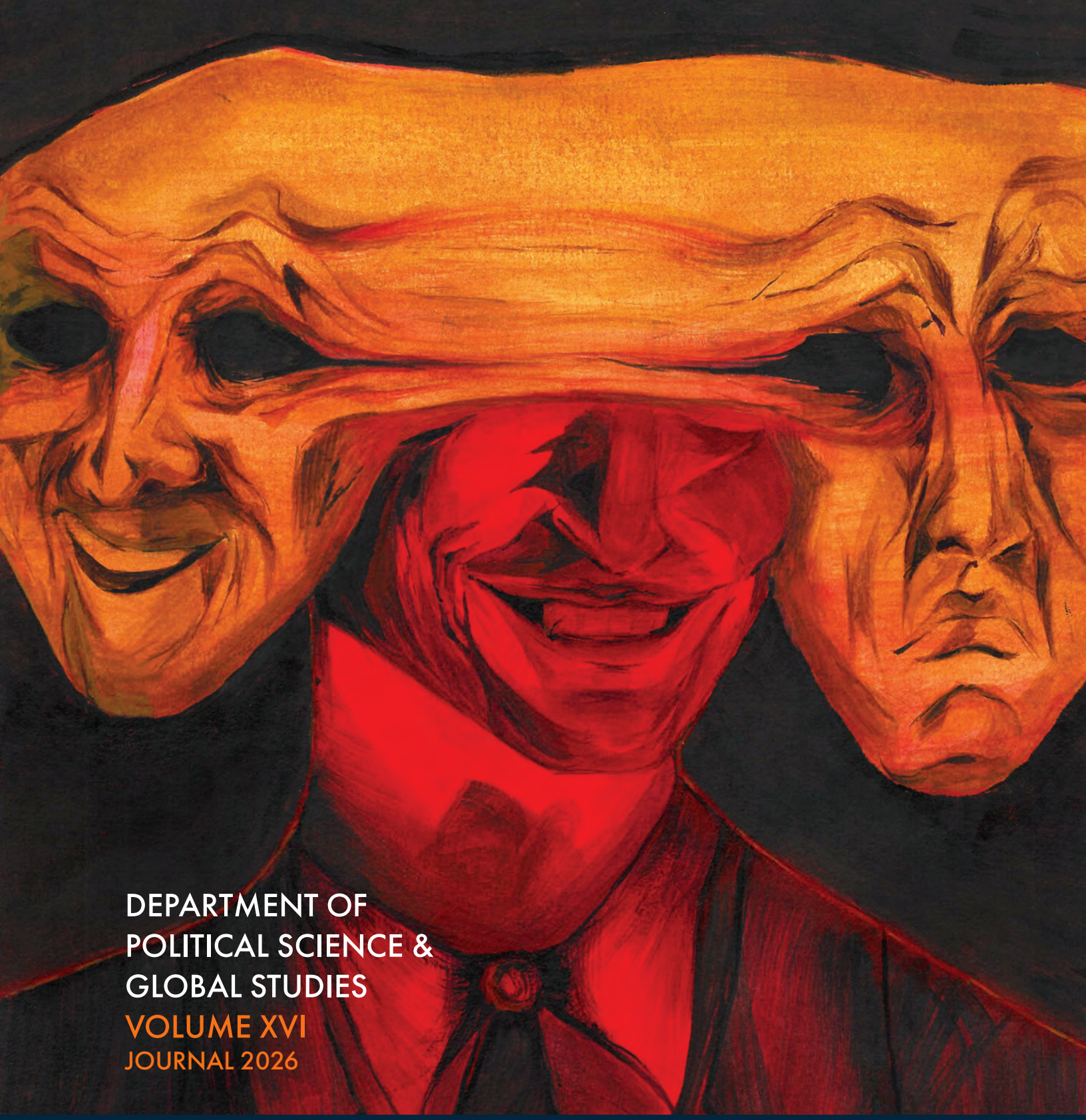

DEPARTMENT OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE &
GLOBAL STUDIES

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GLOBUS MUNDI

COSUMNES RIVER COLLEGE

CONTENTS

WELCOME TO OUR SIXTEENTH ISSUE OF GLOBUS MUNDI

FACULTY PAGE

MARTIN MORALES

WHAT AN INTERESTING YEAR.

Welcome to our sixteenth issue of *Globus Mundi*.

I think the first order of business is to clarify my status particularly as I addressed "the end" at last year's Colloquium. It seems that my joy at the thought of retiring and my inability to do basic math (still a typical IR student !) – caused me to mis-speak: *This* year will mark the beginning of what I refer to as "the last cohort."

As last semester ended, we resumed a departmental tradition and had an "End-of-the-Year BBQ" in the park. A lot of amazing food, a few surprise visitors and an all-around good time. I've really missed those and am glad they're back. Special thanks to **Will Walker** for being an awesome grill-master and to everyone who came.

Fall semester's activities began the first week with students tabling. Special thanks to **Ryan Pearce, Veah Davis** and **Alondra Rodriguez Ambario** for standing out there in the blazing heat and providing program information to students. A few weeks later, on September 17th, Beth and I hosted our annual New Student Orientation and provided students with transfer insights and GE/IGTC course selection advice unavailable through traditional avenues. A month later, **Ryan Pearce** hosted a successful "Transfer Apps. Workshop." Finally, November saw Professor Amanda Wolcott and I present "A Clandestine Affair: Anthropology and IR," a program showcasing the intersectionality of both disciplines through case studies in Asia and Latin America. The semester ended with a student's Christmas get-together at Adamo's Restaurant in Midtown, an event that included alumni from last year.

Spring semester's highlights included "Gunboat Diplomacy II" and "Colloquium XIII." "Gunboat Diplomacy II" was an event hosted by History Professor Alex Peshkoff and I focusing on recent US foreign policy initiatives in Venezuela and Iran. This year, hopefully, ends like last year with an end-of-the-year BBQ or similar event.

Another wonderful thing from the past came back this year: our internship program. This year, I was able to place **Alondra Rodriguez Ambario** and alumna **Brenda Chavarin** in Governor Newsom's office working in Constituent Affairs and the Communications Office, respectively. They're continuing **Katelynn Lyall's** legacy. This year, as midterm and local elections approach, we're hoping to recommend students for internships in federal, state and municipal campaigns.

This year marks a return to pre-Covid transfer levels (see "VALETE"). Additionally, we've heard from more alumni this year than we have in a while. Both make us very happy and we seek to build on this especially as "the end" approaches.

XVI

Globus Mundi is now old enough for a Drivers License !

This issue was edited by **Ryan Pearce** and **Veah Davis**. Both are TA's (Ryan for me, Veah for Professor David Weinshilboum, English Department) and both are Honors Students. We thank them for their diligence in editing this volume. Veah is transferring to Pace University in New York and will continue her studies in both Political Science and English with her sights set on law school upon graduation.

Maryam Almahdi, our covers artist, has provided us with two evocative pieces and we are grateful. This year's covers reflect confusion the world is experiencing ("Masquerade") with hope becoming a small thing lost in the chaos existing behind the curtain, as it were ("Behind the Curtain" is our back cover). Maryam is

transferring to UC Santa Barbara with plans to continue her studies in IR.

This volume contains fourteen articles, all researched, written and edited by students, and is the first issue since Volume X to be spiral bound because of its size. It's reflective of student's coursework this year, specifically drawing from "Revolutions & Ideologies" and our two Global Studies courses on Africa and Southeast Asia. *Globus Mundi* is available online through the departmental website and, as usual, will be distributed in next year's classes.

The first three articles in this issue were chosen for presentation at Colloquium this year.

"Choosers Create Beggars: Exploitation's Effects on Child Poverty in Sudan and The Democratic Republic of Congo's Children" by **Yasmin Haidari,** delves deeply into policy and the consequences of exploitation in Africa. She transfer to UC Santa Cruz to continue her studies in IR.

"Sanctions on Syria and the Results on Life Post Civil War," by **Abdullahi Altahan,** is one of two surprises in this issue. Abdulhadi will attend UC Berkeley next year to pursue his studies in IR.

Veah Davis writes "In Theory, This Should Work: How Ideological Application Can, in some cases, Kill Revolution," a work drawn from "Revolutions & Ideologies."

Ibrahim Traore is charismatic and compelling leader - a man on a mission to transform his country. **Ana Voicu** gives us "Burkina Faso & Ibrahim Traore: The Polarizing Image of an Upright Man." Ana returns next year to complete her studies ahead of transfer.

"The Xinhai Revolution of 1911: Catalysts, Consequences and Legacy in Modern Chinese Politics," by **Frank Norris**, was also a product of "Revolutions & Ideologies." While the Xinhai Revolution wasn't taught, this paper will be assigned as required reading for both "Politics in the Pacific Rim" and "Revolutions & Ideologies" in their final offerings.

In yet another paper originating from "Revolutions & Ideologies," **Alex Prasad** explores the legacies of Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata in "Villa, Zapata and the Mexican Revolution." Alex is transferring to UC Santa Barbara to continue his studies in IR.

Going on a pilgrimage is not usually followed with thoughts about a site's economy. **Yasir Babir** looks at that unspoken thing, indeed the economy associated with Hajj in "The Hidden Economy of Mecca." Yasir is transferring to UC Irvine.

In "Revolutions & Ideologies," **Alondra Rodriguez-Ambario** examined something not many people would focus on, "Machismo & Mexico." Her article reflects components from several other courses ("IR" and "Political Theory") and is a refreshing look at how women endured in revolutionary Mexico. Alondra is transferring to UC Davis and will continue her studies in IR.

"Women's Rights in Congo," by **Izabel Torres**, examines the history and present state of rights for women in the DRC, incorporating knowledge from "IR" and "Political Theory," in addition to what she studied in "African Politics".

"African Migration" by **Noel Phillip Prudente**, examines how conflict and economic policies have impacted the movement of people continent wide. Noel's article comes from his research in "African Politics." He's transferring to San Francisco State University and will continue his studies in IR.

Another student in "African Politics,' **Aaron Petersen II**, gives us "Sudan's Civil War and its Consequences." Aaron returns in the fall.

A fourth article emerges from "African Politics:" "TRC Post Apartheid," by **Rajan Banwait**, examines the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in post-Apartheid South Africa. Rajan is transferring to UC Berkeley.

"Bananas, Death Squads, and Lawsuits: An Exploratory Approach to the Future of Regulating TNCs," by **Maya Renteria**, is the other surprise submission this year as the topic emerged from Beth's Honors IPE seminar. Maya transfers to UCLA.

Baylor Buechler, who published in last year's issue, gives us "India & Pakistan: Evolution of Religious Strife," an article in which you see the knowledge from other coursework clearly reflected. Baylor transfers to UC Davis and will complete his studies in Political Science.

COLLOQUIUM

Colloquium was held Wednesday, April 29th and featured three presenters: **Yasmin Haidari, Abdulhadi Altahan** and **Veah Davis**, presenting their articles, "Choosers Create Beggars: Exploitation's Effects on Child Poverty in Sudan and The Democratic Republic of Congo's Children," "Sanctions on Syria and the Results on Life Post Civil War" and "In Theory, This Should Work: How Ideological Application Can, in some cases, Kill Revolution," respectively. Colloquium was, as usual, well attended by students and the video from this night is available on the departmental website.

As discussed, we've come back to pre-Covid numbers this year but must face the fact that we're back to zero for fall. Literally, two people are coming back ! One person who isn't returning is my TA, **Ryan Pearce**. Ryan has set a very high bar for those who follow him by his service. His commitment to excellence in everything he did was noticed and greatly appreciated. The degree of professionalism in his work as Editor to this issue has been outstanding. His work as departmental tutor, ensuring students who sought him out for

teaching and commitment to knowledge - as noted by students. Sections Ryan hosted for IR, Comparative, Revolutions, Theory and IPE (and our regional courses) were at the UC GSI level, featuring crafted questions for discussion and reflection. He worked as "Ambassador for Honors" whenever necessary and was more than happy to share his knowledge and insights with interested students. And, selfishly, I was "managed well" not having to stress classes, additional research, lectures or events because Ryan kept me on track. Ryan transfers to UC Berkeley to continue his studies in political science and philosophy. I'll miss him and our office chats.

Ana Voicu succeeds **Ryan Pearce** as my Teaching Assistant, Editor in Chief of Globus Mundi and departmental tutor. She's already been "on the job" this year and I look forward to working with her next year.

ALUMNI NEWS

Ali Alukrafi has gotten married. Mabruk, Habibi !

Nadia Al-Ani, presently at USC completing her studies in International Relations, Philosophy, Politics, and Law at the Dornsife College of Science, was a rising senior this year and accepted into a progressive degree program in the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism Master of Public Diplomacy.

Congratulations to **Hawa Amiri**, who graduates with her MA in Global Affairs from The American University in Washington, DC. Hawa started at CRC, transferred to and graduated from UC Davis. Hawa always remembers my birthday !

Ammar Ansari is graduating from the Coro Fellowship in Public Affairs in San Francisco. During his Fellowship, he was placed at the Governor's Office and Inequality Media with former Labor Secretary and UC Berkeley Professor Robert Reich. Ammar graduated from UC Berkeley (BA in Political Science and BA in History with Honors); he also attended the London School of Economics ahead of obtaining his Masters from Oxford University. Ammar, Aymaan and I enjoyed a lovely Peruvian meal in San Francisco recently.

Samantha Ayers graduated from the University of Sussex (UK) with an MA in IR. Samatha started at CRC, transferred to and graduated from CSUSM.

Bamine Boye (aka "Charlie") has been busy since he left CRC. He went home to Sierra Leone and briefly entered politics – an "eye opening experience." Upon his return to the US, he enlisted in the armed forces and graduated from Arizona State University with degrees in International Affairs & Leadership. Presently, he's at University of San Francisco earning another MA (Public Policy & Public Leadership) and applying to Ph.D. programs. Charlie was the guy who never wore socks no matter how cold it was !

Samantha Bland, my Portugal travel partner and former TA, graduates from Hull University with an MA in Digital Marketing and Advertising. Sam, her mother Cathy, and I had a lovely pre-Christmas meal in San Francisco.

Brenda Chavarin was one of two interns placed in Governor Newsom's Communications Office this year. Before her internship concluded, she was invited to apply for the position of Assistant Director of Communications – which she now holds. Congratulations Brenda ! Brenda started at CRC, graduated from UC Davis with her BA in IR and is awaiting news on acceptance to graduate programs in history.

Michael Cutter started at SFSU this year. I was happy to see him pop out of a class to say "hello."

Jimmy Guzman graduates from UCSD with his MA in International Affairs with a Specialization in International Economics and a regional focus on Latin America. Jimmy has been interning at PG&E to which he'll return while he looks for international employment. Jimmy and I grabbed a meal in North Beach when he was last in SF.

Madison Hinshaw will be starting the last semester of graduate school this fall. It's always a joy to see her at SFSU – and get dinner together after class.

Gabriela McMorris graduates from UCLA with a BAs in Political Science and Psychology. Gabi will attend CSU Long Beach for her Master's.

Nicholas Molinari is enjoying life at UC Davis. He ran into Ryan and, subsequently, checked in.

Ricardo Miles graduates from SFSU with his BA in Political Science. I've been fortunate to have him in Model UN for two years. This year, Ricardo represented Brazil in the UNHCR.

Brandon Santos graduates from Sonoma State University with a BA in Early Childhood Education and will be substitute teaching next year before starting a credential program. Brandon, Ricardo Miles and I had a lovely meal in SF this spring.

Karanbir Singh graduates George Washington University School of Law in Washington, DC. Well done, Counselor ! Karanbir started at CRC, transferred to and graduated from UC San Diego.

Aymaan Sumandi, former TA and now dear friend, has added to his duties as "TA for Life," graciously shooting MUNFW 75 Opening Plenary at the Herbst Theater in San Francisco for me. He continues to make sure everything I do online works.

Alexis Trillas has completed her first year at SFSU and likes it so much she's applying for the blended program to graduate with both a BA and MA in IR in 2028. Alexis did Model UN this year, representing Brazil in the UNHCR.

Jaime Velasco has been accepted to the hybrid program in Law & Public Policy at UCSF/UCLaw.

Gabriella Violett, a former TA, will attend Edinburgh University this year in pursuit of her MA in History. Gabriella, winner of the UC Davis Distinguished Scholar in IR & human Rights Award, graduated from UC Davis and also attended the London School of Economics.

Jesse White, the last person I saw in the hallway as we were being ordered off campus for Covid, graduated from UC Davis with a BA in IR. His way of letting me know he graduated was … unique.

If you're alumni, please check in and tell us how you're doing. We'd love to hear from you.

Inquiries regarding Globus Mundi should be directed to Professor Martin Morales, Department Chair, at (916) 691-7114 or, via email, to moralem@crc.losrios.edu

Thank you for your support.

VALETE

ELLIOT ABDULLAH	UC DAVIS
MARYAM ALMAHDI	UC SANTA BARBARA
YASIR BABIR	UC IRVINE
RAJAN BANWAIT	UC BERKELEY
BAYLOR BUECHLER	UC DAVIS
SHAAN CHEEMA	UC DAVIS
VEAH DAVIS	PACE UNIVERSITY
YASMIN HAIDARI	UC SANTA CRUZ
NICK MOLINARI	UC DAVIS
CALEB MOSLEY	UC DAVIS
LAVRAJ NARAYAN	UC BERKELEY
ISHWAR PAL	UC BERKELEY
RYAN PEARCE	UC BERKELEY
ALEXANDER PRASAD	UC SANTA BARBARA
NOEL PRUDENTE	SFSU
SAMANTHA RAMIREZ	UC DAVIS
MAYA RENTERIA	UCLA
ALONDRA RODRIGUEZ AMBARIO	UC DAVIS
YASHITA SINGH	STANFORD UNIVERSITY
PETRA VEGA	UC MERCED

CHOOSERS CREATE BEGGARS: EXPLOITATION'S EFFECTS ON CHILD POVERTY IN SUDAN AND THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO'S CHILDREN

YASMIN HAIDARI

I. INTRODUCTION

With all the chaos and revolution, creation and destruction, and amid both war and peace, the world seems to operate in manners of both duality and balance. It's necessary for a component to exist so that its counterpart does too. In that essence, regardless of the extremes, the world balances itself out. This seems to remain true for most relationships; however, in such an interconnected system, that balance seems to never meet its ends with child poverty, for its dual existence is paired with extraordinary exploitation. To balance that relationship, the other side is tasked with transferring back some of what they have taken. And who wants to participate in return if the benefits reaped accompany accumulations beyond what balance can reestablish.

There are 2.3 billion children in the world, and they comprise one-third of the entire human population. However, they are also the group that is at highest risk of poverty, malnutrition, abuse, and are more disproportionately impacted by human rights crises.[1] Of the world's 2.3 billion children, 412 million live in extreme poverty and survive on less than $3.00 a day while another 566 million face multidimensional poverty; meaning they lack access to necessities like food, water, and education.[2] Under the guidelines of the United Nations (UN), children are defined as anyone under the age of 18-as established in 1989 under an enshrined set of rights in the most ratified treaty in the world by every UN member state except the United States; the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The treaty states that every child has the right to speak out and express opinions, as well as rights to equality, health, education, a clean environment, a safe place to live, and protection from harm.[3] Despite its ratification almost 37 years ago, children are as exploited and malnourished as ever. The treaty was ratified; however, nothing was established to guarantee the contents of the treaty. No methods of accountability were imposed, and laws were written without anything put in place to or ensure their weight. Thus, lies the roots of extreme child poverty.

Of the world's extremely impoverished, 90% live in Sub-Sahara Africa and South Asia; making the regions home to three in four children living in extreme poverty.[4] Both regions are the most over-exploited in history and contain two of the world's most resource rich nations; The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sudan. Cursed with resources, both Congolese cobalt and Sudanese gold have attracted massive foreign intervention and extraction operations of these resources to meet global demands. The supply chain for both cobalt and gold has devastated the lives of children across the two nations and has created impoverishing conditions fueled by the proxy war in Sudan and child labor in the DRC. As extraction projects persist, these determinant factors on children's psychological development, physical health, and education extend themselves throughout the entire span of their childhoods. These extreme imbalances pull the most vulnerable to the bottom while they help raise and fuel the rest of the world as the supply chain demands. As long as these resources continue to exist, so do the conditions of child poverty for as the Congolese saying goes, you never finish eating the meat of an elephant.

II. MARKET MEETS THE MAGNETS: SUPPLY DEMANDS EXPLOITATION AND EXTRACTION

Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo are nations historically defined not by scarcity, but by abundance. Sudan's gold

deposits date back to the ancient Kingdom of Nubia, whose mines supplied the gold that adorned Egyptian pharaohs and filled the tomb of Tutankhamun.[5] For centuries, Sudan's earth has produced one of humanity's most coveted metals; a symbol of power, divinity, and financial security. Similarly, the DRC has long held vast mineral wealth, but in the modern era, cobalt has become its most strategically critical resource. Cobalt is indispensable to the lithium-ion batteries that power smartphones, laptops, electric vehicles, and renewable energy storage systems.[6] In a world racing toward electrification and decarbonization, cobalt has become a backbone of the global economy.

In Sudan, civil war erupted in April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti.[7] What began as a struggle over political transition after the overthrow of former president Omar al-Bashir evolved into a violent contest for total state control. Territorial division quickly became strategic as the SAF holds much of the east and key urban centers, while the RSF dominates much of Darfur, where significant gold deposits lie.[8] The war has killed tens of thousands, displaced over 12 million people, and created what is now described as the largest humanitarian crisis in the world; yet, amid famine, displacement, and destruction, gold production has surged.[9] In 2024, Sudan produced record levels of gold, much of it from artisanal mines, even as the country collapsed. Gold is not incidental to the war; it fuels it.[10]

In the DRC, the crisis unfolds differently but no less violently. Approximately 70–75% of the world's cobalt supply comes from the DRC.[11] Two-thirds of global production originates there, and a significant portion is mined by artisanal workers known as creasers.[12] The global shift toward clean energy has dramatically increased demand for cobalt, further intensifying extraction pressures. Unlike Sudan's overt battlefield conflict, DRC's struggle is embedded in global supply chains. There is no singular declared civil war over cobalt, but there exists a system of chronic instability, militia influence, weak governance, and extreme poverty that feeds mineral extractions.[13]

In both nations, vast mineral wealth exists alongside mass deprivation, illustrating how resource abundance can become a double-edged sword when political power and global markets intersect. Global markets operate through the logic of supply and demand, but this logic considers the human cost an abstract. Paradoxically, gold demand increases during periods of economic instability.[14] Investors purchase gold as a hedge against inflation, currency devaluation, and geopolitical uncertainty.[15] Central banks accumulate gold reserves while technology sectors use it in electronics. When global recession fears rise, gold prices surge, recently surpassing $3,000 per ounce, and incentivizing increased extraction. In Sudan gold output rose to approximately 64–65 tons in 2024, generating billions in revenue.[16] Nearly 80% of this production comes from artisanal and small-scale mining.[17] The market's demand functions as a magnet, pulling gold from conflict zones into global financial systems.[18] Cobalt demand operates through a different but equally powerful magnetism. Every lithium-ion battery requires cobalt to prevent overheating, extend battery life, and safety.[19] Electric vehicles require between 6 and 12 kilograms of cobalt per battery, and renewable energy storage systems depend on it. As governments commit to carbon neutrality and corporations market sustainability initiatives, cobalt demand rises sharply.[20] In 2022 alone, millions of tons were produced globally, with the DRC dominating supply.[21]

The climate crisis has thus produced another crisis; an extraction race to meet decarbonization goals.[22] Markets reward increased supply, but they do not differentiate between cobalt mined safely and cobalt mined by children in collapsing tunnels. Artisanal and industrial cobalt are mixed before processing, eliminating traceability.[23] Sudan's mineral economy revolves around gold as a store of value and instrument of financial leverage. Control of gold deposits translates directly into political and military power. In Sudan's civil war, both the RSF and SAF seek territorial dominance not only for governance but for access to gold-rich regions. RSF leader Hemedti built his fortune through gold mining in Darfur and institutionalized that wealth through industrialized gold companies. Reports indicate that large quantities of gold are smuggled to the UAE, which has invested billions in Sudanese sectors, including mining, agriculture, and ports. In exchange, weapons and funding reportedly flow back, embedding Sudan's gold economy within a broader proxy war dynamic involving Egypt and Turkey.[24]

The DRC's cobalt economy is structured differently. Rather than an overt two-sided civil war for cobalt dominance, the DRC's cobalt extraction system operates through multinational corporations, subcontractors, and informal labor networks.[25] Global technology companies rely heavily on Congolese cobalt but often claim limited oversight over artisanal mining practices. Children begin as surface diggers, washing ore in toxic pools of water.[26] As they age, they are deemed strong enough to dig up narrow tunnels by hand. These tunnels frequently collapse, burying miners alive. Because artisanal and industrial cobalt are mixed in supply chains, it becomes nearly impossible to distinguish "clean" cobalt from exploitative cobalt. Sudan's gold war is visibly militarized; the DRC's cobalt crisis is corporately embedded. The actors may differ, paramilitary leaders versus multinational corporations, but the outcome is similar; wealth extracted outward, and poverty entrenched locally.

Artisanal mining is often described as informal or small-scale extraction, but the term obscures its scale and severity. Globally, approximately 45 million people depend on artisanal mining, with 270 million indirectly reliant on it.[27] Ninety percent of the world's mining workforce operates in "artisanal" conditions. The 2011 secession of South Sudan resulted in the loss of 75% of oil reserves and 90% of foreign exchange earnings.[28] Inflation soared, unemployment spread, and millions turned to artisanal gold mining as a survival strategy. In 2021 alone, mercury was used in over 50,000 artisanal mining sites across 14 of Sudan's 18 states. Artisanal mining now produces roughly 80% of Sudan's gold output. In the DRC, artisanal miners, including thousands of children, dig with pickaxes, shovels, and bare hands. "Artisanal" suggests tradition or craftsmanship; in reality, it reflects extreme poverty, lack of regulation, and absence of alternatives.[29]

In Sudan, the power play manifests as a proxy war. The UAE reportedly funds and purchases gold from RSF-controlled areas, while other regional powers back the SAF.[30] Gold becomes the currency of influence. Both sides seek total state control because controlling the state means controlling export routes, mining territories, and international partnerships. External actors can claim neutrality by framing the conflict as an internal civil war, even while engaging economically and militarily through intermediaries. In the DRC, power operates through corporate and geopolitical influence rather than proxy confrontation. Historical foreign interventions, support of favorable leadership, and economic leverage have shaped governance structures that facilitate this mineral extraction. Both cases demonstrate how internal leadership, whether military factions or political elites, can function as intermediaries for external interests. These supply chains are deliberately opaque, allowing powerful actors to distance themselves from the visible consequences of extraction.

III. FUEL THAT FEEDS THE FLAME: CHILD POVERTY

Child poverty in both nations is not incidental; it is structurally produced by conflict and extraction economies. In Sudan, famine conditions are described as man-made, resulting from the deliberate obstruction of food access and destruction of livelihoods. Over 33 million people require humanitarian assistance, and millions face acute food insecurity.[31] In Darfur, one in two children suffers from malnutrition, with severe acute malnutrition threatening death within weeks if untreated. Families flee bombardment only to encounter hunger, displacement, and violence again.[32] In the DRC, children enter cobalt mines because parents cannot afford school fees or because parents themselves have died, leaving no other option. In essence, poverty functions as coercion. It forces children into labor to sustain family survival. Extraction economies thrive precisely because poverty removes alternatives. The consequences for children extend far beyond immediate physical danger. Chronic exposure to cobalt dust can cause lung disease, heart failure, potential cancer links, and birth defects.[33] In Sudan's gold mines, mercury is used extensively to separate gold from ore, causing tremors, insomnia, memory loss, cognitive dysfunction, and other forms of long-term neurological damage. Psychologically, prolonged exposure to war, displacement, and labor exploitation creates toxic stress. Chronic stress elevates cortisol levels, altering brain development, and reducing gray matter in regions responsible for learning, memory, and emotional regulation. Studies link poverty to irregular development in the frontal and temporal lobes, contributing to lower academic performance and long-term economic disadvantages. Children may become withdrawn, anxious, depressed, or aggressive. Some experience psychosomatic symptoms such as headaches, breathing difficulties, or speech disruptions. Others turn to self-harm.[34] Resilience is often expected without acknowledging that constant exposure to trauma reshapes neurobiology itself. Educational outcomes suffer as children leave school for mines or struggle to concentrate due to hunger and stress. However, educational attainment reinforces poverty, ensuring that the next generation remains trapped within the same extraction economy.

IV. NO PAIN NO AID: PROBLEMS WITH AID AGENCIES

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, the global community has publicly committed to ending poverty in all its forms, including extreme child poverty. The agenda outlined goals and specific targets to help strive for adherence. Target 1.2 sought to reduce poverty by half, and Target 1.3 emphasized expanding social protection systems, especially for children.[35] Yet, at the midpoint of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), leading institutions warn that, at current rates, extreme child poverty will not be eradicated by 2030.[36] Even UNICEF leadership has acknowledged that ending child poverty is ultimately a policy choice; an admission that poverty persists not because solutions are unknown, but because structural priorities remain misaligned.[37] In conflict zones such as Sudan, public appeals for humanitarian access reveal another layer of dysfunction; strong declarations are issued, yet enforcement mechanisms remain weak. Aid often functions as a top-down emergency response, providing food and medicine without laying institutional foundations. When aid organizations withdraw, systems collapse because sustainable structures were never built. The gap between rhetoric and

measurable, lasting change exposes a model that manages crises rather than resolves them.

A central weakness of aid architecture lies in the unregulated flow of money and persistent corruption. The essential analytical task is to follow the money; where it goes, who controls it, and what outcomes it produces. Too often, funds move through layers of political elites, contractors, and intermediaries before reaching intended communities. As Michael Parenti argued, foreign aid can resemble a transfer from poor citizens in wealthy countries to privileged elites in poorer ones.[38] Corruption is not merely theft; it is systemic misalignment, where incentives prioritize visibility, donor satisfaction, and short-term metrics over transformative outcomes. Failed projects are frequently repackaged rather than restructured, and outdated methods continue to absorb resources.[39] The result is a cycle of managed failure in which accountability is diluted, and long-term impact remains elusive. Without transparent tracking and enforceable oversight, aid risks reinforcing the very inequalities it claims to address.

At the heart of persistent poverty lies exploitation, which generates a self-reinforcing cycle; exploitation produces child poverty, child poverty limits access to education and opportunity, and limited opportunity pushes children back into exploitative labor systems. This loop persists in places such as the DRC, where mineral extraction fuels global industries while local communities remain impoverished. The issue is found in the structural economic arrangements that reward extraction over institutional development. Children return to mines not because solutions are unimaginable, but because education systems, labor protections, and economic alternatives are absent or underfunded.[40] As long as global supply chains depend on exploitative labor and resource extraction without equitable reinvestment, peace and the eradication of hunger remain fragile. Poverty is reproduced because exploitation remains intact; humanitarian relief cannot permanently disrupt a system that continuously regenerates the conditions it seeks to alleviate.

Aid is often framed as altruistic, yet it also operates within geopolitical power structures. Institutions such as USAID function as instruments of soft power, shaping political and economic environments in ways that align with strategic interests. When European colonial powers withdrew, new forms of influence emerged through financial leverage, development programs, and conditional support. Aid can create dependency, especially when funding dictates policy direction and limits sovereign decision-making. This dynamic highlights that "helping" establishes hierarchy; the giver retains the power to withhold.[41] Nations may not feel constrained while compliant, but when policies challenge dominant interests, conditions shift and leverage is applied. In this framework, aid is used to stabilize geopolitical influence rather than empower genuine self-determination.[42] African states did not simply fail; they operated within a global structure that often constrained their attempts at independent development.

Many aid organizations suffer from fragmented initiatives, overlapping mandates, and a diffused strategic focus. There are abundant conferences, reports, and declarations, yet comparatively fewer scalable, demonstrably successful models that permanently dismantle poverty systems. Administrative overhead consumes significant resources, while coordination gaps reduce efficiency. Public messaging frequently emphasizes compassion and urgency, but measurable systemic transformation remains limited. Meanwhile, frontline workers face extreme risks, including violence and death, while the decision-making authority often resides far from affected communities.[43] Policies are drafted in global capitals rather than shaped by grassroots' realities. Genuine change requires listening directly to communities, not merely negotiating with established officials who may benefit from maintaining the status quo. Without coherent strategy and community-centered engagement, aid becomes reactive rather than transformative.

Meaningful reform requires enforceable regulation, not symbolic commitments. Binding international agreements must regulate exploitative supply chains, hold corporations accountable for labor abuses, and ensure transparent tracking of aid funds. Peace negotiations must incorporate enforceable economic provisions that address root causes rather than temporary ceasefires. Development should prioritize institution-building, education systems, judicial independence, transparent taxation, labor protections, and local industrial capacity, rather than perpetual material distribution. Aid must support and strengthen these systems, not replace them. Additionally, tracking and exposing exploiters within global supply

chains is essential to dismantling the economic structures that fuel poverty.

