstrated by the continued supply of illicit drugs and DTO operations) can be attributed to the institutional weaknesses in Mexico. Institutionalists argue there must be strong enforcement mechanisms, such as the capacity of the state to repress DTOs, policing methods, and criminal justice processes to hold actors involved in the illicit drug trade accountable. Many scholars favoring institutional perspectives point to the pervasive corruption in Mexico as a crucial explanation for the failure of drug policies; specifically, some scholars argue the inefficiencies in Mexico's criminal justice system have allowed DTOs to operate without punishment (Ingram and Shirk 2010). Institutionalism thus blames Mexico for the continued supply of drugs, holding that the government's "insufficient political will" to tackle corruption allows DTOs to continue operating (Beittel 2022, 16). Institutionalist arguments are illustrated by US officials who claimed the drug policy's lack of success can be attributed to "Mexico's failure to deter [transnational criminal organizations] or successfully prosecute them in court and the slowing of Mexico's responses to US extradition requests for defendants on drug-related charges" (Beittel 2022, 20).

However, contrary to such claims, Mexico was required to implement sweeping criminal justice reforms as a part of the

Mérida Initiative. A pillar of the initiative requires Mexico to increase its "capacity to sustain rule of law" ("The Merida Initiative" 2021). To suffice US demands, Mexico enacted a broad range of judicial reforms in 2008 to combat the criminal justice system's inefficiencies and "to achieve a more democratic rule of law by introducing greater transparency, accountability, and due process" (Ingram and Shirk 2010, 3). The US provided 400 million USD to support Mexico's judicial changes (Hinojosa and Meyer 2019). Furthermore, the US directly oversaw the changes through collaborative efforts such as the Justice in Mexico Project which hosted nine forums between 2007 and 2008 to specifically discuss judicial reforms (Shirk 2010). In addition to strengthening Mexico's criminal justice institutions, the US also provided training, funding, and equipment to the military and police in Mexico ("Five Key Points" 2021). Thus, from an institutionalist standpoint, Mexico's compliance with the US illustrated immense strengthening in the state's drug-fighting institutions.

Nevertheless, despite sweeping reforms and extensive aid, it is undeniable that DTOs continue to operate and flourish, and the supply of illicit drugs has not lessened. Thus, a new perspective is necessary to better understand the consequences of the US drug policy and the underlying mechanisms of the illicit drug market. Both institutionalism and realism assume that the US drug policies are effective and that their success relies on Mexico's implementation. Structural arguments, however, suggest that the drug policies themselves are antithetical to decreasing the illicit drug supply, thus requiring a new analysis of the mechanisms of the illicit

drug trade is an inevitable result of the dynamics between the global north and global south; this suggests that most drugs are cheaply grown and manufactured in the developing countries of the global south but sold at extraordinarily high markups in global north's lucrative markets (Balaam and Dillman 2019).

Thus, because the demand in the US is unwavering, the US drug policies are ineffective because they do not account for DTOs' profit motivations. Applying dependency theory to a micro-level analysis demonstrates that DTOs rely on the profits made in the lucrative US markets, thus making supply-side policies ineffective. From a macro-level analysis, dependency theory also illustrates that Mexico pursued these ineffective policies nonetheless because the state was dependent on funding from the US which required Mexico's forceful suppression of DTOs. Unsurprisingly, the US drug policies adopted by Mexico were unsuccessful and unable to address the underlying forces of the illicit drug market. Implementing ill-suited policies resulted in increasing the strength of DTOs, accelerating levels of violence throughout Mexico, and ultimately harming both civilians and Mexican society at large. By applying dependency theory to both the micro-level market dynamics and to the macro-level Mexican adoption of the US drug policy, this paper argues that the US drug policy in Mexico was unsuccessful because such policies were not designed to assist Mexico in effective manners to combat DTOs; instead, the policies were forced onto Mexico because they appeared to be the easiest way for US politicians to attempt to address the domestic US drug problem.

Case Study:

For structuralists, it is essential to define DTOs as profit-maximizing groups; like other businesses, they respond to consumer demands (Englund 2020). The profit paradox holds that the illegality of drugs in the US limits the supply of desirable drugs, consequently increasing the price (Balaam and Dillman 2019). This has created a situation whereby there are billions of dollars to be made in the illicit drug market (DEA 2018). Drug traffickers, for example, may earn between 14 and 48 billion USD for their illicit activities (Dell 2015). Because the US demand for drugs has not lessened since the implementation of the Mérida Initiative, it is not surprising that DTOs continue to operate and seek these profits (Huey 2014). Expanding on the structural premise, dependency theory holds that agents in DTOs rely on the money made in the illicit drug market. Many actors in the drug trade are involved in the criminal operations because they lack legitimate means to advance their socioeconomic positions. Thus, institutional arguments that discuss corruption as limiting the success of US drug policy ignore the underlying motives for corruption. Mexican police, for example, are faulted for corrupt practices which inhibit the implementation of US drug policy; however, little mention is made to the fact that police are “poorly paid compared with other occupations, especially at the local level, and, as a result, could be susceptible to [DTO] pressure” (Beittel 2022, 14). Thus, dependency theory suggests that drug policies which only address the supply side of the illicit market will prove unsuccessful as they ignore the suppliers’ reliance on consumer demands

and profits.

Despite DTOs' profit-motives suggesting supply side drug policies will be ineffective, Mexico still adopted the US supply-side drug policy. A macro-level application of dependency theory suggests this should not come as a surprise given the unequal relationship between the US and Mexico. Since the US War on Drugs began in the 1970s, US-Mexico relations have been heavily dominated by drug policy concerns. The US Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 required that any country seeking US foreign aid must obtain US certification to confirm its compliance with the war on drugs; such a commitment was demonstrated by a country allocating parts of its federal budget to drug control and adopting US drug policies (Chabat 2002). Since the Anti-Drug Abuse Act, Mexican politicians have continued adopting US drug policies to maintain funding and approval, with some scholars arguing Mexico has become a "quasi-client state of America" (Luna-Monsivais et al. 2020, 246). President Calderón's declaration on a Mexican drug war was no exception to the trend of Mexican compliance with US drug policy. Calderón's decision was initially puzzling as there was already turmoil in the country due to the greatly contested presidential election (Delgado-Ramos, Romano, and Breña 2011). Before declaring a drug war, Calderón had "made limited mention of security issues" (Dell 2015, 6). However, prior to even taking office, President Calderón was having closed-door, secret discussions with US Ambassador Antonio Garza "to discuss Mexico's continuing commitment to the drug war with the United States' support" (Luna-Monsivais et al. 2020, 243).

Unsurprisingly, the US demonstrated unwavering support for the Mexican drug war, providing aid through the Mérida Initiative.

However, the drug war caused violence to rise throughout Mexico to unprecedented levels (IEP 2015). Homicide rates skyrocketed to one of the highest globally, with 33,341 homicides in 2018 alone ("Criminal Violence" 2023). The national homicide rate increased 76.3% between 2015 and 2022 (IEP 2022). In other words, the US drug "strategy seemed to have paid off by eliminating a large number of drug cartel leaders: more than twenty-five capos and 160 lieutenants were captured or killed in just six years. At the same time, however, drug-related violence escalated by almost 300 percent" (Calderón et al. 2015, 1480). This rapid increase in violence has been directly attributed to the US drug policies pursued in the Mérida Initiative. For example, the militarization of drug control and the initiative's focus on expanding Mexican armed forces greatly increased violence. In fact, 72% of the aid given to Mexico as a part of the Mérida Initiative was for military and police equipment and technology, allocated under the classification of "Counternarcotics, Counterterrorism, and Border Security" (Carpenter 2013, 141). The number of troops fighting in the Mexican drug war had increased from 6,500 in 2006 to more than 45,000 by the end of President Calderón's term (Dell 2015). However, the military was not properly trained to combat DTOs or dismantle civilian violence, which led to many civilian casualties and injuries (Beittel 2022). Likewise, the kingpin strategy itself (targeting the leaders of DTOs) worsened the illicit drug trade.

For example, “drug-related violence increases substantially following Mexican government crackdowns” (Dell 2015, 27). One study found that the kingpin strategy increased inter- and intra- DTO violence because it splintered DTOs into smaller, competing organizations (Calderón et al. 2015). Intra-organizational violence has been attributed to the changing composition of DTOs. In 2006, before the drug war, there were four main DTOs; however, leaderless organizations fragmented into nine major groups in addition to hundreds of smaller localized groups (Beittel 2022). Before this, the more stable drug trade organizations “had long associations, often familial, and were understood to have ruled their cartel armies in a hierarchical fashion from a central position” (Beittel 2022, 36). The new groups, however, were much more volatile and lacked stability (Beittel 2022). For example, the imprisonment of Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán created a “power vacuum” in the Sinaloa Cartel which prompted violence within the group for leadership and eventually led to emergence of new DTOs altogether (“Criminal Violence” 2023). Inter-organization violence also increased as competing groups fought for new market shares following the removal of a DTO leader. Because DTOs are profit-maximizing groups, violence and turf wars are used to fight over the shares of the illicit drug market (Andreas 2019). Before, DTOs controlled their own areas and drug trafficking patterns; but with more groups, organizations must fight for their share of the market (“Criminal Violence” 2023). This led to larger drug organizations using smaller ones to fight “proxy” territory wars for them (Beittel

2022). Thus, the creation of new groups and splintering of the original groups disrupted the previous DTO control and consequently added to the violence in the country (IEP 2022).

Furthermore, DTOs adapted new strategies in response to the drug war. Trying to prohibit DTO movement across the southern border forced groups to form new strategies to maintain their profits made in the lucrative US market. Some organizations have adapted new, savvier approaches to get around state barriers, such as changing their trafficking routes in response to crackdowns (Dell 2015). DTOs have therefore added more nuance to their operations to make them harder to discover; for example, some organizations now engage in the licit market to hide their illicit business or diversify their business to sell various illicit drugs (Beittel 2022).

Likewise, the splintering of larger DTOs creates new problems for authorities as smaller organizations adapt more quickly to government suppression and are harder for enforcement agencies to track and monitor (IEP 2022). Other DTOs resulted to targeting politicians to resist the government's crackdown that threatened their transnational operations (Beittel 2022). Thus, Mexico's suppression of DTOs created heavy backlash, more violence, and new challenges to constraining the illicit drug trade.

Violence also caused larger issues in Mexican society as DTOs fighting "for territory, markets and access to strategic trafficking routes, have led to pervasive insecurity throughout the country" (IEP 2022, 26). The increase in violence and DTO operations in Mexico hampered the criminal justice system's effectiveness.

Since 2006, Mexico's homicide rates and organized crime rates have risen while the criminal justice system efficiency has simultaneously declined; the percentage of homicides that did not result in a conviction went from under 30% in 2006 to 70.9% by 2014 (IPE 2015). Furthermore, targeting local DTO leaders in one area caused violence to spillover to nearby municipalities, increasing criminal behavior in the long run for such areas as citizens and DTO's compete for scarce resources (Calderón et al. 2015). Violence has also driven internal displacement in Mexico, with an estimated 230,000 individuals displaced due to drug violence (Carpenter 2013). Many of such displaced people chose to migrate to the US ("Criminal Violence" 2023). Thus, the effects of the US drug policy in Mexico have not only been detrimental to the stability of the country, but they have also spilled over to the US. The US drug policy failed to prevent the influx of illicit drugs and added to the existing political issue of migration by creating a push factor for Mexicans to migrate to the US.

Conclusion:

Dependency theory demonstrates that the US drug policy was ineffective because DTOs remained reliant on US demand for profit and Mexico was forced to adopt inappropriate policies to continue receiving US aid. Thus, policies only targeting the supply side of the drug trade are insufficient in addressing the root causes of the overdose epidemic in the US. However, the US drug control policy continues to allocate 55% of its budget to fighting supply and only 45% to reducing demand (Balaam and Dillman 2019). This paper presented that only taking an institutional or realist

approach to the issue of illicit drug trade fails to address the root issues driving the illicit market. Consequently, it is necessary to reconceptualize the problem of illicit drug trade and "move away from framing violence as a 'drug war.' Doing so creates space to discuss humanitarian issues, including refugee flows, internally displaced people, children in organized armed conflict, and direct engagement with gangs and certain [DTO]s" (Carpenter 2013, 155).

As a bilateral agreement, the Mérida Initiative was supposed to not only reduce the supply of drugs coming into the US, but also hold the US responsible for the role it has played in strengthening DTOs. For example, guns coming from the US have been traced to cartel violence, thus making the US a contributor to the growing violence in Mexico. As part of the Mérida Initiative, the US vowed to increase its investigations into these sales and strengthen its monitoring of weapons being sold to Mexico. However, the US State Department approved "2,476 guns to be sold to Mexico in 2006. In 2009, that number was up nearly 10 times, to 18,709" and as of 2011, "The State Department has since stopped disclosing numbers of guns it approves" (Attkisson 2011). While it is politically easier to continue blaming Mexico for the supply of illicit drugs, it is imperative that the US readdress its approach to drug trade and take responsibility for the role it has played in worsening the issue if any progress is to be made.

Trying to reduce the illicit drug supply is unarguably politically easier than reducing the demand; it has proven to be simpler policy-wise and more politically popular for officials to blame another country rather

than taking domestic accountability (Balaam and Dillman 2019). However, such an approach has proven to be not only extremely costly but also ineffective (Balaam and Dillman 2019). It is imperative that policymakers and officials reconcile with the fact that the US drug policies thus far have not been effective, and changes are necessary. It is thus important that more studies are done to better understand the operations of DTOs and their ability to adapt to various enforcement strategies. Notably, if the US desires to address the pressing political concerns of irregular migration and illicit drug consumption and overdose, it is essential that the country recognizes the role it has played in worsening the drug trade situation and seeks out policies to reduce the US demand in the illicit drug market.

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Photo by Brooke Taylor '24

From Protest to Policy: How Cuban Dissent Reshaped the Penal System

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In May 2022, Cuba's National Assembly enacted a sweeping Penal Code reform which shifted policy to restrict citizen freedoms, criminalize dissent against the state, and curb foreign involvement (Oliver and Venancio, 2022). One way to help analyze this policy reform is the punctuated equilibrium theory (PET), which foregrounds that a sudden punctuation in society is the driving factor in policy change. Adopted following the outburst of mass anti-government protests on July 11th, 2021, the protests became a turning point in Cuban society, leading policy makers to update the Penal Code to impede future public dissent. In explaining the Penal Code update, PET accurately recognizes the link between the July 11 protests and the Penal Code update. However, it overlooks the possibility that the policy community remains the same through policy change and raises uncertainty in identifying the key punctuation in the policymaking process, such as the potential causation of US sanction onset.

Although the updated 141-page Penal Code was reformed under claims to modernize the island’s penal system, it raises concern over its violations of personal liberties and lack of public transparency and consultation (Pappier and González Cabrera, 2022). Despite implementing several positive provisions, such as the criminalization of gender-based and

domestic violence, the updated Penal Code increases limitations on Cubans' freedoms of expression and assembly and obfuscates foreign influence (Amnesty International, 2022). The updated Penal Code introduces new crimes, predominantly related to issues of state security, for death penalty eligibility. These amendments signify that Cubans who engaged in the 2021 protest are included. Article 120 of the Penal Code declares any action that prevents "in whole or in part, even temporarily, the President, Vice-President of the Republic or the higher bodies of the State and the Government from exercising their functions" to be a crime (Oliver and Venancio, 2022). This prohibition of dissent restricts any opportunities for change from grassroot actors. The Code further criminalizes the use of social media to spread "fake information" (Amnesty International, 2022). Given the vagueness of the term "fake information," human rights lawyers question the validity of such statements, since the state subjectively determines the accuracy of information. The Code further forbids Cuban organizations and individuals from using or receiving foreign funds "used against the Cuban state and its constitutional order" (Amnesty International, 2022).

International human rights advocates argue that the Penal Code reform resulted from the dissidence and threats of power created by the July 11 mass protests. Amnesty International's Erika Guevara-Rosas asserts that "the Cuban authorities have consistently used criminal law — or the threat of it — to silence dissent" (Amnesty International, 2022). The reform contains "a suite of chilling provisions" that grant authorities even

greater power in suppressing freedom of expression and assembly. This Code update took effect as hundreds of Cubans remained imprisoned for their participation on July 11 to declare their grievances and demand better living conditions in the island's worst economic crisis since the fall of the Soviet Union (Washington Office on Latin America, 2022). At the outset, Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel encouraged government supporters and security forces to respond with force (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Díaz-Canel blamed US sanctions for causing the protested resource shortages on the island, condemning "how the US . . . intervened in [Cuba], . . . how they maintain domination. This whole situation caused a shortage of supplies in the country" (Representaciones diplomáticas de Cuba en el exterior, 2022). Díaz-Canel stressed that over 86 percent of the Cuban population had supported the state's "democratic exercises" and the Cuban constitution (Representaciones diplomáticas de Cuba en el exterior, 2022), accusing the US of destabilizing the island through its persistent aggression and media manipulation (Yaffe, 2023). Cuban authorities arrested and detained peaceful protesters and government critics. Human rights organization Cubalex reports that over 1,400 individuals were detained from the July 11 protests, and Cuban courts confirmed convictions of approximately 380 protestors and bystanders (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Prosecutors framed peaceful protest activities and state criticisms -- exercises of freedom of action and association -- as criminal behavior.

