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Letter from the Editors

On behalf of the 2013-2014 Elliott School Undergraduate Scholars, we are honored to present to you the official journal of this ESIA Undergraduate Scholars program. Within these pages, you will find issues affecting every corner of the globe ranging from refugee repatriation to contemporary conflicts to women’s rights, all addressed in a myriad of unique studies pertinent to international affairs. As editors of this year’s journal, we have been privileged to work alongside such talented and devoted scholars whose original research and perspectives you are about to explore. This journal is a testament to the intelligence, vision, and grit of every scholar.

The most salient feature of the Undergraduate Scholars Program is that contrary to any normal thesis experience, it truly fosters collaboration and camaraderie between the scholars and their graduate mentors and faculty advisers. We therefore would like to extend a special thanks to all those who made these research papers possible through their efforts. The guidance and technical knowledge provided by the graduate mentors was invaluable for creating scholarly papers. The insight and expertise provided by faculty advisors was vital for harvesting academic ideas. Their yearlong commitment to this endeavor and every individual research project it produced truly sets this program apart. This journal would also not be possible without the tremendous support from the Elliott School administration and staff.

Lastly, we are deeply grateful to Annie Vinik for her unwavering dedication to this program. It is thanks to Annie’s vision, perseverance, and impeccable management that the Elliott School Undergraduate Scholars program continues to produce remarkable research in the field of international affairs year after year.

We hope you will enjoy The Journal of Undergraduate Scholars and everything it has to offer.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Blackwell          Guillaume Julian          Kareem Rosshandler
Foreword by Dean Michael Brown

GW’s Elliott School of International Affairs has a three-part mission: educating the next generation of international leaders, conducting research on important global issues, and engaging the policy community in the United States and around the world. Education is the school’s paramount priority. In addition to educating students about the world, we enhance their research and analytic skills so that they, in turn, can advance our collective understanding of important global problems and develop potential policy solutions.

The Elliott School’s Undergraduate Scholars Program provides some of our best students with opportunities to deepen their expertise on issues they care about. It strengthens their research, analytic, and communication abilities. It also provides a platform for major research projects that generate constructive policy recommendations. It is a win-win-win proposition.

The Elliott School Undergraduate Scholars Program supports independent research by providing undergraduates with a research stipend, a faculty advisor, a graduate student mentor, and a series of meetings focused on advanced research skills and effective writing. These efforts culminate in a Spring Conference, where the Scholars present their research findings. The Program and the Conference strengthen our academic community by bringing together undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, and staff in highly interactive, enlightening projects and presentations.

Fifteen Elliott School undergraduates participated and excelled in the Undergraduate Scholars Program in 2013-14. The work of fourteen of these students appears in the pages that follow. All fifteen students identified important topics, designed and carried out innovative projects, and contributed to our understanding of a wide range of international affairs issues. Their areas of inquiry explore some of the most pressing challenges facing the world today, including the essential role of education in overcoming employment inequality, the urgent need for health-care policies that empower women, the potential for negative political outcomes in countries with abundant natural resources, the ways in which an influx of refugees strains the host country’s political, social, and economic stability, and the implications of group identities on society and politics. These research projects also span the globe – from Africa,
Europe, the Americas, and Asia to the Middle East. In short, these scholars tackled a wide array of very important issues.

On behalf of the Elliott School and our students, I would like to thank the faculty advisors who shared their world-class expertise with our undergraduate scholars: Michelle Allendoerfer, Lisa Benton-Short, Alexander Dent (two projects), Ilana Feldman, Christina Fink, Michelle Kelso, Kathryn Kleppinger, Robert Maguire, Melani McAlister, Mike Mochizuki, Marie Price, Robert Shepherd, Robert Sutter, and Jenab Tutunji.

I would also like to recognize the important contributions of the Elliott School graduate students, who served as mentors to our undergraduate scholars: Alyssa Abraham, Jacqueline Baudouin, Julia Collins, Jelena Coric, Florian Decludt, Allison DeMaio, Alejandro Garcia, Jonathan Kirk, Joseph Martin, Gregory McGowan, Marisa Meyers, Michelle Murphy, Deep Pal, and Sungtae Park.

In addition, I would like to thank Annie Vinik, Associate Director of the Elliott School’s Academic Advising and Student Services Office, for her administrative leadership of this superb program. Bravo to Elliott School students Alexandra Blackwell, Guillaume Julian, and Kareem Rosshandler for their assistance in editing and producing this publication!

To the 2013-14 Elliott School Undergraduate Scholars: I would like to convey my congratulations to you on the successful completion of your projects and for your contributions to scholarship and policy analysis. You began your undergraduate years as consumers of knowledge. You are now producers of knowledge, and you are helping humanity understand important global issues. It is a privilege to have you as colleagues in the field of international affairs.

Michael E. Brown
Dean
Elliott School of International Affairs
The George Washington University
About the Program

The 2013-2014 Elliott School Undergraduate Scholars cohort was an exceptional group. In addition to producing highly impressive pieces of individual scholarship, the students provided one another with invaluable feedback and support. They were also incredibly active in academic circles beyond the program itself – within the GW community and beyond. An unprecedented number of students presented their research at conferences both on campus and around the country and world; from universities in the DC area to the University of Notre Dame and Harvard to Singapore, these Undergraduate Scholars took their show on the road and actively engaged in scholarly and international affairs conversations at multiple levels.

When the Elliott School Undergraduate Scholars Program launched in Spring 2009, it was a one-semester opportunity that built upon the typical independent research model by offering additional support and resources to participants, who were chosen through a selective application process. Beyond choosing a research topic and working with a faculty advisor to research and write a paper, students in the program were paired with a graduate student mentor, met in a weekly class to develop their research and writing skills, received a research stipend, and presented their work at the end of the semester. In 2010, this publication became an additional component of the program.

In 2012-13, the program expanded to two semesters. This format allows students to spend the fall semester, when the weekly course continues to focus on research and writing advice, deepening their research and outlining their papers. The spring semester is devoted to writing the final paper and to a more profound level of peer support than was possible with the one-semester model. Each weekly session focuses on two students’ rough drafts, which the entire group reviews.

The feedback the students provide each other is remarkable; having developed a strong group rapport, familiarity with the various project topics, and a sense of best practices in research and writing during the fall semester, students offer each other incisive critique in a candid but collegial manner. The final papers and presentations are stronger as a result of this process, as are the relationships among the Undergraduate Scholars and between the undergraduates and their faculty advisors and graduate student mentors.