Ultimately, aid should function as support rather than intervention, with the goal of rendering itself unnecessary. Sustainable change begins at the individual level, one educated child, one strengthened institution, but scales through systemic reform. Ending child poverty is indeed a policy choice, and genuine progress depends on whether global power structures are willing to prioritize institutional sovereignty over dependency.

V. SOLUTIONS

To end exploitation in places like Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo is to dismantle a direct pipeline to child poverty. The issue is not scarcity; its structure. It's not that the world lacks money or resources; it's that wealth flows through systems designed to extract, not to develop. If the global economy can coordinate complex supply chains to place cobalt-powered smartphones in nearly every hand across the planet and produce products adorned with gold mined from conflict zones, then it is possible to ensure that children have food, safety, and schools. The abundance exists. What is missing is reconstruction of systems, enforcement of policy, and redistribution of power. Creating policy is not the difficult part; enforcement and adherence is. Adherence depends on one central truth, as affirmed by Malcolm X, that power only respects power. Any attempt to reorient policy must carry weight equal to or greater than the forces it seeks to disrupt. Exploitation persists because it is profitable, structured, and protected by networks of political, military, and economic actors operating across borders. Therefore, reform must be equally structured, equally profitable for participants, and equally enforceable.

This is not simply a call to end war. War is conflict amplified by intervention and mass weaponization. Conflict is natural; exploitation-driven war, however, is manufactured and sustained through external funding, arms deals, and resource trafficking. The horror lies not in disagreement, but in the industrialization of violence. Gold in Sudan and cobalt in the DRC are not merely minerals; they are economic arteries feeding global industries; technology firms, arms suppliers, trading hubs such as the UAE, and manufacturing economies like China and France. These supply chains are not accidental. They are organized networks linking artisanal mining, militia financing, arms procurement, and global markets. Artisanal and small-scale mining persist because it is often the only available livelihood. Yet, it is also the mechanism through which armed groups and corrupt officials extract wealth.

International aid has repeatedly failed to dismantle this system. Foreign aid has had limited influence on poverty reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa due to weak economic management, corruption, political instability, and structural dependency.[44] Aid often addresses symptoms rather than structural economic distortions. It reinforces economies centered on raw material exports and dependency on external actors. In many cases, it empowers unaccountable leadership while undermining sovereignty. The global humanitarian system is not only financially bankrupt but fundamentally broken. Aid has become a bandage on a wound continuously reopened by exploitation. Long-term development requires self-reliance, governance reform, macroeconomic stability, and regional cooperation, not perpetual external relief.[45]

Thus, the solution cannot merely target Sudan or the DRC. Policy must address the entire supply chain. Every actor benefiting from gold and cobalt flows must be included in reform including states, militias, trading hubs, tech companies, battery manufacturers, arms suppliers, and financial intermediaries. Authority in these systems is diffused. It operates at subnational and cross-border levels. Peacebuilding must therefore map and engage the interconnected military, economic, political, and social networks underpinning this exploitation.

Access to cobalt and gold must continue because global industries rely on them, but extraction methods must change. Replacing abusive artisanal systems with regulated, industrialized, and technologically advanced mining reduces child labor, violence, and inefficiency. Ethical extraction methods already exist and are more efficient and less gruesome while achieving the same output. The issue is not feasibility but investment and governance. Profits must be structured to benefit all stakeholders. The state must use revenue to rebuild institutions and grow GDP; and the population must benefit through wages, infrastructure, and education. Companies must secure predictable supply, and international buyers must obtain stability. When all parties take something home, resistance decreases.[46]

Recycling and technological transitions also matter. Electric vehicle batteries last 12–15 years, and recycling programs can extract cobalt from existing batteries, reducing pressure on Congolese mines. Investment in cobalt-free battery technologies such as lithium-iron-phosphate should continue, but it must be paired with economic diversification in the DRC, so communities are not devastated by demand shifts. Transition without stabilization would merely create a new crisis. Economic regulation must redirect the flow of wealth. The money exists; it is simply misdirected. Artisanal gold in Sudan often finances armed groups such as the RSF and SAF through arms deals, with gold flowing to external markets including the UAE, which acts as a major trading hub.

Policy must regulate these pipelines rather than merely condemn them. Economic levers can include sanctions targeting exploitative transactions rather than broad population-wide penalties, mandatory transparency requirements for tech and trading companies, fixed price agreements negotiated with producing states to prevent underpricing, and export controls tied to verified ceasefire compliance. Conflict persists largely because armed factions receive external support. Exhaustion alone will not end war if supply lines remain open. Cutting off war-sustaining trade while offering profit through regulated extraction creates leverage. Instead of dependency on IMF programs or donor-driven reforms that may not align with local priorities, states must take charge of export regulation and resource taxation. Harnessing domestic resources, improving governance, and stabilizing macroeconomic conditions are prerequisites for aid effectiveness.

Aid without governance reform perpetuates dependency. Peace negotiations between the RSF and SAF must confront economic reality; both factions derive power from gold. As long as these actors exist and cannot immediately be dismantled, they must be given a seat at the table. Sustainable agreements must consider what each side wants, security guarantees, economic share, political legitimacy, and construct a split-control or monitored revenue-sharing mechanism that removes incentives for continued warfare. If gold revenue becomes conditional upon ceasefire compliance and arms inflows are restricted, the economic logic of war weakens. The UAE and other trading partners must retain structured access to gold under transparent systems. Removing them entirely may destabilize markets; however, restructuring their access creates leverage. Peacebuilding must incorporate regional actors, because ignoring cross-border networks ensures failure.[47]

People mine "artisanally" because they must survive. Stabilization therefore requires alternative livelihoods. Reconstruction plans must invest in infrastructure, provide living wages, expand access to education, create regulated employment in mining and other sectors, and build institutions capable of governance and accountability. The richest irony is that the regions with the most resources often experience the deepest poverty. Those with the greatest capacity for profit should not live in perpetual instability. Most people do not choose war; they endure it because economic systems give them no alternative. Instead of repeating policy frameworks that lack enforcement, international institutions must reorient their role from donors to architects of enforceable economic agreements. Rather than providing temporary aid, they should design systems of profit-sharing, export-regulation, and blueprint development to present during negotiations. Where governance capacity is weak, structured international oversight tied to measurable economic benchmarks can provide weight. Sanctions should be targeted and strategic. Accountability must extend beyond African actors to include French and Chinese exporters supplying goods to hubs that fund atrocities. Exploitation is global; therefore, responsibility must be likewise.

There is a tired and racist narrative that Sudan, the DRC, and Africa itself are places where war is inevitable and perpetual. This narrative ignores the external economic interests, creating this instability. Conflict is not destiny. It's structured. True revolution here is development and accountability. The worst people can do to themselves is rarely as catastrophic as what organized exploitation does to them. When communities have wages, education, and institutional support, cycles can be broken. We don't need more money; we need systems rebuilt and policies enforced. Wealth must be redirected from pipelines of war to foundations of development. It is a matter of political will and economic restructuring. Ending exploitation ends child poverty pipelines. Stabilizing leadership requires economic incentives. Development requires sovereignty and accountability. Policy must hold as much power as the forces it seeks to transform. The world is abundant. What remains is the courage to reorganize it.

VI. CONCLUSION: CHOOSERS CREATE BEGGARS

In the 1700s, sugar-primarily used to sweeten tea in England-was harvested under brutal conditions by African slaves in the West Indies. Extensive brutality, loss of life, and devastation went into just sweetening someone's cup of tea. Were the lengths taken to acquire sugar for the option of sweetened tea worth the cost of all the detriment it created? There are cries for equality and a balance of power; however, the balance of power requires a readjustment of the power of the consumer. Everyone wants the blood of children to stop running, but what if that same blood is what fuels our laptops, paints the colors projecting through our phones, or ensures the luster in our gold? Would one still want to stop the bleeding? Would one still be willing to modify their wants to meet a child's needs? Power imbalances and the mass concentration of that power on a single end creates inequality.

The accumulation of power creates extreme and excessive consumerism requiring the depletion of the exploited party's loss of power and life to grant the latter more. To gain, one must take from somewhere. For one side to have more, another now must have less. To live in excess means another is exploited in excess.

To balance these means, some of this stolen power must be returned. The problem lies here; once power is taken, the party that takes and all parties involved in experiencing the benefits of the taking, will not want to return what was stolen. This is not due to the fact that this creates a type of comfort to what was once

absent, but instead it adds excessive amounts of comfort to what means of comfort already existed prior to this accumulation. This 'excessive comfort' is the choice and granted ability to engage in over consumption. Not a need or a want; however, an option. An excessive number of options fueled by extreme amounts of deaths and blood spilled. Bodies bleed through the earth, but as long as their blood doesn't pollute our lands, it seems to not matter.

As consumers, we have the power of choice. We have the power to be conscious consumers and not indulge in excess. To make sure our purchases are not made from products that utilize exploited children, people, and resources. As consumers, we supply the demand to cobalt-driven technological devices; therefore, we bear the responsibility to not overconsume or purchase new devices that we don't require. Less demand necessitates less supply and eventually factors behind less demand to force better methods of supply production because the power incentive behind the demand side of the scale is profit. To maintain profits, consumer demands must be met. If the demand of the consumer becomes ethical consumption, approaches to the extraction of supply will change.

As choosers, we create the beggars as our extreme actions have detrimental reactions. In a world so highly innovative and technologically advanced, the existence of such conditions of other people and children is more preventable than the implementation of exploitation methods and processes that afflict them.[48] If we choose differently, a child will have to beg less. The dynamic of the relationship no longer has to be that of choosers and beggars, but providers and receivers. It is possible for children to have food to eat while we still receive resources. If exploitation of those means ends, they can have the ability to profit instead. We'll have to pay a little more, but they won't have to live a little less. For their conditions are created for them by those who are able to choose. That's why it's never okay to let the children drown; for if we didn't create floods, why would kids drown?

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SANCTIONS ON SYRIA: THEIR IMPACT ON LIFE POST-CIVIL WAR

ABDULHADI ALTAHAN

I. INTRODUCTION

More than five hundred thousand dead. Over a hundred thousand missing.[1] The Syrian civil war is one of the deadliest civil wars in the twenty first century. Not only for the sheer amount of violence, but also the deaths caused by its long-lasting economic consequences.

In early 2011, a series of peaceful protests inspired by the Arab Spring arose in support of teenagers arrested for anti-government graffiti in the southern part of Daraa, a medium-sized city in Syria. These protests were met with violent force by the Ba'athist party and the situation rapidly escalated into the arresting, beating, and shooting of civilians. In response, militias formed and a full-scale civil war erupted; involving the Syrian Government, various armed opposition groups, extremist Islamist militias, Kurdish forces, and the intermittent participation of multiple foreign states [2] More than a decade later, hundreds of thousands of Syrian women, children and men have been killed, with millions more internally displaced, and a[3]. Entire cities have become rubble, infrastructure is non-existent across the nation, and Syria's economy has been fundamentally shattered.

Direct military intervention and diplomatic efforts were attempted to try and resolve the crises. Unfortunately, these all failed. International sanctions became the primary tool that Western governments used to influence the Syrian government's actions. The United States (US), European Union (EU), and their Western allies, imposed sanctions on the Syrian state with the goal of halting and limiting any further violence, destruction, and death. Further, it was hoped that this would lead to holding then Syrian president, Bashar al Assad, accountable for the war crimes and human rights abuses he and his government committed.[4]

By 2018, as the Syrian government continued its conflict with the rebels, it managed to reclaim much of its initially lost territory. This pivotal moment seemed to suggest that the civil war might be subsiding. Syrian people held hope for peace, reconstruction and stabilization. However, this hope was short-lived, as the civil war would continue to ebb and flow over territory and people. Precipitous economic decline continued; poverty rose, and widespread insecurity became the norm. Sanctions have played a significant contributing role in these issues. For many Syrians, sanctions are not seen simply as diplomatic measures, but rather as a punishment that continues to affect food security, price stability, employment, healthcare, and, ultimately, their survival.

In early December 2024, just as the civil war appeared to be coming to an end in the Ba'athist regime's favor, a well-coordinated and surprise offensive by Hayat Tahrir al Sham (HTS) changed the future of a nation. In less than two weeks, HTS swept across the state, overwhelming the Syrian Armed Forces and dismantling what remained of Ba'athist control and eventually entering the capital.[5] High-ranking Ba'athist officials fled Syria as the regime's government collapsed. Former President Bashar Al Assad fled to Russia, while other officials fled to neighboring countries like Lebanon. The fall of the Ba'athist regime finally brought about the end of the civil war; one filled with mass displacement, economic failure, and widespread devastation.

This article examines the role that sanctions have played in shaping life and economic outcomes in post-civil war Syria. Beginning with an overview of the conflict and its economic aftermath, then on the origins and evolution of international sanctions before their lifting. Additionally, it will analyze the impact of sanctions, the Kurdish and Druze communities and their economic hardship with a focus on currency collapse and recent monetary reforms. While the international sanctions placed on Syria were intended as a tool for accountability and pressure, their

continued use on the Syrian people has severely crippled recovery efforts for the state. Further, they have contributed to prolonged human suffering while also failing to produce the very political reforms they were intended to induce.

II. BACKGROUND

Before the protests and subsequent civil war erupted in 2011, Syria had a hybrid economic system; featuring strong state involvement and private control by the Assad family over many sectors of the economy.[6] The government provided subsidies in sectors like banking, natural gases, fuel, food, electricity, and other basic services while the public sector was primarily based on providing essentials and maintaining stability by keeping prices on essentials low enough that the average person was able to afford them. Prior to the war, economic inequality and unemployment for the youth and young adults were already on the rise.

The eruption of nation-wide protests in 2011 strained the economic system. As demonstrations and protests gathered momentum, the government responded increasingly with force, and the economy effectively collapsed. Manufacturing centers such as Damascus and Aleppo were devastated by violence. Agricultural production fell, largely due to widespread displacement. Oil fields became hotly contested by the government's forces and different armed groups. Tourism, which had previously contributed over 14% of the state's revenue, ceased entirely, while similar collapses in foreign trade and investment [7].[8]

By the mid-2010s, Syria's GDP had shrunk by 54% by comparison to its prewar economy.[9] Current estimates of the damage across the nation are in the hundreds of billions, with total reconstruction of residences, non-residential structures, and infrastructure alone costing approximately 216 billion US Dollars.[10] Although the overall level of violence was markedly decreased by 2018, Syria did not economically recover. Instead, Syria entered a period of deep stagnation; marked by high inflation, currency depreciation and widespread poverty.

Although the Syrian Civil War was officially declared over in December of 2024, the end of the conflict merely laid bare all the issues the state faced. The aftermath demonstrated the full extent of the damage accumulated over the past decade. According to the United Nations (UN), t[11]aid. Before the Ba'athist Regime collapsed, Syria's economy was already buckling, with the decline beginning in the mid 2010s. The lack of recovery in 2018 when the conflict began to draw down revealed the consequences of the civil war beyond the devastated cities. By the time the conflict was over, Syria no longer faced a temporary postwar issue, it was facing a long-term economic crisis.

III. ORIGINS OF SANCTIONS

So how did we get here? The sanctions placed on Syria did not begin with the civil war. The United States first imposed restrictions on Syria in December of 1979 after it was designated a State Sponsor of Terrorism. However, the preponderance of sanctions occurred in 2011 due to protests against the Syrian Government and the state's violent response. The US hoped that by imposing heavy sanctions on the Syrian Government, it would deprive the regime of the resources it needed to continue its violence against civilians. Further, that it would pressure the regime into stepping down from power and allowing for the democratic transition that the Syrian people demand[12].[13]

Early on, sanctions were focused on targeted high-power individuals and organizations that were linked to human right violations and abuses. These measures included freezing assets and bank accounts, as well as travel bans. As the conflict escalated, sanctions targets were broadened to include Syria's economic and banking sector, energy imports and exports, foreign investments, and state-wide access to international trade and finance. Ostensibly, the US took these measures to weaken the Syrian regime's ability to finance military operations and to show international disapproval.

The United States is responsible for the majority of sanctions against the Syrian State. Particularly, their expansion of secondary sanctions targeting Syrian corporations, foreign individuals, banks, any international companies engaged in business with the Syrian Government, and Syrian exports. These measures discouraged other states from trading with Syria, and curtailed other means of international economic engagement, even in sectors that were not specifically targeted. The EU and other Western nations allied with the US implemented their own sanctions, further reinforcing Syria's economic isolation and lack of access to global markets. While these sanctions were imposed with the primary goal of targeting and pressuring the Assad regime and its political elites, the tolls that these sanctions took were more than intended. Over time, the breadth of these sanctions and their continued enforcement have contributed to severe economic and financial erosion and a plummeting living standard for ordinary Syrians.

IV. SOCIAL AND HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES

For ordinary civilians, the effects of the sanctions remain visible in daily life. As the Syrian Pound continues to depreciate, and inflation surges, real wages have collapsed. This has left the average salary unable to cover basic living expenses. Unemployment continues to rise and has reached a staggering level of 80%, with opportunities to work or support oneself vanishingly scarce. Monthly incomes

for many Syrian families are estimated at roughly £300,000 Syrian Pounds, roughly equivalent to about 20 USD in 2024, with rent alone often exceeding this amount.[14] As a result, many households are no longer able to rely on their own wages for survival. Instead, many families have been forced to depend on remittances from relatives who have fled the country, making external financial support their primary means of living.

Healthcare systems, already weakened by the havoc wrought by the war, have only worsened from the flight of medical professionals fleeing the state and the ongoing challenges in importing equipment and medicine through sanctions.[15] Public hospitals also struggle with unreliable energy infrastructure, prolonged underfunding, and corruption. Similarly, private healthcare remains inaccessible for most Syrians, with costs only increased due to limited medical supplies within the nation.[16]

Parallel to the issues in healthcare, the education system has withered over the past decade under the combined weight of underfunding, economic sanctions, and conflict. Many schools were damaged or destroyed during the war, and shortages of teachers and educational material have limited the education system even further. The economic hardship faced by families has also forced many children to leave education behind to pursue work and help support their family's survival. This erosion of educational access across the Syrian state has threatened the future of an entire generation, undermining the potential for long-term economic and social stability.

Humanitarian Aid Organizations and other aid groups were supposed to be exempt from the sanctions; however, the implementation of these restrictions was highly inconsistent. In theory, these exemptions were designed to ensure that essential goods such as food, water, medicine, and humanitarian aid could continue to reach the civilian population. However, in practice, many groups avoided any transaction involving Syria. This hesitancy results from the fear of legal penalties, reputational risks, or regulatory backlash.[17] This risk-averse behavior has severely limited the ability of humanitarian organizations to aid civilians and operate effectively within the country. As a result, even activities that were permitted within the scope of sanctions have been delayed or halted, further compounding the crises.[18]

V. THE SYRIAN CURRENCY CRISIS AND MONETARY REFORM

Concurrent to the social and humanitarian crises post-war, currency instability has become the definitive issue plaguing Syria's economy. The rapid depreciation of the Syrian Pound since the outbreak of the war in 2011 has left many struggling. Prior to the war, the Syrian Pound was relatively stable and exchanged at a rate of approximately 50 to 1 relative to the USD. However, once the conflict began, the currency experienced a massive devaluation.[19] By 2024, the Syrian Pound had depreciated by over 300%, reaching a crushing exchange of £22,000 Pounds to 1 USD at black market rates.[20]

This sharp depreciation was driven by a confluence of factors from the prolonged conflict.[21] As access to foreign currency declined, the Central Bank of Syria struggled to stabilize its currency, relying on a fixed exchange rate to try and project an image of economic stability and hide its scarce reserves. However, this exchange rate was not tied to the true value of the currency and would always overvalue its worth. As a result, black markets for currency exploded and the Central Bank lost its place as the primary currency exchange for those entering the country.

This widening gap between official and underground exchange rates has become a serious issue for ordinary Syrians. Importers and local businesses often rely on black market USDs to purchase goods, subsequently passing the increased costs onto consumers through higher prices. Meanwhile, people salaried in Pounds and government employees continued to be paid through official rates, with drastically reduced purchasing power, highly incentivizing corruption. As a result, even households with a stable income often find themselves unable to afford necessities.

To address this problem and maintain its authority, the Syrian government placed strict laws on having any form of currency besides its official Syrian Pound within the country. The holding of Euros, Turkish Liras, USDs or any other kind of foreign currency became a criminal offense, punishable by imprisonment, harsh fines, and commitment to labor camps. Even referencing these currencies and uttering the words “Dollar” or “Euro” became illegal. Syrians began to refer to these currencies in slang or by homophones, referring to the dollar as “na ‘na” (mint) or Turkish Lira as “milih” (salt).

Following the war’s end, the new Syrian state authorities have introduced new banknotes and currency designs. This includes the removal of the Assad family from the notes in an attempt to restore faith in the currency.[22] The Central Bank of Syria has also moved away from featuring heritage sites, cities, or figures on the currency to indicate stability in the fragile postwar environment. Instead, the new currency designs include indigenous plants and fruits, which are intended to represent neutral symbols that can be found throughout the country.[23] These changes also depoliticize the currency, making it a symbol of unity rather than state power. These new bills were introduced in early 2026 and are being exchanged for old currency to remove it from the market. Originally, citizens were given only 90 days to exchange their old bills before they were no

longer recognized as legal tenders. However, the new government has been slow to enforce this deadline. Concurrently, the newly reconstructed Central Bank of Syria has removed two zeros from the nominal value of the currency to make its use more efficient, simplify daily transactions, and to reduce menta[24]inflation.[25]

The new government has also repealed the laws criminalizing possession and use of non-Syrian legal tender, a significant step away from the old regime. Under the previous system, these strict prohibitions on foreign currency fueled black markets, distorting the official value. By legalizing the circulation and exchange of foreign currency, the new government has been able to shut down these markets and create a more transparent system. Prices across the state have normalized, and this has stabilized the Pound short term. Alongside these reforms within the nation, the easing of sanctions has also played a significant role in helping stabilize the economy.

New Syrian Currency featuring National plants and fruits (Central Bank of Syria)

VI. THE LIFTING AND EASING OF SANCTIONS

As Syria's humanitarian and economic conditions have deteriorated throughout the decade of conflict, debates on the cessation of sanctions have become increasingly more common. These prolonged restrictions on Syria's economy have contributed to rising poverty, widespread unemployment, food insecurity, and internationally significant displacement, destabilizing both Syria and its neighboring countries. Despite their stated goal, sanctions failed to produce meaningful political reform from the Assad regime and have only inflicted enormous pain and suffering on innocent civilians.

Following the ousting of the Assad family and Ba'athist regime, the US and its allies have begun reassessing their position on sanctions. In May of 2025, the US announced a temporary lifting of certain provisions in the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act for a period of 180 days. The decision was based on monitoring the situation and helping support stabilization efforts. While stated to be temporary, this change marks a significant step toward the removal of sanctions. Merely a month later, in June, the US government stepped farther, revoking six major executive orders that had previously formed the backbone of sanctions against Syria under the Caesar Act.[26] These orders had restricted financial transactions, asset transfers, investment, and other engagements with the Syrian government.[27] Similarly, the EU has also lifted its economic sanctions—a sign of hope for a peaceful and rebuilt Syria.[28] This relief has allowed for major Syrian industries to regain their strength in sectors like textiles, oil production and refining, and telecommunications.

Following this initial progress, the United States Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) lifted key restrictions on the new Syrian government. These new liberties permitted international actors to legally engage in transactions with Syrian banks and commercial entities. Further, this new wave included authorizations for cross-border payments, foreign investment, trade in select non-prohibited goods, and new infrastructure developments. These steps have significantly eased the financial hardship of the Syrian state and have encouraged foreign states to begin reintegrating it into the global economy.

The effects of sanction relief quickly became apparent. Syria experienced a surge in imports, including consumer goods, industrial equipment, and modern technology. These had all been largely unavailable due to high tariffs placed by the previous regime and the state's economic isolation. This newfound supply has improved access to essential goods and contributed to increased market activity and employment. Additionally, the new state government has signed agreements with international payment processing corporations, such as MasterCard and VISA, to establish digital finance infrastructure throughout the state, reconnecting it with the global payment network.[29] This reintegration is an essential step towards modernizing Syria's financial system and reducing popular reliance on cash-based transactions.

With the easing of restrictions, such rapid developments demonstrate the extent to which sanctions have constrained post-war economic recovery. Further, the state's international financial isolation has compounded an already difficult process of rebuilding. While the long-term sustainability of this progress remains unknown, sanctions relief has played a pivotal role in improving Syria's struggling and fragile postwar trajectory.

VII. KURDISH AND DRUZE REGIONS

Formally the war ended in December 2024, and while the lifting of sanctions has opened a path to economic recovery, localized and unresolved conflict zones remain. These continue to undermine the nation's stability, particularly in the Druze and Kurdish majority regions. These regions were largely spared from large-scale fighting

in the final years of the war; however, they remain politically and economically destabilized. This persistent local insecurity has shown that the end of nationwide conflict has not translated into a complete peace, but rather a fragile and uneven postwar semblance of order. One shaped by numerous groups jockeying for authority amidst the settling dust.

In Northeastern Syria, Kurdish militias under the Syrian Defense Force (SDF) continue to exert control over significant chunks of territory, with only partial integration into the reforming Syrian state. This region is particularly important due to its agricultural production, oil resources, and prisons that are filled with more than 9,000 ISIS fighters.[30] The ongoing disputes over regional authority between the new Syrian government and the SDF have resulted in both sides being unwilling to cooperate.[31] Due to this, economic activity in Kurdish controlled areas tends to be informal and sporadic, further fragmenting a fragile national economy.

Simultaneously, Druze-majority regions in southern Syria, particularly in the Suwayda province, have experienced continued unrest. Like the Kurdish provinces, this has been driven by economic hardship, political distrust, and resistance against centralized authority. While large-scale violence has been limited, occasional clashes between the Syrian Army and the Druze militias have occurred alongside protests and armed standoffs. Mirroring broader trends across the state, economic pressures caused by sanctions have also played a significant role in fueling discontent in these regions. Rising prices, fuel shortages, and unemployment have eroded living standards, particularly in rural areas. In both the Kurdish and Druze regions, public trust in central authority has withered from a lack of public services and development assistance.[32] This has resulted in communities turning to local governments and a pervasive sense of neglect from the central government. In these cases, local militias and informal powers have filled the gaps which the official Syrian government has failed to do so.

The continued existence of these localized conflicts has been a direct consequence of, and struggle for, Syria's larger economic recovery. Persistent regional insecurity discourages foreign investment and delays reconstruction efforts. Without meaningful political integration, these regions are likely to remain volatile, which will only multiply the challenges faced by Syria in its efforts for national reconstruction and overall stability.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The Syrian civil war, formally concluded in December 2024, left behind a country annihilated by more than a decade of violence, economic collapse, and international isolation. While the end of large-scale fighting is a significant turning point, it has not signaled an immediate transition to stability, security, or recovery. Instead, Syria has entered a complex postwar phase that has been defined by institutional fragility, deep social and economic scars, and unresolved political and territorial tensions. At the center of this portrait are the long-term consequences of international sanctions. These have not only shaped Syria's wartime economy but continue to play an influence in its post conflict trajectory.

The sanctions imposed on Syria, particularly those expanded after 2011 by the US and EU frameworks, were designed to threaten and pressure the Assad regime and deter any further violence towards protesters or civilians. However, as discussed, these measures not only failed to produce any significant reform but also imposed severe costs on the civilian population. Broad restrictions and bans on trade, banking, energy, and investment have only contributed to economic decline, currency collapse, and the deterioration of public services; all of which predominately harmed Syrian civilians instead of those in power.

The collapse of the Syrian pound stands as one of the clearest indicators of the effect of the war and the sanctions that it prompted. Currency depreciation eroded purchasing power, fueled inflation, and fractured the economy through the emergence of black markets and unofficial exchange rates. All efforts by the former regime to maintain control of the currency only further undermined its legitimacy among civilians and incentivized corruption. By contrast, the postwar monetary reforms undertaken by the new Syrian authority have attempted to restore trust, stabilize the national currency, and strengthen economic activity. While these reforms alone cannot solve Syria's economic crisis, they signal a break from the old regime and highlight the importance of credibility and recovery.

The easing of sanctions in 2025 is a significant shift in Syria's postwar trajectory. The temporary lifting of sanctions under the Caesar Act and eventual revoking of several executive orders have allowed Syria to reengage with the international community. Imports have risen and helped revive the economy. The introduction of a potential digital payment infrastructure has similarly underlined the extent to which sanctions had constrained recovery. Despite these tangible gains, Syria's economic trajectory remains unpredictable, largely due to ongoing political instability and tepid international engagement.

Ultimately, Syria's current condition represents the complex and often unintended results of long-term sanctions for states in conflict. While sanctions may have their purpose as a diplomatic tool, their protracted use in Syria has only contributed to a crippled and economically devastated state without their intended outcome. As Syria moves forward, sustainable development and recovery will

depend heavily on a balanced approach from the state that prioritizes its citizens, the rebuilding of its infrastructure, and reintegration into the global economy. It may be a long road to recovery, but it is one Syria is prepared to walk.

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"IN THEORY THIS SHOULD WORK" HOW IDEOLOGICAL APPLICATION CAN KILL REVOLUTION

VEAH DAVIS

I. INTRODUCTION

The cycle of revolution is one that is always flowing and ever-changing, something that has built up modern society and politics as we know it. It's a force that's unstoppable and immovable.[1] It's a fire sparked by an ideology, fanned by organization and mobilization, and spread through society to incite change in the world. To push for progress. For liberty.

A pattern noticed by most scholars when studying revolution is the notion that freedom and liberty have been driving factors for most modern revolutions.[2] When we look back into our history for examples of this, we can see this pattern appear across the world: English colonists and the American Revolution to be free from the Crown and establish a democratic republic; the French Revolution to be free from monarchy and subsequently establish a republic; the Philippine Revolution and their quest for independence from Spain; the Russian Revolution and the overthrow of the Tsar and establishment of the Soviet Union. This escape from monarchy and establishment of a representative government (with some exceptions to the success of that representative government) drives the study of revolutions today and even [3] explanations on the ideological background of these movements.[4]

But the purpose of this article is not to rehash the history of democratic or freedom-driven revolutions in their entirety. Rather, it is to observe how the development and applications of ideologies can kill the success or historical effect of a revolution itself. Ideology, I will stress, is essential to shaping a revolution and the movement that comes after.

I will discuss basic definitions of revolution and ideology, the factors that comprise the two categories, their criteria of success, and conclude by applying these to case studies to analyze and determine commonalities between revolutions, their nuances, and how they might be defined as a failure or a success.

II. REVOLUTION 101: WHAT DEFINES A REVOLUTION, AND WHAT MAKES IT SUCCESSFUL

There are no singular criteria for what constitutes a revolution. To different revolutionary scholars, the factors that comprise a revolution can vary greatly. Political theorist, historian, and philosopher Hannah Arendt argues that revolution itself[5]of war[6] [7][8] Even abolitionists like Derecka Purnell and Angela Y. Davis, who write about police brutality and the push for reform in the justice system, share the notion that revolution must have some form of violence to fuel or agitate it.[9]

However, in reading both Briton and Arendt's arguments on the beginning stages of revolution, war is only mentioned as a starter in Arendt's argument. To Arendt, revolution is a progeny of war, coming almost directly after the end of a war. In Briton's case, war would agitate revolution, but that does not necessarily mean that it would birth the revolution itself. However, despite the differing views on violence and revolutionary agitation, it's safe to conclude that to begin a revolution, one must be angry about something. Revolutions must have an inciting incident to spark change.

Second comes the question of what you are fighting a revolution for. As mentioned before, many modern-day revolutions—and studies relating to these revolutions—have found that the principles

of freedom and liberty formed the backbone of many ideologies and their revolutionary movements. Many revolutions often have an ideology[10]; for the Philippines, it was freedom from Spain and the establishment of an independent Philippine state; for Marx, it was the globalization of a non-capitalist society; for France, it was representation and freedom from the monarchy.[11] Thus, it seems that ideology does play an important role in revolution and is a relevant factor in criterion.

Third comes support. The mobilization of actors, non-state or state, is important in the grand scheme of revolution in general. Professor of political science at Brown University, James A. Morone, touches on the importance of representation as a fuel for the American Revolution, and subsequently, its importance in the overall operation of the Revolution in general; the people of the colonies began to organize among themselves, agitating against British soldiers and wresting political authority from 12slowly but surely. Popular support is crucial when building the basis of revolution—especially a revolution that desires to bring about societal change and governmental upheaval.