In the analysis of policy making, the PET subsystem refers to the policy community: the group of actors (usually politicians,

lobbyists, bureaucrats, etc.) that possess the expertise, information, and decision-making power necessary in policymaking. These actors benefit from the policy status quo, and they maintain a policy monopoly by limiting the actors included in the policy process and minimizing public recognition of the issue (Jones et al., 2019). The policy community further aims to maintain a positive policy image by combining empirical information and emotional appeal towards the policy (Jones et al., 2019). Changes from within the subsystem are relatively incremental because the policy community interprets new information about relevant policy to fit the existing policy image -- a process also known as negative feedback (Green-Pedersen & Princen, 2017).

Political systems also include macro-politics in which political actors like presidents, prime ministers, party leaders, and the general news media (Green-Pedersen & Princen, 2017) operate. PET contends that policies endure long periods of stability without disruption and policy change is expected once a punctuation (or focusing event) disrupts the system and the policy monopoly (Jones et al., 2019). No significant policy change is expected without a focusing event, since the policy community upholds policy monopoly. Once a policy monopoly is shattered, a new policy community, who may not share the existing policy image, is expected to emerge. This change leads positive feedback to operate and “a new policy image may establish itself within a short timespan” (Green-Pedersen & Princen, 2017).

Although PET is generally applied to policy making in democracies, it has also been applied to authoritarian regimes.

The centralization of authoritarian regimes shut out "external disruptions to political processes and contain internal conflicts" (Lam and Chan, 2015), as policy communities establish needed change without consideration of the opposition. Although the "recalcitrance" of authoritarian governments leads pressure "from below" to build up against the state, the concentration of government power allows authorities to proceed with their desired changes. In analyzing PET in 1980 authoritarian Brazil's public budgeting policies, scholars determine that "public consultation and institutional fragmentation were not fully instituted until . . . [democratic] transition" (Rey et. al., 2015). Authoritarian regimes engage in a punctuated policy process in which the policymaking is so insulated that it does not change until "the built-up pressures can no longer be resisted" (Lam and Chan, 2015). Once this occurs, the policy response is "radical and forceful" and designed to exclusively serve the policy community's interests.

PET's emphasis on policy stability in the absence of punctuation effectively explains the prior lack of Penal Code reform. The previous Code was established 1987 and was designed to deal with political attacks against President Fidel Castro's regime, as well as eliminate crime and anti-socialist behavior (Treto, 1991). Cuban civil society has since tried to mobilize against the state to declare grievances. Yet these small-scale protests are demobilized and diminished by the socialist state, preventing them from gaining prominence (Yaffe, 2023). The last mass anti-government protest had been the 1994 *Maleconazo*, which was quickly demobilized by state figures and led a

massive wave of 35,000 Cubans to leave the island by sea. Given punctuation absence since, PET accurately predicts policy stability in the Code because of the lack of government threat.

Cuban civil society had since been unobtrusive because of state-imposed restraints. During his nearly five decades of rule, Castro established a repressive system that punished all forms of state dissent -- and this legacy carried on. José Miguel Vivanco of Human Rights Watch contends that “as other countries in the region [transitioned] from authoritarian rule, only . . . Cuba continue[s] to repress . . . civil and political rights. Castro’s draconian rule and the harsh punishments . . . to dissidents kept his repressive system rooted firmly in place for decades” (Human Rights Watch, 2016). This structure of governance continued after the rule of Castro, to that of his younger brother, Raúl Castro, and now Díaz-Canel. Some progress was achieved in 2014 when the Raúl Castro administration granted conditional release to 53 political prisoners in response to normalizing diplomatic relations with the US (Human Rights Watch, 2016). For the most part, however, the state has maintained strong authority and dominance over its civil society.

As PET suggests, the Cuban policy community maintained its monopoly and benefit from the policy by limiting the actors involved in the policy process. The 2021 Penal Code’s policy community consisted of President Díaz-Canel as well as “magistrates, judges, prosecutors, specialists, members of the Ministry of the Interior, law professors, and deputies from different territories” (Reinaldo et al., 2022). These actors worked under the control of

Díaz-Canel, who had benefited from the previous policy monopoly under which no societal dissent was articulated. No other actors were included in the policy sphere. Cuba was suffering an economic crisis with severe shortages of food, medication, and resources. The Díaz-Canel administration was not challenged by citizens because the existing state structure allowed no room for mass mobilization. The leader carries on with the country's autocratic tradition of excluding civil society from the political realm (Corrales and Brasesco, 2021).

In the midst of economic calamity, Díaz-Canel strove for a positive policy image, as PET proposes, by combining empirical information regarding foreign intervention with an emotional rhetoric regarding the island's vulnerability in order to absolve the Cuban state. Díaz-Canel publicly blamed the US for Cuba's economic collapse to distract from the state's culpability and lack of support. At the 2020 United Nations General Assembly, the president criticized the US' lack of commitment to Cuba and the world, lamenting that "once again the empire's perversity and lack of commitment to humankind is expressed" (Representaciones diplomáticas de Cuba en el exterior, 2020). Díaz-Canel further rebuked the US embargo and its sanctions against the island, which he emotionally characterized as "brutal" and a "ruthless economic war" against the Cuban people (Corrales and Brasesco, 2021). Although Díaz-Canel could not keep the crisis out of the public spotlight, he framed it to highlight the state as innocent and blame foreign powers for the crisis, hence maintaining a positive portrayal of his administration and the Cuban state.

The July 11 protests marked what PET refers to as the focusing event in the policymaking process. Thousands of Cubans mobilized in what constituted the largest nationwide anti-government demonstration since the Cuban revolution over 60 years prior (Human Rights Watch, 2022). The previous mass-protest, although not quite as large, had been the exodus-inducing 1994 *Maleconazo*. On July 11, 2021, however, citizens mobilized to hold the Cuban state accountable and demand institutional change in response to the island's extreme resource scarcities and human right violations. The mass-protest threatened state authority and legitimacy, throwing the state system into disequilibrium, like PET suggests.

The Díaz-Canel administration responded to the July 11 protests with force and blamed the US for citizens' uprising. Police authorities used violence to dismantle protests and arrest hundreds of protestors and activists (Marsh and Acosta, 2021). Guevara-Rosas asserts that Díaz-Canel utilized a rhetoric of war and confrontation in order to instigate "violence against those who demand accountability and the free enjoyment of their human rights" (Amnesty International, 2021). In a four-hour-long televised address alongside his Cabinet, Díaz-Canel lamented that the complex situation had been "taken advantage of by those who do not really want the Cuban revolution to develop or a civilized relationship with respect with the United States" (qtd. National Public Radio, 2021). Díaz-Canel blamed the US government for the mass protests, denouncing that "this policy of sanctions that prevents any kind of fuel arriving in Cuba has put us in a very difficult situation" (Faiola, 2021). Díaz-Canel

portrayed the mass protests as an issue of internal security, accusing the US of revolting civil society.

PET proposes that punctuation shatters the current monopoly of the policy community, but the Cuban case differs because the policy community persisted through the policy change. The mass-protest signified that Díaz-Canel no longer dominated society. As a result, the leader led the policy community to update the Code in order to reclaim his control and legitimacy. By updating the Penal Code, Cuban authorities took “drastic measures to punish people who participated in the demonstrations [and] . . . steps to dismantle the limited space for civil society that allowed these protests to occur” (Pappier, 2022). PET rightfully predicts that the punctuation of mass-protest threw the state structure into disequilibrium, and a new policy was needed in order to reestablish policy monopoly among the policy community. Once a policy monopoly is shattered, a new group of actors in the policy community will unite, and a new policy monopoly emerges. In this case, the policy community did not change. As PET suggests for authoritarian regimes, the concentration of governmental power allowed the policy community to proceed with their goals. The Penal Code was adapted to continue to serve the interests of the one-party state and President. Following the July 11 protests, the Cuban government denounced and prohibited any and all forms of public dissent in the subsequent protests scheduled for November 15th (Órgano oficial del comité central del partido comunista de Cuba, 2021).

By May 2022, the Cuban National Assembly updated and approved a new Penal Code

to come into force in August, which reportedly “intend[ed] to modernize the Cuban penal system” (Oliver and Venancio, 2022). Yet given the Code’s excessive prohibition of freedoms of expression and assembly, human rights activists argue that the intent of the new policy is to control and restrain citizen dissent and threats to the state’s authority, upholding the interest of Díaz-Canel, who led the policy community. The eruption of a mass-protest served as a focusing event in the policy-making process of the Code as Díaz-Canel referred to the protestors the following day as “vulgar criminals” (Faiola, 2021) and vowed consequence for those who engaged in “public disorder contempt” (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Given the onset of strong dissent, the policy community had to update the existing Penal Code to eliminate future threats of state power and legitimacy.

PET effectively links the July 11 protest occurrence to the adoption of an updated Penal Code. As revealed by the actions and rhetoric of President Díaz-Canel and the Cuban government, the mass protests caused disruption within the incumbent political system as protestors undermined the authority of Díaz-Canel. Human rights advocates worldwide denounced the Code as “limit[ing] basic freedoms such as public protests” (Washington Office in Latin America, 2022) in consequence of the July 11 mass demonstrations. Given Díaz-Canel’s immediate response to the mass demonstrations, it becomes clear that the societal threat to his legitimacy motivated the Code update. In order to maintain control and dominance over the Cuban population, the group of judges, prosecutors, ministers, and deputies, under

the leadership of Díaz-Canel, updated its Penal Code to prevent future citizen disruption and instability towards the political system.

Although PET effectively identifies a policy community to be the creator and maintainer of policy, the theory does not acknowledge that policy community may not change with policy, which could potentially limit the researcher's ability to explain policy change. Díaz-Canel, along with his group of law specialists, judges, ministers, and deputies, maintained their control over policy. Scholars apply PET to authoritarian regimes by citing that the concentration of government power allows authorities to accomplish their desired changes, despite citizen discontent. Yet PET does not adequately attend to the potential persistence of the policy community. Under Cuba's one-party authoritarian government, the policy community never changed. Rather it maintained its monopoly by updating its policy to prevent the emergence of future protest. The absence of change within the policy community leads the researcher to question whether the dependent variable, policy change, can be explained by a constant.

PET raises further uncertainty in what should be considered as the focusing event in policy-making. It could be argued that there were various contending factors in the update of the Code. Díaz-Canel claimed the updated policy was necessary in protecting the island from US interference and obstruction. Yet international human rights lawyers perceived the update of the Penal Code to be a direct governmental response to the mass protests. The July 11 protests erupted from resource scarcity on the island, largely a result of US

imposed-sanctions, which disrupted the structure, discontented citizens, and led to their mobilization. Díaz-Canel repeatedly declared that the mass-demonstrations were caused by the US (Corrales and Brasesco, 2021). The Cuban state was unable to provide its citizens vital resources, such as medication and food, because of US-imposed sanctions. Since the protests erupted as a result of sanction-induced conditions, the foreign sanctions may have served as the actual focusing event in the Penal Code's policy process.

Ultimately, although PET sheds light on the role of the July 2021 protests in triggering the stricter Penal Code, the theory does not attend to the possibility of policy endurance and lacks an explanation on what constitutes the ultimate punctuation when several contending causal factors exist. PET identifies the emergence of the July 2021 protests as the key driver in the Díaz-Canel administration's Code update. As demonstrations threatened state legitimacy, the policy community (led by Díaz-Canel) updated the long-standing Penal Code to prevent future acts of dissent. Even when applied to authoritarian regimes, PET does not consider the possibility that policy communities endure through policy change, raising questions of whether a constant (in policy community) can thoroughly explain change in policy. The theory alsolacks precision about what constitutes the ultimate focusing event since US sanctions, which led to the economic conditions that Cubans mobilized against, could have potentially served as the punctuation in the policy reform.

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Photo by Maya Khalife-Hamdan '25

Lebanon's Partial Democracy: An "In-Between" of Democratization and Authoritarianism

Maya Khalife-Hamdan '25

In February 2023, Lebanese economy minister Amin Salam declared that it is “difficult to prove that Lebanon is not a failed state” (qtd. in Al Jazeera). Democracy in Lebanon is weak and was deemed as one of the most corrupt nation states in 2023, ranking eighth in the world (United States Institute of Peace). Enduring the everlasting effects of the 2020 Beirut port explosion as well as an economic crisis, over three quarters of Lebanon’s 6 million citizens have fallen into poverty (Public Broadcasting Service). With crippling medicine shortages and continuous power outages, the democratic institutions of Lebanon have become perceived as inadequate and lacking. Citizen mistrust in the government is increasingly displayed, with 96% of citizens considering corruption to be an “endemic” (Ghosn and Parkinson).

Lebanon operates a semi-presidential system, under a sectarian power-sharing structure which ensures political representation of officially recognized religious sects. Freedom House defines Lebanon’s democracy as only “partly free," however, particularly because the system limits political competition to the dominating political elites and impedes the rise of cross-communal and civic parties (Freedom House). This leads to the question of how the state continues to survive in this “limbo” status between a failed state, yet no democratization nor authoritarianism is following. Throughout

following. Throughout this paper, I argue that since the Lebanese state was formed during a period of complete collapse, citizenry followed through with continuing political practices in order to prevent conflict and instability. Given the country's consequent legacy of authoritarian leaders, this governance ultimately became entrenched within Lebanon's political institutions.

Theory of State Formation

Theory of State Formation as a "social contract" contends that prior to the formation of states, people lived in an environment of war against all, with constant chaos and survival of the strongest. Yet since constant competition leads to insecurity throughout society, citizens agree to a "social contract," under which they limit their ability to do as they please in order to achieve the collective benefit of security and order. The state and its institutions are consequently endowed to uphold the social contract by law and force, which makes it a political legal unit. That is, the state exercises sovereignty; a monopoly over citizenry.

Following the French mandate in Lebanon in 1946, the nation experienced a weakening of state structures, division of territory, and a fragmented economy, due to imposed cleavages. The state of Lebanon was fragile from its beginning and the Lebanese continuously struggled to overcome the cleavages between those who identified with the Arab world and those who identified with the West. Lebanon quickly went from being a "weak" state to a collapsed state with the emergence of its civil war (1975-1990). As

proposed by the Theory of State Formation, the state would consequently attempt to attain stability by diminishing the presence of competition within Lebanon. Given its collapse, I suggest that the state had to subsequently develop strong organizations based on sectarian divisions, as well as the collecting of resources and capital. The conflicting elites were obliged to renegotiate the state by pursuing a process of state formation. Of course, this system of social adherence does impede citizen liberties and opportunities. Nonetheless, I argue that this system of state formation based on collapse encourages citizens to follow in order to prevent total state collapse, which would inevitably affect citizenry.

Authoritarian Populist Legacy + Banality of Evil Theories

Authoritarian Populist Theory suggests that authoritarian populism emerges as leaders claim they are taking back democracy to the people's control. Although these regimes claim a strong leader to represent the people's interest, they reject constraints on majoritarian decision-making and centralization of power and instead spread dissemination of information. Democratic institutions resultantly weakens, as well as citizenry trust in democracies. Lebanon has a long and complicated history of sectarian populism -- this leads citizens to become politically divided and distrusted.

In connection, philosopher Hannah Arendt's Banality of Evil Thesis argues that contemporary society reduces the individual down to an economic transactional being. Arendt argues that modernity dehumanizes people, as it reduces the individual down to merely economics. There are, as a result, dire

political consequences: evil acts are committed by ordinary, non-hateful citizens who are doing their jobs and/or abiding by the law of the country. Masses become seemingly dehumanized as they pursue transactions without considering the emotional effects. In the case of Lebanon, politicians have long followed a structure and tradition of political transaction. This political conduct ultimately becomes perceived as the norm.

In combining the Authoritarian Populist Legacy and Banality of Evil theses, I predict that persisting authoritarianism in Lebanon leads to the weakening of democratic institutions and trust, along with the political polarization of citizenry. As years have progressed, this manner of governance became ingrained among politicians, who transactionally operate the country by such means. This persisting presence of politically authoritarian governance and conduct leads to societal mistrust and frustration with Lebanon's state institutions. Yet citizenry follows through with this "social contract" to avoid further disorder. This political status maintains Lebanon in a "limbo" status, without complete democratization nor authoritarianism.