I would like to thank the 2013-14 Elliott School Undergraduate Scholars for their hard work, commitment to their research and to one another, and for the spirit they showed throughout the year. I congratulate them on their superb work. I am so proud of all that this group has already accomplished and look forward to seeing what the future holds.
Additionally, I would like to echo Dean Brown’s gratitude for the dedication of the faculty advisors and graduate student mentors who supported the Undergraduate Scholars. These professors and master’s students play a crucial role in the program. I am also most appreciative of the efforts of the co-editors of this publication, Alexandra Blackwell, Guillaume Julian, and Kareem Rosshandler. Finally, I would like to thank Dean Brown and Professor Mike Mochizuki (who was at the time Associate Dean for Academic Programs) for their ongoing support of this program.

I wish the 2013-14 Elliott School Undergraduate Scholars all the best and look forward to working with next year’s group!

Annie Vinik
Associate Director, Academic Advising & Student Services
Elliott School of International Affairs
The George Washington University
Changing the Education System in Burma

Preparing to Repatriate Karen Refugees

Keila Franks

Introduction

The 2012 ceasefire between the Karen National Union and the Burmese government ended 63 years of civil war. In light of the recent democratic and liberalizing reforms in Burma (Myanmar) that have followed, the Thai government, the Burmese government, and organizations working with Burmese refugees in Thailand have begun discussing refugee repatriation. However, refugees belonging to the Karen ethnic group have raised concerns about repatriation, especially in regards to security and political issues. The Karen ethnic group is one of the largest ethnic minority groups in Burma and also the ethnic group that makes up most of the refugees in Thailand’s refugee camps. The Karen Refugee Committee and a group of the Karen community-based organizations both issued statements outlining conditions that must be met before repatriation can occur. These include the removal of landmines, the withdrawal of Burmese troops from Karen areas, and a political settlement between Karen ethnic armed groups and the Burmese government.1

One important concern about repatriation is the challenges that returning refugee students would face in trying to integrate into the education system in Burma. This thesis highlights these challenges, and it then discusses how to best reform the Burmese education system in order to accommodate returning refugee youth. This analysis relies on a review of relevant literature as well as 37 interviews conducted on the Thai-Burmese border with Karen refugees and representatives of organizations that work in eastern Burma and in Thailand with Karen refugees. Because all of the Karen refugees who were interviewed referred to their home country as Burma, rather than Myanmar, this thesis will also refer to the country as Burma.

KEILA FRANKS is a recent graduate from George Washington's Elliott School of International Affairs with a BA in International Affairs. Keila focused on East and Southeast Asian affairs throughout her undergraduate career, and she furthered this passion after graduation by presenting her thesis at the 2014 International Burma Studies Conference in Singapore and serving as a 2014-2015 Fulbright Scholar in Malaysia.

Methodology

This thesis relies on primary data collected in June and July of 2013 in Bangkok, Thailand as well as on the Thai-Burmese border in Mae La refugee camp and in the border town of Mae Sot. Qualitative data was collected from 37 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with young Karen refugees and with representatives from organizations that work in eastern Burma or that work with refugees in Thailand. The young Karen refugees who were interviewed were between the ages of 18 and 40, and 16 of them belonged to the Karen ethnic group and one belonged to the Mon ethnic group. Two were born in a refugee camp, one was born in Mon State, Burma, and the rest were born in Karen State, Burma. All had attended at least some school in a refugee camp in Thailand.

I also interviewed members of organizations that either worked with Karen refugees in Thailand or were based in Thailand but provided services in Karen State, Burma. The original purpose of the interviews was to examine refugees’ concerns with repatriation. However, approximately halfway through the interviews, I decided to focus my research more narrowly on issues related to education. Therefore, only those interviews that provided insights about educational issues are used in this thesis. All interviewees are referred to by pseudonyms, and the organizations they represent are only mentioned if the interviewee gave consent.

My primary data is complemented by a review of secondary sources related to the Karen struggle, Burma’s education system, the situation of Karen refugees, and concerns about the repatriation of Karen refugees. Finally, when advocating for a decentralized education system in Burma, this thesis draws from the lessons learned from other decentralized ethnic education systems, namely those in India and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the lessons learned from the Mon National School system in Burma.

There were a few limitations to the research for this thesis. First, due to the contemporary nature of some issues discussed in this thesis, some information remains in flux, including the current state of preparations and plans for repatriation as well as the state of pending education reforms in Burma. However, the main issues addressed in this thesis, namely the concerns about repatriation and the education system in Burma, are unlikely to change. Another limitation of this research was my inability to interview a fully representative sample of young refugees. Although I tried to interview a wide variety of young refugees, I was inhibited by the restrictions on foreigners entering the refugee camps in Thailand. Therefore, the majority of the young refugee interviewees were living in Mae Sot, which means that they were among some of the very few who had the opportunity to leave the refugee camps. This could have created a biased sample because these interviewees were often the highest achieving refugee students. In addition, I was able to stay in Mae La refugee camp for three days (July 3, 2013 until July 5, 2013), and therefore I was able to conduct interviews with young refugees in the camps. However, I stayed at the Bible College in Mae La and could not leave the college’s campus, so most interviewees in Mae La were those who attended or worked at the Bible College. Thus, I acknowledge that my sample of young refugees who were interviewed is not fully representative. However, I believe that the fact that all of the young refugee interviewees cited similar concerns about Burma’s educational system
means that the concerns mentioned in this thesis are fairly widespread among the Karen refugee population in Thailand.

Background

History of the Karen Struggle and Recent Developments

Burma is an ethnically diverse country, with approximately one third of the roughly 50 million people belonging to ethnic groups other than Burman, the ethnic majority. The Karen are one of the largest ethnic minority groups in Burma. The Karen are a diverse group themselves, with 20 identified sub-groups, the largest of which are the Sgaw and Pwo Karen. The Karen are dispersed across the country, from the Irrawaddy Delta region in lower Burma to the hills of eastern Burma along the Thai-Burmese border.