Next comes the consideration of failed and successful revolutions, criteria that don't formally exist. What most would consider a "successful revolution" mostly depends on the question of: does success equal the achievement of revolutionary goals or something else? There are some cases in which revolutions don't succeed even if they had support (a primary factor in the growth and operation of a revolution in general), and some cases—though rare—where revolutions don't have support yet succeed anyway. There's a push and pull to be considered here, and it seems the parameter for success or failure changes on a case-by-case basis.

When looked at mathematically, the numbers seem sensible. T[13] study done at the University of Texas at El Paso where they concluded that if 3.5% of a population was in support of a revolution, the revolution was successful, and if less than 3.5% of the population supported the revolution, the revolution would fail. While this is a generally broad statement, and the nature of revolutions vary on a case-by-case basis, their findings are telling.

It's hard to concretely define what would be a successful or failed revolution, but I shall try. For simplicity's sake, however, and the nature of our later case studies, we shall define a successful revolution as one that did, or did not, accomplish its long-term goals.

Taken together, what makes a revolution? 1.) You must be angry about something (political, social, or civil unrest) 2.) You generally have to back something that supports a push for change in the wake of societal unrest. 3.) You must be supported in order to complete your goals and make your revolution successful. If you have none of those, you will fail. Have only a few of those things and lack the others? Then maybe with some luck you may succeed. Have all three, and you're in the running for a successful revolution.

Now that we have established the outline of a revolution's development, and the criterion for successes and failures in revolution, we will now consider three ideological case studies, apply the previous criterion, and analyze their cases in the context of success or failure.

III. IDEOLOGICAL MURDER: SUCCESSFUL REVOLUTIONS AND THEIR FAILED COUNTERPARTS

The case studies that we will consider include two failed ideological revolutions and one "successful" one according to the established criterion: Marx (communism), Hitler (fascism/national socialism), and Jesus (Christianity).

Marx's Manifesto describes communism as an ideology and political party meant to give power to the working class—it calls for the dismantling of capitalism and capitalist institutions, an emphasis on a "shared society," and, in Marx's words, "the theory of Communism can be summed up in just a few words: abolition of private property."[14] Marx, though, was just a theorist in his words, and the application of pure Marxist communism has never been successfully done. It's iterations–i.e. Leninism, Stalinism, Maoism, etc. are all different in their applications and development of Marx's original theory. But that's also what makes this case so interesting; has the varied applications of this ideology changed the success or failure rate? I would argue yes, simply because each of the different iterations of these ideologies build on each other. Stalin applied it through violence (check one for revolutionary actions), Mao applied it through marching and the establishment of the cult of personality (gathering supporters, another check!), and Lenin applied it through speeches (another check!) Save for Lenin, support for these movements were forced, and, ultimately, their versions of government failed. It is evident, especially in the next case, that forced support for an ideology, or a movement, does not result in a successful revolution, at least not in the context of these cases.

Fascism, and Hitler's application of it, are generally the same. Mussolini's "Doctrine of Fascism" outlines fascism as the ideology of placing incredible importance on the rights of the nation, the dismantling of individual culture (there is one monoculture of the state), disdain for the easy life, and opposing socialism and communism.[15] Hitler abided by this doctrine almost to the T. He and his regime spread propaganda relating to a pure, Aryan race and the elimination of anyone that was not, ultimately resulting in the Holocaust. His ideology was to have that pure race, and most

of his views are outlined in his autobiography, Mein Kampf (My Struggle).[16]

Finally, Christianity, which calls for the adherence of Christian doctrine: follow the Ten Commandments, live life beside God and Jesus, read and study the Bible, and preach the teachings of the Lord. There isn't a set societal goal. For Christian followers, denominational or not, the personal goal is for followers to live a life like Jesus did and perhaps spread the gospel while they were at it. At the time of its formation, though, Christianity's goal was to spread throughout the ancient world to preach the truth about the one true God.

But which of these ideologies succeeded, and which failed? If we look at the outcomes of each of them, it becomes glaringly obvious that those whose ideologies and systems were forced did not make it far in their longevity. Marx's ideology had the unfortunate death-by-proxy through Stalinism and the USSR—communism itself was seen as dangerous, something to get rid of. The US set off the Red Scare twice—once in light of the Russian Revolution and the second during the [17]with the USSR. Communist countries, at least those claiming to be communist, are nations that are dependent on others and who have a suffering populus; North Korea being a prime example. The application of communism through these iterations of Marxist theory ultimately failed to achieve Marx's goal of a globalized, international communist system. Nor did Marx himself complete his goal—he never amassed a large party of supporters to spread and globalize his ideals; never rebelled against the government to topple the pre-established system; rather, he just sat and watched. He was a theorist with revolutionary ideas. But his ideology paved the way for other revolutionaries to build from him, and even those failed in their interpretations. Communism does, after all, only work in theory.

Hitler, like Stalin and Mao, forced his ideology onto the population. Germany was a democracy before Hitler took power as Chancellor, and in only four months, he dismantled the democratic regime and installed himself as Fuhrer. His goal with this position of power was to establish a pure Aryan state, and to rid the world of those not of the pure race; [18] While the Holocaust tragically took place, Hitler's goal of establishing an Aryan race state was not achieved. German society and politics took a plunge after WWII, and its taboo to even mention the Nazi party in Germany.

Christianity is a unique case. Brought on by a revolutionary still spoken about to this day, Jesus was a figure that preached against Roman ideology and empire through the teachings of God. He preached the Gospel, held sermons and organized his Apostles to help spread the Gospel, and was ultimately crucified by the Roman Empire. Though despite all the repression by the Romans, Christianity prevailed. Jesus's teachings are still present to this day, even with all the Apostles dying or being killed off. The ideology still lives to this day and has spread through most of the world now. But what was Jesus's goal?

The Bible is our most useful source when it comes to observing who Jesus was as a person rather than the religious figure. He preached his goal of societal redemption and said that by spreading the word of God, and its doctrine, one found a way to get to that redemption and into the kingdom of Heaven. Did Jesus save every soul from damnation? Probably not, as one person can't entirely save those who do not want to be saved or chose not to follow doctrine; yet his influence and legacy are hard to argue with. Again, Christianity's case is unique: the ideology itself was not forced upon people, rather, you were given a choice to follow the doctrine or not, and with its globalization in the modern world, I would say that Jesus's goal of wanting to teach and save was largely accomplished.

A commonality with these cases is the way in which their ideals were spread and how they were enforced: as I mentioned before, ideologies that are forced upon oneself are not an ideology that is likely favored. Stalin forced compliance with his military strength, instilling fear into those who "supported" his ideology: but when there was a way out or an area of defeat, the entire system collapsed. The same can be said of Hitler and his version of fascism—which he called national socialism. He forced compliance with the SS and SA Nazi forces, spreading propaganda through society about the "enemy from within," yet failed in his creation of a pure state. He killed himself, putting an end to the Nazi regime and ideology with it. He failed his own ideology. While classical Christianity (before the Crusades, mainly referring to Jesus in the time of Rome and the original Apostles) did spread the ideology through sermons and evangelical means, those listening were ultimately given a choice: follow the teaching and be saved or don't and be denied salvation.

One could see that last statement as propaganda, though Jesus never spread his ideals through violence or extreme means. He always emphasized a choice. That same sentiment is not echoed in the Crusades, however, but the founding of Christianity most importantly offered a choice; the others did not.

I raise the question again as a refresher: can ideological application affect a revolution's success or failure? The answer seems to be yes, especially if one has strayed far from the original doctrine of that ideology (Marxism ≠ Lenisim ≠ Stalinism ≠ Maosim). If the application of that ideology itself is inherently violent in nature, then it's most likely not going to succeed or have longevity. Even now, in the Christian space, if one is forced into the ideology, they often stray from the Church.

IV. CONCLUSION

Though there are other factors that play into a movement's success or failure—the supporters and actors of the revolution, their ways of mobilizing, the capability of a state to suppress that movement, and more—importance of ideology should not be underestimated.

The case studies analyzed are all examples of revolutionary ideologies that were unprecedented in their challenge. Communism was the antithesis of a capitalist society, even though the capitalist system was mostly global at the time. Fascism and national socialism opposed the growing ideology of communism and socialism, fighting for a single culture with a disdain for individualism, dismantling race and class, and establishing only the state. Christianity was the antithesis of Roman religious belief, it stated that the emperor was not God and that the true God was more powerful than man combined, it shunned the Pagan religions of old Rome and the world, and it gave a choice to be saved or not be saved. The ideology of these movements and the revolutionaries behind them shaped the outcome before it even came to be.

Ideology, it seems, is everything in the revolution. It's the backbone of the movement; the thing that people either directly or indirectly follow when supporting a revolution or a revolutionary. Ideology comes from our morality—a revolutionary who builds or builds off an ideology often takes from their own subjective morality. That movement is then followed by those that share the same judgement, and then the revolution is built. That's what it all circles back to: the ideals that form the foundation of bringing about change. It all starts with an idea, no matter how small. That idea is the seed of revolution, the bringer of change, and the decisive factor of failure or success.

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ENDNOTES

1 In On Revolution by Hannah Arendt, she explains the background behind the word "revolution," relaying the meaning of its original definition–the revolvement of the stars–and the use of the word today in a political context. She compares the two definitions, stating that, like the stars, revolution itself is non-stop and constantly in motion. It is the notion of an irresistible movement.

2 "Even the revolutionists, whom one in a tradition that could hardly be told, let alone make sense of, without the notion of freedom, would much rather degrade freedom to the rank of a lower-middle-class prejudice than admit that the aim of revolution was, and always has been, freedom." Arendt, On Revolution

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4 Mark A. Bessinger, "Evolving Study of Revolutions"

5 On Revolution introduction: "War and Revolution," by Hannah Arendt.

6

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8 The Anatomy of Revolution by Crane Briton.

9 Angela Y. Davis speaks about revolutionary reform in the system through numerous speeches in Freedom is a Constant Struggle, and Derecka Purnell echoes her same sentiments in Becoming Abolitionists: Police, protests, and the Pursuit for Freedom.

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11 Marx, The Communist Manifesto, 1848

12 The Democratic Wish by James A. Morone, 1951.

13 "When Revolutions Succeed? 80/20 Rule and 7 Plus Minus 2 Law Explain the 3.5% Rule." University of Texas at El Paso.

14 Marx, The Communist Manifesto

15 "The Doctrine of Fascism" by Benito Mussolini, 1932.

16 Mein Kampf written and published by Adolf Hitler in 1925, outlined Hitler's view on race, antisemitism (of which he was fond of), his hatred for the Treaty of Versailles, communists, Jews, etc. He wrote it in prison after he was jailed for a failed coup.

17 "McCarthyism & the Red Scare," The Miller Center.

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THE POLARIZING IMAGE OF AN UPRIGHT MAN: A POLITICAL PROFILE OF BURKINA FASO AND ITS REVOLUTIONARY LEADERS

ANA VOICU

I. INTRODUCTION

"The one who feeds you, typically imposes his will on you."[1] Revolutionary leader and former president of Burkina Faso, Thomas Sankara, uttered that statement of defiance in reference to the issues of foreign aid and dependence. A Marxist-Leninist, and Pan-Africanist, Sankara's vision for both his nation and Africa collectively, centered on self-determination, decolonization, and anti-corruption. Although Sankara's presidential term was abruptly terminated in 1987 by an assassination, his words linger in the hearts of West Africans even forty years later. Sankara's short lived presidency was remarkable for improving the material conditions of Burkinabe, the people of Burkina Faso; however, his successors have been shrouded in corruption, political instability, and economic stagnation.

For decades, far too many African leaders have fit that mold. It has become a stereotype—a punchline for Westerners to laugh at and mock. There is cruelty in this mockery, but a grim reality remains nonetheless. Even with this bitter political climate, Africans do not despair. Many have turned to Ibrahim Traore, the current president of Burkina Faso, as a symbol of hope for Africa's future. Traore has captivated the hearts of many and even drawn comparisons to his great predecessor. In his short tenure, his actions have garnered the attention of international leaders, many of whom question or even condemn his policies. There is some validity to these claims; however, it would be futile to dismiss his popularity and his vision for the nation, as it may have greater implications for the future of the entire continent.

II. BURKINA FASO: AN OVERVIEW

French speaking, landlocked, and located in West Africa, Burkina Faso spans roughly 274,000 square kilometers. The nation is bordered by Mali and Niger, who currently form a close political alliance. Burkina Faso is one of ten nations within the Sahel region of Africa, an area marked by notable economic and environmental instability, yet also immensely promising. The Sahel harbors the youngest population in the world and a projected population of 500 million by 2050, according to the IFAD.[2] Burkina Faso's average population is especially young; the median age being approximately 17.7 years old, based on data collected from the population of twenty-three million. According to the United States International Trade Administration, gold accounts for 80% of Burkina Faso's exports, making it the dominant resource in its trade economy. The nation is one of Africa's most significant exporters of gold internationally.[3] Like many African nations, Burkina Faso is rich in natural resources, but Western imperialism, exploitation, and predatory development loans have hindered their potential for a prosperous economy. Michael Parenti's 1986 lecture to the University of Colorado, Boulder, titled, "US interventionism, the 3rd world, and the USSR," captured this phenomena best. Parenti stated that, "these countries are not underdeveloped, they are overexploited" in reference to the "third world."[4] Parenti asserts that these nations are neither "poor," nor lacking in any capacity. Instead, they are the products of colonialism, preyed upon to feed the gluttonous appetite of capitalism.[5] In the case of Burkina Faso, Thomas Sankara, and potentially Ibrahim Traore, through terminating foreign reliance, and prioritizing self-sufficiency, may be making an integral step in sovereignty and liberation.

III. FROM UPPER VOLTA TO BURKINA FASO: A HISTORY

"Burkina Faso" translates to "the land of upright men," according to the 2006 documentary titled, Thomas Sankara: The Upright Man. However, "the land of upright men," did not always hold that title. Prior to 1984, Burkina Faso was globally recognized as "Upper Volta," a name that was given by French colonialists in 1919.[6] Upper Volta was the original name attributed to the nation because of its proximity to the Volta, a major river in West Africa originating in Burkina Faso. The Volta River is integral to the economic and irrigation systems of the entire region. However, for many decades, colonialism had prevented West Africans from prospering from their own natural resources.

In 1897, The French invaded and, ultimately, conquered the Sahel region. For almost nine hundred years, the upper Volta River region had been under the rule of the Mossi Empire, a group of kingdoms that continue to make up a significant portion of the ethnic population to this day. According to Michael Wilkin's article, "The Death of Thomas Sankara and the Rectification of the People's Revolution in Burkina Faso," from the journal of African Affairs, seventy years of French colonialism had economically destabilized the region, leaving a lasting impression even following Upper Volta's independence in 1960.[7] Colonialism had instituted an economic system of tied labor, akin to Medieval European Feudalism. The French were disincentivized in developing the colony of Upper Volta, in comparison to their other pursuits in West Africa. They refused to develop any major infrastructure or market endeavors. The dry climate did not allow for proper industrial agricultural establishment, and their most abundant resource was their large population of young men. Subsequently, the French had instituted a labor system known as salaries agricoles. The main tenant of this tied labor system was debt entrapment. In order to obtain basic resources to survive in their country, Burkinabe were forced to take out loans from France, accumulating mass amounts of debt. This debt would be gradually paid off by offering their labor to the coffee, banana, and palm plantations in the Ivory Coast or Ghana. The salaries system had significantly reduced the labor force in Burkina Faso. Many of the indebted men were either not allowed to return to their country or refused to return as it was more profitable "selling scrap" on the streets of the Ivory Coast.[8]

Ernest Harsch's, "The legacies of Thomas Sankara: a revolutionary experience in retrospect," documents that there had been very few significant oppositional leaders and movements to colonial rule. Maurice Yameogo was the very first president of the "sovereign" Upper Volta in 1960; however, his presidency remained closely interconnected with the French.[9] A puppet for the colonizers, Yameogo was initially against independence until he was appointed to the presidency. With Yameogo as leader, Upper Volta became one of the most impoverished nations in Africa, faced immense levels of gender discrimination, illiteracy, as well as corruption within the government.[10] Yameogo's leadership was also marked by the suppression of political dissent. Harsch's 2017 book, Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution, asserts that "Yameogo held onto the French umbilical cord," by promoting French officers within Upper Volta's military, refusing to cut ties with the franc monetary zone, and prioritizing French business affairs.[11] Yameogo and his bureaucratic allies were known to have lived in luxury, partaking in extravagant parties and maneuvering around the capital city, Ouagadougou, in European cars. The president undertook coordinated efforts to attack the trade unions and student led movements that opposed him. However, in 1966, an insurrection had finally succeeded, and Yameogo was ousted from office.[12]

In Yameogo's place came the first instance of a military takeover, a style of governance that would persist in the nation for decades.[13] Lt. Colonel Sangoule Laminzana seized power in 1966, marking the end of the civilian government. Laminzana's fourteen years of rule made minuscule steps in resolving any of the issues that had caused the former president to be ejected.[14] Additionally, the government was not equipped to address the great Sahel drought of 1973, resulting in thousands of casualties among the northern region of Upper Volta.[15] The drought crisis required Laminzana to obtain funds from France, escalating the dependence on their former colonial power. The Colonel had failed to address the needs of the rural population, where 95% of citizens were located, extending the failures of the former leader.[16] Laminzana's fourteen-year reign came to a halt in 1980 due to a series of coups d'etat, in his place, Colonel Saye Zerbo.[17]

Early on in Zerbo's rule, Thomas Sankara, a military captain, had enmeshed himself into the hearts and minds of his fellow soldiers.[18] Raised in a relatively wealthy family, Sankara had intended on studying theology; however, he eventually decided to enlist in the military, a popular choice for the young men of Upper Volta.[19] During his military training, Sankara was stationed in Madagascar, and he took a conspicuous interest in Marxist literature and political thought. Yet it was not until he had witnessed a student-led revolution in Madagascar wherein the seeds of his own revolution would be planted in his mind.[20] A major plank of Zerbo's military doctrine was an emphasis on maintaining a close relationship with civilians. A foundational actor in the insurrection of the former leader, Zerbo was aware of the importance of maintaining support with the public. However, Zerbo was primarily fixated on suppressing oppositional movements and dissent. The military had taken notice of Sankara following the success of his leadership

during the border war with Mali in 1974, garnering him popularity within the army. In addition, alongside his close ally, Captain Blaise Comporaré, Sankara had grown closer to the civilian led left-wing movements, including the Union of Communist Struggle, as well as the African Independence Party.[21]

In 1981, Sankara was invited to join the government as a minister for a duration of six months. Over the course of those six months, Sankara could no longer ignore the corrupt nature of the government, surreptitiously alerting journalists and encouraging them to raise awareness of federal actions. Sankara believed that a major hindrance to Upper Volta's progress was the continuance of the salaries agricoles system, which had severely strained the nation's labor force. At the end of his tenure as Minister, Sankara spoke out against the government in a televised press conference.[22] By November of 1982, a coup d'etat had ousted the Zerbo regime.[23] Sankara was not initially given leadership; though, he obtained the role of Prime Minister. In his stead, Jean Baptiste Ouedraogo obtained the presidential title.[24] Tensions dramatically increased between Ouedraogo and his prime minister due to ideological discrepancies; Sankara's speeches regarding anti-imperialism had continued to garner popularity amongst the young male population. In May of that same year, an imprudent neo-colonial intervention was taken by the French counselor of African Affairs, calling for the arrest of Sankara and his allies.[25] Ouedraogo, a conservative, had ordered the arrests, but the right-wing facet of the government began to crumble upon itself, dissent brewing internally and out with the public.[26] Sankara would be eventually freed later in the month, only to witness the government's collapse. The revolutionary spirit had never dwindled; the people of Upper Volta were fatigued with the deception of the government. Civilians began to organize in protest against the regime throughout 1982 and 1983.[27] By 1983, Sankara was officially recognized as the president of Upper Volta, renaming the nation to Burkina Faso, "the land of upright men," in 1984, a reference to the integrity of the people, and a promise that the government will reflect this value.[28]

Sankara prioritized honesty and transparency at the forefront of the government's policies. He ordered former generals and military leaders to return the money they had obtained from bribes and corporate donors, redistributing the funds into social programs.[29] He greatly reduced his personal salary, and the salary of his fellow officials. To cut frivolous spending, he ordered the termination of the use of luxury cars, prompting all officials to use bikes as their method of transportation, just as he did every single day.[30] Military uniforms became modest; the cloth always originated within the nation, handcrafted by Burkinabe, and Burkinabe exclusively.

He became one of the first African leaders to recognize the rights of women. A Marxist, Sankara believed that liberation did not limit itself to the binary, socially constructed rules of gender.[31] In Burkina Faso, and in Africa overall, decades of colonialism had imposed strict patriarchal expectations. Women were undermined, and undervalued, second-class citizens to men. It was not conventional for a leader to recognize the role of women, and certainly not call for the liberation of women. One of Sankara's most acclaimed speeches, a 1987 address, directly emphasizes the role of women:

> The women and men of our society are all victims of imperialist oppression and domination. That is why they wage the same battle. The revolution and women's liberation go together. We do not talk of women's emancipation as an act of charity or out of a surge of human compassion. It is a basic necessity for the revolution to triumph. Women hold up the other half of the sky.[32]

Sankara stood firmly by his words, appointing women to leadership positions in the government, allowing them to enlist in the military, as well as granting maternity leave. He enacted policies that banned forced female genital mutilation, forced marriages, and polygamy.[33]

One of Sankara's most entrenched positions was his stance on accepting foreign aid. He refused to accept any international monetary assistance. The president asserted the notion that Burkina Faso was able to sustain itself, utilizing its own resources. He believed that neo-colonialism was able to prosper so cancerously due to Africa's reliance on foreign entities.[34] Juchean in theory, but successful in practice, under Sankara's leadership, Burkina Faso was declared food self-sufficient.[35] He executed a large-scale vaccination campaign, immunizing 2.5 million children, and reducing the infant mortality rate. Sankara's policies also led to the dramatic increase of nationwide literacy rates, rising from 13% to 73% by 1987.[36] He executed these policies all while refusing to accept any loans from the International Monetary Fund.

Sankara's presidential term ended in 1987 when he was assassinated, orchestrated by his former ally and closest friend, Blaise Compaoré.[37] In 1960, while visiting Cuba, French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre once referred to the Latin American revolutionary leader, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, as "the most complete human being of our age."[38] As cogent as Sartre's argument is, Thomas Sankara should also be recognized under that epithet. Often dubbed the "African Che Guevara," Sankara's dedication to the revolution and the liberation of his people is unlike any other historical leader.[39] Following an analysis of historical materialism, a Marxist theoretical framework, Burkina Faso's revolution was driven by the struggle of the working class against the oppressive bourgeois imperialists. Revolutionary

leaders are not messiahs, they rise to their positions of power based on the material conditions of the people; however, there is a reason why Sankara's presidency is so revered, and that revolutionary spirit has never dwindled within Burkinabe.

IV. BURKINA FASO: POST-SANKARA

For twenty-seven years, President Blaise Compaoré meticulously curated an image of stability in the region, masking the internal corruption led by his administration. In 2014, Compaoré had the intention of altering the 1991 constitution to extend his term in office.[40] He had spent nearly three decades in office; many Burkinabe did not know a life prior to Compaoré. The history of Burkina Faso was censored, as the government refused to educate citizens on Thomas Sankara and the prior revolution. The international community viewed Compaoré's Burkina Faso as a stable zone amid a turbulent geopolitical environment. However, the president could not be further from the "upright man". Compaoré reversed a majority of Sankara's social programs, bribed politicians, ordered violence against protestors, and escalated conflicts between neighboring nations.[41] The president surrounded himself exclusively with a tiny elite group of donors, known as The Clan. He projected an image of heightened social liberties, yet ordered the assassination of investigative journalist, Norbert Zongo, in 1998.[42] By October of 2014, young Burkinabe had grown tired of the corruption and orchestrated a mass popular uprising that overthrew President Compaoré. Comparisons have been drawn to the early 2010's Arab Spring protests, as they were both largely youth led, and centered on the accountability, or lack thereof, of their politicians. Compaoré resigned later that month, fleeing by French helicopter to the Ivory Coast.[43]

Protestors in the 2014 uprising led with the tragically ironic mantra, "rien ne sera plus comme avant," which translates to "nothing will be as it was before," a reminder of the failures of the previous administration, and the promise for a brighter future.[44] In December of 2015, Roch Marc Christian Kabore was inaugurated into the executive role. He had no military ties, and his inaugural speech promised to end government corruption.[45] Kabore found difficulty managing the increasing attacks led by non-state armed groups. The most prevalent of which came from Jihadist militant groups with ties to al-Qaida. He attempted to curb dissent by passing laws that limited sit-ins and other peaceful protest methods. The economy was not developing, wages were stagnant, and corruption was still pervasive.[46] Above all, many Burkinabe considered him to be another puppet for the French, extending their neo-colonial reign, by refusing to cut economic and military ties. Subsequently, Kabore was deposed in early 2022, ousted in a military junta led coup d'etat. Demonstrations against Kabore prompted the ousting, credited to his lack of effort to secure Burkina Faso against extremist violence.[47] The military junta, led by Lt. Col. Paul Henri Sandaogo Damiba, claimed that the military insurgency was necessary to protect the nation. They had formed a close alliance with Mali, who had also recently experienced a junta led coup d'etat against their own president.[48] History may often appear circular, and Damiba's reign happens to offer merit to this notion. Damiba failed to remove French troops from the nation and failed to suppress extremist terrorist groups in the region. In September of 2022, after orchestrating his own coup d'etat just a few months prior, Damiba was ousted. The leadership of Burkina Faso was now, and continues to be, in the hands of President Ibrahim Traore, Damiba's junior captain, and the man that led the coup against him.[49]

V. THE ERA OF TRAORE

Early on in Traore's presidency, his staunch Pan-African inclinations have led him to become one of Africa's most popular leaders, especially amongst the youth.[50] On social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, the African diaspora has embraced the thirty-seven-year-old president, elevating him to a cult-like status. Young Burkinabe have particularly resonated with his pursuit of achieving economic independence from France. Traore has emphasized abandoning the CFA Franc, the currency instituted by colonial France.[51] The currency, although prevalent in the entire Sahel region, is a reminder of their subjugation to an imperialist regime. The CFA Franc is pinned to the Euro, and France holds a de facto vote over the central banks within the Sahel, dictating much of their economic policies.[52] Subsequently, maintaining the currency perpetuates French neo-colonialism.

Traore's popularity has also been heightened by his efforts to nationalize Burkina Faso's gold mines. As stated previously, Burkina Faso's gold sector is integral to the survival of the nation. It is amongst the global top ten gold-exporting countries.[53] Nationalizing the gold sector would further strengthen the African nation's economic sovereignty. In 2024, Traore purchased two major gold mines which had previously been owned by Endeavor, a British mining company.[54] Traore has also terminated exporting unrefined gold to Europe, opting to strictly refine gold within the nation's borders.[55] Concurrently, while the president did not directly ban foreign firms, he implemented a policy that required each company to provide a 15% stake in profits to the nation, as well as offer training and employment to locals.[56]

Comparisons between Traore and Thomas Sankara were drawn in the genesis of Traore's presidency. Both leaders famously refused to accept financial assistance from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.[57] In addition, Traore followed the path set forth by Sankara, reversing salary increases for government officials. The

President himself does not exceed his former military salary. In contrast to the excessive lifestyle of former president Compaoré, Traore has returned to the executive tradition of maintaining a modest way of living, only pictured wearing his military uniform, just as Sankara often was. Additionally, under both administrations, extreme poverty fell, and GDP has risen.[58]

However, is Traore's decision to emulate the revolutionary leader a patriotic homage, or a deliberate effort to manipulate public perception? Is the young president capitalizing off Sankara's image to convince Burkinabe that he supports their liberation, all while taking actions that dispel their cause? From the perspective of Traore's dissenters, amplified by Western media outlets, the young president is viewed through a completely different lens than his supporters in the nation. Critics of Traore attempt to discredit him by pointing to the discrepancies between his Pan-Africanist rhetoric, and his seemingly self-serving policies. Out of the many criticisms, two arguments against Traore have primarily circulated: the extension of the military junta, and his alliance with Russia.

During Traore's inaugural address, he had promised to restore democratic rule by July of 2024, a decision supported by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Instead, the president withdrew Burkina Faso from ECOWAS, drafting a new transitional plan. The transitional plan involved extending the military junta, and Traore's leadership for an additional five years. Only in 2029, they claim, will the government resume elections, as well as return to civilian governance. Although the economy has made steady improvements under his administration, substantial growth will be difficult to procure without the legitimacy of civilian governance. To appeal to investors, Burkina Faso must project political stability. In a nation still considered one of Africa's poorest, it is evidently a self-serving decision to extend a style of governance that most nations view as unreliable. Burkina Faso's economy has the potential to grow at an average rate of 8% by 2043, lifting approximately two million more citizens out of poverty. However, stable governance is required to achieve that [59][60]

The president has also strengthened a controversial political alliance with Russia. In several instances, Traore has publicly met with Russian president, Vladimir Putin, to discuss economic and security agreements. Most notably, in 2024, Traore agreed to issue the deployment of Russian military personnel to Burkina Faso, claiming to assist with combating the rampant jihadist violence that had been permeating throughout the city of Ouagadougou.[61] This agreement is loaded with hypocrisy, considering that the former leader was ousted because he refused to remove foreign military presence. Traore was praised for expelling French troops, only to install Russian personnel in their place.[62] The European Council on Foreign Relations proposes that Russia's alliance with Burkina Faso was curated to project an image of righteous resistance against European imperialists, to generate sympathy from the African Diaspora, and curate support for their actions.[63] Considering Russia's international disapproval following the war with Ukraine, it is a popular theory adopted by European strategists that engage with Africa. They claim that Traore equates anti-imperialist initiatives to just being anti-western in any capacity. However, simply on a fundamental level, it is duplicitous to both claim to champion Burkina Faso's self-reliance, while also utilizing foreign assistance. Military personnel may not be monetary aid, but it is aid nonetheless, and aid that has the potential to become dependence.

In defense of Traore, it is critical to consider the historical context of Burkina Faso when understanding his executive decisions. A military junta is not an ideal form of governance by any standard. The citizens of Burkina Faso should ultimately decide who represents their government, as well as the policies that they impose upon the public. However, corruption was rampant even when Burkina Faso had democratically elected their leaders. Former President Compaoré had intended to alter the constitution to extend his presidential term, and President Kabore refused to oust French troops to preserve their relationship.[64] Simply claiming to lead democratically is not enough to constitute being a competent leader. For thirty-five years, under the administration of civilian led governments, Burkina Faso only plunged deeper into poverty and instability. Traore's popularity can be attributed to that notion, providing an alternative to failures of a corrupt democracy. Evidently, addressing the material conditions of the people, such as

restabilizing after violent attacks and combating food inefficiency, is likely a greater priority for the current administration.

Additionally, while Traore's alliance with Russia is inherently ideologically inconsistent, and does not promote sovereignty, it is not exclusive to Traore's administration, nor is Russia the nation's most formidable ally. In fact, even the European Council on Foreign Relations admits that the military operation is "limited in scope" and has also been prevalent since the early 2010s.[65] President Traore emphasized that his closest allies remain his neighbors in the Sahel by establishing the Alliance of Sahel States with Mali and Niger.[66]

The European Council on Foreign Relations' 2025 policy brief claims that to combat Russia's expanding prevalence in Africa, European states must strengthen their own ties within the Sahel region. Several nations, but specifically France, admitted to having lost their influence in West Africa.[67] When considering Traore's nationalization efforts, regional alliances, as well as removal of French troops, Europe's interest in "protecting" the region becomes much more nefarious. While it is quite likely that Russia's involvement in the Sahel may be a part of a foreign policy initiative to depict the nation in a favorable manner amidst their systemic human rights violations in the Russia-Ukraine war, European interference may also be an attempt to reinstate neo-colonialist measures, ensuring that they remain Africa's primary recipient of extracted natural resources. Subsequently, Traore's popularity becomes a threat to their interests, exacerbating Western criticisms.

In a nation that harbors the youngest median population in the world, Traore's popularity should not come as a surprise. In January of 2025, during the inauguration of Ghanaian President, John Mahama, out of the twenty-one heads of state present, Traore stole the show, receiving an eruption of applause.[68] For decades, Burkinabe have been under the leadership of administrations that have suppressed their voices, prioritizing the interests of foreign elites over the people. These same leaders forced their own citizens into a feudalistic labor system, drove luxury cars on roads they failed to develop, and assassinated the individuals who spoke out against them. Traore's adamant Pan-African vision is perhaps falsely inflated by the nostalgia over Thomas Sankara, but it also highlights that Burkinabe are willing to accept an unconventional leader if it means their government is not controlled by their former colonizers. Evidently, the people believe their president is not another junta leader. He represents a larger vision for the nation, one that prioritizes their sovereignty. The rest of Africa is watching Traore, but specifically the younger population; the future cannot be guaranteed, but there is a high likelihood that a rhetoric rooted in self-reliance may build in the continent, and more leaders will follow Traore's path.