State Formation Within State Collapse

The Lebanese civil war emerged in 1975 -- yet its roots were long embedded in the country's history. Domestically, this emergence was closely related to the political confessional system that governed Lebanon since its independence, introduced through the 1943 National Pact (Ghosen and Khoury). The religious division instigated by the National Pact did not take into consideration the demographic

changes within the country, and the fostered political system was unable to adapt to and meet the demands of those changes (Ghosen and Khoury). These domestic tensions over political structure and power-sharing, paired with external conflicts in regard to the Palestinians and Israelis, led to the civil war, with the already weak Lebanese government unable to prevent it.

The Lebanese state exercised an environment of anarchy and self-reliance in which individuals were in constant competition for resources and power. Central political control of the nation decomposed as multiple factions took over territory through the use of coercion, “then developed methods of capital extraction and entrenched identity constructs conducive to maintaining the divisions of the civil war long after its settlement” (Delatolla). Throughout the early 1970s and 1980s, Lebanon suffered substantial internal instability, with widespread social dissatisfaction and discontent with the rising cost of living, low wages, unfavorable amendments in labor legislation, and substandard work conditions (Delatolla). The fifteen-year-long civil war resulted in the killing of approximately 144,000 citizens, 184,000 injured, 13,000 kidnapped, and at least 17,000 missing or disappeared. Moreover, 175 towns were reported as partially or completely destroyed, and over 750,000 Lebanese individuals were deemed to be internally displaced. The physical consequences of the civil war on the Lebanese state were estimated at $25 billion (Ghosen and Khoury).

Citizens’ encounters and contentions with the state led to the formation of numerous autonomous groups that aimed to

challenge the Lebanese government, as well as each other (Delatolla). Given the hierarchical organization that had been formulated by the French mandate, which displayed favoritism towards Maronite Christians, religion became a defining factor of these groups, predominantly among Christians, Sunni Muslims, and Shia Muslims (Ghosen and Khoury). Each group emphasized its distinct religious and cultural attributes and its right to state power. The state of Lebanon resulting from the civil war fits the State Formation Theory's depiction of constant competition for power and survival. With the lack of a strong centralizing state, Lebanese citizens were in an environment of rivalry, competition, and distrust.

As suggested by the Theory of State Formation, this prevailing instability led citizens to become willing to sacrifice personal liberties in order to achieve state centrality and security. Scholar of Middle Eastern Studies Andrew Delatolla reflects on the attainment of power by the militia groups:

As each group emphasized its distinct cultural and religious characteristics and its right to state power, it became more inward looking. . . . Attacks against populations gave way to stronger feelings of animosity at the domestic level . . . In exchange for security citizens gave material and symbolic support to the militias that formed after the state collapsed . . . (Delatolla).

State Formation Theory asserts that the consolidation of power in order to attain state stability leads the state to have a monopoly over the use of violence against citizens. These groups exert their power in the name of stability, and citizenry is consequently obligated to follow such actions. As the theory emphasizes, this

takes the form of an (unofficial) “social contract,” under which citizens limit their freedoms and liberties in order to achieve the collective benefit of security and order.

In effort to achieve political stability (to the greatest degree possible), the Taif Agreement was formulated to end the fifteen-year-long civil war in 1989, furthering the 1943 National Pact, which deemed “the President shall be a Maronite Christian, the speaker of parliament shall be a Shia Muslim, and the Prime Minister shall be a Sunni Muslim” (U.S. Department of State). To de-escalate tension among the Lebanese, “the agreement reduced the constitutional powers of the Maronite Christian presidency and increased those of the Sunni Muslim Prime Minister while also subjecting the designation of the Prime Minister to binding consultations with parliament and the designations of all ministers to a parliamentary vote of confidence” (U.S. Department of State). This formation of the state was designed with the purpose of combating competition and insecurity among citizenry. This system depends on societal adherence to the social contract, which citizenry adheres to in hopes of attaining stability and avoiding cross-group conflict.

A Persisting Legacy of Authoritarian Governance

In 2006, Lebanese Parliament member Ghassan Moukheiber lamented that “there can be no justice without truth and no justice without reconciliation” (qtd. in Shadid). Since the political collapse and attempt at restoration that emerged after the Lebanese civil war, there has been little to no attempt to attend to the country’s history of political instability and abuse. Rather, the trend of undemocratic leaders

and political conduct continues. The Lebanese state experienced the rise and fall of authoritarian-like presidential leaders (even enduring periods with no ruling president). Lebanon experienced path dependency in terms of political leaders and parties, with the continuous ruling of authoritarian-like leaders and their offspring. Throughout the civil war and the period following, the Frangieh family of Lebanon exercised a significant political presence. During the presidency of Suleiman Frangieh, his family were prominent members and militia leaders. In the present day, the Frangieh family is represented by the political Marada Movement, a political organization directly rooted from a militant group of the Lebanese Civil War (Tran).

Authoritarian Populist Thesis claims that significant democratic decline is induced by populist authoritarian leaders and parties, who, in addition to winning elections, also subvert the political system. Such actors ultimately shift political conversations and the political center, which, in turn, results in general mistrust in democracy and rise in nepotism and corruption. In the 2018 (most recent) World Values Survey, nearly 80% of Lebanese citizens reported that they have “not very much” or “none at all” of confidence in their government (Haerpfer et al.). In comparison, “only” 59% of the Lebanese population reported such low sentiments of confidence in their government in the 2013 World Values Survey (Inglehart et al.). Although the political structure endures, mistrust is increasingly spreading across the Lebanese population as time progresses from the state’s complete collapse during the civil war. The Pew Research Center reports that

84% -- the significant majority -- of Lebanese citizens are dissatisfied with the state's function of the economic system (Mordecai). Moreover, 77% of the Lebanese population claims that they "do not trust the government to do what is right for Lebanon" and "they are pessimistic about the future of Lebanon's political system" (Mordecai)

The Banality of Evil Thesis predicts that the political elite become entrenched with their personal economics and as a result numbly performs wrongdoings and disadvantages to the general population. Authoritarian ruling in Lebanon became embedded within institutions. Fellow at the Carnegie Middle East Center Mohanad Hage Ali reflects that "there's a self-centered political elite that still hasn't acknowledged the changing realities or how difficult the situation is. They want to focus on their own profiteering in the system" (qtd. in Reuters). Lebanon's legacy of authoritarianism prevails in the present day, as governmental figures disregard and diminish challenges faced by citizenry. Upon leaving Lebanon's Presidential Palace in October 2022 (without a replacement), President Michel Aoun admitted that "[he] leave[s] a country that is robbed" (qtd. in Public Broadcasting Service) in regards to the Lebanese who lost their life savings in local banks due to institutional economic mismanagement. Aoun even admitted that some politicians prevented the investigation into the Beirut 2020 port blast (Public Broadcasting Services). One citizen who lost her 15-year-old son in the Beirut explosion laments that "the way that the government is treating this is insulting. . . . we really must be shining a spotlight on the lack of access to justice" (qtd. in Enders). As

predicted by the theories of Authoritarian Populism and Banality of Evil, the authoritarian manner of governance became ingrained in the contemporary politics of Lebanon, with citizens feeling neglected and powerless. Lebanese society certainly recognizes the corruption of the political system. Nonetheless, such tradition is so entrenched in the system that it cannot easily be altered.

Conclusion

The Lebanese state remains in a position of weak formation as a result of the persisting legacy and nature of authoritarian rule. Rooted in a history marked by sectarian divisions and external conflicts, Lebanon's journey toward stability is marred by a persisting legacy of authoritarian governance. The Theory of State Formation proposes that the state achieves societal monopoly through its structure of supposed stability and security. The Taif Agreement sought to recalibrate power dynamics and foster stability through a system of sectarian representation. However, the legacy of authoritarian rule persists, manifesting in a self-interest and economic profiteering political elite. The Banality of Evil and Authoritarian Populism theses further illustrate that with the persistence of this system, the Lebanese authoritarian legacy became instituted within the country's politics. Lebanon is left in a state of "limbo" -- neither fully democratic or completely authoritarian. The theories of Authoritarian Populism and the Banality of Evil shed light on the mechanisms through which authoritarian governance becomes institutionalized, instigating a cycle of distrust and

disillusionment among citizens. As populist leaders manipulate democratic processes and prioritize personal gain over the welfare of their nation, democratic norms are eroded. The state system instilled at Lebanon's formation prevails in the present day, ingraining itself within the country's politics.

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Photo by Anna Lebrun '24

Money Makes the World Go Round

Investigating the Political Protections of the CFA Franc

Anna Lebrun '24

The CFA Franc is a currency system used by states in West and Central Africa, mainly former French colonies. The currency itself first developed during the colonial period as France tried to consolidate control and create links between these colonial economies and its own. While other colonial currencies were abandoned with the wave of independence in the 1950s and 1960s, the CFA Franc continued into the post-colonial era (Patillo & Masson 2004). Agreement to the franc zone and continued use of the CFA Franc was a stipulation of France's peaceful independence agreements. The currency is still used in fourteen countries: Senegal, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, & Niger (who make up the West African Monetary Union (UEMOA)), and Chad, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and the Republic of the Congo (who make up the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC)) (Patillo & Masson 2004). Critics often call the CFA Franc "Africa's last colonial currency" (Pigeaud & Sylla 2021).

In a post-colonial world, how does France compel its former colonies to remain in the CFA zone and ensure their cooperation with French interests? I will investigate this phenomenon, specifically interrogating the question: *how does France leverage its political power in Sub-Saharan Africa to maintain the CFA franc zone?* I will argue that

the CFA franc is maintained through two primary means: the threat of retaliation against non-cooperative countries, and the promise of benefits for cooperative leaders. Through the course of this paper, I will discuss three different countries that belong, or belonged, to the CFA franc zone during their independent history: Guinea, which left the CFA zone in 1960; Togo, which unsuccessfully tried to leave the franc zone in 1963; and Gabon, one of the few franc zone countries which has never attempted to exit the franc zone.

Literature Review -

The bulk of the scholarship on the CFA franc is critical of the currency system. Proponents of the CFA Franc have little else to offer in its defense other than the stability ensured by the CFA Franc, noting the low levels of inflation ensured by the pegging of the currency value to the euro (Taylor 2019). One salient critique comes from the liberalist perspective, which focuses specifically on the negative economic consequences of the CFA franc system (Wilson 2021; Kin and Zhao 2012; Couharde, Coulibaly, Guerreiro, and Mignon 2013) . The CFA system is fundamentally antithetical to core liberalist tenants, as it involves strict government regulation over the monetary system and prevents economies from self-regulating. The fact that it is a foreign state rather than a domestic state further offends this principle, as it prevents states from acting in their own self-interest and pursuing national agendas. Furthermore, critics accuse the system of stifling African economic growth and development by intentionally devaluing the currency and holding it at an artificially low exchange rate

(Couharde et. al 2013; Deslandes 2019; Koddenbrock & Sylla 2019; Patillo & Masson 2004; Taylor 2019). Given the detrimental effects that the CFA franc has on member states' economies and its violation of liberalism's core principles, the consensus of these scholars is that the currency system does not make economic sense for countries in the CFA zone. While this theory offers a compelling critique of the economic implications of the monetary system, it neglects the sociopolitical consequences and does not explain the reason states comply with the monetary system.

The structuralist approach critiques the CFA system for its harmful effects on both the economic and political systems of countries in the CFA zone (Deslandes 2019; Koddenbrock & Sylla 2019; Mohapi 2020; Pigeaud & Sylla 2021; Taylor 2019; Wilson 2021). Regardless of the economic benefits that the CFA may bring (of which there are few), the system in and of itself perpetuates dependency and strengthens French power in the region. Through the creation of the CFA Franc, France has devised what some scholars call a "chain of monetary dependency (and subordination)" (Koddenbrock & Sylla 2019, p.5). States in the CFA zone do not have control over their own monetary system or supply and, instead, must rely on the French government, French reserve banks, and regional (but still foreign) reserve banks. This precludes the governments from acting swiftly in emergencies and makes it difficult for them to pursue national interests.

Joseph Tchundjang Pouemi, a Cameroonian economist, former IMF staffer, and one of the preeminent scholars on African

economies and the CFA monetary system, argued without control over one's monetary system, it is impossible for a country to have an autonomous economic policy or to pursue national interests (Koddenbrock & Sylla 2019). According to Pouemi, it is not only the CFA Franc that perpetuates the domination of the core countries over the periphery. Pouemi asserts that "capitalist money in the dual form of US-dollar dominance and the institutions of the CFA franc operated as forces of continuing 'servitude' and exploitation, linking former metropoles with comprador elites in the newly 'independent' countries" (Koddenbrock & Sylla 2019, p. 6). The CFA Franc is the most blatant of these abusers and, according to Pouemi, is at the center of these African countries' economic issues and underdevelopment. Samir Amin builds on this notion that monetary systems are a tool of exploitation, positing that money is "'the effective instrument for organizing the transfer of value from the underdeveloped periphery of the world system to its advanced center'" (Koddenbrock and Sylla 2019, p.5). Money facilitates the core's accumulation of wealth through exploitation and dispossession of periphery countries, a central characteristic of the imperial system.

Theory -

I will apply the structuralist perspective to the issue of the CFA Franc, which posits that exploitation is endemic to economic and political interactions prompted by the struggle for supremacy amongst actors. Colonization arose out of this struggle and promoted some countries into a position of dominance while others were forced under

their rule. Colonization was designed to promote the interest of colonizing powers through the economic, social, and political exploitation of the colonized. Colonization created a stark division between the haves and have-nots, the core and periphery countries, and the developed and developing world, which persisted even after colonial regimes collapsed. Former colonial powers maintain their position of dominance over formerly colonized countries through various mechanisms.

One way in which France secured its power and interests in its former African colonies in the post-colonial era was through the CFA Franc. The CFA Franc was devised by the French when France was still a colonial power. In the 1960s, as independence movements swept the African continent, France compelled its colonies to sign a Colonial Pact as a condition of their independence, which mandated monetary cooperation between France and the countries in the CFA zone (Mohapi 2020). As France's colonial power waned, the state devised the CFA system to retain economic power and political influence in its former colonies. The French motivation for the CFA franc is evident, but why do member countries cooperate?

African governments cooperate with the CFA franc for two primary reasons. The country's economies have little to gain from using the CFA franc, and it can be argued that the franc is actively detrimental to the country's economic development and growth. Governments are compelled to comply by a threat of interference by the French government and by a promise of support and benefits for leaders who promote French interests, reinforcing or recreating the colonial collaborator class.

The threat of interference is a major tactic used by France to enforce cooperation. As I will demonstrate in my cases, France has leveraged its influence and power to deter states from exiting the franc zone, either by using states as examples (as was the case with Guinea) for any states with aspirations of cessation or deposing leaders who talk of leaving, which can be seen in cases such as Togo, Niger, Côte d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso (Koddenbrock and Sylla 2019). French interference effectively deters or blocks any attempts to leave the franc zone.

Another way in which France garners political support for the CFA franc from African leaders is through the promotion of the collaborator class into seats of power in *independent* regimes. The idea of *collaboration* and *collaborator classes* stems from colonialism and post)-colonial theory and refers to "an association with government by one who benefits personally at the expense of the community it represents" (Gregory 1981, p. 259). Collaborator classes were common in the colonial period, as colonial powers aimed to maintain control and order without allocating their resources to its maintenance. Instead, colonial powers compelled select local leaders to maintain order and promote their control by offering them personal benefits. In the post-colonial era and in CFA countries, France ensures collaborators' cooperation by promising them economic benefits and political power.

Through my investigation of three cases, Guinea, Togo, and Gabon, I will demonstrate that, in instances where states leave, or attempt to leave, the CFA zone, France interferes in their institutions with the aim of deterring countries from leaving

and staunching their attempts. In instances where states choose to remain in the franc zone, France has installed collaborators into positions of power, ensuring their continued cooperation. France employs these two tactics to ensure the continued use of the CFA franc by its former colonies.

The CFA Franc - *France's Gains and Africa's Losses*

France is motivated to retain this currency to secure access to natural resources and maintain its hegemonic status in the international community. The CFA Franc facilitates easy and low-cost trade between France and the CFA community by removing exchange fees and trade barriers while inhibiting trade between countries in the franc zone with those outside of it. As such, France is the first to have access to the resource wealth in countries of the CFA zone. Furthermore, France is able to access these resources cheaply, as the exchange rate between the currencies is pegged so that 1 euro = 655.957 CFA francs (Taylor 2019, p. 9). This reality of monetary devaluation has contributed to a situation where, despite the high volume of trade, which enriches France, 10 of the 14 countries in the franc zone are among the world's *least developed countries*. Italy's Deputy Prime Minister has criticized France for this economic ploy, asserting that without the CFA countries, France would rank 15th among world economies (Taylor 2019). While France elevates its economic status and condition vis à vis trade relations with countries in the CFA zone, the system has stifled these countries' economic growth (Deslandes 2019).