After Burma’s independence from British colonial rule in 1948, the Karen desire for independence was never realized. In 1949, the Karen National Union took up arms against the government, thus marking the beginning of what would be a 63-year civil war. During the first 50 years of fighting, there were only four attempts at dialogue between the Burmese government and the KNU (1949, 1960, 1963-1964, and 1995-1996). It was not until 2012 that the KNU and the Burmese government successfully negotiated their first ceasefire agreement.

At the time of writing, the ceasefire continued to hold, but the peace process overall was still fragile because it was in its preliminary stages. Skirmishes still occasionally occurred in Karen State in 2013. Karen State was also still divided between areas controlled by the Burmese government and the KNU. “White” areas were the areas controlled by the Burmese government, while “black” areas were those controlled by political insurgency groups, most often the KNU. “Brown” areas (sometimes referred to as “gray” areas) were those of mixed control, which essentially meant that both the Burmese military (Tatmadaw) and the non-state armed group vied for control over the area. In addition, rule of law in Burma was still weak, especially in conflict-affected areas. Also, there was no independent ceasefire monitoring system in place, which meant that civilians still lacked protection against human rights abuses. Continued concerns about security and

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4 This is assuming that the 2012 ceasefire holds and that peace talks progress without interruption.
6 UNHCR Thailand- Border Operation Information Management Unit, “Myanmar Cease-fire Overview Table,” June 24, 2013.
8 Thawnghmung, The “Other” Karen, 74.
human rights abuses in Karen State have been two principal reasons that many refugees have been unwilling to return to Burma.

History and Current Situation of Karen Refugees in Thailand

The first refugee camps in Thailand were established in the mid-1980s. The number of refugees in the camps in Thailand increased to 80,000 over the course of the next ten years. These refugees lived in a string of small camps that functioned more like villages and did not have heavy guarding by the Thai authorities.\textsuperscript{10} From 1995 until 1997, the Tatmadaw overran many KNU bases and gained tenuous control of the Thai border area, and the number of refugees fleeing Burma increased to 115,000.\textsuperscript{11} The structure of the camps drastically changed in the late 1990s when the Thai government consolidated many of the smaller camps in a reduced number of large refugee camps.\textsuperscript{12}

In 1999, the Thai Ministry of Interior (MOI) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) began to document and register the population in the refugee camps. However, the Thai government stopped systemically registering incoming refugees in 2005. In 2013, 48\% of the camp population had not been registered and had not had their refugee status officially declared by the UNHCR or the MOI.\textsuperscript{13}

The refugee camp population peaked at around 150,000 in 2005.\textsuperscript{14} According to TBC, the camps were home to 128,480 people as of June 2013, and of these people, only 67,378 (or 52\%) were officially registered with the MOI or the UNHCR.\textsuperscript{15} Although a significant portion of the camp is not registered as a refugee, the majority of the population in the refugee camps in Thailand fled Burma because of armed conflict and human rights abuses occurring in Karen States and surrounding areas in eastern Burma.\textsuperscript{16}

In addition, the UNHCR estimates that 65.3\% of the refugee camp population is Karen, and the vast majority are from Karen State.\textsuperscript{17} The leadership in the refugee camps largely comes from the KNU. Some Karen leaders who had

\textsuperscript{10} Christina Fink, personal communication, March 13, 2014.
\textsuperscript{12} Caitlin Williams, “Creating Leaders from Refugees: Progress and Problems with the Refugee Education Program on the Thai-Burma Border” (MA thesis, Saint Mary’s University, 2012), 41-42.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 124.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 16.
\textsuperscript{16} The Border Consortium is a consortium of ten International Non-Governmental Organizations that provides “food, shelter and capacity building support to refugees from Burma/Myanmar, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and other conflict-affected people through community managed programmes.” (The Border Consortium, “January -June 2013 Programme Report,” 5). TBC keeps track of the entire population residing in the Thai refugee camps in order to adequately determine rationing needs. (The Border Consortium, “January-June 2012 Programme Report,” The Border Consortium, 2012, 8, http://theborderconsortium.org/resources/resources.htm#reports.);
\textsuperscript{17} UNHCR Thailand Border Operation Information Management Unit, “Myanmar-Thailand Border- Refugee Overview (as of end of May 2013),” June 28, 2013.
positions in the civil administration of the KNU government then became the leaders of the Karen Refugee Committee (KRC), a refugee social organization that has influence over the distribution of aid.\textsuperscript{18} By distributing food to refugees, the KNU (through the KRC) is hoping to perpetuate the notion that it is helping and taking care of the Karen people.\textsuperscript{19} Due to the common feelings of dispossession and experiences of abuse by the Burmese army, as well as the fact that many KNU families live in the camps, Thailand’s refugee camps have fostered Karen nationalist sentiment.\textsuperscript{20}

Since 2005, the registered refugee population has had the option to be resettled to a third country. As of May 2013, 84,783 refugees had been resettled to another country.\textsuperscript{21} The vast majority (81\%) have been resettled in the United States.\textsuperscript{22} However, the U.S. closed the group resettlement option in 2013, so only individuals facing extenuating circumstances have had the option of applying for resettlement in the U.S. According to Kristie Kenney, the U.S. Ambassador to Thailand, “[The U.S. is] wrapping up the mass resettlement, mostly because we have covered everybody who is interested, and individual resettlement still remains an option for refugees who qualify.” The “everybody” whom she is referring to is the population of registered refugees, whereas there is still a significant population of unregistered refugees in the camps who are also interested in resettling. However, the U.S. cannot resettle this population unless the Thai government permits these refugees to be registered.\textsuperscript{23} Thus, this population is likely to be repatriated to Burma eventually.