VI. CONCLUSION

Is Ibrahim Traore the reincarnation of the beloved Thomas Sankara, "Africa's Che Guevara?" A simple no can resolve that inquiry, but he does not need to fully embody the former president to be a competent leader. A successful revolutionary leader is not just an agent of history, nor an actor who attempts to relive it, instead they are individuals who are deeply conscious of the conditions of their people, and lead with their fellow man at the forefront. Although many of Traore's policies have improved the lives of Burkinabe, their safety is still at risk, and the president should take every initiative to protect them.

However, if the question is whether Traore is an upright man, the answer becomes much more complex. The "upright man" was never intended to be a term that describes solely Sankara, or any leader for that matter. Burkina Faso refers to the land of upright men, a reference to the integrity of the people and their revolutionary spirit. A singular individual does not encompass that term; President Traore is certainly supported by Burkinabe, and he does not seem to be slowing down, however, only time will determine if he is an upright man.

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THE XINHAI REVOLUTION OF 1911: CATALYSTS, CONSEQUENCES, AND LEGACY IN MODERN CHINESE POLITICS

FRANK NORRIS

I. INTRODUCTION

The Xinhai Revolution, or 1911 Revolution, represented a significant turning point in Chinese history by bringing about the collapse of the Qing Dynasty and the end of over two thousand years imperial rule. The revolution spanned from October 1911 to February 1912. It was not driven by a singular revolt but consisted of various uprisings and political tactics born out of strong discontent with the Qing government. This culminated with the abdication of Emperor Puyi, the founding of the Republic of China, and the ushering in of a new political era. The Qing regime began to fall apart due to internal decay, exposure to foreign ideologies, growing nationalism, and efforts by revolutionary movements led by people like Sun Yat-sen. In addition to remaking China's political landscape, it paved the way forward to the ideological battles and transformations of 20th century China. This article discusses the Xinhai Revolution in detail, studying the historical background, causes, significant events and revolutionaries, and the making of the republic. It will also cover the outcomes of the revolution, its lasting influence, and how it has been viewed by historians throughout history.

II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

A. The Qing Dynasty's Decline

Before the 1911 Revolution, China was under its last imperial regime, the Qing Dynasty. By the late 19th century, the Qing Empire was plagued by a deep internal crisis, reflected in pervasive corruption, inefficient administration, and a decadent political structure that was unable to meet the increasing needs of the changing society. Top officials abused their positions to take bribes and enrich themselves which further weakened governance throughout China's national and local systems. Due to this, state control weakened across the empire, creating a vacuum of chaos, rebellion, and abuse by powerful outsiders.

A series of humiliating military defeats compounded the administrative dysfunction, not only exposing the weaknesses of the Qing armed forces but also damaging the prestige of the dynasty. Their defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-95), hit the nation hard and showed everyone that regional power dynamics had changed. The Qing government struggled under war debt payments while outdated tax systems put a heavy weight on peasants and lower-income workers. More taxes, along with crop failures and financial problems in the countryside, made people increasingly angry at their leaders. These growing problems exposed the system's deep issues and created space for revolutionary thoughts to spread across different Chinese communities.

B. Influence of Foreign Powers and Imperialism

The encroachment of Western powers into China during the 19th century had a profound effect on destabilizing Qing China and fostering revolutionary ideologies. Beginning with the Opium Wars (1839–1842, 1856–1860), China suffered a series of defeats that resulted in a cascade of unequal treaties, including the Treaty of Nanjing and the Treaty of Tianjin. Britain's victory in the First Opium War forced China to sign the Treaty of Nanjing, which ceded Hong Kong and opened several ports to foreign trade. Subsequent treaties with Western powers and Japan—the so-called "unequal treaties"—further eroded Chinese sovereignty, allowing foreign nations to establish spheres of influence and extraterritorial rights on Chinese soil.

These encroachments were not merely symbolic; they disrupted local economies, undermined traditional authority, and exposed China's inability to protect itself. Increasing imperialist demands, combined with frustration with the foreign Manchu Government (embodied by the Qing court), and the nationalist longing to see a united, less provincial China led to a rising nationalism that encouraged revolutionary spirit. Widespread discontent grew not only among the educated elite but also within the general populace. Anti-foreign and anti-Qing sentiments began to merge, reinforcing the belief that a thorough revolution was necessary to reclaim China's dignity and independence from both internal decay and foreign domination. The Boxer Rebellion (1899–1901), a desperate nationalist attempt to rid China of foreign influence, was crushed by an eight-nation alliance, further undermining Qing authority.

C. Rise of Nationalism and Reform Movements

Amid the failures of the Qing state and the intensifying pressure from foreign domination, new reformist and revolutionary ideologies began to emerge, particularly among educated elites and returning students who had been exposed to Western political ideas. In the late 19th century, the Self-Strengthening Movement (1861–1895) sought to modernize China's military and industrial base while preserving Confucian political institutions. Although this movement introduced limited reforms—such as modern arsenals, shipyards, and translation bureaus—it ultimately fell short due to bureaucratic resistance and a lack of coherent national strategy.

In 1898, Emperor Guangxu launched the Hundred Days' Reform led by Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, aiming to enact sweeping changes in education, administration, and the military. However, the movement was swiftly crushed by conservative forces, particularly Empress Dowager Cixi, who perceived these changes as threats to imperial power, placing Emperor Guangxu under house arrest. The failure of peaceful reform efforts persuaded many that revolution was the only viable path forward. Groups like the Tongmenghui, founded by Sun Yat-sen in 1905, began to promote the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty and the establishment of a republic. These developments reflected a growing nationalist consciousness and a decisive turn toward radical change, laying out the ideological groundwork for the Xinhai Revolution.

III. CAUSES OF THE XINHAI REVOLUTION

The Xinhai Revolution was the result of a complex interplay of political, economic, and social pressures that had been building over several decades. Politically, the Qing government had long adhered to autocratic rule, which by the early 20th century had become increasingly out of step with the demands of a rapidly changing society. The imperial bureaucracy was plagued by corruption, inefficiency, and nepotism, rendering it incapable of managing national affairs or responding to domestic crises. Repeated failures to implement meaningful reforms—such as the aborted Hundred Days' Reform—led many to conclude that the monarchy was beyond saving. Economically, the burden of taxation fell heavily on the rural population, already suffering from poverty, land scarcity, and debt. At the same time, China's economy was dominated by foreign interests due to unequal treaties that gave foreign powers control over trade, tariffs, and key industries. This foreign economic dominance not only stifled local enterprise but also contributed to widespread unemployment and discontent among Chinese workers and merchants. The result was a growing sense of economic injustice.

Socially, resentment toward the ruling Manchu elite intensified. Many Han Chinese viewed the Manchus as foreign occupiers, especially in the wake of national humiliations at the hands of Western powers and Japan. Ethnic tensions, combined with widespread peasant discontent and urban unrest, created fertile ground for revolutionary agitation. Movements such as the Tongmenghui capitalized on this sentiment, advocating for the overthrow of the Qing and the establishment of a republic. Together, these political, economic, and social grievances formed the underlying causes of the Xinhai Revolution. They fostered a climate in which revolutionary ideas could take root, making the collapse of the Qing Dynasty both inevitable and, to many, a necessary step toward national revival.

IV. THE ROLE OF REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS AND KEY FIGURES

The success of the Xinhai Revolution was not merely the result of widespread dissatisfaction with the Qing Dynasty; it was also the result of a well-organized revolutionary movement led by a cadre of dedicated individuals and groups who labored long and hard to rally support, disseminate revolutionary ideas, and orchestrate uprisings. The Tongmenghui, or United League, was at the heart of this movement, and was founded in 1905 by Sun Yat-sen and other exiled Chinese nationalists in Tokyo, Japan. As a unifying body for various anti-Qing organizations located in China and around the world, Tongmenghui brought their revolutionary efforts together under one vision and leadership. This league was instrumental in drawing up revolutionary plans, fostering military rebellions, and spreading political propaganda to rally public support.

Sun Yat-sen stood out as the ideological architect and symbolic leader of the revolution. His political philosophy, the Three Principles of the People—nationalism, democracy, and people's livelihood—offered a blueprint for a modern Chinese republic. Nationalism targeted the expulsion of the Manchu ruling class and foreign imperialists, democracy advocated for representative

governance and civil rights, while people's livelihood emphasized economic equity and social welfare. Though Sun Yat-sen was not physically present in China during the initial outbreak of the revolution, his writings, speeches, and personal charisma inspired a generation of revolutionaries and gave intellectual legitimacy to the revolutionary cause. During this revolution, Sun was abroad in the U.S. for a fundraiser. Several other key figures also played instrumental roles in turning revolutionary rhetoric into action. Huang Xing, a military leader and co-founder of the Tongmenghui, directed several armed uprisings and was a central commander during the Wuchang Uprising. Song Jiaoren, another prominent member, worked on shaping the political transition after the revolution and was crucial in organizing the Kuomintang (Nationalist Party). Yuan Shikai, though initially a Qing military leader, ultimately betrayed the dynasty and negotiated the emperor's abdication, making him a controversial yet pivotal figure in the revolution's outcome.

Underground networks, student associations, and secret societies such as the Gelaohui were instrumental in spreading revolutionary ideas, coordinating logistics, and launching attacks. Revolutionaries used newspapers, pamphlets, and public lectures to challenge the legitimacy of the Qing regime and promote republican ideals. Revolutionary education also played a significant role, as students studying in Japan and other countries returned with modern political ideologies and technical knowledge, becoming key agents of change. A major source of strength for the revolutionaries came from the overseas Chinese diaspora. Communities in Southeast Asia, the United States, and Japan provided essential financial backing and served as safe havens for exiled activists. These expatriates, many of whom were merchants and laborers, contributed funds for weapons, publications, and travel. Their support extended beyond money as well—they organized political rallies, formed revolutionary chapters abroad, and lobbied foreign governments to support the cause of Chinese republicanism.

Collectively, the efforts of these movements and individuals created a revolutionary force that transcended regional, class, and ideological divisions, making the Xinhai Revolution not just a spontaneous revolt but a meticulously planned and passionately executed transformation of Chinese society and governance.

V. TIMELINE AND KEY EVENTS OF THE REVOLUTION

The Xinhai Revolution unfolded rapidly, marked by a series of pivotal events that shifted the trajectory of Chinese history. The catalyst was the Wuchang Uprising on October 10, 1911, a mutiny by revolutionary-minded soldiers in the New Army stationed in Wuchang, Hubei Province. The uprising was not meticulously planned; it was triggered accidentally when explosives being stored by revolutionaries detonated prematurely, exposing their plot to the authorities. Facing arrest and execution, the conspirators chose to act immediately. Their swift seizure of control in Wuchang inspired a chain reaction, setting off uprisings in other provinces and transforming a local revolt into a national revolution. Following the success in Wuchang, revolutionaries quickly gained momentum. Within weeks, provinces across southern and central China began to declare independence from the Qing Dynasty. From Hunan to Shaanxi, provincial assemblies announced their separation and pledged loyalty to the revolutionary cause. By the end of November 1911, approximately 14 provinces had broken away from Qing authority. This wave of defections made it clear that the dynasty could no longer maintain centralized control and that the political foundation of the empire was crumbling.

Amid the growing instability, revolutionaries sought to create a unified alternative to Qing rule. On January 1, 1912, the Republic of China was formally proclaimed in Nanjing, with Sun Yat-sen installed as the provisional president. While symbolic, his presidency was understood to be transitional. The real challenge lay in securing the peaceful abdication of the Qing emperor and avoiding prolonged civil conflict. At the center of this delicate process was Yuan Shikai, a seasoned Qing general and former high-ranking official. Although initially summoned by the Qing court to suppress the revolution, Yuan recognized the shifting political tides and saw an opportunity to position himself as a central figure in the emerging republic.

Negotiations between Yuan, the Qing court, and the revolutionaries intensified in early 1912. Sun Yat-sen, recognizing Yuan's military power and political influence, offered to resign in exchange for Yuan's support of the new republic and his agreement to pressure the emperor to abdicate. Yuan accepted, using his influence over the Beiyang Army to convince the imperial family that resistance was futile. These negotiations culminated in the abdication of Emperor Puyi on February 12, 1912, officially ending more than two millennia of imperial rule in China. Yuan Shikai was soon named provisional president of the Republic of China, following Sun's resignation. Though his motives were often questioned, Yuan's involvement was crucial to achieving a relatively bloodless transfer of power. He managed to broker peace between monarchists and republicans, at least temporarily, thus ensuring that the revolutionary gains were not immediately undone by civil war.

The Xinhai Revolution, therefore, was not a single dramatic battle but a rapid sequence of uprisings, political maneuvering, and negotiated settlements. Its success lay not only in military rebellion but in the strategic decisions made by key leaders and the widespread rejection of Qing legitimacy. This carefully managed

transition would, however, soon face serious challenges as the new republic struggled to consolidate power in a fragmented political landscape.

VI. FORMATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND POLITICAL TRANSITION

With the collapse of Qing rule in early 1912, China stood at a historic crossroads. For the first time in over two millennia, the country was no longer governed by an imperial dynasty. In its place, the seeds of a new political experiment, the Republic of China, were planted. The republic was formally declared on January 1, 1912, in Nanjing, and Sun Yat-sen was elected provisional president. This was a deeply symbolic moment, and the greatest hope of revolutionaries working to modernize China; replacing monarchical rule with a representative government based upon constitutional principles. Nanjing had been proposed as a provisional government to see the country through this transition. Aware of his weak military power and of the unstable bond among the forces of revolution, Sun Yat-Sen agreed to step aside if a more powerful leader could bring about the desired national stability. The powerful general of the Beiyang Army, Yuan Shikai, was that leader. In March 1912, Sun resigned and ceded way for Yuan Shikai to take a shot at the presidency. His decision, while pragmatic, underscored the compromises inherent in the early republic's formation and hinted at the difficulties that lay ahead in balancing revolutionary ideals with political realities.

Yuan Shikai's presidency marked the beginning of a complicated and ultimately unstable political transition. Although the republic had been declared, many of its institutions were weak or undeveloped. The new political system lacked nationwide legitimacy, and many areas of China remained under the control of regional military leaders, or warlords appointed by Shikai, who owed little allegiance to the central government. The Provisional Constitution of 1912, while a progressive document, offered limited safeguards against authoritarianism. It envisioned a parliamentary democracy, but in practice, power was heavily concentrated in the hands of the president.

Yuan, though instrumental in the peaceful abdication of the Qing emperor, harbored ambitions that soon placed him at odds with the spirit of republicanism. He sought to centralize authority and consolidate personal power, often destroying democratic instruments. Tensions escalated in 1913 when Yuan Shikai used military force to dissolve the newly formed National Assembly, sidelining opposition figures such as Song Jiaoren, who had been poised to become prime minister. Song Jiaoren's assassination—widely suspected to have been orchestrated by Yuan—marked a turning point and triggered widespread disillusionment with the republican experiment.

By 1915, Yuan had gone so far as to declare himself emperor of a new dynasty, a move that provoked fierce backlash across the country. Yuan endeavored to build dictatorial power and establish his own dynasty while still serving as the first president of the new republic. His imperial ambitions were met with armed resistance from both former revolutionaries and provincial leaders. Isolated and under growing pressure, Yuan was forced to abandon the throne in 1916, dying shortly thereafter. His death created a power vacuum, plunging China into an era of warlordism and political fragmentation that would persist for over a decade.

While the formation of the Republic of China was a significant achievement, its early years were marred by structural weaknesses, opportunistic leadership, and a lack of political cohesion. It succeeded in ending dynastic rule, but it failed to establish stable and democratic order. The early republic was more of a transition than a transformation—an uncertain bridge between imperial China and the modern nation-state that would continue to evolve through struggle and reform.

VII. IMPACT AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE REVOLUTION

The Xinhai Revolution of 1911 is one of the most significant events in Chinese history, as it marked the end of over two millennia of imperial rule in China by overthrowing the Qing Dynasty. This political change meant the end of dynastic rule that had been in place in China for centuries and the beginning of the new, though relatively short-lived, republican era. The immediate effect was the abdication of Emperor Puyi in 1912 and the end of the Qing Dynasty's imperial system that had dominated Chinese politics and culture for centuries. Although this act signaled a new political epoch, the revolution's impact was much more profound and protracted.

The most controversial consequence of the revolution was the rise of warlordism and the subsequent political fragmentation of China in the 1910s and 1920s. In the power vacuum that followed the failure of the central authority to establish a strong central government, regional military commanders known as warlords emerged to take control of different parts of China. These warlords acted independently and would fight each other in battles to seize more land. By 1912, China was just republican by name, as it experienced political instabilities that were compounded by factionalism, invasions, and revolutions. The outcome of this process was the emergence of a highly fragmented political system that weakened the attempts to build a stable and efficient republican government. The dreams of democracy and unity of the nation that the revolutionaries had were quickly replaced by chaos and administrative authoritarianism.

The post-revolutionary period also highlighted the immense difficulties in transitioning from a traditional monarchy to a modern democratic republic. The Chinese people, largely unfamiliar with the principles and practices of democratic governance at the time, found themselves under a regime that lacked both legitimacy and capacity. The lack of an educated, politically engaged populace, coupled with structural weaknesses in the newly formed government, made it nearly impossible to implement meaningful reforms or establish a durable political system. As a result, many of the revolution's promises—such as popular sovereignty, constitutionalism, and national rejuvenation—remained unfulfilled. However, the Xinhai Revolution did succeed in planting the seeds of modern Chinese nationalism.

As Gang Zhao points out, this nationalistic view of China as a multiethnic entity has persisted into the 20th and 21st centuries, contributing to the development of modern-day China. The fall of the Qing Dynasty and the rejection of foreign domination invigorated a new generation of thinkers, activists, and students. This emerging nationalism was powerfully expressed in the May Fourth Movement of 1919, a mass protest that combined anti-imperialist sentiment with calls for science, democracy, and cultural renewal. Clearly, the ideological legacy of the Xinhai Revolution continued to shape political discourse, inspiring both reformist and revolutionary paths for China's future.

In the long run, the revolution played a foundational role in shaping the ideological landscape that would influence later movements, particularly the rise of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). As research shows, the Communist Party used the failures of 1911 as a foil against which they justified their own revolution, arguing that it produced nothing positive of consequence. Many young revolutionaries, disillusioned by the failures of the republican experiment, and inspired by Marxist ideals, sought more radical means of achieving national unity and social justice. The CCP would eventually position itself as the true inheritor of the revolutionary spirit, claiming to complete the transformation that the 1911 Revolution had only begun. In essence, while the Xinhai Revolution failed to establish a stable and democratic republic, it undeniably changed the trajectory of Chinese history. It shattered the imperial model, awakened national consciousness, and set the stage for the ideological battles that would define the People's Republic of China in 1949.

VIII. HISTORIOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVES AND SCHOLARLY DEBATES

The Xinhai Revolution has long been the subject of extensive scholarly debate, with historians offering contrasting interpretations of its effectiveness, significance, and lasting impact. Some view the revolution as a landmark success that decisively ended more than two thousand years of imperial rule and planted the ideological roots for modern Chinese nationalism and republicanism. These scholars argue that by dismantling the Qing Dynasty, the revolutionaries created the foundation upon which subsequent generations could build a new, progressive China.

From this perspective, the Xinhai Revolution represented a bold and necessary break from China's feudal past. However, others contend that the revolution's outcomes fell far short of its ambitions, highlighting the subsequent era of political fragmentation, warlordism, and weak governance. Scholars underscore that, with Puyi abdicated, "China's dynastic era was finished but the country's troubled 20th century was still just beginning". This school of thought argues that the revolution did not have the institutional and social foundation for a republic and, thus, paved the way for authoritarians like Yuan Shikai to hijack the revolution. Some historians argue that 1911 was not a clear revolution against imperialism but a transition period that put China in a long-term political and ideological vacuum.

Another area of analysis considers whether the Xinhai Revolution should be seen as a national revival or as a part of the early twentieth-century revolutionary movements. Being much like its contemporaries, comparisons can be made with the revolutions in Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and Mexico, all of which were dealing with issues of modernity, state, and nation in the context of the decline of empires. However, the Chinese revolution was distinct in its cultural roots, dynastic tradition, and unbalanced approach to Western political ideas. In this sense, the historiographical debate on the Xinhai Revolution reflects the revolution itself—not a clear success story or a failure, but a turning point in China's history nonetheless, a process of modern state formation.

IX. CONCLUSION

The Xinhai Revolution stands as a significant moment of Chinese history. It put an end to over two thousand years of monarchy and paved the way for the formation of a modern republic. Although the revolution ousted the Qing Dynasty and its failed political principles, its broader political tenets, democracy and national unity, were hard to carry out in practice. The breakdown of power and transition to the rule of figures like Yuan Shikai bring to light the gulf between the romantic call for revolution and the harsh reality of political change. Although the Xinhai Revolution failed in its specific aims, it established an ideological foundation for future movements that still underpins much of contemporary Chinese political discourse. It still echoes in the continued debates about governance, national identity, and reform. However flawed in its conclusion, the revolution

can be considered a crucial part of the long process of China's modernization and freedom from foreign domination.

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VILLA, ZAPATA AND THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION

ALEX PRASAD

I. INTRODUCTION

The Mexican Revolution, which erupted in 1910, remains one of the most significant and transformative events in Latin American history. It was not a singular, unified movement, but a series of uprisings and revolts led by diverse groups in response to a long history of social, political, and economic inequality. The roots of the revolution were planted during the nearly 30-year dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, whose regime, known as the Porfiriato, oversaw rapid industrialization, foreign investment, and economic growth. However, these gains were accompanied by an extreme concentration of wealth and power among elites and foreign interests, while the vast majority of Mexicans, especially rural peasants and indigenous communities, faced displacement, land dispossession, and exploitation. This unequal distribution of resources, combined with growing unrest, eventually led to the popular uprisings that ignited the revolution.[1]

The revolution's path was deeply influenced by regional dynamics. In the north, industrialization and trade with the United States created a diverse, militarized working-class movement that was more connected to the global economy. Pancho Villa, one of the revolution's most iconic leaders, emerged from these circumstances. Villa's background as a bandit turned military leader reflected the adaptability of the north's resistance, paired with flexibility and a hands-on approach.[2] In contrast, the southern movement, led by Emiliano Zapata, was rooted in the agrarian struggle and indigenous rights, particularly in the state of Morelos, where peasants had been oppressed by large sugar plantations. Zapata's campaign focused on reclaiming the land and developing autonomy for rural communities, framed through an indigenous, anti-centralist ideology.[3]

II. REGIONAL GOALS AND METHODS

The regional dynamics of the Mexican Revolution played a major role in shaping the goals and strategies of its most prominent leaders. While both Villa and Zapata challenged the central government, their geographic and social contexts structured the kind of reforms they pursued and the methods they used to achieve them. The South, dominated by sugar plantations, fostered a resistance movement rooted in land and tradition. The North, shaped by industrial development, railroads, and transborder commerce, produced a more diverse and militarized movement. These differences go beyond strategy and were shaped by how each leader envisioned justice, power, and governance.

Zapata's southern movement was anchored in the state of Morelos, where rural communities had long-standing grievances over land dispossession. Under Porfirio Díaz, large plantations or estates—known as haciendas—expanded rapidly, consuming communal land and leaving indigenous and mestizo farmers with little to sustain themselves with.[4] The Zapatistas framed their revolution as a moral and legal reclamation of land, often citing local records to prove ancestral ownership. Their stated goal was not to seize power nationally but to restore control to local villages through community-led councils and agrarian distribution. According to Robert Millon, author of "Zapata: The Ideology of a Peasant Revolutionary", this regionalism was not a weakness but a deliberate ideological stance. Zapata believed that reform should originate in the community, not be imposed from the top.[5]

The Zapatista method of resistance reflected these priorities. Their forces were organized not as a centralized army, but as loosely affiliated village militias. These groups knew the terrain well and relied on local support rather than a military hierarchy. Though this model limited their reach, it enhanced their legitimacy in the eyes of their supporters. For the Zapatistas, securing justice at the village level mattered more than controlling the national government.

In contrast, Villa's northern revolution had a broader scope, partly because of the political structure and social makeup of the region. Northern Mexico had seen more infrastructure investment under Díaz, and its population included landless laborers, ranchers, and small entrepreneurs. Villa's base of support came from this mixed class structure, which shaped his vision of reform. While Villa did implement land redistribution in some areas, his broader agenda included labor protections, public education, and a meritocratic military. These reforms reflected a more statist approach to revolution, which translated to a stronger control over territory and resources.

The limitations of each regional approach also became apparent over time. Zapata's refusal to centralize or ally with other military leaders left him vulnerable to isolation. Meanwhile, Villa's expansion into central Mexico exposed weaknesses in his organizational structure and governance. Once removed from his regional base, Villa struggled to manage political relationships and administrative demands.[6] Both leaders were deeply shaped by the terrain and demographics of their respective regions, and these conditions structured what they believed revolution should achieve.

Pancho Villa commanded one of the most formidable military forces of the revolution. His Division del Norte was highly organized, disciplined, and mobile, benefiting from railroads and an industrial base in the North. Historians like Frank McLynn emphasize Villa's use of military professionalism, including artillery units, supply trains, and tactical coordination that enabled him to win several major battles against federal forces. His battlefield successes were reinforced by his charismatic leadership, which helped maintain troop loyalty and morale. Politically, Villa often positioned himself as a defender of constitutionalism and reform, but his approach was flexible and often driven by practical needs rather than ideological consistency.[7]

Villa's military success also made him a key player in national-level politics, especially after the fall of Victoriano Huerta. He participated in the Convention of Aguascalientes in 1914, which attempted to unify the revolutionary factions.[8] Although Villa briefly allied with Zapata during this time, their joint forces could not stand against the better-organized army under Venustiano Carranza. Villa's later attempts to maintain control in the North were undermined by internal administrative weaknesses and diplomatic isolation. His reliance on battlefield control ultimately proved insufficient, as post-revolutionary governance required political centralization and bureaucratic negotiation, which Villa was less able or willing to navigate.[9]

In contrast, Emiliano Zapata's strategy remained rooted in defense and guerrilla-style resistance. His forces were smaller, locally organized, and more interested in protecting territory than launching national offensives. Zapata rarely attempted to control major cities outside Morelos, and his military engagements were often aimed at maintaining regional autonomy rather than achieving federal power. This strategy was consistent with his political stance, which prioritized village-level governance and land reform over participation in national politics. Zapata did not seek high office or the presidency.

Zapata's most significant political action came in his continued opposition to both Madero and Carranza, both of whom he viewed as betraying the revolution's promises. His refusal to compromise made him a moral symbol of the revolution's grassroots base but also limited his strategic flexibility.[10] While Villa tried to negotiate power, Zapata largely rejected political alliances unless they aligned fully with his principles, particularly those laid out in the Plan de Ayala.

III. POST-REVOLUTION: IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

The Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920 resulted from a deep dissatisfaction with the social, political, and economic inequalities that defined Mexico under Porfirio Díaz's regime. The revolution's two primary figures, Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa, despite their distinct ideologies and strategies, both played a crucial role in pushing for societal change. While Zapata's vision focused primarily on agrarian reform and indigenous rights, Villa aimed at modernizing Mexico through labor rights and state-led economic growth. Both their ideas were absorbed into the post-revolutionary state but transformed to fit the practical demands of the evolving Mexican political system.

Zapata's core ideology was rooted in agrarian justice, advocating for the redistribution of land to the rural poor and emphasizing local autonomy for peasant communities. His famous Plan de Ayala demanded the return of land to indigenous communities and a radical restructuring of the land ownership system. Zapata's approach was not just about land reform but about empowering indigenous and rural communities through decentralized governance, where local communities had direct control over land, rather than relying on a central government. His vision was one of resistance to both landowners and the centralized state that he felt perpetuated inequalities.[11]

In the post-revolutionary period, Zapata's agrarian reforms were incorporated but under a highly centralized system. President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940) embraced the notion of land reform but reinterpreted Zapata's vision. The Cárdenista reforms, which distributed large regions of land to peasant communities through the Ejido System, were deeply influenced by Zapata's goals. While

Zapata emphasized local autonomy, the Cárdenista reforms imposed state oversight, reducing the possibility for peasants to make independent decisions regarding their land.[12]

Zapata's desire for indigenous sovereignty and anti-imperialism also found a form of expression in the Cárdenista era, with the nationalization of key industries like oil. Cárdenas famously nationalized Mexico's oil industry in 1938, a move that embodied Zapata's calls for national independence from foreign control. The legacy of anti-imperialism that Zapata fought for was transformed into a broader nationalistic agenda during this period, with the state taking control of industries and protecting the country's resources from foreign exploitation.[13] This marked a key shift in the application of Zapata's principles, as his more radical ideas were moderated and institutionalized by the state.

While Zapata's vision of agrarian justice was absorbed in part, his ideas on decentralized governance were marginalized. The Cárdenista state, though deeply influenced by Zapata, consolidated power in the hands of the government, which led to a top-down reform process that reduced local control and the grassroots participation that Zapata had envisioned. Still, Zapata's legacy endures in modern social movements, particularly in Chiapas, where indigenous and peasant groups continue to draw from his Plan de Ayala as they advocate for land rights, indigenous sovereignty, and resistance to globalization and corporate exploitation.[14] These movements, though far from the original Zapata-led resistance, embody his ideals of autonomy and social justice, especially in rural communities.

Pancho Villa's pragmatic and nationalist ideology focused on modernizing Mexico through the creation of a strong centralized state, as well as social reforms aimed at integrating Mexico's laboring classes into the national framework. Unlike Zapata, who focused almost exclusively on rural reform, Villa's goals were more expansive, encompassing labor rights, military organization, and a broader vision of national unity. Villa sought to create a modern state with strong industrial growth, national infrastructure, and a military capable of defending the nation. He advocated for the integration of labor into the national economy, where industrial workers and peasants alike could benefit from state-sponsored reforms.[15]

In the post-revolutionary state, Villa's more centralized, nationalist ideas were absorbed into the policies of Carranza and Cárdenas, particularly in areas like labor rights and the militarization of the state. While Zapata's vision was deeply decentralized, Villa's vision was more aligned with the establishment of a centralized, state-led political system. His emphasis on national unity and militarization resonated with the Mexican military reforms that emerged in the 1920s and 1930s. Villa's ideas regarding labor rights influenced the creation of state-managed labor unions and state-run programs designed to support industrial workers. His military strategy, focused on discipline and meritocracy, helped shape the development of the Mexican army, which evolved into a more modern, bureaucratic institution in the years after the revolution.[16]

Villa's political influence, however, fell after his assassination in 1923. His more radical goals for economic modernization and social equality were countered by the post-revolutionary government, which focused more on national integration and state control. Villa's legacy was eventually romanticized in the official Mexican national narrative, where his military exploits and rural leadership were celebrated, but his political ideals were left behind. Villa's image became a symbol of Mexican nationalism, celebrated during national holidays, but his economic and labor reforms faded in the state's greater focus on modernization and centralized control.[17]

Villa and Zapata's ideologies have persisted far beyond the revolution, shaping both Mexico's political culture and modern social movements. Today, their images are icons of revolutionary spirit, but their ideologies have been reinterpreted in various ways over time. For Zapata, his focus on agrarian reform and indigenous rights continues to inspire movements that seek land redistribution and the empowerment of marginalized communities. His image is evoked in modern political discourse, especially in the context of land struggles in the southern regions of Mexico. The Zapatista movement in Chiapas, for example, while not directly descended from Zapata's army, draws on his ideals of community self-governance and anti-capitalist resistance.[18]

Villa's influence, although more romanticized, continues to resonate in the national consciousness as a symbol of resistance and social reform. His nationalist ideals, focused on military strength, national unity, and worker's rights, are often invoked in the context of Mexican pride and national identity. However, his economic and political ideals, particularly his emphasis on social justice for the working class, have largely been overshadowed by the state's focus on economic liberalization and capitalist modernization.

IV. POST-REVOLUTION: REGIONAL GOALS AND METHODS

The Mexican Revolution was not just a national upheaval; it was a deeply regional phenomenon, with leaders like Zapata and Villa representing the distinctive needs and aspirations of their respective regions. While Zapata's movement was firmly rooted in the south, advocating for land reform and rural empowerment, Villa's focus on the northern regions of Mexico was primarily shaped by a need for national integration and industrial development. The post-revolutionary state had to reconcile these regional movements with

a growing desire for centralized control and state authority. This section explores how the revolutionary ideals of Zapata and Villa, grounded in the regional concerns of their time, were adapted, co-opted, or constrained by the Mexican government in its efforts to consolidate power in the decades following the revolution.