The CFA franc plays a key role in the maintenance of France's economic interests. However, the more significant

role of the CFA franc is diplomatic, not economic. The CFA zone helps France maintain its pré carré: through the CFA Franc, France maintains influence in Africa and the international community, securing support votes in international organizations and maintaining France's image as a world leader. French leaders are open about the benefits France receives from the CFA countries. In 1957, Prime Minister François Mitterrand asserted that "'without Africa, France will have no history in the 21st century'" (Sidi Mohamed 2023). In 2008, former President Jacques René Chirac claimed that "'without Africa, France will slide down into the rank of a third [world] power'" (Nyikadzino 2021). Without the CFA Franc, France risks losing its influence in Africa and its role as a great power.

Guinea - *the Consequences of Monetary Independence*

Guinea was the first of France's sub-Saharan colonies to achieve independence in 1958. The colony's independence came about from a referendum in 1958 in which citizens were able to vote on whether to remain in the French African community (Walraven 2009). Of France's 15 colonies in the community, Guinea was the only colony to vote "no" to remaining in the community, with 95% of Guineans voting to leave the community: on October 2nd, 1958, Guinea officially became an independent state (Walraven 2009). Ahmed Sékou Touré, the mayor of Conakry, vice-president of the government council of Guinea, and deputy of the French National Assembly was at the forefront of the fight for independence, stating: "We will not give up, and we will never give up our legitimate and natural right to independence [...] We prefer to be poor in

in freedom than rich in slavery" (Pigeaud & Sylla 2021, p. 82).

Independence, however, was not supposed to be a total divorce from France. While Guinea became an independent and sovereign state, the hope was to retain the CFA franc and continue economic and diplomatic relations between the states (Pigeaud & Sylla 2021). After France's frosty response to Guinea's choice to become independent, including refusing to recognize the new state for several months, repealing institutions and aid programs, and attempting to block Guinea from becoming a UN member state, Sékou Touré began to rethink his commitment to the CFA Franc (Pigeaud & Sylla 2021). Sékou Touré's Guinea attempted to renegotiate the conditions of the CFA franc agreement, hoping to create its own national currency within the franc zone (Tietz 2022). Upon France's refusal to negotiate the rules of the CFA franc zone, Guinea left the zone and created its own national bank and currency (the Guinean Franc) (Tietz 2022).

France responded swiftly and harshly, funding armed mercenaries in the region to sow discord and destabilize Guinea and the Sékou Touré régime (Pigeaud & Sylla 2021). Maurice Robert, a French intelligence officer with the Service de Documentation Extérieure et de Contre-Espionnage (SDECE), describes the operation and France's overall policy in Guinea.

> We had to destabilize Sékou Touré, to make him vulnerable, unpopular and [...] develop a climate of insecurity in Guinea and, if possible, to overthrow Sékou Touré...Among these destabilizing actions, I can cite operation "Persil," for example, which consisted of introducing a large quantity of counterfeit Guinean banknotes with the goal of destabilizing the economy (Wilson 2021, p. 173).

These operations were only partially

successful: while operation “Persil” effectively destabilized the Guinean economy, devaluing the new Guinean franc and undermining the legitimacy of Guinean infrastructure and the Guinean Central Bank, France was unable to deter the country or unseat Sékou Touré (Pigeaud & Sylla 2021). Sékou Touré remained in office until his death in 1984, and Guinea has maintained its use of the Guinean franc to this day. While the operations were unsuccessful in reinstating the CFA franc in Guinea, French leaders hoped that the events in Guinea would serve as a warning for France’s other colonies, which gained independence en masse in 1960. In 1962, George Pompidou, at the time France’s Prime Minister, declared: “Let the experience of Sékou Touré take its course. Many Africans are beginning to realize that Guinea’s policy is suicidal and contrary to the interests of Africa” (Pigeaud & Sylla 2021, p. 86).

Togo - *Squandered Independence*

Togo gained its independence on April 27th, 1960, led by Sylvanus Olympio, who was elected to be the state's first president. In the transition period, Togo maintained the CFA franc as part of a provisional monetary agreement between Paris and Lomé (Pigeaud & Sylla 2021). In this transition period, Olympio made new trade agreements with the United States, Germany, and other independent African states (Pigeaud & Sylla 2021). Realizing the limiting nature of the CFA Franc, Togo petitioned France to relax the rules of their monetary agreement (Pigeaud & Sylla 2021). Once again, France refused. In December 1962, Olympio proposed a law that would establish the Central Bank of Togo and create the Togolese Franc (Pigeaud & Sylla

2021).

On January 13th, 1963, around a month after Olympio proposed monetary independence from France, President Sylvanus Olympio was shot and killed in front of the American Embassy by Étienne Gnassingbé, a former Togolese soldier who had served the French Army during the colonial period (Pigeaud & Sylla 2021). Olympio's plans for monetary sovereignty died with him, and Togo remains part of the franc zone to this day. Nicolas Gruntski, a longtime political rival, was appointed President of Togo by the pro-French insurrection committee (Pigeaud & Sylla 2021). Gruntski was a vehement supporter of France and FrançAfrique (France's post-colonial frontier in Sub-Saharan Africa). Gruntski immediately reaffirmed Togo's commitment to France and desire to strengthen the relationship between the countries. In July of 1963, President Grunitzky signed a financial, monetary, and economic cooperation agreement that affirmed Togo's use of the CFA Franc (Pigeaud & Sylla 2021). Jacques Foccart, the chief advisor on African Affairs and a co-founder of the Gaullist Service d'Action Civique, a program specializing in covert operations in Africa (including instrumenting coups), described the difference in the Franco-Togolese relationship when Olympio and Grunitzky were in office: "Sylvanus Olympio was not one of our friends,[...] With him, my relations were never as cordial as those I had with Nicolas Grunitzky" (Boisbouvier 2021). Since the coup of 1963, only French allies have held the office of President in Togo, including Gnassingbé Eyadéma (who took credit for the assassination of Sylvanus Olympio) and his son Faure

Gnassingbé who is the country's current president (Preuss 2020).

Gabon - *The Perks of Collaboration*

When Gabon gained dependence on August 17th, 1960, the state retained a close relationship with its former colonial power. Léon M'ba, the prime minister, took on a leading role in the transition period and set the terms for the state's relationship with France, signing all the accords and cooperation agreements that France laid out for its new ally (Tietz 2022). In 1961, despite criticism from the public and members of his own party that he was too pro-French, M'ba was elected president (Tietz 2022). France supported M'ba's presidency; however, the extent of their support only became startlingly clear in 1964 when, after a popularly supported coup d'état removed President M'ba from power on February 18th and put in anti-French leaders into office, the French government sent troops from Congo-Brazzaville to restore the deposed head of state, who retook office on February 20th (Reed 1987).

France was motivated by a desire to retain influence and control over Gabon due to its economic and diplomatic importance to France. Gabon has incredible natural resource wealth, including oil and uranium, and France wanted to maintain its access to these resources (Reed 1987). Continued use of the CFA franc would facilitate France's cheap access to these resources by eliminating trade and currency transfer fees. Furthermore, M'ba was a long-time supporter of France in a region full of unstable transitions and strong anti-French leaders like Sékou Touré and Sylvanius Olympio, and thus, his position of power was an asset to France as it dealt with

anti-French leaders across its other former colonies (Teitz 2012).

The desire to keep an ally in Gabon's highest office remained at the forefront of France's policy throughout the late 1960s when President M'ba's health was in decline (Yates 2019). Before he passed in 1967, France had begun grooming his successor, Albert-Bernard Bongo (Albert-Bernard Bongo converted to Islam in 1973 and changed his name to Omar Bongo) (Yates 2019). The Bongo family, often called the Bongo Dynasty, ruled Gabon from 1967 until August 30th, 2023 (Yates 2019). Ali Bongo assumed the presidency after his father's death in 2009. Throughout its 83 years as an independent state, Gabon has never tried to cut ties with France or leave the CFA zone. France has staved off coup attempts, protecting their allies in office (Yates 2019). These allies acted as a collaborator class, protecting French interests in the region and, in turn, profiting from a situation that did not serve the national public interest.

Conclusion–

The CFA franc is a powerful tool to maintain French power and influence in the post-colonial world. The franc ensures not only the country's easy access to the continent's natural resource wealth but also ensures the continuation of France's pré carré. The benefits for France are immense, yet the African signatories are plagued with poverty and underdevelopment, in no small part thanks to the CFA franc system. While the CFA franc is generally harmful to the national well-being and interests, France leverages a threat of repercussion and a promise of reward to promote cooperation with the

CFA franc system.

The case of the CFA franc is an illustrative example of the ways in which former colonial empires preserve their power in the post-colonial era. While in the colonial period, power was held with military force and boots on the ground, in the post-colonial (or neo-colonial period), power is maintained through more covert and insidious means, including monetary systems. As Joseph Tchundjang Pouemi notes, all dominant monetary systems necessarily function to promote the wealth of the core at the detriment of the periphery. These systems perpetuate an unequal and unjust world order in which colonizers can continue profiting from the exploitation of those they colonized.

Additionally, the case of the CFA franc shines a light on the insidious tactics that these hegemonic powers use to perpetuate this unequal system. While the CFA franc supports French interest and hegemony in sub-Saharan Africa, it is France's meddling in the political institutions and operations of states in the CFA zone that has enabled France to maintain the CFA franc itself. Despite the hurdles and looming consequences of monetary independence, it is clear that it is necessary for any of these states to see true liberation from the colonial system.

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Photo by Annie Cronin '24

Understanding the Resource Curse: A Comparative Analysis of Norway's Successes and Saudi Arabia's Failures in Escaping the Resource Curse

Annie Cronin '24

A petrostate is a country whose economy is heavily, or completely, dependent on the extraction and export of oil. Having large oil reserves does not automatically constitute the existence of a petrostate. This distinction arises from their capacity to generate revenue from a range of industries and sectors beyond oil. Petrostates are characterized by the vigorous concentration of political and economic power within an elite group (Ross 1999, 317). The resource curse, often referred to as the paradox of plenty, is a puzzling situation where countries wealthy in natural resources struggle to achieve economic development and political stability due to a heavy reliance on said natural resources (Ross 1999, 317). While the discovery of natural resources, specifically oil, can bring immense wealth to a country, it often brings with it the consequences of economic and political instability. This paradox ultimately begs the question:

RQ: Why are most natural resource-rich countries more susceptible to political and economic instability? What factors contribute to a country's triumph over expected political and economic pitfalls associated with an abundance of natural resources?

Thesis: Countries that have an overwhelming abundance of natural resources, under certain conditions such as the presence of authoritarian regimes and a lack of economic diversification, will fall prey to the so-called resource curse, while

resource-rich countries with diversified economies and democratic regimes can combat the resource curse.

Literature Review

The intention of this research question and subsequent research aims to understand how an abundance of natural resources within a specific country can ultimately hinder, and even prohibit democratic development. This study intends to understand what variables are overwhelmingly contributing to politically underdeveloped countries with natural resource wealth, specifically countries with large oil reserves.

A popular explanation for understanding economic instability in natural resource-rich countries is the Dutch Disease theory. The Dutch Disease occurs when a country's robust economic growth in a specific sector, most often natural resources, leads to a steep economic decline in other important revenue-producing sectors. The term originated in 1977, describing the Netherlands' manufacturing decline after discovering a large natural gas field in 1959. The theory states that as the newly successful sector booms, a country's currency will become stronger, making the import of resources cheaper, and thus destroying the competitiveness of other sectors (Larsen 2006, 608). Dutch Disease involves three key effects: the movement of resources like capital and labor to resource extraction (factor movement effect), increased demand from resource income leading to economic imbalances (spending effect), and the loss of positive effects in non-resource sectors (spillover-loss effect) (Larsen 2006, 608). Some argue that Dutch Disease is not necessarily harmful but rather a natural economic adjustment to new circumstances.

Both the "curse" and the "disease" are linked to institutional arrangements or policies, suggesting that proper management can mitigate problems

(Larsen 2006, 610). Dealing with Dutch Disease relies on macroeconomic policies while avoiding the resource curse involves fundamental societal elements. While Dutch Disease is a complex economic phenomenon that may explain aspects of political and economic instability, it represents only a fraction of the whole picture. Dutch Disease is almost entirely reliant on economic principles, as opposed to reviewing the whole state, and in particular, its governmental structure. Understanding why a state with vast natural resources is so susceptible to instability requires an understanding of the entire state, not just its economic context.

Proposed by Hussein Mahdavy in 1970, the Rentier State theory (RST) identifies countries that regularly receive hefty external rents, often unrelated to domestic production processes, as rentier states (Tagliapietra 2017, 5). These states rely heavily on external income to sustain their economies, diminishing the development of a strong and supportive domestic economic market. The “rent” is any revenue that a natural resource-rich country makes from exporting said goods, specifically oil. Once governments receive large revenue gains from exporting their goods, they “grow irrationally optimistic about future revenues” and “devote the greater part of their resources to jealously guarding the status quo” as opposed to promoting development (Ross 1999, 312). The population's involvement in rent generation (oil production and exportation) is limited as the government is the sole recipient and controller of the means of production and exports (Tagliapietra 2017, 5).

The expected role of the government in providing for the common good through taxation and domestic income is nonexistent, as rentier states provide “favors” through the government’s generosity. Unlike many democracies that

decree “no taxation without representation,” rentier states operate using a “no representation without taxation” mentality (Tagliapietra 2017, 11). Citizens who are not taxed will likely not demand political accountability. Rentier states don't necessarily depend on their domestic economy growing. There is no need for democratic representation for legitimacy. In contrast, non-resource-rich states, relying on taxation, must gain the approval of their population. The RST, explaining how governments relying on external revenues become less accountable and face little pressure to improve economic policies, has become a principal theory in understanding oil-dependent states around the world. Similarly to the Dutch Disease theory, RST creates a strong framework for one important factor, specifically the lack of democratization, while giving little attention to others that contribute to instability. Understanding the political plights of resource-rich countries is incredibly important, but so is looking at their economic situation. RST and the Dutch Disease theory both fail to provide an “all-encompassing” understanding of the problems that resource-rich countries have, and what has supported the current situation in said countries.

The most thorough theory used to explain the detrimental effects of natural resources on countries is known as the resource curse. The resource curse theory argues that countries with abundant natural resources, particularly oil, will experience low economic growth, a trend toward authoritarian governance, and poor developmental outcomes compared to countries with fewer natural resources (Wiens et al. 2014, 783). Countries rich in natural resources should be expected to be economically and politically prosperous

countries. In reality, however, these countries face a vast range of consequences, with the most important being political instability and economic mismanagement, threatening to destroy any ounce of a country's stability when the resource ultimately runs out (Wiens et al. 2014, 784). As a result of overwhelming wealth, citizens will rarely need to pay taxes and governments will invest in sectors such as children's education and healthcare to appease their populations. If citizens are happy, there will be minimal, if any, demands for greater political accountability, or even a new government. This reinforces an authoritarian political structure, as politicians can remain in power for however long they choose without fearing retribution. Authoritarian leadership often leads to economic mismanagement and, most often, a lack of economic diversity.

With a reliance on one industry, countries become incredibly vulnerable to fluctuations in global commodity prices, creating economic distress and hindering long-term development (Tagliapietra 2017, 7). When a country with steep dependence on one industry runs out of said product, the economy will collapse, as no other industries are supporting the country and its citizens, leading to economic and political ruin. This analysis is not possible when relying only on the Dutch Disease theory or the RST, as neither provides an extensive enough context to properly investigate this paradox. The resource curse theory applies both the political and economic consequences of resource reliance in understanding the pitfalls that these countries face.

The resource curse theory is the strongest choice for analyzing oil-dependent states. It takes the well-informed structures of the Dutch Disease theory and the RST and

combines them to create a comprehensive explanation in understanding why natural resource-rich countries are incredibly susceptible to political and economic instability. The theory highlights the potential for financial mishandling and political turmoil, while the two previous theories only focus on one aspect of a country's potential for instability. It is broader than both theories, but it still provides a targeted theoretical framework that can be used to support research.

Independent and Dependent Variables

IV One: Type of Government

The first independent variable studies the form of government present in an oil-abundant state. By studying the type of government with authority over its internal oil reserves, I will establish a relationship between greater wealth and a greater risk of authoritarianism, leading to a country's susceptibility to the resource curse. The 20th Century played host to a dramatic increase in the presence of democratic countries worldwide. Yet, almost all democratic governments emerged during this time in countries with little to no proven oil reserves (Ross 2011, 2). Countries that produced less than $100 per capita of oil per year were three times as likely to establish democratic governments as opposed to countries with significantly larger oil production rates (Ross 2011, 2). Before the early 1970s, oil-producing countries were no more likely to be authoritarian than any other state, as at this time, the "Seven Sisters," a group of giant Western oil companies, dominated the international oil industry, allowing them to procure a vast majority of potential oil wealth (Ross 2011, 3). At this time, governments of oil-producing countries had minimal funding, and consequently, little power over their citizens. Due to the rise of independent oil companies and the creation of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the

Seven Sisters lost their power over oil markets and almost all developing oil countries created national oil countries, commandeering the wealth and power that once exclusively belonged to the Seven Sisters (Ross 2011, 4).