Not only can the unregistered refugee population not apply for resettlement, but they also continue to be in a precarious position in Thailand. This is especially true now that donors are allocating less humanitarian aid for refugees in Thailand. Due to the decrease in armed conflict and the recent liberalizing reforms in Burma, donors have begun to shift their emphasis away from the border and to donate more money to organizations within Burma.\textsuperscript{24} The reduction in donor funding for humanitarian aid being given to the camps in Thailand has resulted in ration cuts, resulting in many refugees seeking to earn an income outside of the camps. However, those who do not have any documentation have the hardest time finding employment. If the Thai police catch an unregistered refugee outside the camp, often he is sent back to Burma, whereas a registered refugee is often simply sent back to the refugee camp.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{18} Thawngmung, The “Other” Karen, 82.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 82.
\textsuperscript{20} Thawngmung, The “Other” Karen, 82.; Christina Fink, personal communication, March 13, 2014.
\textsuperscript{21} UNHCR, “Resettlement of Myanmar Refugees From Thailand (as of May 2013),” June 28, 2013.
\textsuperscript{22} The Border Consortium, “January to June 2013 Programme Report,” 18.
\textsuperscript{23} Assistant Regional Refugee Coordinator at US Embassy Bangkok, interview by author, tape recording, Bangkok, Thailand, July 1, 2013.
\textsuperscript{24} The Border Consortium, “January to June 2012 Programme Report,” 16.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 24-25.
Repatriation of Karen Refugees: Preparation and Concerns

Due to the 2012 ceasefire and the beginning of liberalizing reforms, refugee organizations in Thailand have begun to discuss the possibility of repatriation. In February and May 2013, Karen community-based organizations (CBOs) held two meetings to discuss how to prepare for repatriation, including how to create an effective system to disseminate information about the situation in Burma. Although rumors that refugees would be forced back to Burma had begun to circulate in the refugee camps, all of my interviewees from refugee organizations stated that their organizations were not planning the logistics for a repatriation program, but rather were simply making initial preparations for repatriation.

In October 2012, the UNHCR created a Framework for Voluntary Repatriation (a UNHCR discussion paper) to discuss how to prepare for repatriation to Burma. This framework discusses three repatriation scenarios: (1) “free choice of areas of return,” which most likely means the repatriation of refugees to their places of origin or an area where they can “pursue life-sustaining and economic activities,” (2) the repatriation of refugees to the last place of habitual residence or place of origin (which is likely the preferred option of members of Karen armed groups), and (3) the repatriation of refugees to government-designated areas. 26 For the purposes of this thesis, I assume that repatriation will be a combination of scenarios one and two, in which refugees have a choice of whether to go back to their own villages or to a place right across the border in IDP areas of eastern Burma. If refugees went to IDP areas near the border, this would essentially entail a refugee camp moving into Burma and becoming its own village, like what happened when the Mon repatriated to Burma in 1996. 27

None of the people whom I interviewed in June and July 2013 said that conditions were safe enough for refugees to return to Burma at that point. Refugees and refugee organizations were concerned about security issues such as landmines and the continued presence of Burmese soldiers in areas of return. Other major concerns included the lack of a political agreement between the government and ethnic armed groups, the lack of ethnic rights and rule of law, discrimination against ethnic minorities, and land confiscation. They also generally distrusted the Burmese government and its commitment to uphold the ceasefire agreement.

Educational Issues: Problems to Address before Repatriation

In addition to the concerns noted above, another major concern brought up by my interviewees was the educational system in Burma and the numerous challenges that returning Karen refugee students would face after repatriation when they are trying to reintegrate into the Burmese school system. This section discusses some of these problems with the Burmese education system as well as the discrepancies between the educational system in the refugee camps and in government-controlled areas in Burma. This section also highlights the concerns

brought up by young refugees about their unwillingness and perceived inability to reintegrate into the Burmese higher education system.

**Differing Curriculums**

After the 1962 military coup, education in Burma became less favorable to ethnic minority students because schools were no longer allowed to teach ethnic minority languages. All private Karen schools, including Karen-language schools, were nationalized, and Karen language was removed from the curriculum after fourth grade.\(^\text{28}\) Those in ethnic minority areas are often particularly disillusioned with schools in the “white” areas (areas controlled by the Burmese government) because of the Burman-centric curriculum. In “white” areas, ethnic minority teachers must stick strictly to the curriculum that the government provides to them, which emphasizes Burman-centric history rather than ethnic minority histories or cultures.\(^\text{29}\) In addition, students are taught in Burmese and must complete their lessons in Burmese, even if they grew up speaking their own ethnic language.

In contrast, in the “black” areas of Karen State and surrounding regions in eastern Burma, the KNU runs its own separate education system, and Karen language is the first subject taught in these schools.\(^\text{30}\) Burmese is not emphasized because it is often regarded as the “enemy’s language.”\(^\text{31}\) In areas of Burma controlled by armed ethnic organizations, often times these ethnic organizations simply translate the Burmese math and science textbooks. However, they make sure that they have their own history textbooks, and often these textbooks emphasize their own view of history.\(^\text{32}\) The Karen history textbook discusses the history of the emergence of the Karen people and their movement into Burma, the persecution they suffered at the hands of Burmese kings, attacks on the Karen during the colonial period, World War II, and the post-war period, and the Karen armed resistance struggle.\(^\text{33}\) Thus, those students growing up in the “black” areas of Karen State and those growing up even just a few miles away in a “white” area are learning very different views of Burmese history in their schools.

In Thailand’s refugee camps, the Karen National Union has always either been directly in charge of or had a great deal of influence over the education system. The KNU sees the camp schools as extensions of their own schooling system, and some students who do not have a middle school or high school in their village in Burma come to the refugee camps with the help of the KNU in order to continue their schooling. Dah, a 20 year-old student in Mae La, said that she had come to the refugee camps because “the KNU told my parents they would organize the children who want to study so they can come to the camp.”\(^\text{34}\) The focus on Karen nationalism in refugee camp schools can have negative implications for the people of other


\(^{33}\) Christina Fink, personal communication, March 13, 2014.

\(^{34}\) Dah, interview by author, tape recording, Mae La refugee camp, Thailand, July 3, 2013.
ethnicities in the camps, who may feel excluded by the Karen leadership. As a traditionally marginalized group, the Karen have taken advantage of the fact that they are now the majority in the refugee camp. Rather than embracing ethnic diversity, the Karen leadership has tended to dominate and exclude other groups.35

In addition, the primary language of instruction in the camps is Sgaw Karen, and Burmese, English, and Thai are taught as second languages.36 While there are a few primary schools that teach in Burmese, no secondary schools use Burmese as the language of instruction.37 The schools in the refugee camps also do not offer many opportunities to learn Burmese beyond a low or intermediate level, and many refugee students also resist learning Burmese. Shining Star, a 19 year-old Mon girl who had attended post-ten school in Umpiem refugee camp, explained, “We are ethnic people, and we don’t like Burmans. The military abused us and, in our mind, we hate them, so we don’t want to learn Burmese.”38