Zapata's core goals were rooted with the agrarian population in mind, with his Plan de Ayala articulating a vision of land redistribution and the empowerment of rural communities. Zapata's movement was particularly focused on the southern states of Morelos and Guerrero, where rural peasants - particularly indigenous communities - were living in extreme poverty and under the control of large landowners and foreign interests. Zapata's central demand was for the return of land to the peasantry, the redistribution of wealth, and autonomy for local communities to govern their own affairs without interference from a centralized, oppressive state.[19]

Post-revolutionary Mexico saw these ideals take root but in a modified form, most notably under the leadership of President Lázaro Cárdenas in the 1930s. Cárdenas' land reforms, which distributed millions of acres of land to rural communities, were deeply influenced by Zapata's calls for land redistribution. However, the reforms differed significantly from Zapata's original vision in two key ways. First, the land reform under Cárdenas was heavily centralized, and the Ejido System was administered by the state rather than local communities. While Zapata advocated for decentralized political power, the Cárdenista reforms saw the state as the primary enforcer of agrarian justice, significantly limiting local autonomy.[20] Zapata's ideological commitment to social justice and anti-imperialism also influenced the Cárdenista government's approach to nationalization. Cárdenas famously nationalized Mexico's oil industry in 1938, positioning himself as a defender of national sovereignty and anti-imperialist rhetoric, principles that resonated with Zapata's desire for independence from foreign control.[21] However, as historian John Womack notes, Zapata's direct ideological influence in post-revolutionary Mexico was marginalized by the state's need for centralized control in order to implement these reforms in a way that preserved national unity and political stability.[22]

In more recent times, Zapata's legacy has been reclaimed by social movements and activist groups. His focus on land rights and indigenous sovereignty remains a rallying cry for contemporary movements, particularly in rural areas. These groups, although not directly descended from Zapata's revolutionary army, have drawn from his ideals of land reform and resistance to centralized power to press for greater political autonomy and land distribution in modern Mexico. The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) in

Chiapas, for example, draws heavily from Zapata's Plan de Ayala to advocate for indigenous rights and anti-globalization initiatives. In the context of modern neoliberal economic policies, Zapata's legacy provides a framework for resistance to the domination of corporate interests and global capital.[23]

Villa envisioned a unified Mexico in which the laboring classes, including industrial workers and peasants, could benefit from economic growth and social reforms. Villa's influence was seen in his advocacy for workers' rights, his focus on militarization, and his push for political reforms that could modernize the country along nationalistic lines.[24] In the post-revolutionary period, Villa's more centralized, nationalist views were absorbed into the post-revolutionary state's economic strategies. The Cárdenista period saw northern Mexico begin a process of industrialization, particularly through the development of railroads, mining, and agriculture. Villa's ideas of workers' rights and militarized labor forces were absorbed into state-led industrial policies. However, Villa's more radical ideas for social justice were often overshadowed by the central government's focus on national unity and the development of large, state-managed projects. Villa's vision of a more equitable economy was left largely unfulfilled as the state prioritized the centralization of power over regional demands for economic reform.[25]

While Villa's legacy continued to shape Mexican nationalism, his regionalism, particularly his push for economic equity for the working class in the north, was overshadowed by the state's broader national integration goals. Villa's image became a symbol of Mexican nationalism, celebrated during national holidays, but his economic and labor reforms faded behind the state's greater focus on modernization and centralized control. His role in military reform continued to influence the Mexican army, which adapted Villa's military strategies in the pursuit of national security and economic

development.[26] After the revolution, the Mexican state pushed forward on a project of state-building, aiming to consolidate political power and integrate the regions into a unified national framework. The regional ideologies of both Zapata and Villa were adapted to serve the centralizing goals of the state. While Zapata's agrarianism and Villa's industrial nationalism were important drivers of the revolution, they had to be modified to fit into a state-controlled political system.

President Venustiano Carranza and later Lázaro Cárdenas played crucial roles in transforming the revolutionary goals of Zapata and Villa into state policy. While Cárdenas implemented agrarian reform to address Zapata's demands, he also worked to centralize control over land distribution and political power. Similarly, Villa's military strategies and economic modernization ideas were absorbed into the national infrastructure but were subordinated to state control. The post-revolutionary Mexican state sought to balance the demands of regional movements with the need for national unity, leading to a compromise between revolutionary ideals and the practicalities of governance.[27]

V. POST-REVOLUTION: MILITARY AND POLITICAL STRATEGIES

Zapata and Villa, while united in their goal of overthrowing the Porfirian regime, employed very different strategies to achieve their revolutionary objectives. Zapata, the leader of the southern movement, relied on guerrilla warfare tactics and a decentralized political vision, while Villa, the leader of the northern revolution, organized large military forces and pursued a more centralized political vision. This section examines the military and political strategies of these two figures and explores how their influence on military organization, political control, and governance shaped the post-revolutionary Mexican state.

Zapata's military strategy was based on guerrilla tactics, relying on mobility, surprise, and a deep understanding of the terrain in Morelos and surrounding areas. His forces were typically composed of local peasants and indigenous fighters, who knew the land intimately and were able to launch quick attacks on the larger, better-equipped federal forces. The Zapatista army was small but highly effective in its use of unconventional warfare, which allowed it to disrupt federal forces despite the strength of Díaz's military. This style of guerrilla warfare allowed Zapata to build significant support among the rural peasantry, as his movement was seen as the defender of land rights and indigenous sovereignty.[28] Zapata's decentralized military structure mirrored his political beliefs, where power was dispersed, and local communities had autonomy. This decentralized approach was in direct contrast to Villa's more hierarchical military organization and the centralized political structure he advocated for. Zapata's refusal to consolidate power in the hands of a single leader or political figure reinforced his vision of a society where local communities governed themselves, without heavy reliance on a centralized state. As historian Luis F. Ruiz notes, Zapata's military tactics were designed not just for victory in battle but for revolutionary transformation of rural Mexico.[29]

In the post-revolutionary period, Zapata's guerrilla tactics and emphasis on rural resistance had a lasting impact on Mexican military doctrine. While his emphasis on localized militias was not fully adopted by the state, the Mexican military did incorporate elements of guerrilla warfare in its later campaigns, particularly during the crackdown on rural uprisings in the 1930s and 1940s. Zapata's influence on the military also became evident in the rural militarization under President Cárdenas, where the Ejido System was often protected by local militias that acted as defenders of the land. However, the post-revolutionary state ultimately rejected Zapata's vision of decentralized power and local governance, preferring to exert centralized control over military forces and political authority.

Unlike Zapata's guerrilla tactics, Pancho Villa employed a more traditional military strategy that relied on large, well-organized armies capable of conducting conventional warfare. Villa's forces were often comprised of volunteers from rural Mexico and military deserters, and he built a highly structured military organization, which included divisions, supply lines, and a command structure. Villa's army was not just a fighting force; it was a symbol of national unity, and his campaigns were designed to address the economic grievances of the working class and peasants while also asserting the sovereignty of northern Mexico against foreign interests, particularly U.S. influence.[30] Villa's strategy was to engage in open combat against the federal forces, leading to large-scale battles like the Battle of Celaya in 1915. His military tactics were centered on the use of cavalry and strategic mobility, enabling his forces to capture key territories and challenge Díaz's military for control of the northern regions. Villa's military approach was distinct from Zapata's because of its scale and national ambitions, as Villa envisioned a more centralized government capable of controlling not only the northern regions but also the entire nation. Villa's organization of his military was heavily influenced by his experience as a bandit and his deep understanding of local politics, which he used to rally support from both the urban proletariat and rural peasants. As Mark Cronlund Anderson argues, Villa's ability to build mass support was integral to his military success and national recognition.[31]

However, as the revolution transitioned from military struggle to state-building, Villa's more radical approach to military and political governance was increasingly at odds with the interests of the post-revolutionary government. After his defeat in 1915, Villa's

military organization was dismantled by the new government, and his ideas on military meritocracy and economic reform were sidelined in favor of the state's centralized and nationalized approach to governance. Despite his nationalist rhetoric, Villa's vision for a more inclusive and equitable society was subsumed into the state-led modernization process.

After the revolutionary victory, both Zapata's and Villa's military strategies were absorbed into the new military structure of the Mexican state, in modified forms. The Carranza and Cárdenas governments sought to build a modern, bureaucratic military that could not only defend Mexico from external threats but also maintain internal political stability. The militarization of the Mexican state during the post-revolutionary years was influenced by Villa's and Zapata's revolutionary tactics, but ultimately, the state centralized control over military forces. The post-revolutionary military saw the creation of a professionalized army that replaced the more informal revolutionary militias that Zapata and Villa had commanded. The Mexican military became an essential instrument of state control, consolidating power under the centralized government and protecting the national sovereignty achieved by the revolution. Villa's vision for a military that served the working class was sidelined in favor of state-driven military power. Similarly, Zapata's guerrilla tactics were adapted for use by the military in dealing with rural uprisings, but the vision of local autonomy that Zapata had championed was largely disregarded. The revolution's military strategies were thus transformed into tools for the state's control rather than preserving the regionalism or local autonomy that Zapata and Villa had fought for.[32]

In the years following the revolution, both Zapata's and Villa's military strategies were relegated to the realm of symbolic national identity, yet their influence on the military, politics, and national integration of Mexico remains deeply embedded in the country's history. Their legacies, whether in military tactics or political philosophy, continue to shape Mexican identity and statecraft in subtle ways, influencing contemporary political movements and national discourse.

VI. POST- REVOLUTION: MODERN-DAY POLITICS AND CARTELS

The ideological legacies of Zapata and Villa have endured long past the Mexican Revolution. Despite their fundamentally different approaches to military and political strategy, both men's ideologies have been invoked in various political movements, cultural discourses, and even by more violent groups, such as Mexican cartels, who have co-opted their names and symbols for different purposes. The ways in which Zapata's agrarian ideals and Villa's vision for social reform have been integrated into the post-revolutionary and modern political landscape speak to the enduring power of their ideas, even as the political and economic realities of Mexico diverge significantly from their revolutionary goals. This section explores how Zapata and Villa's ideas are used and manipulated in recent Mexican politics, examining their role in political movements and the cartels, and how these forces align (or misalign) with the original vision of the revolution.

Zapata's legacy is deeply intertwined with agrarian reform and rural empowerment, and in recent decades, his name has been reclaimed by left-wing political movements in Mexico, particularly those advocating for indigenous rights, land reform, and anti-globalization. The most prominent example of this is the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) in Chiapas, a group that emerged in 1994 in response to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the perceived erosion of Mexican sovereignty under neoliberal reforms.[33] The EZLN took the name of Zapata to symbolize their commitment to the ideals of land redistribution and social justice. Their symbolic use of Zapata is not just an homage to his agrarian vision but a call to resist the influence of global capitalism, which they argue marginalizes indigenous and rural communities and populations. The Zapatistas use his legacy to oppose land dispossession and economic exploitation and advocate for a more decentralized, autonomous governance model that aligns with Zapata's original anti-centralist views.[34]

In recent years, Zapata's ideals have found support from left-wing politicians such as Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), who became president of Mexico in 2018. AMLO's political discourse often includes references to Zapata's agrarianism, as part of his broader appeal to rural communities and the marginalized. AMLO's policies, particularly land reform and their efforts to combat inequality, invoke the idea of Zapata as a symbol of justice, aligning his administration with Zapata's commitment to social justice. However, critics argue that Zapata's radical anti-capitalism is often overshadowed by the more pragmatic policies of AMLO, who faces the challenges of balancing modern economic realities with revolutionary ideals. Nonetheless, Zapata's legacy of land rights and resistance remains a foundational part of the Mexican left-wing agenda today.

Villa's legacy has, in contrast, been reinterpreted more frequently within the context of Mexican nationalism, labor rights, and militarization. Villa's emphasis on military meritocracy, social justice, and national integration resonated with both post-revolutionary governments and contemporary movements that seek to align themselves with Mexico's nationalist ideals. Villa's legacy is often appropriated by politicians and labor movements, particularly in northern Mexico, where his advocacy for workers' rights and

economic reform aligns with modern efforts to protect labor and ensure economic equality for Mexico's working class. Villa's image as a national hero has been celebrated in public monuments, museums, and popular media, becoming a symbol of resistance to both foreign and domestic elites.[35]

In more recent political movements, such as the rise of AMLO's Morena Party, Villa's legacy has been framed as part of the struggle to nationalize resources and empower the working class. Although AMLO's administration is focused on social welfare and anti-corruption, Villa's nationalism and commitment to workers' rights are evoked in the rhetoric surrounding economic nationalism and state-led development. AMLO's desire for Mexico to regain control over its own resources, such as oil and minerals, can be seen as aligning with Villa's vision of national sovereignty and self-reliance against external powers. Nevertheless, Villa's more radical economic reforms, including his calls for wealth redistribution and a more inclusive economy, have been largely relegated to symbolic gestures rather than implemented as core economic policies. Villa's vision of a military-civilian alliance and social equality is often sidelined by modern politicians, who celebrate Villa as a hero but shy away from his more radical socialist ideas. Some scholars suggest that Villa's radicalism has been watered down in modern political discourse, with his legacy now used more for national pride rather than as a framework for genuine reform.[36]

In a troubling development, both Zapata's and Villa's images have been co-opted by criminal organizations, most notably Mexican drug cartels, who have used these revolutionary symbols and ideologies to legitimize their actions and influence public perception. Zapata, in particular, has been appropriated by cartels to project a sense of righteousness in their actions, especially in rural areas where the cartel's presence is strong. By invoking Zapata's legacy of land redistribution, certain cartels claim to be fighting for the disenfranchised, portraying themselves as defenders of the poor and indigenous communities. This symbolic co-optation can be seen as an effort by these cartels to create an alternative narrative to their criminal activities by connecting themselves to the idealized image of Zapata as a revolutionary figure.[37]

Similarly, Villa's image is also used by some cartels to symbolize resistance against perceived injustices, particularly in northern Mexico, where Villa's nationalism resonates strongly with local pride. Cartels may invoke Villa's image to portray themselves as champions of the working class, defending their territories from external forces or state oppression. In this way, both Zapata's and Villa's revolutionary symbols are distorted by these organizations, who seek to justify their violent and illegal activities as part of a broader struggle for social justice or national sovereignty. This appropriation further complicates the public's understanding of Zapata and Villa's true legacies, blurring the lines between revolutionary ideals and criminal exploitation.[38]

VII. PERCEPTIONS OF ZAPATA AND VILLA IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY MEXICO

The legacies of Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata have become deeply ingrained in the national identity of Mexico, but their revolutionary ideals have undergone significant transformations since their deaths. While these figures remain celebrated for their contributions to the Mexican Revolution, the ways in which their legacies have been romanticized, villainized, or repurposed for political agendas have rendered their true revolutionary impact elusive. In these subsections, we explore how Zapata's and Villa's ideas have been either idealized or demonized in the years since their deaths, and what the true impact of their movements has been on post-revolutionary Mexican politics.

VIII. ROMANTICIZATION OF ZAPATA AND VILLA

Both Zapata and Villa were idealized in the decades following the revolution, but their original goals were often distorted to serve the needs of the post-revolutionary state. Zapata, a symbol of agrarian justice and rural empowerment, was romanticized as a hero of the poor, a champion of land redistribution and indigenous rights. However, in the years following his death, his radical calls for decentralization and indigenous sovereignty were largely ignored. Instead, Zapata's image was used by the Mexican government to promote agrarian reform policies that were top-down and state-controlled, as seen in the Cárdenista reforms of the 1930s. The state's co-option of Zapata's ideals allowed the government to claim the moral authority of the revolution while maintaining centralized control, which contradicted Zapata's original vision of localized governance and autonomy for rural communities.[39]

The romanticization of Villa followed a similar trajectory. Villa's image as a nationalist hero and military leader was celebrated in the post-revolutionary state, particularly through the creation of monuments, public ceremonies, and historical narratives that highlighted his contribution to the revolution. His focus on economic reform, workers' rights, and military meritocracy, however, was downplayed in favor of a more sanitized narrative of his military exploits. Villa's radical economic ideas, including his calls for wealth redistribution and labor rights, were largely neglected in favor of a nationalist narrative that aligned more with the state's goals of political stability and economic modernization. Villa's legacy was celebrated more for his military leadership and contribution to the revolution's success than for his revolutionary

vision, which was often seen as too disruptive to be fully realized in the new political order.

Both Zapata's and Villa's legacies were romanticized by the post-revolutionary state, but the original revolutionary goals of agrarian justice, economic reform, and decentralized power were often subordinated to the nationalist agendas of political elites. While their symbolic importance in the national consciousness grew, the revolutionary principles they championed were watered down to serve a more pragmatic and state-driven narrative.

IX. THE VILLAINIZATION OF ZAPATA AND VILLA

While Zapata and Villa's ideals were romanticized, they were also vilified by certain political elites and state actors who saw their calls for land reform and economic redistribution as a threat to the status quo. In particular, Zapata's advocacy for peasant sovereignty and his rejection of centralized state control were viewed by the post-revolutionary elite as dangerously radical and subversive. Zapata's refusal to negotiate with the central government during the revolution, particularly his Plan de Ayala, was perceived as a challenge to the new political order. The Cárdenista reforms in the 1930s, which were intended to implement Zapata's agrarian ideals, were ultimately shaped by a state-centered agenda, and his decentralized vision was repressed in favor of a more centralized model of land distribution.

Similarly, Villa's image was vilified after his assassination in 1923, as his more radical socialist ideas, which included land reform and economic redistribution, were seen as too disruptive for the new Mexican state. The post-revolutionary government, particularly under Plutarco Elías Calles, sought to marginalize Villa's legacy in favor of a modern, bureaucratic state that could stabilize the country and integrate it into the global economy. Villa's military strategies, and his vision of a more equitable society, were replaced by a more nationalistic narrative of his contribution to the revolution. The Mexican government, in its efforts to consolidate power, not only romanticized Villa's image but also demonized his more radical ideas, ultimately pushing for a more centralized, capitalist model of development.

X. CONCLUSION

The Mexican Revolution remains a foundational event in the shaping of modern Mexico, with Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa serving as two of its most iconic figures. However, their revolutionary ideals and legacies have undergone substantial transformation since the revolution's end. While both Zapata and Villa fought for agrarian reform, social justice, and independence from foreign influence, their visions were often co-opted, romanticized, and even vilified by political elites, post-revolutionary governments, and modern political movements. Zapata's commitment to land reform and local autonomy became symbolic in the decades following the revolution, yet the radical aspects of his vision were marginalized by the state-led agrarian reforms under future leaders, which centralized control rather than allowing for the grassroots governance he supported. Despite this, Zapata's ideals continue to resonate in movements like the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), which, though far from his original movement, draws heavily from his vision of indigenous rights and anti-globalization. Villa's more nationalistic and economic reforms were similarly diluted in the post-revolutionary period. While his legacy as a military leader and national hero was celebrated, his calls for wealth redistribution and workers' rights were sidelined in favor of modernization and centralized control. Villa's ideals remain an important symbol of Mexican nationalism, though his more radical economic agenda was overshadowed by the state's broader focus on industrial growth and national unity.

Ultimately, both men's legacies have been manipulated and reinterpreted in various ways by the post-revolutionary state and modern political forces. The true revolutionary ideals that Zapata and Villa represented, land justice, economic redistribution, and decentralization, have been reshaped for political purposes, often distorting their original goals to fit the pragmatic needs of the Mexican government. However, their symbolic power remains strong, as their names continue to inspire modern movements advocating for social justice, land rights, and indigenous sovereignty. While the Mexican Revolution undeniably shaped the trajectory of Mexico's political and social development, the legacies of Zapata and Villa serve as reminders of the gap between revolutionary ideals and the realities of state power. Their visions of justice and equality have been reimagined to serve the needs of the post-revolutionary government, yet their names continue to carry the weight of revolutionary hope and the struggle for social change in modern-day Mexico. As the country moves forward, the true test will be whether these ideals are ever fully realized or whether they remain symbols of what could have been.

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THE HIDDEN ECONOMY OF MECCA

YASIR BABIR

I. INTRODUCTION

Mecca, located in western Saudi Arabia, stands as the holiest city in Islam and serving as a focal point of religious life for Muslims across the globe. Each year, millions of Muslims from every corner of the Earth travel to Mecca to perform Hajj, the annual pilgrimage required once in a lifetime for those physically and financially able, and Umrah, a shorter-non-mandatory pilgrimage that may be performed at any time of the year, fulfilling one of the Five Pillars of Islam. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Hajj drew over 2.5 million pilgrims, and Umrah brought in roughly another 8 million visitors. The Saudi Government has stated their goal under the "Saudi Vision of 2030", a state led economic diversification policy; reduce the state's dependence on oil revenue and expanding sectors such as tourism, or notably, religious service, to increase pilgrimage participation to 30 million annually.

Mecca's global prominence is inseparable from its sacred status in Islam. The city operates as one of the largest seasonal economies in the world, with the flow of pilgrims fueling industries like transportation, currency exchange, and informal labor. The pilgrimage economy is not only limited to state institutions, but dense networks of private businesses; a vast group of people who operate beyond the regulatory control of the state.

The economic infrastructure of Mecca is built on a complex relationship. Authority over pilgrimage administration rests with the Saudi ministry of Hajj and Umrah and the royal family, creating a tension between them and the decentralized private and informal networks that benefit from pilgrimage activity. This revenue can include hotel fees and taxes, visa fees, and retail licenses. Alongside these channels, an economy operates in the shadows, composed of unregistered street vendors, tour operators, and undocumented laborers—predominately from South Asia.

This economic system has its political consequences. The control the Saudi government has over Mecca grants them a certain type of power over the Muslim world. Their ability to regulate Hajj and Umrah is a powerful economic tool and diplomatic lever. Countries with larger Muslim populations, from Indonesia to Pakistan, negotiate annual pilgrimage quotas with Saudi Arabia commonly; intertwining religious practice with international commerce.

This article will break the hidden economy into four parts and examine how the economy evolved out of pilgrimage. The following sections will analyze the informal networks, state regulation and centralization, and the broader political implications of Mecca's role. Finally, it will demonstrate that Mecca is not just a spiritual destination, but a critical nexus of economic and political influence extending far beyond the borders of the city itself.

II. THE PILGRIMAGE DRIVEN ECONOMY

The engine of the hidden economy is the Pilgrimage. Mecca's economy revolves around the steady influx of pilgrims performing Hajj and Umrah. Together, they attract millions of visitors annually, generating one of the largest temporary population surges in the world. The Saudis have expressed a desire to increase these figures even further by 2030 as promised in their new policy, making pilgrimage not only a pillar of Mecca's economy but likely a pillar for the broader Saudi Arabian economy.

During peak Hajj Season, between the 8th and 13th of Dhul-Hijjah, the final month of the Islamic calendar, Mecca's population surges from about 2 million to nearly 10 million. To house this massive influx, the city has developed enormous hospitality infrastructure; thousands of hotels, apartments, and short-term rentals all around the Masjid al-Haram, the Grand Mosque that houses the Kaaba and the central site of Hajj and Umrah. Luxury hotels, like the Makkah Clock Royal Tower and the Swissotel, dominate the area around the Mosque, with prices skyrocketing around the peak times of pilgrimage. Many middle and lower tier accommodations operate outside full regulatory compliance, often

unregistered, untaxed, and rented out by local families or small investors. For many families in Mecca, this informal housing market functions as a crucial source of seasonal income.

Pilgrims also generate a massive demand for food and goods—restaurants, food stalls, etc. All experience massive surges that exceed their normal revenue several times over during the Hajj season. Retailers that sell religious artifacts like garments, prayer rugs, souvenirs, and, surprisingly, gold, also experience the same surge. This retail economy is dominated by small shopkeepers, traders who sell during the Hajj season, and itinerant vendors who solely travel to Mecca from across Saudi Arabia and the region. Transportation is similarly impacted, in addition to the state-run infrastructure, like the Metro and bus systems; there is an informal network of drivers, vans, and unregistered taxis. Many of these drivers come from South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, operating on a cash basis and outside of all regulatory frameworks.

A defining feature of Mecca's pilgrimage economy is the scale of this informal activity. Vendors selling food, water, and prayer accessories line the main pedestrian corridors connecting Masjid al-Haram to other key ritual sites like Mina, Arafat, and Muzdalifah. Unlicensed tour guides are common and are usually migrants catering specifically to pilgrims from their country of origin. These multilingual guides enable navigation by foreign pilgrims who may not speak Arabic. Virtually all of this activity occurs outside the formal tax and regulatory systems of the Saudi ministry of Hajj. Most transactions are cash and undocumented, so they don't contribute to state revenue but still sustain the tens of thousands of workers employed informally. Estimates suggest that informal sectors account for about 25-40 percent of the total economic activity generated by pilgrimage.

In essence, pilgrimages function as the core of Mecca's economic engine. The volatility of this creates a parallel system; one where state regulated industries coexist with thriving informal networks. Both are essential to sustaining the millions they must accommodate, but only one is visible in official statistics.

The largest of these shadow sectors is the informal housing market. A significant portion of Mecca's residents—including long term migrant families—sublet or lease their residence, rent rooms, or in some cases entire buildings to pilgrims during the peak season, all without any formal registration. Much of this activity is in the older neighborhoods on the outskirts of the luxury hotel zones, closer to Masjid al-Haram. This sector operates largely through cash-based arrangements between the pilgrims and locals, mostly with long-term migrant families who manage the lodgings. For many lower income pilgrims, particularly those from the Global South, these accommodations are the only financially viable option. Typically, the farther from the Masjid al-Haram and other licensed hotels one goes, the more informal housing predominates; offering flexibility and group arrangements that formal lodgings licensed by the government cannot accommodate.

Transportation during Hajj season similarly relies on informal networks to supplement the state-run aspect. The government's bus and metro infrastructure are simply incapable of absorbing the surge of pilgrims, even more so during the seasonal peaks. Driven by this demand, private drivers operate unlicensed cars and vans to transport the pilgrims between their housing and holy sites. Similarly, informal currency exchanges facilitate these services, with unlicensed exchanges generally being faster and with better rates. These exchanges typically overlap with other underground financial channels, allowing pilgrims to move money across borders without involving registered banks.

Taken together, this informal housing and transport infrastructure allows Mecca to manage the surge demand it experiences during pilgrimage season and that far exceeds the economic and logistical systems arranged by the state. While pilgrimage generates immense revenue, the economic structure depends fundamentally on the labor systems that sustain it.

III. MIGRANT AND INFORMAL LABOR

Mecca's economy runs on the labor of hundreds of thousands of migrant workers, most of whom are from South Asia (particularly India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh), Africa and Southeast Asia (notably Indonesia). This labor force is the virtual spine of the hidden economy in Mecca that can keep up with the demands of Hajj and Umrah. States such as Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Indonesia, and Sudan, are all major sources of migrant labor in the country and especially within the city. This labor fills seasonal demand in sectors ranging from street vending to transportation and construction. During peak season, this labor force often functions as tour guides for pilgrims who may not know how to navigate the city.

In the retail and services sector, migrant-ran stalls selling necessities like prayer rugs, water, and food, are omnipresent surrounding the Masjid al-Haram. Many of these stalls are illegal; however, local law enforcement doesn't stop them during peak seasons due to their crucial role in sustaining the demand of pilgrims. A significant portion of these undocumented workers enter the underground labor economy through pilgrimage visas. Hajj and Umrah visas are generally temporary and are strictly regulated. Despite this, many pilgrims overstay and begin to transition into informal work in the country. These laborers may work for smaller businesses across the country, transitioning into a more formal work,

joining the street vendors, or becoming guides for others from their country of origin.

The economic impact of this labor echoes far beyond Mecca. Migrant workers in Saudi Arabia send billions of dollars in remittances back to their country of origin year after year. In 2022, the total of remittances leaving Saudi Arabia was over $40 billion, making it one of the largest remittance-sending countries. A significant percentage of these funds originate from the laborers employed in the various industries supporting pilgrimage.

These migrant workers operate in complex legal situations. Most of this labor force is tied to an employer through the Kafala system—a sponsorship program legally binding migrant workers to an employer. These employers often hold their workers' passports. Compounding this, leaving a job after being sponsored is commonly seen as a crime, leading to imprisonment or, in extreme cases, deportation; even if the worker is quite clearly being mistreated. These workers have effectively no legal protection and are extremely vulnerable to exploitation. Regardless of this mistreatment, their labor is indispensable, making the pilgrimage season virtually impossible without them.

Essentially, these migrant and informal labor practices are not a byproduct of Mecca's economy; it is the root and foundation. These practices connect the pilgrimage system to transnational migration, fueling the city's shadow economy, and sustaining millions of pilgrims every year. Mecca's pilgrimage generates billions annually, but it's built on the labor of the thousands of migrants generally operating under precarious legal frameworks or outside any type of protection

Reports by the Human Rights Watch and International Labor Organization have documented these widespread labor rights violations. For example, workers in construction and sanitation often must endure desert heat for long hours without any type of safe access to medical care. Female migrant workers, notably from Indonesia and the Philippines, face an acute vulnerability to exploitation in Mecca's labor system. Gendered risks intersect with informal employment, language barriers, and the fear of authorities, to significantly limit access to legal remedies or any type of protection.

In recent years, Saudi Arabia has made major reforms to the Kafala system, allowing some workers to change employers without the approval of the sponsor. However, these reforms do exclude many sectors, including informal and low wage laborers. For many in the hidden economy, legal vulnerability remains unchanged. The volatility of pilgrimage creates a dual labor market, with a state regulated sector dominated by companies with official state contracts, and an informal sector where largely undocumented and exploited workers fill the gaps. Altogether, these labor practices demonstrate how the functioning of the pilgrimage season is sustained by a labor force characterized by legal insecurity, a fragile economy, and social precarity.

IV. HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE ECONOMY

The economic structure of Mecca is not a recent development; it has evolved over centuries of shifting political pressure. To understand the evolution of the hidden economy, you must examine the history of pre-modern trading.

Long before the unification of Saudi Arabia in 1932, Mecca was a thriving commercial city. It sat at the intersection of several thriving trade roots connecting the Red Sea, the Arabian Peninsula, Africa, and Southwestern Asia. Annual pilgrimages brought merchants, scholars, and travelers from across the Muslim world, with the economy revolving around caravan trade, local markets, and the local families who housed pilgrims.

Pilgrimage services were largely managed through local merchant and family networks, with limited centralized authority. The city's economy was rooted in spirituality but maintained fluidity. The discovery of oil in the 1930s changed the state, and by association, Mecca. The rapid increase in national revenue allowed the government to take more direct control of the logistics of pilgrimage, replacing the local communities with centralized ministries. By the 1960s and 1970s, oil wealth financed the massive expansion of Masjid al-Haram, new roads, and modern infrastructure networks. These projects mark the beginning of state dominance over pilgrimage infrastructure, and the gradual marginalization of the family-run economic system.

The rise of air travel in the late 20th century transformed Hajj and Umrah. Millions now had access to Mecca from every corner of the world, and the surge forced the Saudi state to modernize further. The state invested in new mega projects and began regulating the flow of migrants and expanding visa programs. This globalization also expanded the labor pool, with workers coming from Pakistan, India Bangladesh, Africa, and Indonesia to sustain this expansion. After 9/11, Saudi Arabia tightened security and surveillance significantly. This period saw a massive shift from the previous model to a highly monitored system, with informal economies adapting but being forced to go underground.

Under the Saudi Arabian vision of 2030, Mecca is seen as a means to a post oil Saudi Arabia. The goal, to reach 30 million Umrah visitors annually, would transform the city into a year-round tourism hub. In the meantime, luxury real estate, transport infrastructure, and surveillance technology, are being expanded aggressively—

formalizing the economy while marginalizing the lower income residents and informal workers.

In essence, Mecca's hidden economy is a product of a long history; community run pilgrimage systems into a centralized, and hyper-commercialized state infrastructure. These informal networks systems endure due to the fact they were integral to Mecca's economic structure long before the state's centralization. Still, over the past two decades, Mecca's physical transformation has been massive. Driven by the state and demand, privatized construction and modernization are progressing at an incredible rate. This development is not only a byproduct of the pilgrimage; it is the new heart of the city, shaping who benefits from the economy, and who is displaced.

Central to this transformation are the projects around Masjid al-Haram. Neighborhoods have been demolished to make way for luxury hotels, commercial complexes, and infrastructure to accommodate the millions of pilgrims. The Abraj Al bait Towers, a 15-billion-dollar complex by the clock tower, is the most visible sign of this mass transformation—housing thousands of rooms, a mall inside of it, and catering to wealthier pilgrims.

The Saudi Arabian state, through entities connected to the royal family, have been dumping dozens of billions of dollars into infrastructure. In projects like the Mashaaer Metro, road expansions, and the Haramain high speed railway, connecting Mecca to Medina and Jeddah. Operating concurrently, these projects were designed to create a more profitable and controlled urban environment during the busy season.

The primary drawback of these megaprojects is the massive displacement. Older neighborhoods that have long histories and house low-income Saudis or migrant communities have been entirely demolished. The residents of these communities generally receive very little compensation and are often relocated to the outskirts of the city while their land is appropriated.