Nationalizing oil corporations across oil-producing countries has posed a large problem: authoritarianism. In many petrostates, governments have become incredibly authoritarian as they garner wealth and power by being the sole controller of a country's oil production. Governments then use this wealth to sustain power, and suppress political opposition, ultimately prohibiting the formation of democratic institutions that would increase the rights and power of citizens. Autocratic oil-producing governments can use oil revenue to relieve social and political pressure that, in other states, would lead to demands for greater governmental accountability. The "taxation effect" suggests that "when governments derive sufficient revenues from the sale of oil, they are likely to tax their populations less heavily or not at all, and the public will, in turn, be less likely to demand accountability from and representation in their government" (Ross 2001, 332). The "spending effect" suggests that, in conjunction with the "taxation effect," countries will not only limit taxation, but will also spend more money on citizen resources such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure (Ross 2001, 333). These effects display the consequences of the rentier effect. Governments that fund themselves through oil revenue are more likely to be authoritarian, while governments funded through taxation and other means are more likely to be democratic.

IV Two: Lack of Economic Diversification

The second independent variable studies an oil-producing country's economic diversification or lack thereof. Economic

diversification is “the process of shifting an economy away from a single income source toward multiple sources from a growing range of sectors and markets” (United Nations 2023). Traditionally, economic diversification is employed as a means of encouraging economic growth and development to further support a country’s progress. By studying whether an oil-producing country is economically diverse (i.e., a country has multiple sources and sectors of income), I will establish a relationship between a lack of economic diversification and a complete reliance on oil revenue, another indicator of failure in a country’s escaping of the resource curse. Petrostates are defined by their weak economies, as they most often import goods as opposed to investing in domestic industries. Oil dominates the markets in petrostates, sometimes being one of, if not only, domestically produced goods. A reliance on oil hinders the development of other industries and also hinders the economic well-being of a country’s citizens. For example, oil-driven economies often overlook light industries, such as textiles and clothing. Because of this, petrostates often have significantly lower rates of female workers, impeding their access to economic freedom. In fact, in many oil-exporting countries, incredibly high percentages of citizens are employed in the public sector, characterized by “protected jobs with high wages” ultimately contributing to lowered labor productivity, and acting as a barrier to economic diversification (Tagliapietra 2017, 5). This prevents the development of an internationally competitive private sector. In terms of international economic relations, as these countries are almost

entirely reliant on oil income, they are incredibly vulnerable to oil price fluctuations. Petrostates thrive when oil prices are high, but struggle immensely when they are low, a direct consequence of reliance on oil. States that rely almost entirely on oil revenue and lack economic diversification are significantly more susceptible to the resource curse than states that have moved beyond oil revenue and are economically diversified.

DV: Natural Resource-Rich Countries' Susceptibility to Political and Economic Instability

The dependent variable for this analysis will be the susceptibility of oil-rich countries to political and economic instability. I seek to establish a causal relationship between my aforementioned independent variables and this dependent variable, meaning that this study seeks to prove that authoritarian leadership and a lack of economic diversity have led to a weakening of resource-rich states, which will ultimately face incredible turbulence when their resource reserves dry out. This susceptibility is recognized as whether or not a country exhibits symptoms of the resource curse, which will be explicitly referenced during the case study section of this paper. This includes any of the aforementioned variables. Measuring susceptibility will be carried out by analyzing the significance of a country's resource curse symptoms and what steps are being taken to alleviate these issues (i.e., policy decisions, economic expansion, etc.).

Case Study: Saudi Arabia and Norway

This study will use the Most Similar Case Comparison measurement strategy to examine and compare specific oil-producing countries. I have chosen to examine Saudi Arabia and Norway. While in different geographic locations and

seemingly very different histories and cultures, they are very similar in one important area: proven oil reserves. While Saudi Arabia's proven oil reserves outnumber Norway's, both states have a very high level of proven oil reserves and daily barrel production. This provides the structure for the Most Similar Case Comparison. Norway is economically diversified and has a democratic government, escaping the resource curse as one of, if not the most, prosperous countries in the world. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia has fallen susceptible to the resource curse, largely due to its authoritarian monarchy and its overwhelming reliance on oil driving its economy. The table below shows certain characteristics of Saudi Arabia and Norway, including my independent variables, and other characteristics of value, as they help to explain the discrepancies in battling the resource curse.

	Type of Govern-ment	Proven Oil Reserves (in millions of barrels)	% of GDP Driven by Oil	Years of Product-tion in Reserves	Barrel Produt-tion Per Day	Political Stability Rank
Saudi Arabia	Absolute monarchy	266,260	45%	65.4	10,846,000	138
Norway	Unitary parliament-ary constitu-tional monarchy	8,100	4.3%	11	2,056,000	1

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has faced considerable obstacles in managing its vast oil reserves and resulting wealth. Being one of the leading global exporters of oil, Saudi Arabia has developed an overdependence on extractive industries to maintain the state's finances. This overdependence is only exacerbated by the absolute rule of the Saudi Royal Family and its failure to promote economic diversification. More than 45% of Saudi Arabia's GDP is based on oil (Tagliapietra 2017, 2). Oil is the primary source of fiscal revenue with little diversification. Saudi Arabia is entirely too reliant on its oil revenues, as it makes up a

vast majority of its GDP and revenue intake. Saudi Arabia's heavy dependence on oil revenue has left its economy vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil prices. The volatility of oil markets has led to periods of economic instability and fiscal strain, exposing the shortcomings of the country's economic diversification efforts. Not only is there a dangerous lack of economic diversity, but most Saudi Arabia jobs are all too reliant on oil production. More than 60% of citizens are employed in the public sector. Activities in non-oil and non-government sectors are also often linked to oil and government activities. The main sources of income aside from oil production include refinery, chemical, and other mining/extractive industries, while some non-oil sectors, such as construction, depend heavily on government funding (Tagliapietra 2017, 2). As previously discussed, in many petrostates, oil-funded governments respond to demands for greater accountability by offering new handouts. This is the case in Saudi Arabia. In recent years, Saudi Arabia has directed $136 billion to increase wages in the public sector, unemployment benefits, and housing subsidies (Al Muhanna 2022, 4). This reinforces Saudi Arabia’s existing authoritarian regime. To suppress calls for greater accountability and representation, the Saudi Arabian government continuously “buys off” its citizens, ultimately acting as a constant method of securing political power.

Saudi Arabia has attempted to implement safeguards that will limit the effects of the resource curse, but these efforts are few in between. The Vision 2030 initiative, launched in 2016, aims to diversify the Saudi economy and reduce dependence on oil, but its success remains uncertain. The

plan was created by the Deputy Crown Prince, Minister of Defense, and Chairman of the Council for Economic and Development Affairs Mohammad bin Salman.

Its goal is to reduce dependence on oil revenues in the long term by “cutting costs and diversifying the sources of income, given that the price of oil has fluctuated widely over the years and that oil is a non-renewable resource” (Even and Guzansky 2016, 1). The plan is meant to tackle Saudi Arabia’s budget deficit, address high unemployment and low economic productivity rates, and of course, diversify the economy to avoid the disastrous consequences of oil price fluctuation. The Vision 2030 plan has been largely unsuccessful thus far, as unemployment rates remain around 9%, and oil still accounts for 45% of the country’s GDP. These failures are largely a result of the resource curse: what little political and economic stability Saudi Arabia has is almost entirely reliant on oil. Saudi Arabia’s efforts to revert the resource curse will not be fruitful until the Saudi Royal Family relinquishes its grip on political power and emphasizes the importance of investing in different economic sectors to encourage growth and diversity. Unless major changes are made, Saudi Arabia will continue to be plagued by the resource curse, which will ultimately lead to its destruction.

Norway

Norway stands out as a remarkable example of a country that has successfully managed its wealth in natural resources and avoided the pitfalls of the resource curse. Norway is thought to be the most successful country in the world, consistently ranking first in the United Nations Human Development Index (Hannan and Clemet 2016, 22). The differences between Saudi Arabia and Norway are obvious: Norway’s government is a democracy and oil production accounts

for 4.3% of its GDP. Norway's economy is supported by many industries, including other natural resources such as timber, fish, and hydroelectric power (Hannan and Clemet 2016, 23). Norway's economy is robust and diverse, with little reliance on one, specific industry. The oil industry accounts for only 2% of the Norwegian workforce, while it accounts for over 60% of the workforce in Saudi Arabia (Ross 2001, 163). A lack of reliance on oil revenue is clear. Norway is much more economically diverse and significantly less authoritarian than Saudi Arabia. It can thrive without relying solely on oil, thus proving that it has escaped the resource curse.

Perhaps the most important aspect of Norway's success is its establishment of the Government Pension Fund Global, also known as the Petroleum Fund (Larsen 2006, 623). Created in 1990, this fund exists to invest surplus revenue from oil production for the benefit of Norwegian citizens. In simple terms, it is a massive savings account for Norway. The fund is currently worth approximately $800 billion, and " is big enough to make every citizen a millionaire in the country's currency, the kroner" (Treanor 2014). This fund is controlled by the Norwegian government and is used to fund education, healthcare, and social welfare programs that benefit all Norwegian citizens. While this might seem similar to the Saudi method of "buying off" its citizens, it is important to remember that Norway is a democratic country, meaning that public officials are elected by the people. The Petroleum Fund does not exist to suppress people, but it benefits all in social investments. Not only does it support Norwegian citizens, but any revenue from oil and other sectors is public information, emphasizing transparency and accountability. By investing in education, technology, and other sectors, Norway has created a robust and diversified economy, reducing its vulnerability to fluctuations in

oil prices, unlike Saudi Arabia. Moreover, Norway's commitment to social welfare programs and transparency has helped distribute the benefits of oil wealth among its citizens while retaining trust in its democratic government. This has fostered social cohesion, minimized income inequality, and ensured that the entire population remains prosperous.

Conclusion

The cases of Saudi Arabia and Norway illustrate the critical role that governance, economic diversity, and long-term vision play in managing the resource curse. Norway's success can be attributed to its commitment to accountability, economic diversity, and responsible management of oil wealth. Saudi Arabia's challenges, however, highlight the importance of strong economic policy and effective governance to mitigate the negative impacts of oil dependency. As countries worldwide grapple with the management of natural resources, the experiences of Norway and Saudi Arabia offer valuable lessons. Many of the world's most troubled states have high levels of oil and mineral wealth. There is nothing inevitable about the resource curse. It can be avoided. Countries can escape the resource curse by learning from Norway and avoiding Saudi Arabia’s practices. By emphasizing sound economic policies, effective governance structures, and a commitment to long-term sustainability, countries can conquer their reliance on natural resources and ultimately thrive.

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Photo by Brooke Taylor '24

A Comparative Study of China and India's Political Systems

Eleanor Knight '27

In the contemporary age, the comparative study of China and India has yielded unparalleled discussion and development of contrasting perspectives. These countries embody a unique dynamic that prompts a complex question: what led to China's development as a communist one-party system compared to India's parliamentary republic despite being the two most populous countries in the world? J.S. Mill's Method of Difference provides the necessary framework to explore this phenomenon because the two countries have similar contexts, but differing governing systems. To avoid concern regarding correlation versus causation, all variables are studied through a variety of qualitative and quantitative data with attention to source background. Analysis of China and India's varying post-colonial state development, economic stability, and foreign policy can explain the states' political divergence.

China's political system is best described as a unitary Marxist-Leninist authoritarian regime. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is the "founding and ruling party of modern China, officially known as the People's Republic of China" (Maizland). In 1949, Mao Zedong established the Party, which has "maintained a political monopoly" and "overseen the country's rapid economic growth." (Maizland). Current leader Xi Jinping has sat in office

for three terms as the head of state, general secretary, and head of the military (Maizland). Although elections are held in China, voters only select lower-tier or local representatives, and “there are no direct or competitive elections for national executive leaders” (“China”); further, the CCP pilots political loyalty indoctrination. China’s Global Freedom Score is currently a 9/100, classifying the country as “not free”, with a score of -2/40 in the Political Rights in category and 11/60 in Civil Liberties (“China”). It is “conventional wisdom” among the Chinese that “people join the Party…primarily to enhance their career prospects rather than for political or ideological reasons” (Dickson). This anecdote lends legitimacy to the authoritarian elements of the system, enhancing the Party’s control and longevity.

Conversely, India’s parliamentary democracy consists of a “Council of Ministers with the Prime Minister as its head to advise the President who is the constitutional head of the country” (“Governance”). The country’s Global Freedom Score ranks as a 66/100 and relatively high Political Rights and Civil Liberties scores grant India a “partly free” designation (“India”). The president holds a “largely symbolic role” and serves a five-year term (“India”). The Indian political system provides free, fair, frequent and contestable parliamentary elections; however, some marginalized groups face barriers to achieving full political representation, largely because of challenging and institutionalized biases.

Both China and India’s modern political systems are, in part, derived from their respective colonial histories. To begin, the

Second Sino-Japanese War saw

unprecedented Chinese resistance to Japanese invasion. However, central authority in China was already wavering because of previous occupation and devastation caused by the Japanese during the first war. Notably, the first Sino-Japanese War forced China to sign a "humiliating unequal treaty (Treaty of Shimonoseki 1895)" that ceded Taiwan, and multiple other islands, to Japanese rule and distinctively marked the eruption of China's sphere of influence ("How Much of China"). Internal instability followed, prompting the "fall of the Qing Empire in 1911"; "In 1926, Chiang Kai-Shek led both the Guomindang (GMD) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) on the Northern Expedition, which restored some resemblance of order" ("How Much of China"). Soon after, Chiang's betrayal of the Communists, culminating in the Shanghai Massacre (1927), further divided the country and allowed Japanese infringement on the northern territory. Chiang chose to effectively ignore the Japanese expansion in favor of allocating military resources toward fighting the Communists. Mao Zedong, the newly appointed leader of the CCP, eventually became China's leading politician, officially known as Chairman Mao. In the immediate aftermath of World War II and Japanese retreat, Mao's approach revolutionized Chinese politics. He encouraged restoration of production under the state, national unity, and social and economic change, specifically aimed at the peasantry and the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

During this era, China's government transformed into a Communist system with an authoritarian power dynamic. This was due, in part, to the fleeing of the Nationalist

Party following the wars, as well as the increasingly poor and rural population of the country. Consequently, Mao's focus on heavy industry and the progression of Maoism, including the implementation of the Great Leap Forward, "was largely considered to be a failure and many Chinese starved to death" (Chu). Although there was widespread distrust in China of other international powers, the next leader, Deng Xiaoping, pioneered the "'Four Modernizations', describing agriculture, industry, science and technology, and the military...Deng is commonly credited as the person who turned China into the economic world power it is today" (Chu). China's sphere of influence has been dramatically reestablished throughout East Asia and globally, especially as the second most populated country in the world (Jcookson). Despite graduating into a world power, "a significant share of the Chinese public...appear to want to see China move in a democratic direction" (Diamond). Regardless, China's ability to recover from civil war and unstable political institutions following the withdrawal of colonial powers remains exceptional.

India's struggle against imperialism has a more extensive history. "In the mid-nineteenth century, ...the British government formally took charge of India. This government displaced the British East India Company," a conglomerate that organized itself into an unofficial ruling body ("The Story"). Under Queen Victoria's dominion, she promised to not tamper with the cultural and societal intricacies of Indian life; although this was probably an attempt to seize Indian support by presenting as a "good steward of her Indian subjects," it had a nearly opposite effect

("The Story"). The longevity of British presence in the country forced Westernization and involuntarily introduced concepts like nationalism; "the origins of modern Indian democracy…lie in the traditions of British liberalism" ("The Story"). Despite the Nationalists' impact on Indian statehood (i.e. the 1885 Indian National Congress), the basis of these ideals remained anglicized and elitist. In the early 20th century, Indian Nationalists mistakenly interpreted "Woodrow Wilson's call for the self-determination of peoples" as support for Indian independence, but were disappointed by the conservative changes made by the British ('The Story"). Yet soon thereafter, Mohandas K. Gandhi expanded the Indian National Congress into a mass political party, using the strategy of civil disobedience to mobilize Indians of all socioeconomic standings. "This in part explains India's political culture after independence…the idea that you have a right to go out into the public sphere and protest, even though the police remain very colonial in their mentality" ("The Story"). After independence, the Congress opened party membership to the general public for "1/16th of a rupee", diversifying the political sphere, creating space for discussion and negotiation, and preparing for effective Parliamentary institutions ("The Story"). Though both China and India faced the challenge of post-colonial state development, it is clear that India's exposure to Western ideals encouraged democratization, while China's closed "Doors to the West" forced dependency on Maoism and derived authoritarian regime types.

China's economic structure is exceptional compared to other authoritarian states.