The lack of emphasis on teaching Burmese in the refugee camp schools creates a situation in which many repatriated refugee students will not have high enough levels of Burmese to integrate into the Burmese education system. According to one education NGO on the border (interviewed by a Master’s degree candidate at St. Mary’s University),

[The Karen Refugee Committee Education Entity, or KRCEE] has shot themselves in the foot because they have the philosophy that they are preparing to return to Karen State where they will be in charge of their own education. That isn't going to happen. They've educated their children in Karen [language] and so they're going to find it really, really difficult to integrate into the Burmese education system.39

Failings of Burma’s Higher Education

Shortcomings of Higher Education in Burma

From 1962 until 2013, the quality of Burmese universities declined due to the military’s mishandling of higher education. The military regime fired professors who conducted research that disagreed with the military junta’s official view, and scholars were allowed to only have minimal contact with the outside world.40 Under military rule, the Burmese government’s censors had to approve of the curriculum before it could be taught in university, and this limited what could be taught.41 In addition, students also had very little access to information at Burmese universities. Often universities did not have libraries, and some universities, such as the University of Yangon, had libraries where the books were kept behind the librarian’s

35 Williams, “Creating Leaders,” 55.
36 Administrator at KRCEE, interview by author, tape recording, Mae Sot, Thailand, July 6, 2013.
37 Williams, “Creating Leaders,” 72.
38 Shining Star, interview by author, tape recording, Mae Sot, Thailand, July 5, 2013.
41 Fink, Living Silence, 197.
counter and could only be accessed with the librarian’s permission. The military regime also was focused on containing student activism rather than on improving the quality of higher education. It told professors that they should “give in to students’ demands, creating an environment where cheating was rampant and students had little respect for professors.” In addition, teachers received meager incomes, so they often expected students to pay bribes before and after exams. Some people did have the opportunity to attend private schools that taught specific skills, such as accounting and computer skills, and these schools were accredited through other countries (i.e. the United Kingdom and Australia). However, the main goals of higher education, namely gaining knowledge and the skills needed to work in a particular field, were not fully realized at universities in Burma.

In addition, because the students in Rangoon who protested in 1988 were able to easily meet together in Rangoon, the military regime moved university campuses to more rural areas outside Rangoon, increased the number of regional colleges, and encouraged students to enroll in distance education programs. While the regional colleges are, in theory, a good way to make college more easily accessible and affordable for young people living outside of Rangoon, the problems are that the regional colleges are often underfunded and the quality of education in these colleges is low.

The quality of education received in a distance education program also tends to be low. In 2013, approximately 60% of all university students were enrolled in distance education programs. For some courses, the students only go to the college’s campus once or twice a week. In other cases, students enrolled in distance education programs only receive about 10 days of instruction before the most importance examinations. These programs are beneficial in the sense that they allow students to work while also attending school, yet students are not able to achieve a high quality education through the distance education programs.

In addition, the university system has emphasized memorization. Other students had said that the only reason they needed to go to class was because of the roll call, but the class attendance was acknowledged to be “often as low as 50%.” According to a 2013 report written by the British Council, the “absence of student-centred learning and of the encouragement of critical thinking is accentuated by the

43 Ibid., A42-A43.
44 Ibid., A42-A43.
45 Christina Fink, personal communication, March 13, 2014.
47 Ibid., 197.
52 Ibid., 14-15.
lack of academic and institutional authority more generally in the higher education system.\(^3\) In terms of student life on campus, the British Council reported that there were very few student associations, no student newspapers, and limited opportunities for students to travel abroad or participate in exchange programs.\(^4\) Finally, the British Council reported that participating in higher educational institutions results in “major additional costs”, especially in buying needed guides and handbooks and tutors.\(^5\)

However, since 2013, some criticisms of the higher education system have begun to be addressed, and they are likely to change further after the implementation of educational reforms that have been under discussion since 2012. For example, universities are likely to have much more autonomy in terms of curriculum content and administrative decisions.\(^6\) In addition, universities in Burma have been revamping their libraries and developing digital libraries. In April 2014, the University of Yangon and the University of Mandalay launched e-libraries with thousands of online resources, including digital books and academic journals.\(^7\)

### Refugee Youth: The Desire for Higher Education

Many of the young refugee interviewees originally came to Thailand’s refugee camps so that they could pursue their education. Because the refugee camps offer better and more secure educational options than the majority of schools in eastern Burma, some families in eastern Burma send their children to the refugee camps to continue their education. Of the 15 refugees I interviewed who were born in Burma, 14 cited better educational opportunities as one of the reasons that they came to the refugee camps. Seven interviewees stated that one of the reasons that they had left Burma and come to the refugee camps is that their parents could no longer afford to send them to school in Burma, whereas education in the refugee camps is free.

The young refugee interviewees also cited several reasons for why they think the education in the camps is better in terms of quality. Eh Gu said that the education in the refugee camps helps students develop critical thinking and analytical skills, as opposed to the Burmese system, which is based on memorization.\(^8\) In addition, several interviewees claimed that the schools in Burma did not adequately teach them English, whereas their English significantly improved after attending the schools in the refugee camps. Poe Pyit said that even after he had completed the matriculation exam in Burma, he did not speak any English even though he had studied it in class. He said that he only “started” learning English after he entered the refugee camps.\(^9\)

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\(^3\) Ibid., 15.  
\(^4\) Ibid., 15.  
\(^5\) Ibid., 15.  
\(^8\) Eh Gu, interview by author, tape recording, Mae Sot, Thailand, June 22, 2013.  
\(^9\) Poe Pyit, interview by author, tape recording, Mae Sot, Thailand, July 10, 2013.
Those studying in the refugee camps also have more access to higher education than those in eastern Burma. Although there are no formal colleges or universities in the camps, the camps offer the opportunity for students to attend post-ten schools after they complete secondary school.60 As of 2012, the KRCEE’s Institute of Higher Education (IHE) was in charge of seven 4-year programs in various refugee camps, with the first two years focused on general education subjects and the last two years on the student’s “major”, such as health or education.61 The main goal of these post-ten schools has been to prepare students to serve their communities within the refugee camps.62

Although the post-ten programs have been beneficial in helping the refugee community, these schools would not help students to integrate into the higher education system in Burma. These post-ten programs are run either by international NGOs or by the Karen Refugee Committee Education Entity (KRCEE), and they were not designed with reintegration into the Burmese educational system in mind. If refugee students repatriated, there would need to be additional bridging courses established to prepare these young refugees to successfully integrate into the Burmese higher educational system.