The transformation of Mecca into a high-end development zone has stratified access to accommodations within walking distance of Masjid al-Haram and the Kaaba. Wealthier pilgrims stay in luxury hotels within feet of Masjid al-Haram, while lower income people and migrants are pushed away to distant accommodations on the outskirts of the city and are forced to rely on informal transport. These trends continue to reshape Mecca, from a city of communal spiritual experience to a religious commercial hub. The sacredness of the city is slowly becoming more commercialized—with prayer spaces sitting right above a mall. This has sparked a lot of controversy within Muslim communities about the preservation of holy spaces and the erosion of Mecca's historic character.

It should seem clear that the state's relationship with this economy is very odd. The state recognizes that the informal economy is necessary to make the pilgrimage manageable. Yet, the state recognizes that it also undermines official control, reducing the taxable revenue and projecting an image that directly contradicts the 2030 Saudi Arabian vision of a polished Mecca. This urban development isn't just about creating bigger buildings; it's also about control. More security checkpoints, surveillance, and zones allow the state to monitor people's movements.

V. STATE CONTROL AND REGULATION

Mecca's structure is an intricate system of state control and centralization balanced against fluid economics. The Saudi Arabian Ministry of Hajj and Umrah plays an important role in organizing and licensing every aspect of the pilgrimage. Regardless of the state's efforts to maintain this strict control, bureaucracy often intersects and clashes with the private operators and informal networks that really sustain the economy during the busy season.

At the heart of this is the Ministry of Hajj. They control the quotas of pilgrimage by state, the distribution of visas, planning transportation arrangements, and issuing licenses. Every year, quotas are negotiated between Saudi Arabia and the Muslim world, a process allowing the Saudis to regulate crowd flow and maintain the appearance of authority and administrative stability over pilgrimage. The ministry also oversees the logistical systems that transport pilgrims between Mecca, Arafat, and Muzdalifah during the Hajj. The regulation of Visa's is an incredibly powerful tool. Pilgrims must apply for Hajj or Umrah visas through official state channels, generally with the partnership of governmental travel agencies. This allows the state to thoroughly regulate entry and collect as much revenue through the visa fees and service charges as possible. Similar regulations apply to the licenses for hotels, operators, vendors, and transportation services within the city. Official hotels have to register with the Ministry, comply with dozens of safety standards, and pay copious amounts of taxes. Transportation providers are told what routes to operate and are only allowed to operate within certain timeframes and on a strict schedule.

The state relies on an incredibly heavy security infrastructure to sustain its authority over pilgrimage administration. During Hajj, the government moves tens of thousands of officers, drones, and other surveillance equipment into the city to monitor the flow of pilgrims. Checkpoints often regulate movement between the ritual sites; a necessity for safety in gatherings of millions but also reflecting the state's interest in keeping resolute control over the holy cities.

With the massive push to modernize Mecca, the Saudi Arabian state demonstrates their interest in formalizing and monetizing

the economy. This modernization clearly clashes with the informal systems that are vital to the economy. The state maintains its control over Mecca's economy with visas, checkpoints, licenses, and modernization, but it cannot eliminate the informal sector, no matter how hard they try.

VI. SACRED AUTHORITY AND SAUDI STATECRAFT

Saudi Arabia's control over Mecca extends beyond economic management and crowd regulation; constituting a distinctive form of state power rooted in religious authority. With its custodianship of the Two Mosques, the Saudi royal family derives its legitimacy not only from sovereignty but from faith, as the guardian over Islam's most sacred places. This role gives the Saudi state an unparalleled form of soft power that it can project far beyond their own borders.

Whereas conventional state power relies on coercive or material instruments, religious authority derives its influence from shared belief and obligation. For Muslims around the world, pilgrimage to Mecca is not discretionary; it is a religious obligation. With state regulation of Hajj and Umrah with visas and quotas, Saudi Arabia transforms spiritual access into a mechanism of influence. The ability to facilitate, delay, and restrict the pilgrimage, embeds the Saudi government into the religious lives of millions across the world.

This authority has significant geopolitical implications. Muslim-majority countries have no choice but to engage with Saudi Arabia annually to negotiate pilgrimage quotas and logistics. These negotiations link domestic religious expectations to foreign policy outcomes. Muslim governments across the globe have significant internal pressure to secure access to Mecca for their populations, making relations with Saudi Arabia politically delicate. As a result, pilgrimage administration has become a diplomatic arena wherein religious need is intertwined with international politics.

Saudi Arabia rarely weaponizes this power explicitly. Hosting one of the largest annual migrations gives the state the ability to project stability, competence, and leadership, within the Muslim world. Under the 2030 vision, pilgrimage management is framed as evidence of their modernization efforts and how important Saudi Arabia is. However, this power has constraints, with Saudi legitimacy depending on the perception that the pilgrimage remains accessible, equitable, and religiously grounded. Excessive or explicit politicization would severely undermine the authority the state relies on. Therefore, the Saudi Government must balance control with restraint, ensuring the pilgrimage continues to be seen as a religious obligation rather than a political instrument.

Mecca functions as a sacred city and economic hub. It's a place where religion is converted into influence, and spiritual obligation becomes a branch of state power. Control over Mecca not only gives Saudi Arabia the ability to influence pilgrimage flows, but diplomatic relationships and political behavior across the global Muslim community. By regulating pilgrimage quotas and logistics, Saudi Arabia is embedded in the domestic political calculations of many Muslim-majority states.

Through its custodianship of the Two Holy Mosques, the Saudi monarchy derives religious legitimacy that reinforces its political standing within the Muslim world. This status encourages other states to demonstrate restraint with them, as disruptions to pilgrimage access usually carry significant political consequences for Muslims worldwide. Nor is it an idle threat, as certain periods of diplomatic tensions have at times coincided with disruptions to pilgrimage participation, notably in Saudi-Iranian state relations. While never said explicitly, cases like this illustrate how pilgrimage access can contribute to broader political dynamics, especially in the region, reinforcing the notion of Saudi Arabia's indirect leverage within the Muslim world.

VII. CONCLUSION

Mecca is a sacred city. It is the beating heart of Islam, the ultimate destination of Hajj and Umrah, and a symbol of unity for over a billion Muslims worldwide. Yet, beneath this sacred image is one of the most complex economic systems on earth, a system shaped by state power, informal networks, global migration, and its historic legacy. At its core, the city operates on an intricate and parallel economic system. The formal layers are regulated tightly, with state-managed infrastructure, surveillance, visas, quotas, and megaprojects. The shadow layers are fluid, comprised of migrant labor networks, unlicensed housing, and underground financial markets. The two systems are officially separated, yet deeply interdependent, forming an engine sustained by enormous annual migrations.

This structure didn't emerge overnight. It reflects centuries of evolution, from Mecca's role as a caravan trade hub, to a wealth built on oil, mass air travel, and now modernization. Control has shifted from the local merchant networks to the Saudi state, concentrating economic and political power at the top while keeping informal life at the margins. The system relies on hundreds of thousands of workers exploited by the Kafala system and with minimal human rights protections. Urban development, infrastructure expansion, and technological surveillance have intensified state control; reshaping the city and displacing many standing communities. The modernization program's biggest goal has been to maximize economic return and political control, but it has also deepened the social divide between elites, formal sectors, and informal laborers. At the end of the day, Mecca is not only a holy city, but also a global

economic hub, an instrument of the state, and a site where the informal and formal meet. The hidden economy isn't a footnote; it's the foundation.

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MACHISMO AND MARIANISMO POST-MEXICAN REVOLUTION

ALONDRA AMBARIO

I. INTRODUCTION

Machista ideology works on the basis of opposition between male and female gender roles and draws on stereotypical characteristics associated with either group. A typical man is thought to be strong, virile, and aggressive. Women, on the other hand, are seen as the passive, "weaker" sex who are recognized as being dependent on males and are therefore expected to be subordinate to male authority. Feminist collectives in Mexico have reacted to machismo ideology's normalized expectations through large, organized protest demonstrations that occur every year on March 8th. Movements like #NiUnaMenos directly respond to machismo culture by demanding institutional changes; an example of public retaliation against gender inequality.[1]

While the feminist movements of today are fighting against the entrenched structures of machismo, many of the foundations of this gender imbalance can be traced to the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution. The contemporary public confrontation, in the case of modern protests, arises from a long historical process of female struggle and exclusion. To understand the evolution of gender inequality in Mexico, it becomes critical to assess not only what the post-revolutionary institutions did to restore the patriarchal structures, but also where these activities stemmed from, and how they rewrote women's place in society. Despite the revolutionary intensity that momentarily empowered women across class lines, the period that followed systematically erased their contributions and reinstated patriarchal norms under the guise of national rebuilding. This article explores the marginalization of women post-revolution and explores its lasting effects on Mexican women today.

II. THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION

During the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), women of all classes, molded by the Porfirian era, were actively involved. Women pushed to fight for their country by joining the revolution as Soldaderas, spies, and political activists. Despite their vital roles during the Mexican revolution, women were systematically marginalized in its aftermath through a resurgence of machismo. Instead of appraisal, Mexico embraced machismo and marianismo to reinforce traditional gender hierarchies and marginalize women's achievements. Much like machismo, marianismo is the ideology that the perfect woman was self-sacrificing, nurturing, and submissive, often modeled after the Virgin Mary. The usage of these ideologies erased female contributions and reimposed patriarchal control, suggesting that revolutionary movements often reinforce the very inequalities they claim to dismantle.

The Mexican Revolution marked a pivotal time when the oppressed rose against established social injustices, foreign exploitation, and authoritarian rule. It began as a major armed struggle against the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz, who had ruled Mexico for over thirty years. During the dictatorship, his policies favored elites and foreign investors, leaving the majority of Mexicans in poverty and without a political voice.[2] In 1910, Francisco Madero initiated the revolution by calling for democratic reforms and free elections. The rebellion took form through political mobilization and armed rebellion, leading to Diaz's resignation in 1911.

However, after Madero took power, political instability continued and new revolutionary leaders emerged with competing visions for Mexico's future. In the South, Emiliano Zapata demanded land reforms through his "Plan de Ayala," advocating "Land and Liberty" for peasants. In the North, Pancho Villa fought for economic justice for workers and farmers. Meanwhile, figures like Venustiano

Carranza and Alvaro Obregon sought to centralize authority and establish a new constitutional order.[3]

The revolution manifested itself into the Constitution of 1917, which promised land redistribution, labor protections, education, and restrictions on the foreign ownership of resources.[4] Despite these promises, true social and economic equality remained out of reach for many Mexicans. While the fighting ended around 1920, the ideals of the revolution continued to shape Mexican National identity.

III. WOMEN DURING THE REVOLUTION

During this time, women from all class backgrounds formed resistance groups, founded newspapers and magazines, served as nurses, smuggled and sold arms, and collaborated with planning. Upper-class women spent their time in health organizations such as the red cross, while middle-class women served the cause in all capacities. Thousands of lower-class women followed their men into battle as soldaderas.[5] Not only did these women contribute as soldiers, but they also played vital roles as spies, messengers, and organizers.

Many women joined the revolutionary armies led by Zapata and Villa, putting on military clothing and fighting in the same capacity as men. Women such as Adela Velarde Perez and Juana Belen Gutierrez became symbolic because of their contributions as both revolutionary activists and leaders. Many women played important roles as spies and informants. Due to the societal expectation that women were non-threatening, they were able to move freely through enemy lines. Their roles as messengers were vital in ensuring that different revolutionary factions could coordinate their movements effectively.

Juana Belen Gutierez was a strong supporter of Emiliano Zapata and his vision for land reform and social justice. She aligned herself with the Zapatista movement, fighting for the rights of peasants and advocating for the rejection of the exploitation of indigenous and rural populations.[6] Unfortunately, she was incarcerated many times due to her political activities and outspoken advocacy for social justice and women's rights during and after the Mexican revolution. During her life, she also took part in revolutionary journalism where she edited and published the newspaper, “La Mujer Mexicana.” In her writing, she advocated for gender equality, social justice, and the importance of women’s participation in the revolution.[7] Despite the limited recognition of women in the aftermath of the revolution, Juana Belen left a lasting impression on Mexican history and laid the foundation for future feminist movements in Mexico.

The figure of the Adelita was born from the ballad “La Adelita,” which romanticizes the role of women in the revolution, portraying them as supportive figures. Completely invalidating the realities of their labor and sacrifices.[8] Some women gained recognition in revolutionary songs and stories, reflecting their profound importance, but their roles were often framed as secondary to male leaders. The romanticization of Adelitas was convenient for post-revolutionary Mexico, which pushed for the reestablishment of traditional gender norms.

Machismo, as a cultural concept, is rooted in patriarchal values that emphasized male dominance, aggression, authority, and often in contrast to women's perceived subordination.[9] The machista standpoint asserts the distinction that is male and female gender roles based on the stereotypical identification of gender characteristics; a man is to be strong, virile, and aggressive. These characteristics should dominate his general behavior and his relations with women in general. In contrast with men, women are thought to be a more passive "weaker" sex; dependent on men and submissive to male authority.[10] Historically rooted in colonial and Catholic traditions, machismo emphasized male dominance in both private and public areas.[11] In the aftermath of the revolution, the ideological emphasis on machismo sought to reassert traditional gender roles and consolidate male power within the national narrative. Women were expected to resume their duties as a domestic wife while men reclaimed their positions as breadwinners and leaders of society.

Despite their significant roles, women were largely excluded from the official political processes during and after the revolution. Male veterans were celebrated as heroes and positioned as rightful leaders of society, pushing women and their contributions aside. Official revolutionary histories and public celebrations emphasized men, erasing or minimizing the contributions of women. Propaganda filled their lives, being found in textbooks, posters, and films, and portraying male revolutionaries as the sole leaders. This created a heroic masculine image, excluding soldaderas and activists.[12]

At the same time, the idea of marianismo rose in popularity, complementing machismo. Marianismo is a cultural ideal deeply rooted in Latin America, and based on the Virgin Mary, describing the ideal woman as self-sacrificing, pure, nurturing, and obedient to male authority. It's the female equivalent of machismo, with each fostering distinct and gendered roles for society at large. Marianismo became emphasized by the state, and the media promoted the idea that a stable society required women to support them, not challenge them. Women were encouraged to embrace motherhood, while downplaying their roles as soldiers, spies, and political activists during the war.

IV. THE RISE OF MARIANISMO POST-REVOLUTION

This cultural expectation demanded that women be spiritually stronger than men while remaining devoted entirely to home and family.[13] Unlike the temporary empowerment women experienced during the revolution, marianismo reinforced the notion that "true" womanhood means passivity, endurance, and invisibility in political and public life. The emphasis on marianismo after the revolution came as a way to stabilize their torn society. State propaganda, educational curriculum, and public art glorified traditional motherhood. Murals depicting the revolution accentuated males as heroes, relegating women to the background or portraying them only as nurturers or observers. Machismo and marianismo gender roles serve as mechanisms by which messages about cultural knowledge, values, and expectations are linked to boys' and girls' engagement in ethnic-related practices and behaviors.[14]

The cultural rise of marianismo also had profound effects on gender-based violence in Mexico. The idealization of female submissiveness and suffering normalized male dominance—and abuse. Women were culturally conditioned to endure mistreatment silently as an extension of their duty to their families and communities.[15] As a result, because women were expected to embody perfection, any departure from these ideals was punished harshly socially, and sometimes, legally. Throughout the 20th century, Mexico had an uptick in domestic violence, sexual assault, and femicide. Laws often failed to protect women effectively, treating it as a "private matter." In this way, marianismo did not simply relegate women to a secondary status; it actively justified and perpetuated a system where their suffering was permitted.

Some may argue that this ideal seems to elevate women by describing them as morally superior; in truth, it enforces male superiority by establishing women's virtue as dependent on their obedience and silence. After the Mexican Revolution, this structure served to realign the national gender expectations. The women soldaderas, journalists, and organizers who had transcended traditional female roles were either excluded from national memory or reconstructed in ways that subordinated their life. Female revolutionary contributions were often romanticized as extensions of female devotion rather than acts of political or military assertion.[16]

In everyday life, marianismo operates as a combination of moral expectation and dictation of social behavior. Women were criticized for political activism, professional labor, and higher education; and particularly, if they failed to fulfil their primary duty to their family. Deviating from traditional domesticity would not only be considered a rebellion but moral failure. The social lens guaranteed that women were excluded from land ownership, labor rights, and political representation during the institutional reforms of the twentieth century, as new cultural structures solidified in the wake of the 1917 constitution.[17]

Significantly, marianismo also established an infrastructure for the normalization of gender-violence outcomes. By valorizing women's endurance, purity, and silence, the belief formed a basis of justification for hyper-normal male aggression and delegitimized female reporting of abuse and the enacting of boundaries. This continues today in Mexican society—as is evident from ongoing manifestations of machismo in domestic violence, femicidio and institutional negligence of gender justice. The ongoing action of feminist groups like #NiUnaMenos in the face of entrenched cultural expectations and deeply woven narratives demonstrate a collective push back against marianismo

Between 1915-1924, Mexico witnessed its most intense struggle for women's rights in the state of Yucatan. It became the state with the most active participation by women; it was the site of the first two female congresses, and it was the first in Mexico to open education to women. Programs created by Salvador Alvarado expanded educational opportunities and improved working conditions as an attempt for women to integrate into society. Broadened by Felipe Carrillo Puerto, programs allowed for women to run for offices, have access to birth control, and granted educational benefits. His sister, Elvia, organized women into feminist leagues, conducting sponsored meetings, night schools, and campaigns against common issues such as illiteracy, alcoholism, and childcare.

V. INSTITUTIONAL MARGINALIZATION THROUGH POLICY

One of the main promises of the revolution was land reform. The 1917 Mexican constitution enabled the redistribution of land to peasant communities through the ejido system.[18] However, even though the reforms were conceived as revolutionary, women were failed and excluded, while still preserving patriarchal control. The resulting reforms in land distribution, labor regulation, education, and political participation essentially institutionalized machismo, eliminating women from public spaces and enshrining their subordinate status.

While Yucatán stood out as a site of feminist advancement during and after the Revolution, its momentum was not indicative of the national case. The achievements in Yucatán were important, but insular, and did not lead to structural changes across Mexico. As the post-revolutionary state began to consolidate, its policies reflected a desire to reinforce traditional gender roles rather than build on the radical shifts seen in states like Yucatán. Increasingly, the progressive

promise of the Revolution gave way to patriarchal normativity, especially in policies related to land, labor, and political rights.

Despite the promise of egalitarianism after the revolution, there were limited opportunities for women in land reform policies following the revolution. The 1917 Constitution allowed for land redistribution via a Mexico-wide system of ejidos (communal lands), but lands were granted predominantly to male heads of households, thereby excluding women from being formal land developers and farmers. As a result, the Mexican state not only denied women's substantial contributions to agricultural developments, but it also reinforced women's dependency on male family members for financial means.[19]

Labor reforms were also limited. The laws passed to regulate working conditions and protect the rights of workers were primarily for industrial and unionized male laborers. Women were typically in the informal or domestic labor fields, having little to no regulation and protections regarding their labor. Even in the instances when women worked in factories, the application of labor laws for women was minimal, due to issues like the systematic gendered wage disparity, and the lack of male recognition of them as legitimate workers.[20]

The revolutionary government's education policies systematically marginalized women, where the curriculum helped reaffirm domestic roles. In post-revolutionary education, civic nationalism was emphasized in reference to the ideal citizen. However, the "ideal" citizen was implicitly male. Often, girls were only channeled into home economics and moral instruction programs, thus giving them no opportunity to become independent citizens and forcing them to learn how to be better wives and mothers.[21] The state took advantage of education as a means of not only incorporating literacy and political indoctrination but also to continuously establish gender hierarchies in the name of stability and national cohesion.

The exclusion of women from formal politics served as, arguably, the best example of institutional marginalization. Regardless of their active role in the revolution—as soldiers, organizers, and propagandists—women had remained excluded from voting and running for office in the public sphere. It was only in 1953, a complete generation after their service to revolutionary change, that Mexican women were awarded voting rights in the federal election.[22] During the immediate post-revolutionary period, the political sphere was officially a male-first value system where women were silent participants in legislative and public life.

VI. CULTURAL ATTITUDES AND NARRATIVE CONTROL

These post-revolutionary policies and politics together, reinforced the machista ideology and became structural components in the status quo of Mexican Governance. By systematically denying women economic, educational, and political agency, the state upheld patriarchal norms under the guise of revolutionary progress. Even though elements of the revolution did dismantle many aspects of Mexican society, it ultimately reproduced and institutionalized gender inequalities.

After the Mexican Revolution, the national narrative changed dramatically toward male heroism. Murals, literature, and mass media created images of male heroes and emphasized their strength and sacrifice in the revolution. The narrative emphasized the idea of men as leaders, and, as a result, completely neglected, or shifted women's roles into supporting, subservient characters. Artists like Diego Rivera and Jose Clemente Orozco depicted revolutionary scenes with glory; and they frequently marginalized or excluded women, reinforcing the idea that men were the central agents of change.[23]

This cultural remapping also coincided with the erasure of women's agency in reshaping power relations while at the same time reinforcing patriarchal structures that were already inscribed into Mexican society. These stories of women who were spies, combatants, or organizers for the revolution were either not remembered, or their legacy was "cleaned up" to reflect ideals of femininity and obedience. The result is that the collective memory of the revolution has long been dominated by a view that only reinforces machismo, valorizing men's dominance and historically diminishing women's contributions. This played a major role in legitimizing gender roles for the post-revolutionary state, creating a model for the exclusion and exploitation of women in personal and political life in the decades that followed.

Changing times in Mexico promised social transformations, but the aftermath marginalized women. While they participated in fighting, logistics, and political planning, women were largely precluded from post-war nation building. Rather than recognition, they were subjected to reframing, or a disappearance from public memory, that would ultimately place men at the center of national identity. The systematic exclusion of women facilitated the continued acceptance of machismo as a cultural norm, maintaining traditional gendered expectations of male dominance and female subjugation.

We do not have to look far into Mexican society today to see how these trends manifest. Women struggle to have access to leadership positions, there is vast gendered inequality, and gender-based violence pervades everyday life, which includes femicide and

ongoing impunity as national crises, justified by long-held cultural norms that entrenched male control and silence women's voices.[24] While post-war ideals suggested the possibility of justice, the state did not focus their energy on administrative gender equality.

VII. LEGACY OF MACHISMO IN MODERN MEXICO

In recent years, feminist responses to this legacy have begun to emerge. Activists continue to retell the stories of soldaderas and revolutionaries, not just for memorialization, but in relation to the structural apparatuses that have kept them silenced.[25] Movements such as #NiUnaMenos and the March 8th demonstrations are in direct response to the culture of machismo that has been embedded within Mexican society. These movements advocate for, amongst other things, a redefinition of citizenship, including gender justice, but do not limit their inclusion to women's protection.

This contemporary experience is deeply connected to the constructed absence of women in the revolutions' mythology in Mexico. Feminist scholars and activists continue to promote and affirm recollections of this absence against its continued patriarchal erasure as a means to rewrite the collective narrative of the nation; to recognize women as agents of change in the narrative of history and forge futures that do not grow under the shadow of patriarchal subjugation.[26]

The Mexican Revolution provided a brief opportunity for women to become soldiers, strategists, and political agents of their own; nonetheless, it catalyzed and established machismo as the pillar of the emergent national identity. A set of revolutionary gender norms were quickly reabsorbed into a patriarchal framework that once again deprived women of any substantial recognition and rights. Rather than honoring the sacrifices of soldaderas and political activists, the post-revolutionary state produced a history that celebrated male heroism while relegating women to the roles of the domestic, or the symbolic.

CONCLUSION

The historical erasure of women established a precedent for contemporary gender inequality in Mexico. The continued political exclusion of women, like the denial of suffrage and labor protections in the early 20th century, have contributed to the current prevalence of femicide and underrepresentation today. Women are still subject to the same silencing and marginalization as in the past, and revolutionary propaganda has emphasized the construction of a public ideal that subjected women to injustices in their political lives, education, and opportunity for land ownership. These injustices have compounded for generations, still affecting the young women in Mexico today.

According to a national survey on the dynamics of household relationships in Mexico in 2021, at least 23% of women 15 or older have reported experiencing psychological intimate partner violence in their current relationship.[27] This highlights how nonphysical forms of abuse are both widespread and socially normalized, remaining a persistent reality for women in Mexico today. While both individual and societal factors contribute to the prevalence of violence against women, societal expectations based upon gender, will ultimately continue to structure women's lives and intimate relationships. Deeply rooted ideals of machismo normalize male dominance and control, often minimizing psychological abuse as a private matter rather than recognizing it as a form of violence.[28] In many cases, men are often coddled, as they are not to be held accountable for their actions, particularly if those actions are directed towards women and involve any form of abuse.

As stated before, the expectation that women embody qualities of the Virgin Mary, places significant pressures on women to maintain family harmony, and endure suffering in silence. These dynamics are evident in the larger context of gender-based violence in Mexico. An analysis of data shows that femicide in Mexico has increased dramatically in recent years, even though the crime rate for the most violent offenses has not increased at the same rate.[29] The high degree of psychological abuse occurring, concurrent to an increase in femicides, indicates a continuum of violence that exists due to culture, institutional failures, and limited accountability. These patterns reveal how women in Mexico today continue to navigate societal expectations that limit their independence and increase their vulnerability to forms of abuse.

My own understanding of this legacy is shaped by stories passed down in my family as well as my own personal experience. I've seen the toll machismo culture takes on the women closest to me; the limitations placed on their ambitions, the unspoken repercussions of disobedience, and the fear that accompanies walking home at night. These experiences, both personal and collective, demand a serious reexamination of the stories we tell of our national past.

Propaganda, music, and literature were pushed, but reclaiming women's narratives from the Mexican revolution is not simply a historical correction, it's a political act. By confronting the cultural and institutional forces that erased female contributions, we begin to dismantle the structures that continue to harm women in Mexico today. Future research must continue to recover and amplify these voices, ensuring that the next chapter of Mexican history is written with demands of gender justice at its core. In the words of Vivir Quintana's song, canción sin miedo:

"Que caiga con fuerza, el feminicida."

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WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE CONGO

IZABEL TORRES

I. INTRODUCTION

There are 54 separate, independent states across the African continent. Each state is unique and has its own system of political affairs; with conflicts arising from humanitarian crises, and the competition for power, territory and resources. The Democratic Republic of Congo remains an example of this; with ongoing political conflict in which women are subjected to systemic gender discrimination and sexual violence. This article addresses the ongoing war and politically unstable government in the Congo that have resulted in woman enduring sexual violence, displacement, and discrimination. To better understand the depth of the crisis, and to humanize it, the evidence provided will originate from survivor testimonies, scholarly analysis, and reports by humanitarian organizations, in an effort to understand the root cause of the persistent violence and to discover potential protection measures. The Congo is one of many countries suffering ongoing conflicts today; but its persistent gender discrimination and widespread physical and sexual violence is one of most critical threats in the region.

II. THE CONGO WAR: IN BRIEF

The conflict in the Democratic Republic of The Congo dates back to 1996, when President Mobutu Seko, its authoritarian leader, consolidated power by establishing himself as the sole locus of power, prompting major political instability. Concurrent to this, the Rwandan genocide was taking place, and this violence led to refugees pouring into Congo. President Mobutu would establish a powerful rebel group called the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL), alongside critical support from Uganda and Rwanda, and authorizing Laurent Desire Kabila to assume leadership. This resulted in a drastic turn of events wherein Kabila, backed by the AFDL, allowed his forces to seize control of the Democratic Republic and replaced Mobuto as president. Shortly after, tensions rose within once regional allies, Uganda and Rwanda, who had been in favor of Kabila's rise to power in the ensuing African World War. A new rebel group, Rally for Congolese Democracy (RDC), invaded and seized ports within the DRC.[1] This conflict would spiral for years and throughout it woman and girls faced extreme conditions and exploitation.

Since the outbreak of war within Congo, the country has focused on power rather than aid, profiting off the sexual violence imposed on Congolese woman. Any time conflict arises, we see numerous factors affecting the women and children who live there; starving, no shelter, no water, and the persistent threat of sexual abuse. In a study published by the Journal of Development Studies, Jocelyn Kelly and her colleagues observed that "armed groups motivations for perpetrating sexual violence are linked to their conflict objectives such as sowing terror, undermining social cohesion, and creating disorder among communities."[2] This insight reveals why women continue to be systemically targeted with sexual abuse; and why it continues to serve as a strategic tool for inflicting long lasting harm on women.

III. THE IMPACT ON WOMEN

Rape has long been used as a weapon of war towards woman, and it is no different in Congo. Rape is weaponized by armed groups to deliberately instill fear among the women abused, preventing them from speaking out or opposing them.

To illustrate the severity of fear instilled, journalist Kevin Sites conducted an interview with a Congolese woman, whose name was withheld for privacy, and who resided in eastern Congo during the 1990s when FDLR rebels entered her community. Her testimony provides a firsthand account of the level of sexual violence used to intimate women and reinforce the power of these armed forces within communities. Sites wrote:

"They seized her husband, beat him, tied him to a tree, and then killed her two children in front of her. Each member raping her one by one, nothing her husband could do to stop it."[3]

This was one of the first attacks she experienced. She would suffer the same fate again seven years later when a different rebel group attacked her refugee camp.

"They took her outside and tied her to a tree. They killed her husband and raped her with such brutality that her unborn child died two days after the attack. When they were finished, she told me in a calm, steady voice with almost no emotion, that they cut flesh from her dead husband's arms and forced her to eat it."[4]

The experience of everything; from the touch, smell, and even memory of the incident, is a unique type of fear women are subjected to. Re-living such an incident instills a profoundly horrifying fear as a survivor. The physiological consequences of long-lasting scars, physical and psychological, afflict a woman throughout their daily life. As a consequence of gender-based violence at scale, it also contributes to a large number of displaced women. In an article focusing on understanding factors that contribute to gender-based violence, researchers found that: "Sexual violence can be both a driver and a result of displacement, as displaced women are cut off from normal, protective social structures or forced into exploitative situations."[5]

To clarify, if a woman is experiencing such horrific conditions, they are often forced to flee their home to seek safety elsewhere. The transition from home environment to unfamiliarity can leave these women deeply vulnerable when their sole focus is survival.

Linda Jolof and her colleagues study these events, particularly around the middle east. Jolof and her colleagues focus on the continuous issue of instability impacting women's safety. In 2022, Jolof and her colleagues reported that, "When war came, an often comfortable and peaceful life changed to an unstable and unsafe situation."[6]

Earlier this year in February, Sofia Calltorp, Chief of Humanitarian action at UN Women and Director of the Geneva Office, spoke regarding the catastrophe going on within the Democratic Republic of Congo. Calltorp discussed the 'instability' that women and girls endure due to the consequences of the civil war in their country. Violence and systemic exploitation became embedded in daily life for women in the DRC.

"Armed conflict and destroyed infrastructure hindered access to basic commodities such as food, water, electricity and fuel…the lack of resources and options resulted in a grief of not being able to provide their children more than absolutely necessary."[7]

In these conflict zones, women are often the sole provider for not only themselves but for their children as well. And in these conditions, it is simply impossible for a woman to provide for herself, let alone a child. If women don't have access to basic resources, how can they obtain basic human needs? Research shows that women residing in refugee camps often face food scarcity, unsanitary conditions, and inadequate shelter. Besides the inability to provide food for you or your family, surviving the struggle of being homeless in your own home country is another factor. This unfortunately, compounds the strain on many women, leading to feelings of hopelessness and building on the psychological pain caused by traumas already endured.[8]

IV. RESPONSES TO THE VIOLENCE

One person who can speak about these inhumane living situations is Julienne Lusenge, who has been an advocate in the DRC for 40 years. Lusenge also founded the group, Female Solidarity Integrated Peace and Development (SOFEPADI), an organization that provides holistic support to those who have experienced sexual violence.[9] Lusenge uses the experiences of other survivor stories, like hers, to communicate the severity of the conditions suffered by women in Congo. One such account was that of a woman who confessed to being a target of sexual violence while being hunted from her village.[10] This wasn't uncommon for women in the Congo; women have been facing these inhumane acts since the time of King Leopold in 1855.