The capitalistic system, combined with strong international trade and burgeoning industrialization, produced a widespread middle class. China's GDP per capita began to rise steadily after Deng Xiaoping's renewed "Open Door Policy" (1978), increasing from 156.40 United States dollars (USD) to nearly USD 13,000 today (Khokhar and Vaid). The ideas that modernization and democratization are interdependent and "unilinear" dominate the scholarship on developing economies with authoritarian regimes while considering factors like higher education and health rates (Chen and Lu). Interestingly, China's middle class has demonstrated a notable political apathy in part due to the economic benefits provided by the CCP. This reliance on CCP policy has encouraged loyalists and empowered government involvement in the economy. A survey of the urban Chinese middle class showed that only 24.9% of participants disagreed that "government figures act as the head of the family" and citizens "don't need to participate in government decision making" (Chen and Lu). One explanation for this non-democratic perspective is the middle class's dependence on the state; "the state in a late-developing country also plays a decisive role in creating social classes…and hence in shaping their socioeconomic and political traits" (Chen and Lu). China's effectiveness as a party-state is unique because it has "two…powerful ruling pillars…the dominance of a single Leninist party–the CCP– and the prerogative of the government to intervene" (Chen and Lu). Another aspect of this control is visible in employment; membership in the CCP is prominent in all career types-

overwhelmingly seen in blue collar work such as farming and fishing—with 26.03 million total party members (“China: CCP Members”). China’s economy encountered a leveling out spurred by poor post-pandemic recovery; although a significant GDP spike occurred in 2021 caused by increased exports, consumers had “fewer resources to spend” overall (Cheng). While some “Western countries injected cash into the economy via stimulus packages”, the CCP “largely did nothing to support its citizens financially” (Maclean). However, Xi Jinping has established that economic upturn is a primary goal of 2023 and reassured the Chinese people that the possible economic effects of negative Sino-U.S. relations will allow China to assert itself as a global hegemony under its own sphere of influence (“Protect the Party”). China’s economic success has demonstrated that capitalism is not analogous to democracy. The CCP’s heavy economic involvement has monopolized the job market and created a loyal middle class that remains dependent on the authoritarian regime.

After gaining independence from Great Britain, India emerged as a newly democratized state. The first prime minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, introduced a socialist economic structure modeled after a reformed Soviet approach and centered on the country’s self-sufficiency and wealth redistribution (Panagariya). Nehru intended to reduce wealth gaps and decrease poverty rates, but the controlled international trade system was detrimental to the Indian economy. The “meager increase in annual real per capita income from 8,161 Rupees (Rs.) in 1950-51 to just Rs. 12,759 in 1980-81

testifies to the failure of the socialist party framework" (Panagariya). "Simultaneously, China opened its economy in the late 1970s and witnessed a near double-digit growth", invalidating one of Nehru's assertions that as a populous country, India could not function under an open-market capitalist economy (Panagariya). The international cultural shift of the 1980s allowed India to reposition in an economically liberal direction, encouraging external investment and expansion of production through freedom from "price distribution controls" and introduction of "Open General Licensing" (Panagariya). Currently, protests in India are widespread and easily mobilized when "rapid and uneven economic change occurs", promoting federal protection of individual rights (Sinha). India rates a two out of four on freedom of assembly and a three out of four on expression of belief according to Freedom House's classification ("India"). India's 1990s Green Revolution led to a period of agricultural development and growth that spurred India to the international trade front and floated the GDP. Additionally, the Green Revolution urbanized poverty centers and generated a new middle class because of expanding infrastructure and influx of wealth (Sinha). Weak coalition governments in India's states demonstrate the impact of the people's authority, as protests generate policy change (Sinha). Although India's economy began under a socialist framework, liberalization, interdependence on foreign trade, and financial investment in society aided the democratic system.

Historically, China's foreign policy has been unfocused and indifferent, accelerated by a focus on domestic development. When the

U.S. initiated the Open-Door Policy to improve Sino-U.S. relations and encourage trade, the Chinese retaliated, concerned that international business would lead to foreign monopolization of investment and division of the Chinese state ("Open Door Policy"). However, in-part because of China's growing economic significance to the global economy, the CCP has become more assertive; this approach is especially visible between Beijing and Washington, as tensions have been rising for over two decades. During a highly-anticipated summit between the U.S. and China, Xi Jinping said "China has no plans to 'surpass or replace' the United States, but called on Washington to refrain from trying to 'suppress and contain' China" (Sanger and Rogers). Since becoming a superpower, China has embraced "multilateralism" but continues to regard itself as a "developing country" and doesn't want to shoulder too many international responsibilities (Zhu). However, the government's expansionist mindset and neo-colonialist practices in Africa have provoked its neighboring countries to side with Western powers and pressure democratization (Edel). This has strengthened China's consolidation of power under the authoritarian CCP because the state wants to maintain its global influence according to its interests.

India's Western-inspired system of government has resulted in visible democratic tendencies in foreign policy, reinforced by its democratic government which appeases many Western actors. The Indian government supported decolonization in Western Africa, denounced Apartheid, and facilitated roundtable discussions directed to inform policy making (Jaishankar). India's policies

stand harshly juxtaposed to China's neo-colonialist practices in the continent. Although India is often referred to as the "world's largest democracy", the country lacks a strong central government in comparison to other democratized states (Jaishankar). The democratic influence in their foreign policy allows the state to self-assert on an international level because of strong allyship with major democratic powers (Jaishankar). Many older Indians are displeased by this, arguing for a neutral policy approach, while younger generations identify with the democratic means of India's foreign policy (Jaishankar). The increasing number of young voter turnout in India demonstrates a sustained inclination for democratic foreign policy; the interconnectedness between external and internal policy-making demonstrates a similar trend (Kumar).

China and India, despite being the two most populous countries in the world, operate under different political systems. The development of China's single-party authoritarian regime and India's parliamentary democracy is explained through analysis of the post-colonial state, foreign policy, and domestic and external economic stability and influence. Interestingly, both countries faced challenges in consolidation and government formation after gaining independence. India's experience with Western political ideas allowed leaders to model governance after the democratic United Kingdom's Westminster parliamentary system. Conversely, China's struggle with separation of peoples, violence, distrust of external powers, and burgeoning nationalist populism

encouraged unification under non-democratic authorities. Secondly, the contemporary economic standing of the two countries differs astoundingly, as China's non-market capitalism and presence in international trade have created a loyal middle class under the CCP; India continually struggles with rampant poverty, exacerbated by the harsh transition from socialist policy to liberal economics. Protection of political freedoms normalized protestation, forcing weak coalition governments dependent on voters' satisfaction with legislation to act accordingly. Lastly, China's foreign policy is incredibly isolationist and aggressive, which produces reliance on authoritarian means. Democracy is a leading determinant in Indian foreign policy and the government engages with civil rights issues globally through a democratic lens. Considering the similarities between China and India, the stark differences between the states' systems of government may be indicators for intense impacts on future global politics.

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Photo by Regan Goodloe '25

Nth Ricochet: Diffusion of South Korean Digital Sex Crime Policy to Taiwan

Regan Goodloe '25

In March of 2020, a young man named Cho Ju-bin was arrested in South Korea under charges of sexual exploitation facilitated through the internet. Following his arrest, his crimes became widely known and surrounded by infamy. Cho and several accomplices operated online chatrooms where “users produced and traded” both adult and child sexual content that was “often obtained through blackmailing” (“Social Media,” 2020). The chatrooms’ ordinal numbering system earned the case the name “Nth Room.” Characterized by heinous violence, the case “sparked outrage” across South Korea and Asia more broadly (“Social Media,” 2020). The South Korean government responded quickly to the outrage by passing several bills intending to “make digital sex crimes easier to prosecute” – which have come to be known as “anti-Nth Room” legislation (Yoon, 2022). These policies are thorough, unique, and pioneering in their intent to hold government, citizens, foreigners, and foreign companies accountable for enabling online sexual violence. Many East Asian countries, such as Taiwan, China, and Japan watched the Nth Room unfold with careful eyes as whispers of similar problems in their own countries began to arise. The Taiwanese government took swift legislative action as a result, heavily mirroring the broad but directed sexual exploitation policy reforms enacted by South Korea in 2020. The policy diffusion process suggests that these reforms are

the explicit result of Korean legislation, reflecting that Taiwan learned from the Nth Room case and, due to its competition with China for international legitimacy, pursued reforms proactively.

A gross deficiency in dealing with online sex crime was exposed in South Korea by the Nth Room case, as it quickly became clear that the government's current policies were insufficiently positioned to prevent sexual harm. The first of the "anti-Nth Room" legislation was passed in April of 2020, transitioning the status of viewing and possessing "illegally-filmed sexual content" from legal to illegal (Kasulis, 2020). At least 260,000 individuals were members in the Nth Room chatrooms, tens of thousands of which were not able to be held liable for the role they played in perpetuating sexual violence, since it was legal. The public outrage that ensued resulted in this simple, yet powerful change that intends to hold ordinary citizens accountable for consuming illegal sexual content online (Kong, 2021). Various bills were passed that lengthen sentences for digital sex crimes and increase fines, which aim at curbing judicial negligence concerning investigations, prosecution, and convictions of digital sex crimes (Kasulis, 2020). Another significant piece of legislation enacted during this period amended existing statutes which previously allowed adults to "engage in sexual activity with 13-year-olds if it is 'consensual,'" by setting the age of consent at sixteen (Jung, 2020). The catalyst for this piece is that dozens of the Nth Room victims were teenage girls (Jung, 2020). However, the most notable reform is an ambitious revision made also in April of 2020 to the Business Telecommunications Act which seeks to

reach “a vast spectrum of cyberspace” and force internet providers – particularly foreign ones operating in the country – to play a much more proactive role in monitoring their own sites (Yoon, 2022). This is the result of Western internet sites like Telegram, Google Drive, and Facebook being “intentionally chosen” by the Nth Room perpetrators due to their well-known negligence in keeping harmful material off their sites in non-Western countries (Jang, 2022).

Taiwan’s legislature passed a series of bills in January of 2023 aimed to curtail the “spread of illegal images and videos of sexual assault on Internet platforms,” with special attention given to raising penalties for child pornography (“Taiwan passes amendments,” 2023). Sweeping amendments were made to four major laws: the Criminal Code of the Republic of China, the Crime Victim Protection Act, the Sexual Assault Crime Prevention Act, and the Child and Youth Sexual Exploitation Prevention Act (“Building a protective network,” 2022). One amendment to the Sexual Assault Crime Prevention Act requires internet providers to “have a mechanism in place to immediately remove” illegal sexual content from their sites (“Taiwan passes amendments,” 2023). Providers must also now maintain databases with the personal data of “suspected criminals” for up to one-hundred and eighty days (“Taiwan passes amendments,” 2023). Furthermore, media outlets are newly prohibited by the amendments to the Crime Victim Prevention Act from identifying sexual violence victims or using their names in publication (“Taiwan passes amendments,” 2023). In addition, the reforms enacted a

wide range of "related complementary measures," such as strongly encouraging local governments to establish centers for sexual assault prevention ("Building a protective network," 2022). The goals of these reforms include deterring offenders before crimes occur, protecting victims after crimes occur, and stopping repeat offenders ("Building a protective network," 2022). Although the intentions of the reforms are explicitly clear, the context in which the Taiwanese government felt that it was necessary to adopt them is not immediately clear – this is because the context must be examined through the lens of policy diffusion.

Policy diffusion as a theory is concerned with how one government's policy is influenced by the policy of other governments (Shipan & Volden, 2012). The core assumption of policy diffusion is that policy is rarely created, but instead is usually borrowed from elsewhere – although the process of how and where a policy is borrowed may vary widely. For example, a policy object can be borrowed from either a similar political jurisdiction (horizontal diffusion) or from a political jurisdiction on an entirely different level of analysis (vertical diffusion). A policy created for the first time is known as policy invention; each time this policy is adapted and implemented elsewhere, the process of policy innovation occurs.

Diffusion theory posits several distinct models for how diffusion can unfold. For instance, the regional diffusion model suggests that diffusion is more likely to occur across jurisdictions in geographic proximity to one another. Though this model has been relevant to diffusion theory in past decades, globalization and

modernization has allowed the world to be "connected today as never before" in a way that has decreased but not extinguished the model's relevance (Shipan & Volden, 2012, p. 788). However, other models have grown in relevance in recent years, such as the leader-laggard model and the national interaction model. The leader-laggard model describes a system in which some governments are leaders in policy adoption, tending to enact policy first, while others are laggards who tend to adopt policies following many other jurisdictions. Furthermore, the national interaction model establishes that as leaders of different governments interact more, diffusion becomes more likely (Shipan & Volden, 2012, p. 788). For example, diffusion between South Korea and Taiwan – two countries that engage in trade, diplomacy, and cultural exchanges – is much more likely than diffusion between South Korea and San Marino – two countries with little to no interactions. Much of diffusion theory relies on codifying common-sense notions of how human interactions into functions of policymaking.

Moreover, Shipan and Volden (2012) identify the four main mechanisms associated with policy diffusion, each of which produce their own diffusion motivations: competition, learning, imitation, and coercion. Policy diffusion assumes that jurisdictions often compete with one another, and such competition influences how governments make choices. Although this may entail one policy being adopted quickly by a jurisdiction after their competition adopts it, it is necessary to conceptualize competition not only as reactive but also "strategic, anticipatory, and preemptive" (Shipan & Volden, 2012, p.

789). The causal logic in this notion explains that governments may choose to adopt or not to adopt particular policies early on as they anticipate what may attract citizens, resources, or prestige to them. A second diffusion mechanism, policy learning, occurs across jurisdictions as policy choices are watched, though "the wrong lessons can often be drawn from others' experiences" — not necessarily producing meaningful improvement (Shipan & Volden, 2012, p. 790). While policy diffusion can be the result of one government learning from the policies enacted by another government, it can also be the result of one government learning from another government's failure to enact a specific policy. Ideas about policy diffusion having "more to do with political opportunity than with policy effectiveness" come into play during such considerations, especially when considering the motivation of policymakers (Shipan & Volden, 2012, p. 790). In addition, the effect of policy learning increases over time as "more evidence becomes available" (Shipan & Volden, 2012, p. 791). Imitation constitutes the third mechanism of policy diffusion, where governments try to emulate the policies of another "without any concern for these policies' effects" (Shipan & Volden, 2012, p. 791). Instead, the causal logic for a policy diffusing through imitation relies on the notion that, if a government that is typically perceived to be a policy leader adopts one policy, then it must be a fruitful policy. Finally, coercion refers to the process where one government affects the policy decisions of another using "force, threats, or incentives" (Shipan & Volden, 2012, p.791). Coercion is often the tool of hegemons and dissatisfied states to push

their will onto others. When applying policy diffusion theory to the case of Taiwan's sudden amendments to their sex crime legislation in 2023, Taiwan innovated, not invented, this policy decision in response to South Korea's policy decisions. This diffusion is not a case of vertical diffusion, but horizontal diffusion – since it has taken place from one national government to another. Although it is unclear if South Korea is truly the inventor of the policies they adopted, it is much clearer that Taiwan's policies came as the result of the legislation that did and did not get enacted in South Korea. The 2023 Taiwanese amendments to four of their core criminal codes dealing with sexual offenses closely mirror South Korea's 2021 policy. In 2021, South Korea lengthened sentences, increased fines, and established more proactive roles for law enforcement in online sex crime cases; in 2023, Taiwan followed suit with legislation extremely similar in wording. In 2021, South Korea forced internet providers to disrupt their cycle of complicity in online sexual harm; in 2023, Taiwan passed remarkably similar legislation, though far more ambitious in its demands on internet providers. Taiwan pursuing near identical policies to South Korea cannot carelessly be labeled as an obvious case of policy diffusion; since policy is rarely invented, many governments are working with similar policies and tailoring as they see fit for their jurisdictions. Establishing an occurrence of policy diffusion requires the identification of Taiwan's explicit awareness of South Korea's policy.

The Nth Room case headlined newspapers across the world, but especially in other Asian countries. This case was highly visible

to Taiwan and began to engulf Taiwan quickly as whispers of copycat Taiwanese chatrooms arose. News articles on the Nth Room case from Taiwan, China, the United States, and South Korea alike commonly described how this case “has raised serious concerns in other countries, such as neighboring Taiwan” (“Social Media,” 2020). Cases like the Nth Room were almost immediately confirmed to exist in Taiwan (Jang, 2022). Following the case publicity and the rising concern among the Taiwanese public about similar crimes occurring within their own borders, a public survey conducted by ECPAT, a non-governmental organization concerned with ending sexual crimes against children, found that Taiwanese citizens had renewed support for “heavier penalties” for those possessing child pornography (“Social Media,” 2020). ECPAT then began working with Taiwanese lawmakers to enact such legislation, and these lobbying efforts contributed greatly to the resulting amendments (“Social Media,” 2020). Because the primary lobby group that pressured, influenced, and assisted Taiwanese lawmakers explicitly described their efforts as the result of the Nth Room case and the Korean legislation that followed, policymakers themselves also had access to such explicit knowledge.