Among the young refugees whom I interviewed, 11 were hoping to pursue higher education. Each interviewee was asked whether he or she would want to attend university in Burma if accepted and given a full scholarship. Of these 11 interviewees, only two said that they would want to attend university in Burma. The two who said that they wanted to attend university in Burma, Taw Taw Poe and Tonk Men, both said that they would go because they believed that having a university degree was very important and could help them find more opportunities.63 For Tonk Men, this meant better access to opportunities to pursue a post-graduate degree abroad.64

The rest of the interviewees did not want to pursue higher education in Burma. Htoo Wah said, “The universities in Burma don’t guarantee you any job after school. Unless you have a very good friend in the companies... Because there are very limited job opportunities in the country, it doesn’t matter where you graduate from.”65 The most common reason others gave for why they would be unwilling to attend Burmese university is because the educational quality is very low, especially when compared to universities in other countries. When talking about students in Burmese universities, Jessie said, “Even though they went to university, after they graduated they could not speak English very well. They do not know a lot of outside people [foreigners]. They do not have that many activities. They just study and take the exams.”66

60 Williams, “Creating Leaders,” 9-10.
61 Ibid., 54.
62 Ibid., 38.
64 Tonk Men, interview by author.
65 Htoo Wah, interview by author, tape recording, Mae Sot, Thailand, June 17, 2013.
66 Jessie, interview by author, tape recording, Mae Sot, Thailand, July 11, 2013.
In addition, some interviewees also faced circumstances that made it impossible for them to attend higher educational institutions in Burma. For example, Ma Mu said that she would like to attend university in Burma, but that she would be unable to because she was not fluent in Burmese. For example, every young refugee interviewee brought up the issue that the Burmese government would not recognize their high school certificates that they received in the refugee camps, thus making it impossible for them to attend higher education in Burma. When asked if she wanted to go back to Burma now, Taw Taw Poe stated, “Honestly, if the government recognized the refugee camps’ diplomas, I would be happy to go back … I would like to go back even now if they recognized it. But they don’t.” However, even if the Burmese government did recognize their educational certificates, all of the young refugee interviewees would ideally like to attend universities outside of Burma. Eh Gu said that he wanted to pursue higher education abroad in Asia because of the greater recognition and prestige of the diploma.

**Policy Recommendations: Addressing Educational Issues with Repatriation**

The various problems in the Burmese educational system and the discrepancies between the educational system in Burma and in Thailand’s refugee camps must be addressed before repatriation. Addressing these concerns will entail reforming many different aspects of the educational system in Burma. Thus, this section first explores the discussions that are already underway in Burma about how to reform the education system. This section then discusses other educational reforms that should be implemented before refugees in Thailand repatriate to Burma, namely establishing a decentralized education system and improving higher education institutions in Burma, especially distance education programs.

**Current Educational Review and Reform in Burma**

At the same time that the planning for repatriation is occurring, educational reforms are also being discussed by various actors within Burma. In 2012, the Burmese government started the Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR) as part of the research department of the Ministry of Education. Its aim is to evaluate the present Burmese educational system in order to identify areas that need improvement and prioritize those areas for educational reform. The review process is supposed to take about two years and finish in 2014.

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67 Ma Mu, interview by author, tape recording, Mae Sot, Thailand, July 11, 2013.
68 Taw Taw Poe, interview by author.
69 Eh Gu, interview by author.
72 Ibid.
At the same time as the CESR’s discussion of higher education reform, the National Network for Education Reform (NNER) is conducting a separate review of the education system and developing policy recommendations to submit to Burma’s parliament. The network consists of civil society organizations, members of teachers’ unions, ethnic education groups, and the education bloc of the National League for Democracy (NLD), which is the main opposition party in the country. The spokesperson of the NLD’s education bloc, Thein Lwin, is also the head of the NNER. The NNER is sympathetic to including ethnic languages and cultures into the national education system, and it has proposed a trilingual teaching system in which the first language of instruction is the child’s mother tongue, the second language is Burmese, and the third language is English.

Although the NNER has had some concerns about the process of educational reform, certain issues of importance to NNER members have started to be seriously considered. In September 2011, the Upper House of Burma’s parliament passed the Private School Bill, which allowed minority groups to teach their ethnic languages in private secondary schools. However, Thein Lwin, the head of the NNER, criticized this bill for not allowing students to study their mother tongue in primary school and for restricting the right to teach ethnic languages to private schools, which are usually attended by the children of relatively well-off families. From 2012-2014, the government permitted the teaching of ethnic minority languages in government schools, but these classes were only allowed outside of school hours and no extra state funding was provided for this after-hours teaching.

After an educational seminar in February 2014, hopes were raised that mother language instruction would be fully incorporated into Burmese schools. The NNER released a statement about the seminar that said that “the attendees (which included representatives of the CESR committee) agree that children’s mother tongue should be used as the medium of instruction in order for ethnic children to be

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78 Ibid., 9.

effective in their studies and balance the teaching of national and international language skills.”

A few months after this seminar, Mon State’s Parliament passed a bill that allowed for the teaching of ethnic languages in Mon State’s government schools. Under this bill, schools teach Mon language for one hour a day from primary school to Grade 4, and ethnic Pa-O and Karen students in Mon State are allowed to study their own ethnic languages in school.

Although many various parties in Burma have seemed to agree in principle on allowing for the teaching of ethnic languages, the key questions are still to what extent the Burmese government will allow these languages to be taught during normal school hours and whether minority civil society groups and political groups should be allowed to produce ethnic language materials for schools. Finally, the decentralization of the education system is also an option that is being discussed, and the CESR is expected to grant local education officials more autonomy. However, at the time of writing, the details on what this would mean were still unclear.

Decentralized Education System

A necessary component in promoting peace and national reconciliation in Burma is the establishment of a decentralized education system that incorporates the languages, histories, and cultures of ethnic minority groups in Burma. This would satisfy many grievances and aspirations of the ethnic minority communities who have been fighting for greater ethnic rights for decades. Also, it would help Burma’s multi-ethnic population to feel a greater sense of inclusion in Burma. Ignoring the desires of ethnic minority groups for a decentralized education system that incorporates ethnic elements can potentially harm or delay the peace process.