The mental toll it takes on women is significant. Some give up hope, and some are just mentally and physically destroyed. These events discussed are neither the first instances wherein such violence occurs, nor, without the right intervention, the last time it will. Lusenge discusses the continuous human rights challenges the DRC faces today:

"Our country has 7 million displaced people living in inhumane conditions. These people don't have anything to eat nor a roof to sleep under, despite all the protocols, non-aggression conventions, international documents and instruments that exist... We have a lot of resolutions. We do not need more resolutions; we need the implementation of these resolutions so that we can feel they protect us and promote human rights and democracy."[11]

Women deserve to feel safe, especially when gender-based violence occurs. When asked about the outlook for the future of Congo, Lusenge says:

"We are not going to be discouraged. It is important that we mobilize even more in the promotion of rights, especially in the fight against sexual violence and gender-based violence. We must take action - not just talk at conferences, but take action every day to put an end to sexual or sexist violence and discrimination against all people."[12]

Across Africa, women face displacement from their own home, sexual assault, lack of access to food, water, or healthcare. Dr. Denis Mukwege, who represented the United Nations Human Rights office at the time, visited women in the Congo as a gynecologist and obstetrician, and saw the reality himself. Mukwege stated:

"The women came to me, to the hospital with genital injuries. I started treating them. At first, I thought they were sporadic occurrences. Unfortunately, as time went by, I realized that I was at a loss. I was dealing with a new pathology — sexual violence with extreme brutality. It aims to destroy a woman's reproductive system."[13]

Mukwege observed the conditions of how women were handled; it left him speechless. Since his visit to the Congo, Mukwege has not only become an advocate for putting an end to sexual violence but using his voice to demand for justice. When speaking, Mukwege calls for the international criminal tribunal to acknowledge these horrific crimes:

"I believe that a special tribunal, quite simply, could bring justice and justice is part of the healing process for the victims of sexual violence that we are treating today… but there is a piece of this missing and that is justice and reparation for what they endured!"[14]

This is just a small fraction of what could be done. Kevin Stiles, the journalist previously mentioned, four things that could be done to take action: the "Tactical redeployment of UN peacekeepers", "Repatriate or assimilate Rwandan Hutus", "Impose trade sanctions", and "End ambivalence through individual awareness."[15]

V. CONCLUSION

To address Stiles' points, the UN has forces based in the DRC but in a protected location away from those who need them. By allowing them to be more visible within communities, it could be certainly more effective. As for the second one, it might appear extreme, but not impossible. For change to occur, and limit neighboring countries from entering the conflict, we must have a change in diplomacy. The third tactic, sanctions, only works if imposed. The UN would need to target countries that profit from exploiting certain minerals within the DRC. The last one, which we might consider the "simplest", starts by abstaining from the purchase of any items from Congo that fuels the exploitation.[16]

The depth of abuse concluded here is appalling and unacceptable. It exposes the brutal reality of the cruelty women endure there and raises a critical question of how much further must women continue suffering before real change takes place. Women are still fighting for equal representation, regardless of war, violence, and starvation. These topics are difficult, not only as women, but as human beings.

This article aims to unleash the attention needed to fight for women's rights within Congo, not just by recognition but through action. The fight for women's equality is just the beginning; women deserve to feel safe, heard, and represented. It's not only up to us, but government policies, collective enforcement, and international organizations, to ensure change for women in Congo.

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AFRICAN MIGRATION

NOEL PRUDENTE

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's world, the lines and borders of countries are evident. Shaped by expansionist movements such as imperialism and colonialism, European countries, as well as the United States, carved out lines in the sand of what region is overseen by what global power. These territories have now developed into states, and we see inessential borders that restrict and monitor the transit of people between nations.

African migration has been discussed at length within European and Australian communities, and to a degree which some might even consider an international crisis. Does the emigration of people from Africa truly create an international crisis for other states? This article will analyze migration trends in Africa, provide examples of the factors involved in the analysis, and consider whether this poses larger issues for the global community.

II. MIGRATION ROUTES

Africa is rich in peoples and cultures easily identifiable to many. African, and its peoples have had a storied history of migration; however, studies demonstrate recent trends in migration patterns have potentially increased. Whether it be within or from Africa, migration has increased from 31 million to 42.5 million in 2020 and is projected to jump by another five million to 47.5 million in 2025.[1] It is important to note that although this increase is large, the migration flow includes the aggregates of intra-African migration, which makes up the bulk of the numbers.

Prevalent in these migration patterns is the intra-regional movement observed within the continent. Africa sees bountiful migration from Western regions into the South, the East Horn into Southern Africa, and the interior dividing its migrants between the Southern and Eastern regions respectively.[2] It is in these regions that we see the bulk intra-regional migrations. When it comes to overseas emigration patterns, we see that Northern African citizens are who comprise the largest portion of African migrants into Europe and the Middle East.[3] International migration is largely comprised of immigrants coming from lower wage regions of Africa into countries that can generate a higher paying wage.[4] The pressures for sustaining oneself economically can be considered a driving factor to migration out of Africa.

When examining the data on international migrations into the European Union (EU), the number of Sub-Saharan African migrants isn't comparable to the number of intra-African migrations that we see within the continent itself. Data shows that in 2023, there were 448.8 million people living within the EU. Of that number, 27.3 million people were non-EU citizens, which accounts for about six percent of the EU's total population. Of that six percent of non-EU citizens, the refugees residing within the EU comprise one and a half percent of the total population. Of those listed as asylum seekers, African refugees make up a little under a quarter of the percentage of refugees listed at twenty-three percent.[5] This statistic is one of the first in which Africa's immigration presents similar numbers to Asia's applicants for the EU, comparatively, at about 250,000 people.

As we look at the data on migration, we can see that the majority of emigration is moving through international channels, but the majority of those emigrating are utilizing local continental movements, usually funneling up and through Northern Africa. Before we can pin down the causes of emigration out of Africa, we must consider the issues that plague the continent internally.

III. HALF-HEARTED DEVELOPMENT

Pan-Africanism helped usher in a call for self-governance, and as a product of this evolution, we see rapid changes in economic development. Revolutions and Coup d'états begin to erupt across Africa during the 1950s-70s as the continent and its states struggle for independence. Some of these movements provided monumental successes for democracy but neglected to consider the

aftermath of the warring periods within these states, specifically the displacements and large-scale refugee crises within this period.

There are several candidate theories for globalized migration trends, whether it be socially, politically, or even economically. The World Systems Theory argues the influence of globalized capitalism from European countries, as well as the United States, has disseminated into African countries, liberalizing their economy, weakening social welfare, inserting Western religious and philosophical traditions, as well as the growing issues of foreign aid, debt, and investment. Coupled with the fact that globalization drives demand for knowledgeable experts in law, science, and finance—in these same states—the African people are susceptible to migration.[6]

Similarly, Network Theory relies on globalization as its basis for explaining migratory trends but from a different perspective. It argues that migration occurs due to the close ties of people, whether it is kinship, community, or similar identity; it links migrants, non-migrants, and former migrants together. With the increasing influence of the internet, these ties can easily be strengthened, and communication across these communities makes it easier to facilitate future migration plans. Without excluding the ability to expose a potential migrant community to the possibility for a better quality of life, these are also important to inform and dissuade future migrants from moving into states adamantly opposed to immigration or regions.[7]

In these examples we can find correlating evidence between the social and economic conditions of African states and the variability in migration patterns. Both theories are considered "push-pull" models, as they correlate increases and decreases in poverty and knowledge as a cause of migration. However, it is important to note that these models do not consider personal ambition and sustainability as variables within the model.[8]

Migration does have a correlation to developments in infrastructure and knowledge, but it requires a personal ambition, in addition to other motivational factors, to cause a person to choose migration. These push-pull methods do not account for personal ambition and social factors. This prevents these methods from extrapolating aggregate data on potentially swaying factors for their studies. Bearing that in mind, impoverished African states remain a migration desirable destination.

The colonial liberation movement ignited a wave of revolutions and coup d'états, for which the objective was to unify, but instead brought tensions and civil unrest. Creating volatile state security situations in which migration to neighboring countries could occur regardless of economic factors. These levels of instability, uncertainty, and violence are variable factors from state to state but contribute to migratory trends and a reluctance to stay for the African citizen. The Autocracy in Eritrea in 2015, for example, leading to a flow of migration out of the state and into Europe that practically doubled from the previous year, increasing to thirty-five thousand illegal Eritrean crossings into European borders.

State welfare and civil unrest aren't the only factors playing a part in the increasing or decreasing volume of migrants. Colonial links and regional proximity contribute to extra-continental emigration, specifically migrating into another state within the continent. The Maghreb region of North Africa contributes to a majority of the movements in extra-continental migration. Candidate answers for these migrations include the labor recruitment agreements signed with European countries as well as labor laws enacted between countries in the Northern Region of Africa and Europe.[9]

Conversely, weak regional ties and strong extra-continental ties can help facilitate emigration outside of the continent. Countries like Angola, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Somalia, and Sudan, for example, have relatively weak regional ties due to long-standing conflicts or as consequences of refugee resettlement agreements–amongst other reasons. Remarkably, however, it is worthy of note that most extra-continental migration comes from the more politically and economically developed regions within the continent.[10]

This is not to say that migration has simply resulted in a loss of resources from states experiencing continental emigration or intra-continental migration. Efforts have been put in place to stall the migratory diaspora to combat brain drain, or the emigration of skilled workers, from one country to another through policies put in place by the African Union (AU).

States within the AU are using programs to facilitate a positive spin on migration, by incorporating knowledge brought by migrants, and believing that those same people are a part of the solution and not the problem. Intra-continental efforts have been made known, as migrations intra-continentally have been a part of African cultivation in economics, social standing, and politics.[11] Overall, the data suggests that African migration looks to be a continental problem and not an international one.

IV. SO, WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Why then, is African immigration considered such a glaring problem in certain parts of global community? If we recount the previous studies done on migration, at an international scale, emigration pales in comparison compared to intra-continental migration. So why is it that media sources portray the migration of Africans as a terrible problem overseas, "solved" by tightening migration in EU or in Australia for example? We must answer this question through the viewpoint of social standing and perspective.

Today, the social unrest of the "African Migration" problem lies at the feet of colonialism coupled with Anti-Black sentiment. These premises, when coupled with nationalistic ideology, weaponizes African migration as a tool of exclusion from the former imperial powers. An example of this can be found in the Commission of Race and Ethnic Disparities (CRED) issued by Prime Minister Boris Johnson of the United Kingdom (UK) in 2021, in which the government released dubious information about the disparity between migrants and ethnic Englishmen. These reports included phrasing such as "…Recent immigrants devote themselves more to education than the native population because they lack financial capital and see education as a way out of poverty."[12]

Various reports criticized CRED for being inherently racist, as it perpetuated white denialism of Anti-Black sentiment in the United Kingdom; averting their eyes to social and civil problems. Concurrently, anti-immigrant propaganda is prevalent in the UK as immigrants are consistently vilified through slurs and exhibiting a spirit of, "You may be British but you will never be English."[13] Unfortunately, these sentiments are not isolated to the United Kingdom but have been seen in other international migratory destinations. Australia has similarly had recent issues with the migration of, in this case, South Sudanese African peoples into the continent. In 2006, the murder of Liep Gony, a Sudanese immigrant, was rumored to be a South Sudanese gang-related incident. The Australian government criticized the South Sudanese community, stating that their inability to assimilate and integrate was the reason for this murder. Never mind that the murder was later determined to be caused by two white men.[14]

In Australia, these sentiments have been held since before the 2000s, and African migrants have long been portrayed as the crux of violence within their communities. Australian government officials and political pundits attribute these supposed violent tendencies to their warped perception of a history of tribal communalism and child warfare; furthering these stereotypes, characterizations of aggression, and reinforcing xenophobic and racist biases.

Australian media deliver these messages as a "matter-of-fact," when most of these utterances are without substantive evidence. This general attitude towards African migrants in the state is complicated by the Moomba Riots of 2016, as African youth gang activities were the central point of causation of the riots, vilifying the teenagers and the community. It is in these moments that the Australian community would develop these unjust biases as they target the population emigrating into the country to regulate laws and unify the people with hate.

V. POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Given the circumstances, how does one manage these issues? Although most policies and agreements on migration rest in the hands of global authorities, one suggestion that empowers African states across the board is the idea of global-Local or "Glocal" participation in migratory governance. Glocal participation involves major destination cities taking a larger, more direct role. Working with those seeking refuge, or as the destination of migration, and taking an active part in migratory policy. As states fully recognize that refugee settlement agreements affect major cities' reception and integration, with policy changes determining its success or detriment. Glocal policies may help facilitate migration in a constructive and humane manner for the migrants and the cities.

These policies incentivize cities to attempt to harness the positives in receiving migrants, as they can provide positive social and economic stimulation. States additionally gain the benefit of the localization of migration policies, as destination cities wield disproportionate influence on these issues statewide. This policy to empower local cities will also, in turn, support state and other governmental agencies with the knowledge necessary to ascertain proper regulatory and decision-making factors for migratory policy.

A glocal-style agency is potentially a solution to address African intra-continental migration as well, as it helps involve not only the people at the local level but further seeks global cooperation. Many cities seek international organizational partnerships to help direct and maintain policy. This glocal policy opens the door for direct philanthropic actors. These practices center around urban policy-making and transnational advocacy, so that they can strengthen relationships with state legislatures through systemic cooperation.

Glocal policies are not without problems, as many believe state-level representatives will find it difficult to cooperate with sub-national level representatives. Glocal agencies are also relatively novel, and without many advocates, as they have only recently emerged within the decade. Cities critical of these policies must also be heard, for if the end goal is a statewide migration policy, with enforcement, the arguments must be made and settled at the local municipal levels before branching out to the Glocal level.

VI. IMMIGRATION POLICIES

So, what if intra-continental isn't the issue a state is currently dealing with? What steps does a country need to take in alleviating pressing concerns about immigration? The European Union has had several attempted answers and policies, with some bearing fruit while others were more of an experiment. The first of which was known as the Dublin Convention in 1999.

The Dublin regulation states that the application of asylum shall be made in the country where the asylum seeker has first set foot. Unfortunately, this regulation hasn't been as consistently implemented as it should be. An example is Germany in 2010 initially having forty-eight thousand applicants; which half a decade later had increased almost tenfold. Another meeting in 2003 was held between the EU and the AU to propose cooperative migration management between the two and to tighten migration measures and policies.

The EU has increasing demand for labor, so it was suggested that they let people in through working visas. States within the EU, however, have the right to choose whom they will accept. Impoverished and unskilled migrants will be placed in a precarious position, with leverage now held by the receiving states. Meanwhile, the EU's equivalent to a border patrol, known as Frontex, has received increased funding to help mitigate migration and illegal immigration via boat or landlocked central routes.

During these ocean patrols, Frontex stops illegal migrants, detaining and impounding the boats they find. These measures have been costly in social and political capital, as many losses of life have been reported due to these practices. Although they have achieved a statistically significant prevention of migration, Frontex is criticized for the losses of life.[15]

The EU has tried a multitude of policies to mitigate and prevent illegal migration. However, these issues persist, and increasingly so. Migration policy and mitigation practices can only work if both parties, the state from which emigration occurs, and the state of destination, are participating as equals. The historically asymmetrical relationships between EU states and the Western and Northern regions of Africa, which have frequent migrations into the EU, aren't on equal footing when it comes to urban development and financial wealth.

Repatriating agreements are a proposed incentive to the latter; but these agreements are costly. The EU has tried to penalize private business as a means of sanctioning those employing illegal immigrants. Concurrently, the EU has even funded urban development in the parent countries of migrants, so as to potentially dissuade migration, albeit being only partially effective.

VII. CONCLUSION

As globalization spreads, so does modernization. Technology has brought communities from across the world closer, and the internet has become a window for promising potential futures for those in dire need. Whatever the stance on migration is, through the research presented, we have identified commonalities from different countries that exhibit similar traits.

People who oppose African immigration utilize biased media narratives and elitist policy applications to vilify the topic. The UK exhibits a continued denialism of anti-black sentiment and the Australian government outright labels Sudanese immigrants as gangsters. Social prejudices like these are common in the stances of those who want to prevent the migration of African people, whether it be through asylum seeking or economic migration. The reality, however, is that most migrants from Africa stay in Africa. It is even more glaring when we see that although African emigration into the EU does contribute an influx of migrants, these peoples only make up about six percent of their population, and the majority of which are seeking asylum.

Is it a problem? One can argue that the problem isn't the migration of Africans internationally, but the handling of the policies around this. The failures lie, particularly with cities taking asylum-seekers, in the disconnect of policy between national and sub-national levels. At the national level, these people are also not given the benefit of the doubt, as certain governments propagate negative stereotypes and vilify these migrants as the cause of social, economic, and political problems. The case studies shown, such as the UK and the Australian governments, have explicitly vilified and blamed migrants, and used them as a scapegoat for their own people.

A presumption of superiority seems to be trending amongst the states receiving migrants as well. The way forward isn't a demand for separation or assimilation, but an offer of acceptance. When the state determines what you see as the value of a migrant, you neglect to see the successes of the rest.

I have argued that migration itself isn't a problem, rather, that policies around it are handled poorly. Lawmakers will be the first to say it's a policy issue but neglect the social issues that must be

addressed when handling immigration as a whole. The idea that people are a detriment because of where they come from is indicative of a level of racism that can only be found in sheer ignorance.

Policies that are hyper-specific and target particular populations will only create divides between people. This lack of community, in turn, creates compounding problems within the state. People need to treat migration not as a controversial topic but as a global and humanitarian concern, as many migrants who achieve success bring that same knowledge and aspiration to their home country, and, in turn, help build a blueprint for global unity.

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SUDAN: A PROFILE IN CONFLICT

AARON PETERSON II

I. INTRODUCTION

Sudan came into the 21st century on the heels of two civil wars. The first ending in 1972 and the second beginning in 1986. These civil wars were caused by previous divisions of the country and concerns over the north being the overly dominant region. As the turn of the century came, the civil war was coming close to an end. Peace talks occurred from 2002-2004, and a peace deal was ultimately reached in 2005. Despite this, six years later South Sudan would declare its independence. Meanwhile, Sudan has experienced numerous problems since 2003, most notably, the current civil war.

In 2019, after a thirty-year reign, President Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir was ousted by a military coup. To replace him, Abdalla Hamdouk al-Kinani was selected to be Prime Minister. This would last until 2021 when a second military coup detained and ousted Abdalla. This coup was led by General Abd-al-Fatah al-Burhan Abd-al-Rahman, who at the time was the commander-in-chief of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF). Since the coup, Burhan has been both the head of state and head of government for Sudan, with his cabinet of ministers largely being comprised of military appointees.[1]

The time between the outbreak of the current civil war in 2023 and the coup in 2019 was a deeply unstable and tumultuous time for Sudan. Civilian protests—pre-civil war—were massive, as Bashir was widely unpopular. The military had demonstrated their grasp on power and that they were unwilling to relent anytime soon. The nation was divided; facing widespread violence with no end in sight. The military had effectively overthrown and ended civilian rule of the country. Not long after, a factional conflict divided the regime, with the traditional armed forces on one side and a special unit known as the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on the other. The leaders of both groups had previously worked together but had divergent opinions on the best path forward for the nation.[2]

II. OUTBREAK AND OVERVIEW

Officially begun on April 15th, 2023, the civil war has gripped the nation in a deadly struggle for power. The primary combatants, the SAF and the RSF, are both led by former regime generals. The violence started in the capital of Khartoum and has since spread throughout the nation. The region of Darfur, in particular, has been on the receiving end of much of the violence as the RSF rampages throughout the country. Additionally, the governor of West Darfur was also assassinated, likely by the RSF, in June of 2023 after accusing them of genocidal acts in the region. The violence has led to considerable loss of life and countless others being displaced by the RSF's campaign.[3]

Since the outbreak of war, the situation in Sudan has deteriorated rapidly. Millions have been displaced, having fled both internationally and to neighboring countries. There has been significant scrutiny levied against international organizations and communities for their failing of the victims of this war, and a major contributor to this has been the Russo-Ukrainian War and the Israeli-Hamas Conflict. These conflicts attracted much more attention from the media and most of the aid from the nations able to provide it.[4]

While there is still aid being given to Sudan, it isn't nearly as much as these other conflicts are receiving. France is one of the few countries who have given aid, but it was still only marginal. There have been attempts from other countries to try negotiating a peaceful resolution to the war, but these have all failed. Kenya, for example, negotiated with the RSF to form another government in Sudan. In response, Sudan has stopped importing everything from Kenya. At the same time, intelligence suggests the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Iran may seek to negotiate arms agreements with the state as well.[5]

As for the UN, they are limited in what they can do. A state of famine has been declared in parts of Sudan, with droughts and ill-

timed heat waves plaguing the nation. It has been extremely difficult for civilians to avoid the conflict while also managing day-to-day survival. Any valuable land or strategic point of interest is going to have some sort of force there, which increases the potential for attack from the opposing side. This further traps civilians in these positions; being caught between competing and dangerous options—stay or flee. This humanitarian crisis has been deemed one of the worst the world has ever seen and, unfortunately, little has been done about it.[6]

III. REGIONAL PARTICIPATION

Considering Kenya's role in the war thus far, it seems reasonable to expect increased involvement from them. They are a rising regional power, gathering economic power and influence while also building up militarily. Kenya's direct intervention could spell the end of the war and ensure the RSF's victory. However, if Kenya were to intervene, it is also possible nations that support the SAF, like Iran, may get involved. More nations involved might attract more attention from the international community—and more aid—but it could also cause the conflict to drag on further. The more likely scenario is that neither side has their allies or contributors take a more active role than they already are.

As a regional rising power, Kenya may view this conflict as an opportunity to expand their influence. Critics would argue that civil wars leave nations devastated, with a ruined economy and a discouraged populace, making this a poor choice. The work to rebuild Sudan will already be expensive, and even if Kenya is a rising power, there is doubt that they'll be able to handle supporting the rebuilding of another country. On the other hand, some may argue this is a good move for Kenya. Their position as a rising state could tip the balance of power in the region and, potentially, all of Africa. This could prove an opportunity for Kenya to show the global community that they can handle situations like this effectively without having to suffer their own economic or political struggles.

Egypt, Sudan's northern neighbor, is also faced with a dilemma as to the civil war. Egypt has, historically, been an ally of the Sudanese Army and has been indirectly involved because of their concern for the Nile River and the regions stability. Egypt's involvement has been noticed by the RSF and Egypt has, expectedly, denied this. Western intelligence also suggests that Egypt has been supplying aid to the army in critical phases, but Egypt still denies it. Due to this, RSF leaders have changed their view of Egypt from a supplier of their enemy to a full-on hostile power, going so far as to warn people in their territory that traveling north to Egypt would be seen as treason. Considering these circumstances, it leaves the Egyptians with a few options. They could become directly involved militarily, with the potential of expanding the conflict. They could leverage the army's recent victories to try and obtain a truce. Ultimately, they could even wash their hands of the conflict entirely.[7]

Egypt's role is unique; they continue to deny any type of involvement, but the army continues to score victories in the war—with support coming from somewhere. Egypt's choices all carry some possibility of blowback. If they choose to get involved directly, they run the risk of dragging other nations into the war and exploding the conflict. If they decide to leverage the army's recent victories into negotiations, then they could be seen as a peacemaker; however, they run the risk of complicating the war. If they wash their hands of it entirely, then they could lose their close relations with the Sudanese army, losing a valuable ally to their south. It is also possible that the Egyptians decide to maintain their current course and continue supplying aid behind the scenes while denying their involvement.

With Kenyan support, the RSF has declared a new government to challenge the army-controlled regime. Announced on April 14th, 2025, by the RSF's leader, General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, the move has been seen by many as a way to challenge the army's legitimacy in the war. This also provides a more direct way for the RSF to receive aid, though the government has not been recognized by the international community. This move has also compounded a real concern for another permanent split and fracturing of Sudan. If neither side can achieve real victory, or they can't or won't reconcile, then this could be the future for Sudan.[8]

Even if a split were the best of bad options, it won't necessarily solve any of the issues gripping Sudan. The two new states might remain at war; and regardless, might still be plagued by the same problems affecting any nation post-civil war. Splitting will cause competition for resources and, inevitably, one side will be better off than the other. This will only compound the difficulty of rebuilding and prolong the suffering. This could also force both sides to become more dependent on other nations. Any state that helps is going to want something in return, and it's not always in favor of the receiving state's interests or its people's desires. The reality of a possible division of Sudan could also depend on the influence of the regional participants in the war, such as Iran and Egypt.

IV. COMPLICATIONS

A primary reason preventing humanitarian aid from entering the nation is the increasingly poor condition of infrastructure since the start of the war. The civil war has led to much of the state's infrastructure being destroyed, or at least damaged, making it hard for aid to reach people. Additionally, limited access to the internet makes it harder to communicate with the people on the ground, making humanitarian efforts that much more difficult.

Unfortunately, few have tried to relieve these issues, forcing other countries, who perhaps may have a desire to help, to stand idle. This is what has led to such a massive humanitarian crisis on top of the war itself. It's extremely difficult to get aid in, and it's extremely difficult to know where the aid needs to go.[9]

The inaction of the international community isn't entirely their fault. The civil war itself, the differing allies in the conflict, and the willingness of the RSF to mark any other nation as an enemy, contribute to this situation. The RSF is reckless and brutal, which makes it an undesirable proposition to get involved directly unless it is to try and mediate a peace deal. Tragically, an unrelenting and non-negotiable enemy means that the end of the conflict will most likely come through total military victory and not a peace deal between the sides beforehand.

Complicating this, the morale of the SAF has massively improved with the reclaiming of the presidential palace in the capital city. This could potentially lead to a new phase of offensives for the army. The palace is a symbolic icon for the Sudanese people, and it also provides a stronghold of strategic importance. Additionally, it's where the army regime was headquartered before the war broke out, so recapturing their capital is a major boost to their morale and desire to continue fighting. Clearly, it is also a crippling loss for the RSF, who likely lost many men trying to defend it. However, the recapturing of the palace puts pressure on the army to start allowing relief efforts to flow through the country, at least in the parts they control. While it appears that the SAF is better trained and equipped and, therefore, making it plausible that they might win, there is still no end to the conflict in sight.[10]

V. HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS

There have been attempts by the World Bank, and others, to try and help those suffering in the conflict zone. Working alongside UNICEF and other organizations, the World Bank has provided some funding to the Sudanese government to help with things like education and healthcare. These attempts have come in different disbursements of financial aid and in the tens of millions of dollars. There is also a larger package for overall emergency relief that has been given to Sudan, and while this may not be enough to restore these sectors to pre-war conditions, it may help to prevent total collapse.[11] What limited aid that has been given has been largely allocated to help alleviate the suffering of the civilian population during this difficult time. However, the RSF and the army continue to receive financial aid from the countries that back them militarily. Hopefully, the civilian aid will be preserved to create a foundation for rebuilding the nation, or at the very least put towards helping the innocent civilians of this conflict overcome their struggles, though it remains doubtful.

Deepening this crisis is the breakdown of the healthcare system in the nation. Many hospitals have been appropriated for military purposes or are plainly inoperable from damage. The World Health Organization (WHO) has taken a special interest in the war, attempting to gather information on the general state of healthcare in the country. There have also been numerous offenses committed in and around the state's hospitals, further driving people away. Disease rates have skyrocketed, as well as medical mortality. This will most greatly impact the millions of children living within the state, already under threat from the war.[12]

Similarly, the loss of education and famine grips the people. Whole generations are deprived of access to an education from this conflict, and this will come back to haunt Sudan long after the war. Famine is leading to malnutrition in many children, affecting their everyday lives and their ability to learn and retain information.

Left with few options, the fleeing of the Sudanese people has caused a massive refugee crisis. Millions of people have been internally displaced, and millions more have left the country. Since the outbreak of war, Egypt alone has taken in more than a million people from Sudan, with other neighboring countries taking in hundreds of thousands of refugees.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

This conflict has, unfortunately, flown under the radar for much of the international community. What limited international participation in helping the people of Sudan and ending the war that has been attempted has been complicated by numerous failures. Food supply has plummeted, water is hard to find, and education and healthcare are nearly non-existent. The innocent civilian populace is struggling to an unbelievable degree, and the RSF appears to have little to no remorse for their actions in West Darfur or in the rest of the country. Tensions are still hot and neither side is willing to back down.

With no end in sight, Sudan faces a very difficult future. When the war ends, it will take tens of years to rebuild the nation, even with the help of neighbors and allies. The longer this war goes on, the worse off the nation and its people will be and the longer it will take to rebuild and get Sudan back to where it was. Unless the UN or other international organizations intervene more directly, Sudan, and its people, will continue to suffer.

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EFFECTS OF THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION POST-APARTHEID

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I. INTRODUCTION

The dismantling of Apartheid in 1994 marked the most pivotal and important moment in South Africa's history. By transitioning the country from decades of institutionalized racial segregation and oppression into a democratic society-founded on principles of human rights and equality for all. This social and political transformation was supported by different institutions, such as land reform programs, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), and a new constitutional structure; one designed to foster and promote justice, inclusivity, and social-economic redress. The TRC's objective was to confront the past cruelties, by and through restorative justice, while land reform movements aimed to correct deeply entrenched beliefs of dispossession. This systematically had formerly excluded and denied the Black majority from land ownership and other rights. Concurrently, this new wave of democratic governance instituted policies intended to dismantle Apartheid, as well as social and economic hierarchies.

However, over three decades since the official end of Apartheid, South Africa continues to remain one of the most unequal societies in the world. Continued disparities in education, wealth, land ownership, and access to services suggest that the effects of Apartheid continue to shape the country's social and economic landscape; perhaps, even its future. This enduring inequality raises many critical questions about the efficacy of these transitional justice and reform policies since their implementation in 1994. This article examines the extent to which the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the land reform initiatives, and the post 1994 democratic policies implemented in place of Apartheid, have meaningfully and fully addressed the structural inequalities inherited from the Apartheid system, assessing both their transformative potential and their limitations.

II. LIMITS OF RECONCILIATION: CRITIQUES AND DIVIDED PERSPECTIVES ON SOUTH AFRICA'S TRC

One of the main features of South Africa's transition from Apartheid to democratic governance, was the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1995. This commission, led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, was implemented to find and uncover human rights violations committed under Apartheid, offering amnesty in exchange for truthful testimonials, and to facilitate national healing. At its core, the TRC was founded on the principles of restorative justice, for which the objective is to foster reconciliation between the victims and the perpetrators. The TRC held several hearings across the country, in which more than 22,000 statements were given from the victims and approximately 7,000 amnesty applications reviewed.[1] This brought global attention to the crimes committed during the Apartheid and gave voices back to the people and victims who had long endured these crimes and for those who have been silenced.

Despite this noble goal, the commission continued to face significant criticism, as many argued that the amnesty provisions enabled many of the offenders to avoid punishment or escape accountability for their crimes. Other critics of the TRC explained that the commission focused more on the individual acts of violence, instead of on the institutionalized and systemic forms of oppression. Mahmood Mamdani, a Ugandan anthropologist, academic, and political commentator, believed that the TRC failed to correctly address the structural violence that the system of Apartheid had propagated.[2] This criticism directly confronts the core concerns of South Africa's transition to a democratic state, post 1994. While the TRC had successfully compelled a narrative of moral reconciliation,

it was limited to identifying individual offenders and the victims of human right violations.

Due to this, the commission largely overlooked the institutional and systemic nature of Apartheid. Most notably, in issues such as land dispossession, economic disenfranchisement, and racially skewed access to healthcare, employment and education. When citizens were asked about their feelings towards the TRC and its reconciliation efforts, many offered contrasting views. The TRC was not viewed as effective in bringing forth reconciliation by three of the groups interviewed.[3] According to a report published by Jay and Erika Vora, researchers found in a group of 27 participants that all 7 Afrikaner participants said the TRC was not effective in bringing about reconciliation, while 9 out of the 12 English and 3 out of 8 Xhosa participants indicated that the TRC was not effective.[4] When asked to explain their reasoning, each group had different answers. The English believed that there had been some great progress through acts of forgiveness by relatives and families of the victims, and that total reconciliation would not be possible due to the huge number of atrocities committed. The Afrikaners believed the TRC was only prolonging the reconciliation process instead of trying to contribute to it. The Xhosa participants plainly questioned whether everyone should be reconciled.[5]

These findings by Jay and Erika Vora highlight the fractured views of the TRC by different cultural and racial groups in post-Apartheid South Africa. That all 7 Afrikaner participants believed the TRC failed to produce any meaningful reconciliation reflects a deep mistrust with the process, likely caused by the perceived vilification of Afrikaners and their public roles in Apartheid crimes. From this viewpoint, the Afrikaners likely perceived the TRC as a prolonged confrontation with the past, instead of a process for mutual understanding, which many believed expanded divisions instead of trying to mend them. The English participants offered a more nuanced view, in which they acknowledged instances of forgiveness, but also recognized the limitations of reconciliation. This reflected a presumed understanding that the path towards reconciliation will not be easy, because systemic injustices continue to remain unanswered. The participants' responses demonstrate the complex interaction between symbolic acts of forgiveness and the structural changes needed for reconciliation. The Xhosa participants, who explicitly rejected the idea that "everyone should be reconciled," offered the most critical perspective on the TRC and its efforts. Their stance suggests that reconciliation, as TRC pursued, may have been seen as more of a moral duty to discuss the victims and the perpetrators without ensuring justice. Their perspective challenges the core principles of the TRC, which proclaimed its efforts to be for national unity and restorative justice, while often at the expense of real justice or material reparations. Further, it could be argued that the Xhosa respondents felt reconciliation was premature, inappropriate, and even offensive, since there was an absence of any genuine transformation and or accountability. On balance, these points of views demonstrate that the TRC struggled to accommodate the lived experiences and expectations of the people in South Africa. Instead of forming a shared national narrative, the TRC exposed the fractured understanding of justice, memory, and what a path to national healing would be. Thus, the TRC was limited not only from an institutional perspective, but a cultural divide it attempted to bridge, without addressing the root causes, such as power and inequality.