Even though the regional diffusion model may seem to initially be a compelling one to apply to this case, it may be “misleading” to assume that geographic proximity in the key explanatory mechanism through which diffusion occurred in Taiwan (Shipan & Volden, 2012, p. 789). A more compelling notion is that of isomorphism, which establishes that countries which are culturally alike are more likely to diffuse

policies between one another. Geographic proximity and cultural similarity are, of course, not necessarily isolated considerations – since many culturally alike countries are in close geographic proximity to one another; however, it is useful to conceptualize Taiwan and South Korea as similar in culture. Both nations are democratic, highly advanced technologically, progressive in values and policies relative to many of their neighbors, and are examples of unexpected economic successes in the region. When placing such considerations at the forefront, one might even conceptualize Taiwan and South Korea as more culturally similar than Taiwan and China or South Korea and North Korea; certainly, they are much more similar to one another from a policy perspective and considered significant allies that regularly interact, implicating the relevance of the national-interaction model as another piece of the explanation for policy diffusion in this instance.

Two of Shipan and Volden's four policy diffusion mechanisms – coercion and imitation – are mostly useless to explain why and how Taiwan's sex crime amendments are the result of diffusion from South Korea. The Taiwanese legislature simply has not been coerced in any form by any other governmental body to enact their reforms, so coercion is not applicable. Likewise, Taiwan did not blindly enact policies that reflect South Korea's, but instead waited three years before passing these reforms, so it is obvious that mere imitation is not at play. Conversely, examining the mechanisms of learning and competition is much more fruitful. The assertion that policy learning becomes more prevalent as time goes on, due to

more evidence of that policy's success emerging, is a captivating way to understand why Taiwan did not amend their laws until 2023, even though the anti-Nth Room legislation was enacted in 2020. In the three years since the Nth Room case, South Korea avoided making global headlines for a similar online sex crime scandal and boasts effectiveness in minimizing the harm caused by online sex crimes in the country (Yoon, 2022). This period of seeking evidence of policy success revealed to Taiwanese officials that the policies enacted by South Korea can achieve their policy goals of reducing the prevalence of digital sex crimes. Further, Taiwan arguably learned from South Korea's failure to enact these laws earlier that a proactive approach ould llow Taiwan to avoid a comparable situation. Therefore, Taiwan employed policy learning to gain insight from both South Korea's action and inaction – this is the context in which the Taiwanese government felt that it was necessary to enact sweeping reforms to their own laws.

Taiwan evidently had a desire to become a leader of sex crime policy rather than a laggard following the Nth Room case. Competition as a mechanism that influenced Taiwan's desire to not be seen as a laggard is a powerful one. Taiwan is not necessarily in direct competition with South Korea itself, but with the rest of the countries in the region and in the world more generally. This competition is often indirect as Taiwan, which is not formally recognized as a sovereign state by many countries, strives to be viewed as advanced and progressive to gain more international legitimacy and resources. Taiwan's competition with China is more direct and it

is compelling to consider that the Taiwanese government sought to get ahead of China in this policy aspect, especially since Chinese actors were confirmed to be taking part in online sexual crimes resembling the Nth Room – just as Taiwanese actors were ("Digital sex crime," 2021).

The application of policy diffusion to the case of Taiwan and South Korea produces a causal explanation for the implementation of online sex crime reforms in Taiwan wherein Taiwanese actors gained explicit awareness of South Korean policy action and inaction, engaged in policy learning to conclude that implementing reforms would achieve their policy goals, and subsequently enacted these policies. This process was also influenced by Taiwan's desire to compete with other nations to be viewed as a leader in policy innovation as well as by the cultural similarities the country shares with South Korea. This explanation is both a captivating and useful one that highlights how a state's position, goals, and view of itself influences what interactions with other jurisdictions are likely to result in policy diffusion and – if policy diffusion is likely to occur – which particular mechanisms of diffusion are likely to be utilized. Policy diffusion accounts well for the variance between states and the complexity in the factors that influence which decisions are made – as well as how those decisions will be made. While it can account well for highly specific factors and circumstances, it is also broadly applicable.

However, this broad applicability may give rise to doubt about the conclusiveness of one's assessment of where and why policy diffusion has taken place. For example, it is

possible to make a case that Taiwan's policy reforms are an example of diffusion from similar European Union legislation passed in 2020 ("Social Media," 2020). Policy innovation remains prevalent, which can be seen as a weakness of diffusion theory if it becomes easy to falsely attribute sources of diffusion. It remains difficult to definitively demonstrate or isolate influences which are extremely complex and multi-faceted. Nevertheless, the case of online sex crime policy in Taiwan and South Korea remains a clearer example of policy diffusion that reaffirms the plausibility of confidently concluding how one government's policy has influence on another's policy.

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Photo by Adam Young '24

Two Worlds Apart: An Exploration of Governing Differences in Post-Soviet Lithuania and Belarus

Catherine Tanner '26

The fall of the Soviet Union marked the birth of multiple Eastern European nation-states in the later years of the 20th century. However, consolidating a nation into a cohesive nation-state is onerous, and the resulting authoritative structure develops out of determining contextual factors. When examining former-Soviet Union nation-states, a peculiarity is seen in the governments of Lithuania and Belarus. While Lithuania has established itself as a consolidated democracy, its geographic neighbor, Belarus, arranged itself into an authoritative regime. Examining the two former Soviet Union members through the method of difference has indicated the factors that led to such a drastic difference in their structures of governance, such as how each country approached the task of establishing a national identity in the immediate post-Soviet years, national interests that arose as a result, and existing economic structures before independence from the Soviet Union.

Understanding the characteristics of each of the two nation-states in the second decade of the 21st century provides the foundation that allows connections to be drawn to establish the degree to which the two countries differ in their Soviet-independent and sovereign government structures. Databases and events included in each country's respective historical timelines from sources such as the Freedom House, BBC, and the CIA help

to provide these particular foundations through a general representation of the impacts of how political power was organized in each country following the fragmentation of the Soviet Union. As a result, it is possible to use these findings to generate assumptions about why these differences between Belarus and Lithuania exist.

The young eastern European nation-state of Belarus is one of the most oppressive regimes in the world. According to the Freedom House, the country received a freedom score of 8 out of 100 in 2023 (*Belarus*, 2023). This score is based on standards provided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, independent of what the government claims to be accurate and instead based on the actual level of freedom and rights enjoyed by the population of each respective country, the criteria of which is based on comparative examinations (*Belarus*, 2023). While it claims to be a presidential republic, the government is, in actuality, a dictatorship ("Belarus," 2023). Since being elected in 1994, Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka has remained the president despite the fact that the country claims to have five-year terms (*Belarus*, 2023). Although the government claims that his reign has been undisputed, even in "fair" elections, the country's state-sponsored violence and oppression of dissidents prove otherwise. Despite widespread opposition from the general populous to his continuous standing as president, the government claimed in the 2020 election that Lukashenka had won 80 percent of the vote, which was ultimately found to be a forged statistic (*Belarus*, 2023). Since the eruption of protests in response to the

latest election, rather than responding to calls of dissatisfaction, the government has increasingly restricted political freedoms and individual rights (“Belarus,” 2023). The state also heavily censors and controls media, with the only competition to national channels being Russian networks, further contributing to the limitations of freedoms Belarusians possess (“Belarus country profile,” 2012). Regarding other authoritative positions in the Belarusian government, a candidate can only obtain political power by aligning themselves with Lukashenka and his party. Otherwise, it is virtually impossible, meaning political representation is limited to one party. Political opponents can even face prison sentences for publicly running against Lukashenka. For example, Viktar Babrkya and Siarhei Tsikhanouski were sentenced to 14 and 18 years in prison in 2021 for doing so (*Belarus*, 2023, B1). In addition, colleague Maryia Kalesnikava was kidnapped and sentenced to prison the year before after attempting to create a new political party in opposition to Lukashenka (*Belarus*, 2023, B1). Although Belarus labels itself as a presidential republic, the country’s national government is more suitably characterized as an authoritative, personalistic dictatorship based on actual measured levels of freedom that coincide less with the definition of democracy and more with that of authoritarianism.

Unlike Belarus, its neighbor Lithuania is a semi-presidential republic and is accurately characterized as such (“Lithuania,” 2023). The country has become a consolidated democracy, according to Freedom House, with a 2022 freedom score of 89 out of 100 (*Lithuania*, 2023). This indicates that after

the fragmentation of the Soviet Union,

unlike Belarus, Lithuania ensured freedom and rights to its citizens and upheld its democratic legitimacy and promises. Freedom House also reported that in the last Lithuanian elections, it was found that the president and parliament's election and the president's appointment of the prime minister "...were in accordance with democratic standards" (*Lithuania*, 2023, A1). Unlike Belarus, there is also great diversity in political parties and divisiveness, meaning that multiple political views can compete to represent constituents in the Lithuanian government, unlike in Belarus, where political divisiveness is punished (*Lithuania*, 2023, B1). In addition, while President Lukashenka has remained in power in Belarus since his election in 1994, Lithuanian coalitions have transferred governing power between each other in elections since the early 1990s. The country, in addition to being a republic democracy, is also liberal in that it protects practically all of its citizens' liberties under the country's constitution, meaning political practice aligns with promise (*Lithuania*, 2023).

Examining the inconsistencies between the post-Soviet legacies of Belarus and Lithuania indicates that perceived patterns of homogeny in the former Soviet region, as attributed to the countries' shared history under the Soviet Union, perhaps do not hold after all. Despite emerging from a politically uniform entity, it is possible, maybe even likely, that the succeeding countries will differ in how each decides to implement its hegemonic structure. The most comprehensive evidence to support this idea comes from identifying studied factors that the two countries seemed to prominently differ from each other in the

context of each country in the years immediately leading up to and following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, both through comparative, empirical studies as well as through findings in comparative studies examining differences in each country with respect to the same, particular variable. As nation-states continue to be redefined through succession into the 21st century, examining past cases sheds a greater understanding of how other modern successions will proceed and provides a sense of how to develop a politically successful nation-state.

More than thirty years after the fall of the Soviet Union, Lithuania is now a fully consolidated democracy; however, its emergence as such is not a coincidence; instead, upon examining domestic, as well as international, factors that occurred and influenced Lithuania, it is more than evident that its consolidation into a liberal democracy, a governing structure completely opposing that of the Soviet Union, is indicative that Lithuania's government is a product of context, coinciding with values and goals of importance to the country's national government. For example, a unique social norm in Lithuania during the early 90s was its strong sense of nationalism and national identity and a desire to stand autonomous from Russia. Such a value was not widely entrenched among other Soviet Republics; thus, it is indicative that such a separation from Soviet and Russian identity played a role in the governing structures that the nation-state later decided to implement. Because the country, before becoming independent from the Soviet Union, had the desire to separate its legacy from that of its sovereign, it is unsurprising that a

democratic form of governance was created to institutionalize this separation. In other cases, nationalism is usually associated with fascism and a turn away from democracy; however, in the case of Lithuania, it proved integral in ensuring that democratic institutions could be solidified. Even before independence movements began to gain more momentum, there was a significantly more modest degree of "Russification" that had occurred in Lithuania compared to other Soviet Republics, as the country, along with the other Baltic States, "...were the last to be annexed into the Soviet..their three peoples...retaining a high degree of continuity in their language and culture" (Diuk & Karatnycky, 1993, p. 113). Both the retained and newly discovered sense of nationalism, founded in seeking an identity apart from Russia, can be attributed to the development of democracy in Lithuania, as adopting democracy would be a complete severance from the governing identity of the Soviet Union. Historically, Lithuania also enjoyed a period of independence as an autonomous nation-state in 1918 until it was annexed into the Soviet Union in 1940 (Fritz, 2007). Because of this, Lithuania experienced Russian influence and communist rule for less time than many other Soviet Republics. Thus, this shorter duration of Russian influence ensured a more intact sense of national identity outside of the Soviet Union than in other former Soviet states (Fritz, 2007). The aspiration of achieving a national identity separate from Russia meant a need for a government that differed from that of authoritarianism, making the country's adoption of a democratic system foreseeable after the fall of the Soviet

Union.

Opposing Lithuania, Belarus seemed to lack a national identity in its post-Soviet years before consolidating itself into an authoritarian regime; instead of investing in developing and strengthening a Belarusian identity, the population's sense of national identity is still tied to Russian nationalism. In fact, "The lack of a Belarusian 'national identity' is widely regarded as a cause of Belarus' path, which is unusual at least among the Western parts of the former Soviet Union. This lack of national identity is held to account both for Belarus' pro-Russian orientation and for society's acceptance of an authoritarian regime which continues the communist 'social contract' (obedience and acquiescence for stability and social security)" (Fritz, 2007, p. 212). Belarus's failure to efficiently establish itself as a strong nation is evident even today, more than 30 years after the Soviet Union fell. In a study conducted by the Pew Research Center in the mid-2010s, about 54% of Belarusians surveyed about the importance of being able to speak a national language to their national identity found that being able to speak Belarusian was very important to the participants' identities. Although this statistic is still more than half of the Belarusians surveyed, it is significantly lower than the percentage of respondents from other European countries who responded to the same question (See Figure 1). This statistic of Belarus can be attributed to the fact that Russian is more commonly spoken in the country than in Belarus, further demonstrating how extensive Russia's influence continues to be ("Belarus," 2023). It would seem as though this complete lack of nationalism coupled with a

Russian-favoring ideology would pose risks to the survival of Belarus as a sovereign nation-state, but it did not seem to pose any effect. Instead of dampening the country's ability to exist separately from the Soviet Union, the country's weak nationality "...has held back democratization, since national liberation was much less relevant as a potential rally-point for the opposition than in the Baltic states or Ukraine" (Fritz, 2007, p. 233). Since establishing and preserving a national identity was substantially more significant in Lithuania, consolidating into a democracy was vital if the nation-state was to exist autonomously apart from Russia. However, the lack of anti-Russian sentiment meant that there was less of a need to establish a democratic state for Belarus since there was less of a need for it to establish a government that would make it more independent from Russia, especially when coupled with other factors of Soviet-era Belarus.

Going hand in hand with how citizens of each country perceived and reshaped their national identities after the fall of the Soviet Union is also the national interests of Lithuania and Belarus as they began to consolidate themselves into nation-states separate from Russia. Unlike Belarus, Lithuania began to look towards Western integration through organizational membership. Lithuania also started attracting foreign investors in the early 90s, leading to increased attention from both Western democracies and NATO member countries (Fritz, 2007). To maintain this attention and to hopefully become a member of these organizations as well, it was imperative for Lithuania to structure itself into a democratic nation, as one of the most important missions of Western

states is the promotion of democracy. One of Lithuania's first steps to aligning itself more with the West and less with Mother Russia was signing an agreement with the Intermonetary Fund (IMF) in 1992 (Fritz, 2007, p. 258). Additionally, as Lithuania continued to establish itself as independent from Russia, there was a greater desire "...of becoming an EU-accession country...Since the late 1990s, the accession process had an important influence on shaping the state-building effort in Lithuania" (Fritz, 2007, p. 249). Sequentially, more than a decade later, "...in a national referendum on EU membership held in May 2003, 91 percent of voters were in favor, with 63.4 percent of eligible voters participating" (Fritz, 2007, p. 253). This particular voter statistic indicates how important Western integration was to Lithuanians. In 2004, the young nation-state successfully achieved membership, which indicated "...that all elite groups came to share a broadly common policy orientation. Thus, there was an underlying consolidation in two regards: an agreement to stick to democratic rules as the basis of legitimate government, and a basic agreement on the new order to be built" (Fritz, 2007, p. 249). To Lithuanians, it was understood that to reintroduce and reintegrate the newly independent nation to the international community, it was necessary to realign itself with global superpowers completely opposing Russia, the most powerful being NATO and the EU. Of course, to successfully achieve this, it was clear that Lithuania acknowledged the importance of adopting democracy in lieu of the authoritarian regime passed down from the Soviet Union to completely separate itself from Russia and prove its

dedication to becoming integrated with the world's other robust democracies.