The reforms being discussed now by the central government and other groups within Burma take on an additional degree of importance when planning how to incorporate refugee youth into the educational system. Creating an educational system that incorporates Karen language and history would make it easier for Karen refugee students to be incorporated into schools in Burma when repatriation occurs. NGOs and other organizations providing education on the border in Thailand should be included in the discussions about reforming the education system in Burma so that they can highlight the needs of refugee youth who may be returning to Burma in the relatively near future.

Fundamental Principles

It is important first to recognize some fundamental principles on which the education system in Burma should be based. First, UNICEF had emphasized the importance of having the education system in Burma adopt a conflict-sensitive

80 Snaing, “Mother-Tongue Instruction.”
81 Weng, “Mon State.”
83 Snaing, “Mother-Tongue Instruction.”
84 South and Lall, “Comparing Models,” 300-301.
approach, support peace education, and recognize the potential role that education can play in addressing underlying causes of conflict.\footnote{Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar-UNICEF, “Mid Term Review Report,” UNICEF Country Programme of Cooperation 2011-2015, 2013, 13, \url{http://www.unicef.org/myanmar/GoM-UNICEF_MTR_Report_FINAL.pdf}.} In order for education to be part of the peace-building and reconciliation process, it must be able to recognize ethnic differences while also promoting tolerance and respect for all people and all groups.

Charl C. Wolhuter, Ferdinand J. Potgieter, and Johannes L. van der Walt of the Post-Graduate School of Education in North-West University (South Africa) established six criteria which can be used to evaluate a national education system’s capability to effectively address ethnic diversity. The first of these criteria is the recognition of individual and group differences, which is premised on the idea of intercultural education. The principles of intercultural education are “education with empathy” (deep understanding of other groups), “education in solidarity” (appealing to the collective human consciousness), “education in and for intercultural respect,” and “education for ethnic thought and dialogue.”\footnote{Charl C. Wolhuter, Ferdinand J. Potgieter, and Johannes L. van der Walt, “The Capability of National Education Systems to Address Ethnic Diversity,” AOSIS OpenJournals, Volume 77, Issue 2 (2012): 3, accessed October 13, 2013.} Two other criteria that are necessary in addressing ethnic diversity are the recognition of equality and the recognition of anthropological equivalence and basic human rights. Although it is important for the education system to be sensitive to individual and group differences and to provide for the needs of ethnic groups, the fixation on ethnic differences can lead to xenophobia or ethnic segregation.\footnote{Ibid., 3-4.}

Two other important criteria identified by Wolhuter, Potgieter, and van der Walt include the recognition of “unity, commonality, and communality (national unity, nation building)” as well as the recognition of social justice. The education system must work to forge a sense of national unity and communality, and it must also emphasize the importance of social justice “as a space that allows for repairs to be done to damaged solidarities.”\footnote{Wollhuter, Potgieter, and Walt, “The Capability,” 3.} Finally, the authors state that in order to effectively address ethnic diversity, national education systems must recognize pedagogical demands, meaning that the system should be “aimed and geared at providing optimal opportunities for all learners- irrespective of ethnic background and affiliations.”\footnote{Ibid., “The Capability,” 4.} When discussing how to reform the educational system in Burma, the review committees and networks should strive to achieve an educational system which meets all of these criteria.

Multilingual Education System

In order to adequately address the pedagogical demands within Burma (the last criterion identified by Wolhuter, Potgieter, and van der Walt), the Burmese government should create a decentralized education system which incorporates ethnic languages. Students whose first language is not Burmese are at a serious
disadvantage under the present national education system in Burma. Research has shown that children who begin their education in their mother-tongue perform better and achieve higher results than those who start their education in an unfamiliar language. Incorporating mother-tongue instruction into the education system would increase the quality of education because it would result in stronger classroom participation, positive benefits to students’ self-esteem, and greater parental participation in education. \(^{90}\) In addition, instruction in a child’s mother tongue “is beneficial to language competencies in the first language, achievement in other subject areas, and second language learning.” \(^{91}\)

Burma should adopt a multilingual education system, which was defined by UNESCO in 1999 as an educational system consisting of at least three languages: “the mother tongue, the national language and an international language in education.” \(^{92}\) According to Thein Lwin, the head of the NNER, all schools in Burma should be bilingual, teaching in both Burmese and one local language, and English should be taught as a second language. \(^{93}\) He states that schools should start teaching all three languages at the primary level. \(^{94}\) It will also be necessary to provide adequate materials to teach Burmese to non-native speakers because, currently, the materials for Burmese language instruction are created for native speakers of the language. \(^{95}\) In addition, if a child’s mother tongue is Burmese, the student should choose one of the ethnic minority languages to learn as her second language, which will promote greater inter-cultural understanding and tolerance. \(^{96}\)

Although there are numerous different ethnic languages in Burma, Thein Lwin believes that, pragmatically, the national languages of Burma should be Burmese, Chin, Kachin, Karen, Karenni, Mon, Rakhaing, and Shan, and that the majority dialect of each of these languages should be the official language in each of their respective states. \(^{97}\) Recognizing each of these as the official language in their respective states would help to allow for ethnic languages to be officially taught in the educational systems in these areas. \(^{98}\) This would also facilitate the incorporation of Karen refugee students into the educational system in Burma because they are accustomed to being taught in Sgaw Karen in refugee camp schools.

However, educators will run into several challenges in implementing this multilingual education. First, some minority written languages are not well

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\(^{90}\) South and Lall, “Comparing Models,” 303.

\(^{91}\) Lwin, “Languages, Identities,” 12.


\(^{95}\) Lwin, “Education and Democracy,” 21.


\(^{97}\) Ibid., 13.

The best way to overcome this challenge would be to create more opportunities for ethnic minority educators to conduct research on pedagogy and how best to teach their language. In terms of developing more scholarship on how to teach Karen language, the teachers in Thailand’s refugee camps may be particularly well equipped to assist in this endeavor because they are accustomed to using Karen as the primary language of instruction in classrooms. Giving them this role would also have the added benefit of giving them a voice in the educational system in Burma and an important place in society when refugees repatriate to Burma.