III. UNFULFILLED PROMISES: LAND REFORM, ECONOMIC INEQUALITY, AND THE PERSISTENCE OF APARTHEID-ERA STRUCTURES

The Natives Land Act, enacted in 1913, restricted any Black South Africans from owning any land in most of the country and was at the forefront of Apartheid policy. The post 1994 government, led by the African National Convention (ANC), identified land reform as one of the most critical areas for redressing these historical injustices and for promoting economic equality in the country. In 2012, the ANC reported on the effectiveness of their land redistribution efforts. They found that land reform had been only partially effective, as 87% of the arable land in South Africa remains in control of white farmers and redistribution has been slow. To this day, most black South Africans, most notably in rural areas, continue to live in extreme poverty as a result of Apartheid and the lack of substantive land reforms.[6] This shows the ineffectiveness of the land reform efforts by the ANC, even two decades after the end of Apartheid. This not only exposes their failure to keep the promise of land reforms, but it also underscores the continuing racialized structure of land ownership in South Africa—a key pillar of the Apartheid's social and economic

structure. Despite the state being formally democratic, these foundational inequalities still remain. This situation is symbolic of the broader disconnect between economic justice and political transition. While the democratic government has been successful in establishing legal equality, constitutional rights, and symbolic reconciliation, the slow pace of land redistribution shows that Apartheid era economic power structures remain largely intact.

When analyzing the failures of land reform since the end of Apartheid, many factors led to this result. According to Ruth Hall, corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, and the lack of political will and post-transfer support were the main reasons that undermined the program's effectiveness. Taken together, these contributing factors demonstrate that land reform suffered not only from practical failures in execution but from deeper ideological ideas within the post-Apartheid state. This emphasizes a larger issue; in that the post-1994 transformation has prioritized symbolic justice and formal equality over structural change and redistribution. Without a radical reimagining of what justice in land reform looks like, it is likely to remain an unfulfilled promise rather than a realized foundation of the new democratic state; one that is actively and progressively pursuing changes for equality.

IV. ENDURING INEQUALITY: THE LASTING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LEGACY OF APARTHEID IN POST-DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICA

Although the formal end to Apartheid was declared in 1994 after the first democratic election, social inequality in South Africa remains prevalent and deeply racialized. The history of racism and inequality in South Africa's is rooted in its colonial and Apartheid past. After the National Party under the leadership of Daniel Francois Malan came to power in South Africa in 1948 and was the first to implement Apartheid policies, it made racial segregation official through a series of laws; including the Population Registration Act of 1950, which classified South Africans by race. Another was the Group Areas Act of 1950, which enforced segregation in residential areas, where nonwhites were forcibly removed from any urban areas and forced to live in poor, rural communities that were often cramped. Perhaps the most insidious law was the Bantu Education Acts of 1953, which created separate education systems for black South Africans—by design often inferior to those that whites attended. Although the official end of Apartheid ended these laws, their effects have lingered to this day.

According to the World Bank, South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world. The wealth and income disparities between black South Africans and whites are skewed along racial lines, as the white minority continue to control a heavy share of the economy.[7] Despite the formal end of Apartheid and the establishment of a democratic government, these persistent economic disparities continue to uphold the legacy of systemic oppression even after political transformation. It alone is not enough to eradicate the institutional and structural foundations of racial inequality. So long as whites continue to dominate major sectors of the economy, it will continue to reflect the failure of redistributive reforms post-Apartheid. Even though South Africa's peaceful transition from one government institution to another is significant, it remains incomplete in terms of social and economic reforms. This confrontation with reality is important for political stability, social cohesion, and the pursuit of justice in post-colonial societies.

In the end, successful democratic transitions come through both economic equality and political rights. Although South Africa has implemented many reforms to combat inequality in areas like housing and education, they have been only partially effective in addressing and resolving these issues. The Education reforms greatly expanded enrollment in primary schools, as a unified education system replaced racially segregated schools, as well as introducing free schooling for all. However, unemployment remains a huge issue, as black South Africans are mostly affected by limited economic opportunities. While the ANC has expanded access to basic services, education is still affected by geography and racial disparities, and 38% of black South African remain unemployed.[8] Another only partial success was the National Housing Policy, which was implemented to build more than 3 million houses post-Apartheid. The proposal was intended to provide poor families with housing and basic services. However, this program only bolstered unemployment rates; as houses were often built too far away from cities and, as a result, led to fewer job opportunities. Ironically, it also reinforced the Apartheid era Population Registration Act of 1950 as many black South Africans subsequently lived in separate areas than whites.[9] Although the ANC government has made efforts to expand access to basic human needs, their reforms have unintentionally reinforced the systems that they intended to replace. Even with improvements like increased educational opportunities and housing provisions, the unemployment rate among black South Africans, suggests that the economic structure of Apartheid continues to remain intact.

V. CONCLUSION

South Africa's post-Apartheid journey reflects both major progress and continued struggles. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission provided a template to the rest of the global community for confronting past violence but left many economic injustices largely unaddressed. Land reform movements, that were at least symbolically significant, have fallen well short of their goals

due to political and structural constraints. Most critically, this enduring inequality reveals the deeply rooted and systemic legacy of Apartheid's social and economic order. For South Africa to fulfill its democratic promise to its people, especially for black South Africans, future reforms must address these foundational disparities. Although the work towards an equal and fair society in South Africa remains one that will require iteration, one cannot ignore the past and how far the country has come since the end of Apartheid. Change remains ongoing and urgent, and it's up to the people to decide how fast that change for the better occurs.

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BANANAS, DEATH SQUADS, AND LAWSUITS: AN EXPLORATORY APPROACH TO THE FUTURE OF REGULATING TNCS

MAYA RENTERIA

I. INTRODUCTION

On June 13, 2024, a federal jury in Florida issued a guilty verdict against Chiquita Brands International for funding Colombian right-wing paramilitary death squads that killed banana workers.[1] Chiquita Brands International, one of the world's largest banana companies, was ordered by the court to pay an aggregate total of $38.3 million dollars in damages to sixteen family members of eight deceased workers.[2] The lawsuit was initially filed in 2007 by the EarthRights group, a nonprofit that defends human rights and specializes in legal actions against corporations; but litigation only began in 2024 due to it being a bellwether trial in a mass tort lawsuit and requiring multidistrict litigation. Despite this, a verdict was delivered after a six-week trial and two days of deliberation.[3] The federal jury ruled specifically that Chiquita was responsible for financing the paramilitary death squads of United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), a right-wing militia group, over a period of at least ten years which ultimately led to the deaths of eight workers.[4] In the lawsuit, Chiquita claimed that their local subsidiary, Banded, paid the AUC because they wanted protection from left-wing guerrillas. They hoped their payments to the AUC would "pacify the operating environment in the banana growing region of Colombia."[5] Concurrently, they also claimed that the payments were given to the AUC as a bribe, out of concern they would harm Chiquita's employees and operations.[6]

Unfortunately, the complaints issued in this lawsuit were not rare, as thousands of banana workers have been murdered over the last century in Colombia.[7] Likewise, this was not the first time that Chiquita had been in court for funding the murders of banana workers. In 2007, Chiquita pleaded guilty to a federal felony, providing funds with the knowledge that they will be used to support terrorist acts or organizations, despite spokesman Michael Mitchell saying that "suits of this nature are without merit."[8] In the 2007 suit, the U.S. Department of Justice alleged that Chiquita paid the AUC paramilitary—a terrorist organization—$1.7 million over six years, which is illegal under federal law.[9] As a result of these charges, Chiquita was forced to pay a $25 million dollar fine to the U.S. government.[10] However, the 2024 case was rare, as a major corporation in the United States was held accountable for human rights abuses in another country.[11]

II. TNC'S AND GLOBALIZATION

To properly discuss this event, and its importance, the political and economic context must be understood. Chiquita is a transnational corporation (TNCs), so named for their operations across national borders. These entities have played an increasingly major role in the global economy due to the shift towards globalization. Conceptually, it involves the "increasing economic interdependence as well as the spread of Western [specifically U.S.] cultural influence all over the world."[12] Globalization entails the major features of capitalism, which includes but is not limited to: private ownership, free markets, and profit-driven activities. The idea of profit-driven activity—mind, in a global capitalist context—is global production, and it has undergone rapid changes over the last few decades.[13]

In some markets, production has become increasingly concentrated in the hands of TNCs, raising questions about how competitive these markets really are. Conversely, according to some scholars, TNCs have also created unprecedented job

opportunities for labor in developing countries, raising the standard of living. This is in large part due to TNCs investing abroad in competitive transnational markets, policy liberalization encouraging competition, and the technological changes that make foreign investment more efficient. Increasingly, a larger portion of foreign direct investment (FDI) ends up in these developing countries, further fueling industrialization. However, some scholars argue that globalized production fails to lift many workers out of poverty. The intense competition among many suppliers for TNCs leads them to limit labor costs and to prevent labor from having a collective voice in order to maximize profits.[14]

Another consequence of globalization is that many TNCs hold significant influence through their foreign assets, as they govern complex global value chains (GVCs) linking suppliers and assemblers around the world. Countries strive to improve their position in the GVCs to compete for more profits, and as encouraged by the global capitalist structure. TNCs, for their interests, depend on states with stable rules governing property rights, trade, and investment protection. They rely on these states for the rule of law and many subsidies, yet also actively seek to avoid state taxation and sometimes manipulate global markets. To understand this paradox of wanting rule of law whilst also subverting it, an example may be of use. As a TNC, Chiquita should want the relative stability and rule of law of a democratically elected government as opposed to an authoritarian one. However, Chiquita purposefully overthrew the democratically elected government of Jacobo Arbenz, then president of Guatemala in 1954, because they judged him to be bad for business.[15]

Chiquita has been known by another name, having grown out of the United Fruit Company (UFC). UFC was a massive agricultural corporation that had a history of supporting authoritarian governments and movements throughout central and south America because they deemed it good for business. They also held economic power over multiple Central and South American countries, and the U.S., to be capable of installing such authoritarian governments. In 1954, the UFC successfully lobbied the U.S. government to overthrow the democratically elected Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz. The UFC did this because Arbenz had passed several land and labor laws intended to ease the suffering of Guatemalan people, which also hurt UFC's business. The primary crop affected was bananas. To this day, bananas remain an important cash and staple crop in Guatemala, and, according to one source: "In 2022 the U.S. imported $2.8 billion."[16]

III. THEORY, PRAXIS, AND CONSEQUENCE

While Chiquita has strong economic and political power, Colombia's is comparatively weak. Colombia has been shaped by the core-periphery model, wherein developing states are pushed to have natural resource and extraction dependent economies. They are forced to sell those resources to developed states (often those in the West) at extremely low costs, so those developed states can make a profit in turn selling finished, valued-added products back to the developing state. This ensures that the state with natural resources, or periphery state, remains in debt to the developed, or core, state. This theory is aptly applied when discussing Colombia. This system makes sure that Colombia, a developing country, is in constant debt to developed countries like the U.S. This creates a feedback loop where their impoverishment, due to the system they're trapped in, exacerbates their weak political power which exacerbates their impoverishment and so on. Thus, making their government easier to manipulate by other nations and TNCs.[17]

Chiquita, a TNC headquartered in Florida, has most of its operations in the Global South.[18] It is an example of a TNC that benefits from, and only exists because of, global capitalism and the core peripheral model. They are incentivized to keep their headquarters in Florida, where they can reap the benefits of being an "American" company, with all its attending privileges, while also reaping the benefits of low production and labor costs in other countries. This duality highlights the asymmetry of power present in numerous areas of the globalized economy; TNCs, like Chiquita, can exert immense influence over sub-national institutions (mayoral offices and local police forces), national political structures (presidents and the legal system), and the broader market conditions in areas like the Global South. Often, this is achieved through monetary payments, otherwise known as bribes, like the ones that Chiquita was recently found guilty of giving to the AUC.[19]

[20]

By funding a paramilitary group, Chiquita protected its goods at the cost of human lives, specifically, the lives of their own employees. The corporate economic interests of core states often override human rights concerns in peripheral states, and international markets are often shaped by hegemonic interest. It is also clear that the accumulation of capital by TNC's perpetuates exploitation in

peripheral economies by non-state actors from core economies. Further, it illuminates how the U.S. government's regulatory mechanisms are reactive, not preventative, when it comes to TNCs. Suggesting that in the U.S., state interests act in tandem with corporate interest. If so, this partnership benefits TNCs through ensuring legal consequences don't fundamentally disrupt business; exemplified by Chiquita being fined by the government in 2007 for funding a terrorist organization yet being allowed to resume business.

This suggests a tension between state sovereignty and TNCs. While Colombia is the sovereign state wherein the killing of the eight workers occurred, it was the U.S. civil court system that held Chiquita accountable. This discrepancy is indicative of two issues in how TNCs are regulated. First, is that some states may lack the systemic capability or enforcement mechanisms to regulate TNCs, especially in developing nations. Colombia's justice system was incapable of bringing this case against Chiquita, partially due to the corruption that is perpetuated by the core-periphery model and the bribery of TNC's like Chiquita. This may be why TNCs, like Chiquita, choose to operate in developing nations; they know they can avoid being held accountable in those countries. This lack of accountability is exemplified by a tweet sent by the Colombian President, Gustavo Petro, after the 2024 verdict was released.[21] In it he "questioned why the U.S. justice system could 'determine' Chiquita financed paramilitary groups, while judges in Colombia have not ruled against the company".[22]

The second issue is that the regulation of TNCs is a relatively new venture, one that the global community is still figuring out. Previous attempts have been made to use existing international legal frameworks and institutions (like the International Court of Justice, World Trade Organization, and International Criminal Court) to regulate TNCs. Theoretically, these frameworks and institutions could regulate TNCs in the absence of strong state oversight in developing countries.[23] However, this has been met with little practical success. According to "Regulating transnational corporations at the UN: the negotiations of a treaty on business and human rights," the United Nations (UN) has five decades of experience in dealing with TNCs and human rights.[24] Their first major effort occurred in the 1970s when three developing countries pushed for a resolution of a program of action to regulate TNCs.[25] When this failed, a second attempt was made in 2004 with the Draft Norms.[26] This also failed. Then in 2011, they finally succeeded, as the UN's Human Rights Council unanimously endorsed The Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.[27] These principles "call on both governments and companies to identify, prevent, mitigate, and remedy actual and potential human rights abuses."[28] However, it isn't just the UN making efforts to regulate or hold TNCs accountable. There has been a similar push for the ICC to include Chiquita in its investigation of the Colombian government's human rights violations.[29]

The legal victory for the Colombian families was made possible by international human rights advocates that agreed to represent them for little cost.[30] This is demonstrative of the growing influence of international advocacy networks, which I will refer to as IANs.[31] IANs are advocate NGO actors that operate across nations and try to hold powerful economic actors, like TNCs, accountable for their actions.[32] The involvement of IANs in the Chiquita case demonstrates that the solution to regulating TNCs may not be found solely in the state, but perhaps through non-state organizations as well.

On balance, Chiquita serves as an example of the complex and sometimes contradictory role of TNCs. TNCs can drive economic growth, increase employment, and be the catalyst for other positive economic indicators. However, they can also be powerful non-state actors that can challenge a state's authority, exacerbate inequality, and operate beyond traditional regulatory structures.

IV. CONCLUSION

With all of this in mind, let us consider what this might mean for the future of regulating TNCs. I think that there are two main possibilities for the future. First, is that more people will file suit against TNCs, like Chiquita, for their human rights violations. Verdicts favorable to the plaintiffs, like the families of the deceased Chiquita workers, might embolden others to step forward now that they see that justice is possible. The plaintiff's counsel for similar pending cases may use this precedent as evidence in the plaintiff's favor. Given the value of precedence in the U.S. legal system, it might become the exemplar and help to expedite future cases. I think that there is a strong possibility that there will be an increase in lawsuits against TNCs and a concurrent decrease in the amount of time that these lawsuits will take to render verdicts.

Conversely, the second possibility is that there may be less court cases. TNCs, seeing that this verdict opens the door to other such cases, may pour more resources into their pending litigations to try slowing them as much as possible. While this won't prevent them from moving forward, assuming competent counsel, it will test the plaintiff's mental and financial stamina. Having to go through the process of a lawsuit in the U.S.'s legal system can be exhausting to plaintiffs who would be subjected to intense and rigorous scrutiny by the vastly resourced opposing counsel. Assuming that plaintiffs are unable to find a lawyer who represents them for free—a likely proposition—going through a lawsuit is financially taxing. It is expensive to retain skilled counsel, and if one is suing a TNC with

millions, if not billions, in resources at their disposal, you need a skilled lawyer. TNCs can rely on the combined stress and cost of such litigation to try to wear them down. And after the plaintiff is worn down, they can try to settle with them for an acceptable pittance.

The lack of formal enforceable regulations on transnational corporations, especially regarding their human rights abuses, needs to be addressed. I will close by briefly providing some solutions, in no particular order, that I think are viable based on my research. Improved measurement of economic outputs beyond Gross Domestic Product, GDP, would allow a more wholistic view of the effect of TNCs in the areas that they operate. Improved regulation of finance, which would prevent TNCs from abusing financial systems to pay organizations that cause harm like the AUC. The reversal of privatization would take resources from TNCs and give them to the public thus reducing TNC power and increasing public power. Making the reduction of inequalities a goal of global policy would provide a goal for the international community, increase international cooperation, and ensure that everyone is playing their part in regulating TNCs.[33] Ultimately, I hope that, at the very least, this will make you think twice about who and where you get your bananas from.

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INDIA AND PAKISTAN: THE EVOLUTION OF RELIGIOUS STRIFE

BAYLOR BUECHLER

I. INTRODUCTION

India—likely to become the most populous country in the world soon, used to be bigger. When India was the Crown Jewel of the British Empire, it encompassed the regions now known as Pakistan and Bangladesh. These provinces would break off from India after independence from the British due to religious conflicts. India was divided between two religious populations, Hindus and Muslims, while Pakistan and Bangladesh were formed as Muslim majority states instead of being part of a Hindu-led India. However, the religious strife between India and Pakistan did not end there, and this rivalry continues to this day. North of India and Northeast of Pakistan lies Kashmir, a disputed region that has seen an eighty-year history of conflict. Just last year, there was yet another incident of targeted violence in the region that killed twenty-six people over the span of four days and led to a diplomatic and military crisis in the region.[1] This article will consider the evolution of this religious rift in the subcontinent of India, how Pakistan and Bangladesh broke away from India, and discuss the overall dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir.

II. THE PARTITION

On August 15th, 1947, India and Pakistan finally achieved their independence from the British Empire. However, independence did not unify the subcontinent. Pakistan was established as its own country separate from India, consisting of two separate regions as a place for the Muslim population of India to settle.[2] There were two separate wings of Pakistan—one in the East and one in the West. West Pakistan, the area of the modern-day state, is situated in the western part of the Indian subcontinent near Punjab and Baluchistan; and East Pakistan, now known as Bangladesh, is situated towards the eastern end in Bengal.[3] Even though the two wings were separated by over a thousand miles, they were still the same country, known as Pakistan, and were administered together with the governmental center located in West Pakistan. In 1930, these regions had the highest percentage of Muslim citizens relative to their populations, making them candidates for Muslim states.[4] The origin of Pakistan came from the 1930s after a political speech by Sir Allama Mohammad Iqbal—otherwise known as the spiritual father of Pakistan—who discussed a "Muslim India within India" and how a Muslim state in Northwest India would be the final destiny for Muslim Indians in the region.[5] The name Pakistan itself was coined several years later, as an acronym of different regions between Persia and India, including Punjab, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Sindh, and Baluchistan.[6] Much of this region would come together and become what is today Pakistan.

The Government of India Act of 1935 laid out the post-colonial government of India, including a constitutional blueprint for an independent Pakistan until 1956.[7] There were also prospects over a three-tier united India—consisting of the Hindu provinces at the top, the Muslim provinces in the middle, and the state governments at the bottom, with a centralized constitutional government. However, after fierce negotiations, the Indian National Congress, the All-India Muslim League, nor India itself supported this.[8] Therefore, India resorted to partitioning the state between the two different religious groups, and thus, Pakistan was born. As part of the Partition, many Muslims living in India and Hindus living in what became Pakistan had to relocate to their respective religious states, displacing millions of people in India and transforming the subcontinent along religious lines.

After the 1947 Partition of India, mass migration became a grave issue on the subcontinent and transformed several areas as a result. Due to the long history of religious violence between the

two populations, intermingling could result in violent outbursts. Oftentimes, this led to rape, bloodshed, and property destruction, especially along the borders of the Hindu and Muslim states.[9] The partition also massively shifted demographics in regions along the newly drawn borders, such as Bengal and Punjab. In East Bengal alone, it is estimated that anywhere from 4.1 million to 5.8 million Hindu migrants relocated there between 1946 and 1970. Similarly, West Bengal took in 3.9 million refugees, with 1.5 million Muslim migrants moving from West Bengal to East Bengal.[10] Throughout the partition process, many refugees in Bengal moved in large sporadic waves because of major massacres, such as the Noakhali massacres of 1946—which killed over 5,000 people and sent over a million refugees into India by 1948. While Punjab was the site of most of the bloodshed, East Bengal was also an area of conflict. Conflicts such as the Noakhali massacres and the pogroms of 1950 and 1964 occurred there as part of the strife.[11] In East Bengal, due to the social persecution, many villages that were once centers of Hindu culture were abandoned, leaving their temples to fall silent. This left many Hindu residents in Muslim states questioning their faith, as they began feeling abandoned and persecuted after Partition permanently changed the landscape of their territory.[12] Therefore, many Hindu groups decided to move to India to avoid persecution in the new Muslim state. Bengal was, and still is, one of the largest regions of the Indian subcontinent, and it was deeply divided by faith.

One region of West Bengal in Hindu-led India is the Nadia district. Nadia was a border district where, in just four years after Partition, a majority-Muslim district converted into a majority-Hindu district as a product of mass migration.[13] In 1941, Nadia had a population that was 51% Muslim and 46% Hindu; however, by 1951, its population became 77% Hindu and 22% Muslim. Further, over 400,000 Hindu migrants entered Nadia within four years of the Partition.[14] Over the span of ten years, the Hindu population more than doubled, and the Muslim population was halved, due to these mass movements across the Indian and East Pakistani borders.[15] Taken together, this district experienced a massive demographic transformation; and in this district and others, minorities who did not relocate to their respective states often faced persecution with little recourse.[16] The governments of India and Pakistan supported this because they each wanted their own official Hindu and Muslim states respectively, with little resentment. India and Pakistan are still divided to this day, and Pakistan would be further divided in 1971 when East Bengal broke off and became Bangladesh.

Bangladesh, originally known as East Pakistan after the Partition, would become its own country in 1971. Bangladesh separated from Pakistan after two decades of oppressive governmental actions towards the Bengali people. They were treated as second-class citizens by the West Pakistani central government, and Bengali languages were not recognized.[17] For East Pakistan to separate and become its own country, the Bengali people fought a civil war for nine months in 1971 following Operation Searchlight. Through this operation, the West Pakistanis occupied Bangladesh, killing millions of Bengali citizens in the process.[18] Through their conduct, the Pakistani government violated numerous international laws on human rights, such as rape, genocide, and extreme civilian violence.[19] The Pakistani government targeted Hindus in East Bengal, as well as Bengalis calling for liberation. Eventually, Bangladeshi liberation from Pakistan would occur during the end of 1971, but it was paid for in blood. While the bloodshed has subsided in the region since the divisions of both India and Pakistan, the dispute between the two parties remains to this day.

III. KASHMIR

Since the Partition of India in 1947, India and Pakistan have been in a conflict over a disputed region, located between them, known as Kashmir. Kashmir is located to the north of India and to the northeast of Pakistan. During the Partition of 1947, each Indian province was given the option to join a Hindu-led India or Muslim-led Pakistan. While Kashmir had a majority-Muslim population that wanted to go to Pakistan, the ruling king in Kashmir was not a Muslim and opted to align Kashmir with India, resulting in huge backlash and an uprising by the Muslim population there.[20] Subsequently, the first war between India and Pakistan over the region would occur between 1947 and 1948, otherwise known as the Kashmir War of 1947-1948 or "the bone of confrontation between the two civilizations."[21] In the hopes of easing tensions, the Indian Constitution granted Kashmir a self-autonomous status with Article 370.[22] In doing so, Kashmir would have a degree of self-determination and self-government. However, some areas of Kashmir are controlled by Pakistan with most of the region being controlled by India. Even then, the entire region of Kashmir

remains disputed to this day. In 2019, Article 370 was repealed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his BJP political party, leading to Kashmir's increased subjection to Indian-led bureaucratic incursions, including lockdowns and communication blockades.[23] Despite this semi-autonomous status, conflicts have arisen between the two countries and the state of Kashmir itself, with the region being a battleground for four major wars in the 20th century (1948, 1965, 1971, and 1999), as well as eventually becoming a nuclear flashpoint with the two primary states having such weapons.[24]

Both India and Pakistan have special interests in the region, hence the eighty-year dispute in Kashmir. Pakistan is the Muslim half of the Indian subcontinent, and it would be desired for them to have the majority-Muslim state of Kashmir join this Muslim homeland. However, Kashmir was ruled by a Hindu maharaja during Partition who preferred to align the state with India, and India wants it that way to express their secular credentials.[25] In doing so, India could claim to contain both Muslim and Hindu states; however, Muslims were and still are a minority group in India. The maharaja went against the wishes of the people living in Kashmir when he opted to go to India, and that choice remains disputed to this day. Most regions of Kashmir align with India, but some choose to align with Pakistan. The Indian-aligned region of Kashmir is known as the Jammu and Kashmir state, or the J&K State, has made political demands to the Indian government including affirmative action, a semi-autonomous status within India, and even threatening to secede.[26] However, none of these needs have been met, partially due to the Indian government's repeal of Article 370, which was designed to give Jammu and Kashmir a semi-autonomous status. Furthermore, Pakistan does control a part of Kashmir, known as Azad Kashmir and the Northern areas, which have struggled to achieve self-determination, as well as political and constitutional rights.[27]

Both portions of Kashmir have fought for their political and constitutional rights for eight decades, and there are several main factors that are often used by scholars to explain the dispute between India and Pakistan. The first factor is territorial, in that India and Pakistan cannot mutually agree on a status for the Jammu and Kashmir state as both actors want it to pursue their own national interests.[28] Second, the national and religious identities of India and Pakistan do not get along and are extremely competitive with each other; in that India is focused on secular and democratic ideals, whereas Pakistan is more focused on theocratic and authoritarian ideals.[29] A third argument is about how each country pursued different nationalist images. Indian nationalism revolved around secularism and civic nationalism, whereas Pakistan was founded on ethnic and religious nationalism as a Muslim homeland.[30] The overall interests of both India and Pakistan revolve around taking over the Jammu and Kashmir State, and only one can be successful, and so the two nations have spiraled into conflict.

Throughout this eighty-year struggle for self-determination and constitutional rights in Kashmir, the state and its politics are not the only struggles. Since the beginning of the armed conflict in Kashmir in 1989, between 50,000 to 100,000 lives have been lost, as well as countless injuries, displacements, and vast property destruction.[31] Throughout this conflict, humanitarian issues have been prevalent, in which civilians are often killed, women are assaulted, children are exploited, and homes are destroyed. These acts are often committed by military and police officials—who are supposed to protect these civilians. The United Nations strongly condemns these actions, especially sexual violence, and genocide, which both violate international law.

In Kashmir, this is no exception. Research by Sehar Iqbal discusses the life experiences of twenty Kashmiri women who have experienced a plethora of traumatic events.[32] Sexual violence is one of the most malignant threats in Kashmir with over 11% of Kashmiri women experiencing some type of sexual violence; with the most common perpetrators being members of the military and police forces.[33] Many Kashmiri women are also victims of domestic violence and neglect by their husbands, who have grown up seeing violence in their daily lives.[34] As violence is a part of everyday life for many Kashmiri civilians, they adopt violence themselves. The Kashmiri people face numerous other issues in their daily lives as well, such as abandonment, loss of family members, injury, disability, mental trauma, extreme poverty, and even death. Healthcare facilities are scarce in Kashmir due to the ongoing conflict, causing many deaths from disease or violence without the ability to receive life-saving care.[35] The military has been in Kashmir for over three decades now, and the root causes of mass humanitarian issues in the region are tied to the military presence and the struggle for self-determination. Those who have seen violence in their communities for their entire lives do not know a peaceful world, and think violence is always the answer.

IV. THE RECENT 2025 CONFLICT

Over the last three decades, military forces have been in Kashmir and have been a part of numerous violent conflicts regarding the land dispute. One flashpoint in this conflict was just last year; an attack which killed twenty-six people in four days, provoking a diplomatic and military crisis across the Indian subcontinent.[36] On April 22, 2025, an armed group went into Pahalgam, located in the Indian-administered part of Kashmir, and murdered visitors in the area. With twenty-six deaths, this attack was one of the most lethal in the history of the conflict over Kashmir.[37] India pinned the blame on a jihadist group in Pakistan known as Lashkar-e-Taiba, or LeT,

alleging that Pakistan endorsed this assault as part of a campaign of cross-border terrorism. Pakistan dismissed these allegations and argued instead that India employed terrorism to divert global focus and attention away from human rights abuses in Kashmir.[38] After these allegations were dismissed by both countries, they each went to retaliatory measures, including direct military contact along the border and other aggressive policies.[39] The international community called for both India and Pakistan to tone down the rhetoric and exercise restraint, especially considering that both countries have nuclear weapons and the fear of escalation is very real.[40]

After four days of bloodshed, India and Pakistan worked out a ceasefire with both sides claiming victory in the conflict.[41] It is uncertain whether this ceasefire will hold overall, even if no escalations have occurred since April 2025. It is often argued that both India and Pakistan have achieved what they wanted to in the ceasefire, while others argue that the diplomatic approach lacked durability and legitimacy, emerging from informal tweets and phone calls.[42] It is likely that the diplomatic process will need to discuss the root causes of this conflict, including terrorism, water issues, and the eighty-year dispute over Kashmir.

Third parties may need to intervene, and some likely candidates include Saudi Arabia, the United States, and China. Saudi Arabia can be a key mediator due to its strong interest in regional peace, as well as its ties to South Asia.[43] In doing so, Saudi Arabia can facilitate dialogue between India and Pakistan regarding international mediation and diplomacy. Another potential mediator in this dispute can be the United States, however, there has been a lack of clarity over their position on this conflict.[44] Both India and Pakistan are strategically aligned with the United States; though in distinct aspects. India is a key partner in the Indo-Pacific strategy as a counterbalance to China, and Pakistan has geopolitical and security ties with Afghanistan.[45] To maintain their status as a credible diplomatic mediator between India and Pakistan, the United States will need a balanced and consistent foreign policy in the region. The United States could also work with other countries with close ties to India and Pakistan, such as the Gulf States, to help facilitate peace talks between the two countries.[46] China could also play a key role in peace talks between India and Pakistan. China has a strategic alignment with Pakistan, and it has an emerging rivalry with India, who aspires to become a global leader themselves.[47] Furthermore, China did play a role in the recent conflict in Kashmir, by supplying Pakistan with military technology, putting Pakistan on par with India's military capabilities during the four-day war. Even if China may be more allied with Pakistan than India, China can play a diplomatic role here. However, similarly to the United States, China must act responsibly and can also work with nearby Gulf countries to build up their footprint and facilitate peace in the region.

To resolve this conflict between them, India and Pakistan cannot simply rely on foreign intervention. They need to put simple, tactical ceasefires behind them and focus on long-term agreements and deals as to how to govern Kashmir and resolve any other conflicts. In the end, foreign mediation can be helpful as a means of brokering diplomacy, but any efforts to resolve the dispute over Kashmir will require strong domestic legitimacy and leadership that seeks the support of both India and Pakistan as much as possible.

V. CONCLUSION

The conflict between India and Pakistan on religious lines, particularly when it comes to Kashmir, has gone on since India was partitioned in 1947. The struggles that people have faced dating back to Partition have long-standing effects that continue to this day. A subcontinent of two billion people and growing has been divided religiously for eighty years with no signs of stopping. For now, it is expected that Kashmir will remain disputed, especially considering India and Pakistan had this recent flareup, and since India repealed the semi-autonomous status of Kashmir. India has become slightly more authoritarian under Modi's government, and unless its political landscape changes, little progress will be made to give the Kashmiri people their constitutional rights and self-determination. Overall, as of 2026, it is unclear as to what Kashmir will become once this conflict is finally resolved, whether it joins India or Pakistan, or seeks its own separate entity.

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