While Lithuania opted to ally itself with other nations to separate from the isolationism of the Soviet Union, Belarus, on the other hand, was focused on a completely different national interest. Interestingly, while Lithuania demonstrated an apparent affinity towards joining NATO and the EU, these influences were marginal in Belarus (Fritz, 2007). While other former Soviet Union members began facing increasing debts in the wake of the establishment of these new nations, Belarus started to experience a decrease in its national debt, and its debt numbers are significantly lower than those of its democratic colleagues (See Figures 2, 3). Completely opposing its neighboring countries, its state-building process was based on the "...intention of the government to forgo independent statehood and to form a union state with Russia" (Fritz, 2007, p. 219). Considering that Belarus, immediately after the fall of the Soviet Union, sought consolidation with Russia demonstrates that there was no desire from the country to globalize and become involved with global superpowers other than Russia. Coupled with other factors, such as economic prosperity during the Soviet years and a lack of a Belarusian identity separate form Russia, it is no surprise that Belarus was adamant on ensuring a strong relationship with Russia in its new national interests. The country still greatly depends on Russia economically, especially because of its energy importance ("Belarus county profile," 2012). Along with this economic prosperity associated with Russia, however, Belarus had already experienced a

"Russification" in the 60s, which led to the Belarusian language and culture being considered secondary to that of Russia. Belarus is also a recipient of Russian subsidies, which "...have variously been estimated at US $500 million to US $1.5 billion per annum which would have been equivalent to 4 to 11 per cent of the GDP" (Fritz, 2007, p. 217). It is evident, because of this, that Russia has played a significant role in controlling and puppeteering Belarus through economic means, and it put Belarus in a dependent position to the global superpower, forcing the newly established nation to abide by Russian interests and structure itself accordingly. Additionally, while Lithuania experienced increased foreign investment, Belarus "...and its markets were predominantly in other Soviet republics, while its goods were uncompetitive on Western markets at the outset of its independence" (Fritz, 2007, p. 215). Because Belarus did not experience any interest in its markets from Western powers, there was less of an incentive for the nation to attempt to integrate into the global economy; instead, it provided Belarus with even more leverage to support its reunification with Russia and remain closer to it and ideology rather than Western democracies.

Along with budding national interests within new nation-states after the fall of the Soviet Union, pre-existing and shifting economic structures during this time also proved to be an essential determining factor of the government structures born of post-Soviet nation-states in response. Unlike Lithuania, Belarus found economic success while a part of the Soviet Union, "...a fact which appears to have promoted support for preserving the socialist

economic system" (Fritz, 2007, 233). In 1993, while many of its neighbors were engulfed in economic strife, Belarus was fairing much better. In fact, "While GDP fell by more than 20 per cent in Lithuania in 1992, the fall was less than 10 per cent in Belarus" (Fritz, 2007, 216). The country also managed to experience the highest growth rates out of all of the post-Soviet countries in 1997 and 1998 (Fritz, 2007). The success found in socialism contributed to a lack of desire to shift towards capitalism, therefore meaning that there was less of a perceived need for a liberal democracy to advance capitalist interests and, consequently, modernization. Interestingly, "During the late 1980s and the breakup of the USSR, Belarus was among the most conservative republics. This conservatism was based on a relatively well-functioning Soviet System: rates of investment and economic growth were high, corruption more limited than elsewhere in the Union, and the political leadership rather popular" (Fritz, 2007, p. 212). Because Belarus was already experiencing such great economic success, much of which could be attributed to Russia's foreign influence, there was no need to move away from the current socialist economic system derived from the Soviet Union. In fact, "...there seems to be an association between the pathway of institutional change chosen and the scale of GDP that was lost during the transition recession. Those countries which chose to restore the previous system initially retained a much higher level of their previous GDP than the others" (Fritz, 2007, p. 48). When applying this idea to Belarus, it becomes increasingly apparent as to why the country decided not to make many institutional changes: making changes to a

system that was already functioning in a manner that served its citizens as how they saw fit was a risk that Belarus did not deem worth taking, and thus allowed the country to maintain a steady economic status as a result (See Figure 5). Although Belarus seemed to be an exceptional case in the Soviet Union regarding economic growth, it was later categorized as such due to how it chose to merge its interests into a cohesive government, especially since it seemed to stay rooted in its Soviet-era conservatism.

Unlike Belarus, Lithuania did not possess the same prosperous economy when it was part of the Soviet Union. The country experienced an economic decline from 1990 to 1994 before finally experiencing growth after 1995 (Fritz, 2007). In addition, while a member of the Soviet Union, "...Lithuania was the least industrialized of the three Baltic republics and agriculture made up 27.6 percent of the GDP in 1990" (Fritz, 2007, p. 250). This contrasts with Belarus, which had managed to become industrialized after WWII and thus diversified its means of production (Fritz, 2007). Because of how much Lithuania's economy suffered in the early 90s, it became an imperative interest for policy-makers to pass reforms to reintroduce growth; in fact, "Economic policy has been marked by early rapid moves on several fundamental dimensions establishing a basic market economy framework by the mid-1990s...monetary reform, privatization, and the reform of the fiscal system" (Fritz, 2007, p. 250). Many of these reforms are also aligned with propelling Lithuania into a capitalist system, demonstrating a complete turnaround away from the Soviet system, unlike Belarus (Fritz, 2007). Additionally,

there was a more significant amount of support for establishing a free market economy than in other former Soviet Republics (See Figure 4). Ultimately, “The strong commitment to national independence led Lithuanian citizens and elites to embrace capitalism as the economic model” (Fritz, 2007, p. 258). Consequentially and uncoincidentally, most capitalist systems are justified and upheld using many values overlapping with democracy. Therefore, it was understood that adopting democratic practices was a rational choice to implement and maintain capitalism successfully. While Lithuania’s aspiration to alter itself economically stemmed from a desire to integrate into the global economy and evolve from past national economic struggles, it also derived from the necessity to separate itself from Russia as much as possible. Unlike Belarus, “...the strength of [Lithuanian] nationalism meant that relying on Russia...was never an option” (Fritz, 2007, p. 258). In order to continue to improve their economy, it was essential to “modernize” and integrate by shifting away from the command economy that characterized the Soviet Union and towards a free market system, and the most methodical way to achieve such a goal would be through enacting democratic reforms and institutions as well, as both go hand in hand, in most cases.

In the last thirty years, the most significant event in shaping subsequent domestic and international politics, both in and outside of Europe, was the rise and fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, as the national identities of each respective Soviet Republic within the Soviet Union were displaced after annexation. The newborn nation-states were faced with establishing respective

governments independent of the Soviet Union, and, as a result, structural ideologies were used to establish the new sovereign entities, which were often aligned with national interests and maintaining desired economic structures. Despite sharing a common history as former members of the Soviet Union, many of the structures of governance that each country chose to adopt differ from each other in peculiar means, even outside of the case of Lithuania and Belarus. As a result, there is a question of how important of a role common history plays in determining and interpreting the outcome in such situations of succession as in the Soviet Union, given the exceptional case of the two neighboring countries that sought utterly opposing methods of consolidating their national power into a new government. The case of Belarus and Lithuania demonstrates that factors independent of shared common history can influence interstate affairs and how the nuances of such commonality often affect each succeeding party differently.

Figure 1 (Mitchell, 2018)

Majorities across Europe say national language, laws key to identity

% who say ____ is very/somewhat important to truly share their national identity (e.g., to be truly Danish)

	To respect the country's institutions/laws	To be able to speak national language
Denmark	98%	93%
Finland	98	68
Norway	98	97
Netherlands	97	96
Hungary	96	98
Portugal	96	95
Sweden	96	89
Belgium	95	86
Bulgaria	95	97
Estonia	95	90
Romania	95	92
Austria	94	85
Czech Republic	94	95
Bosnia	93	69
Germany	93	86
Greece	93	89
Switzerland	93	86
Croatia	92	82
Georgia	92	92
United Kingdom	92	83
France	91	88
Ireland	91	82
Italy	91	87
Poland	91	94
Slovakia	90	92
Ukraine	90	62
Serbia	89	83
Moldova	87	66
Russia	87	86
Spain	87	89
Lithuania	85	92
Armenia	83	92
Belarus	82	54
Latvia	82	87

Note: Orange labels are Central and Eastern European countries. Blue labels are Western European countries. In several countries that have more than one official language, multiple languages were listed. For example, in Switzerland, respondents were asked about being able to speak French, German or Italian.
Source: Surveys conducted 2015-2017 in 34 countries. See Methodology for details.
"Eastern and Western Europeans Differ on Importance of Religion, Views of Minorities, and Key Social Issues"

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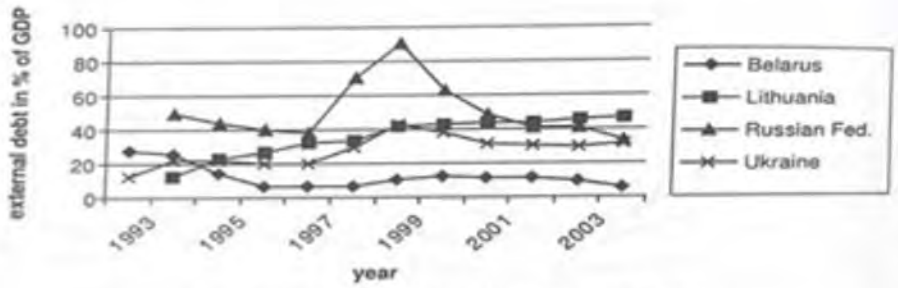
Figure 2 (Fritz, 2007).

Table II.1.2.: Debt to GDP in %, 1992–2004

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Belarus	–	27.7	25.7	14.7	6.6	7.0	6.7	10.4	12.1	11.2	11.3	9.1	5.9
Lithuania	–	–	12.4	22.8	26.4	32.8	33.3	41.9	43.0	43.6	44.1	45.8	47.0
Russian Fed.	–	–	49.6	43.8	39.7	38.4	70.2	90.3	62.5	48.2	41.4	40.6	33.2
Ukraine	–	12.8	21.9	21.6	20.2	20	29.6	42.8	37.8	31.8	30.1	29.4	31.1



Graph II.1.1: External debt to GDP, 1993–2004

Figure 3 (Fritz, 2007).

II.1: EXTERNAL DEBT

Table II.1.1: Total debt stock, in US $ million, 1992–2004

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Belarus	–	969	1,297	1,694	1,105	1,171	1,154	1261	1265	1381	1655	1615	1351
Lithuania	56	333	503	770	1,258	3,262	3,741	4,529	4,884	5268	6,199	8,342	10,466
Russian Fed.	78,652	112,440	122,342	121,735	128,685	127,705	177,710	177,100	160,027	152,500	147,400	175,300	192,966
Ukraine	551	3,855	5,636	8,428	9,538	11,133	13,071	13,941	12,166	12,098	13,555	14,578	20,157

Source: World Bank, Global Development Finance.

Figure 4 (Fritz, 2007).

Table II.4.1: % saying that free market right for the country's future

	1991	1994	1997
Lithuania	87	55	65
Ukraine	43a	38	32b
Russia	58	25	29b
Belarus	38a	32	48b

a=1992 b=1996
Source: Blanchflower (2000).

Figure 5 (Fritz, 2007).

I.1 GENERAL MACRO-ECONOMIC DATA

Table I.1.1: GDP levels in post-Soviet countries, 1989–2004

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2004
Baltic states	*100*	*97.2*	*87.9*	*68.0*	*59.8*	*57.8*	*59.1*	*61.5*	*66.7*	*69.9*	*69.5*	*73.7*	*78.3*	*82.8*	
Estonia	100	91.9	82.7	71.0	65.0	63.7	66.4	69.0	75.7	79.2	78.7	84.3	88.6	93.6	112
Latvia	100	102.9	89.9	61.1	54.1	55.3	54.7	56.8	61.5	64.4	66.3	70.8	76.2	80.6	90
Lithuania	100	96.7	91.2	71.8	60.2	54.3	56.1	58.7	63.0	66.2	63.6	66.0	70.0	74.1	89
CIS	*100*	*96.8*	*89.0*	*71.3*	*63.9*	*54.3*	*51.2*	*51.4*	*52.9*	*54.4*	*57.0*	*60.8*	*65.3*	*69.6*	
Armenia	100	94.5	83.5	48.6	44.3	46.7	49.9	52.8	54.6	58.6	60.5	64.1	70.3	79.3	98
Azerbaijan	100	88.3	87.7	67.9	52.2	41.9	37.0	37.4	39.6	43.6	46.8	52.1	57.1	63.1	72
Belarus	100	98.1	96.7	87.4	80.8	71.4	63.9	65.7	73.2	79.4	82.1	86.8	91.0	95.2	111
Georgia	100	84.9	67.0	36.9	26.1	23.4	24.0	26.7	29.5	30.4	31.3	31.9	33.3	35.1	45
Kazakhstan	100	99.0	88.2	83.5	75.8	66.2	60.8	61.1	62.1	60.9	62.6	68.6	78.0	85.4	103
Kyrgyzstan	100	104.8	96.5	83.2	70.3	56.2	53.1	56.9	62.5	63.9	66.2	69.8	73.5	73.2	80
Moldova	100	97.6	80.5	57.2	56.5	39.0	38.5	36.2	36.8	34.3	33.2	33.9	36.0	38.6	44
Russian Fed.	100	97.0	92.2	78.8	71.9	62.8	60.2	58.2	58.7	55.8	58.9	64.2	67.4	70.2	82
Tajikistan	100	100.2	91.7	62.1	52.0	40.9	35.8	29.8	30.3	32.0	33.1	35.9	39.5	43.1	69
Turkmenistan	100	101.8	97.0	82.5	83.7	69.2	64.2	68.5	60.7	65.0	76.0	83.6	90.3	98.4	112
Ukraine	100	96.4	88.0	79.3	68.0	52.5	46.1	41.5	40.2	39.4	39.3	41.6	45.4	47.3	57
Uzbekistan	100	99.2	98.7	87.7	85.7	81.2	80.5	81.9	86.1	89.9	93.9	97.6	102.0	106.3	115

Source: UNECE, Economic Survey of Europe, 2003 (1), Table B.1; for 2004: EBRD, Transition Report (2005).

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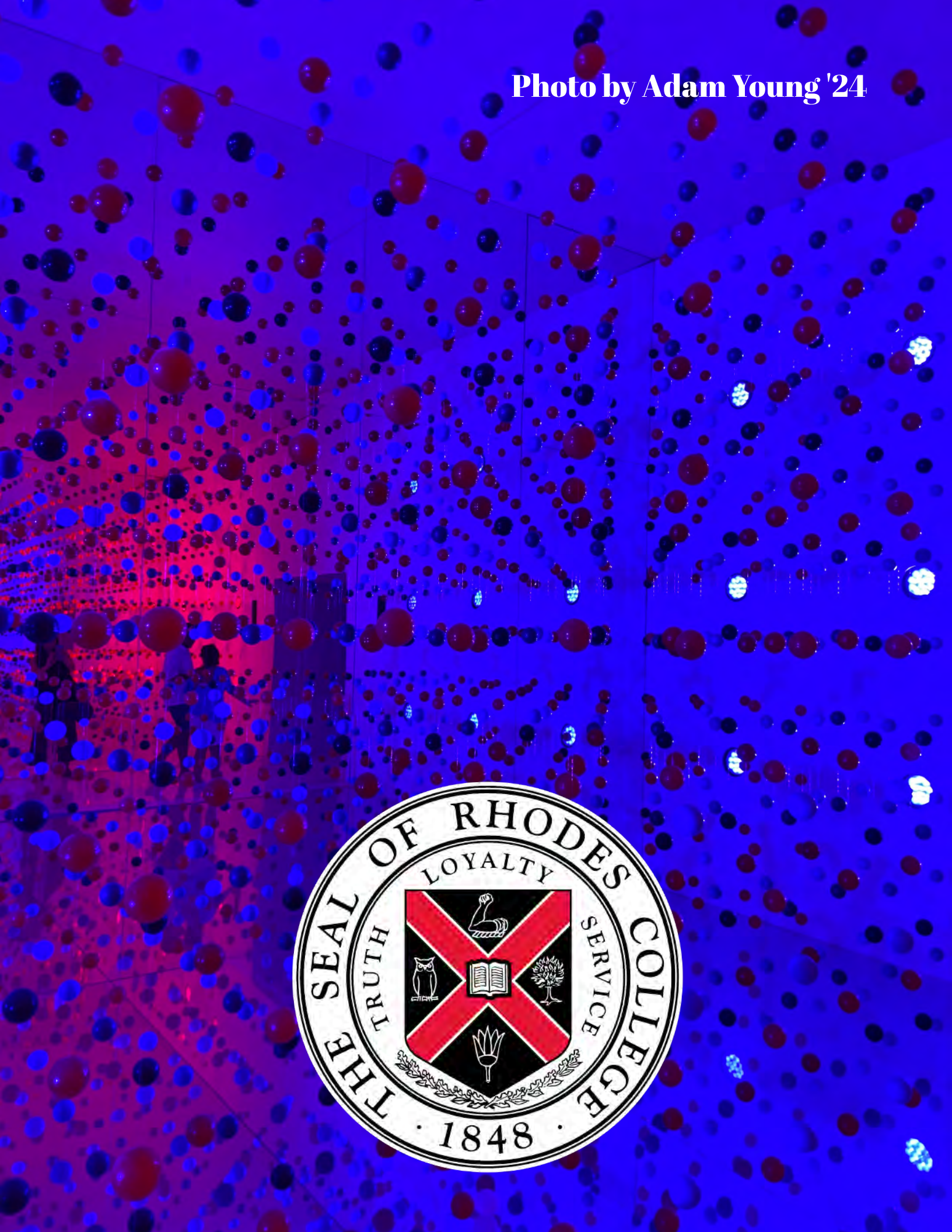

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