Second, educators will run into serious challenges in areas where non-official ethnic languages or minority dialects of the official ethnic languages are spoken. For example, Chin has about twenty different dialects. Also, speakers of the Pwo dialect of Karen often cannot understand speakers of the Sgaw dialect of Karen (which is spoken by the majority of Karen). In areas where people speak many different languages and dialects, schools could adopt a system similar to the one in Cambodia in which the government hires teachers’ assistants from the minority ethnic groups. These assistants help students understand the lessons in their own mother tongue during their first three years of primary school. Overall, this system has proven relatively effective, and a similar program could be used to assist students in Burma whose mother tongues are not the official languages and dialects.

Decentralization: Role of the Central and Local Governments

In order to establish an educational system that effectively meets ethnic minority and returning refugee needs, the government should establish a decentralized authoritative structure for the education system so that states and local communities are able to run their own schools and incorporate their own values into school curriculums. Thein Lwin advocates for this type of decentralized system, arguing that states and local authorities should have more autonomy, provided that they meet a “minimum standard” established by the central government. These “minimum standards” could include what Thein Lwin refers to as “citizenship education,” which teaches children “social, moral and political development” and promotes democratic values.

However, these nationally established “minimum standards” must leave space for states and local educational authorities to incorporate local priorities and values. The language of instruction should be determined by local authorities, and local education boards should be able to choose their own textbooks and create the school’s curriculum, provided that it adheres to the guidelines established by the state educational authorities. Although it will be impossible to incorporate all ethnic languages and dialects into the school system, the school authorities should be

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101 Ibid., 29.
103 Ibid., 29.
encouraged to establish weekend or summer programs that teach other minority languages.105

Increasing parental and community involvement will be important in ensuring the success of a decentralized education system. In order to successfully encourage community and parental participation in educational affairs, the government must clearly explain the decentralized system and what roles local communities should play in the educational system. When examining the decentralized educational system in the Betul district of Madhya Pradesh in India, Madhulika Patel found that the people’s participation in educational matters and parent-teacher interactions were weak and that there was a lack of understanding of the decentralized educational structure. Patel argues that the government should make a greater effort to raise awareness about communities’ roles and responsibilities, as well as the benefits of participating in the affairs of the school.106

In Burma, it would be ideal if the involvement of parents and members of the local community in schools could increase and if communities could assess and give feedback about the school’s performance.107

Although the central government should delegate more powers to the state and local governments, it should not expect local communities to fund the schools and generate all of the resources for the educational system. In less affluent economies, transferring financial burdens to local levels can simply result in a reduced school budget.108 In terms of providing funding for schools, both the central government and the state governments should be responsible for contributing to the education budget.109 Burma’s central government already has increased its education budget, but it is unlikely that it will be able to provide enough funding to adequately cover all of the educational needs in the country, especially if extra demands were to be put on the government to provide more resources to allow for ethnic language teaching in schools. Thus, it is likely that programs such as ethnic language teaching will still need to rely on local resources as much as possible, as well as funding and support from external donors.110 UNICEF’s “Mid-Term Review of the 2011-2015 Country Programme of Cooperation” between Burma and UNICEF recommends that the Burmese government should expand its partnerships with NGOs and other development partners in order to better meet the needs of marginalized communities and to strengthen the schools’ performance.111 Those NGOs that are currently supporting education in the refugee camps should also assist with repatriation and developing the school system in Burma so that it can incorporate returning refugee students.

Overall, the increased authority that states and local communities will have over education will greatly enhance the ability of the educational system to incorporate returning refugee students. It will allow each community to decide how to best address the issues of repatriation and reintegration based on its own unique circumstances, and it will give returning refugees (especially returning refugee parents) a say in the education system in their area of return, which will better ensure that the educational system addresses their needs. Most importantly, it will create an opportunity to create an educational system into which returning refugee students can successful integrate.

Integration of Different Ethnic Groups

Despite the difficulties with integrating children from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, it is essential that all children living in a community attend the same school and that returning Karen refugee children are incorporated into the school in their area of return, even if the local population is predominantly Burmese or another ethnic group. Burma should avoid policies similar to the ones implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) in the aftermath of the 1992-1995 war between the three main ethnic groups (Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks), which denied many ethnic minority children access to education and thus impeded a sustainable return. In addition, the system of mono-ethnic schools in BiH discouraged ethnic minority parents from sending their children to local schools because these schools only used the curriculum of the majority ethnic group in the area. In mono-ethnic schools, children belonging to ethnic minority groups are forced either to assimilate or to take a bus to a different region in order to attend a school that uses the curriculum for their own ethnic group. In other areas of BiH, a single school could have two groups of students learning different curricula mostly or completely separate from each other. This phenomenon, known as “two schools under one roof,” again shows the de facto segregation of ethnic groups in schools in BiH. This type of segregation only enhances discrimination and xenophobia, and it has been widely condemned by UN bodies such as UNCESCR and the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Although Burma should establish a school system that recognizes ethnic differences, it should avoid implementing policies similar to those in BiH.

In addition, returning refugee students should attend local schools that are already established in the areas of Burma where they return, even if this means that

114 Ibid., 41-2.
115 Ibid., 41.
they have to attend a bridging course to catch up to the other students. Before repatriation occurs, the Burmese government and NGOs should ensure that the areas of return within Burma have adequate educational infrastructure and resources to accommodate these returning refugee students. They should not provide educational assistance only for returning refugees, but rather should focus on developing areas of return and ensuring that these communities’ schools have the capacity to absorb returning refugee students.116

Developing the Karen Education: Using Mon National Schools as a Model

A group of independent Karen educators should be responsible for developing the guidelines for the curriculum to be used in Karen areas. The schools in Karen areas should not simply adopt the curriculum developed by the Karen Education Department (the education branch of the KNU) because this curriculum presents a one-sided, Karen-centric view and reflects a separatist agenda. The curriculum should both reflect ethnic elements (including language and history) while also adequately integrating children in the national system, which creates opportunities for them to pursue higher education and find jobs in the country.

When developing the curriculum for Karen areas, it should be modelled after the Mon National School system. Ashley South and Marie Lall argue in their article “Comparing Models of Non-state Ethnic Education in Myanmar- The Mon and Karen National Education Regimes” that the New Mon State Party (NMSP) education system should be used as a model for Karen schools.117 The NMSP education system has stuck a balance between incorporating ethnic elements, including mother-tongue teaching and elements of Mon culture, and integrating Mon children into the national system by largely following the government curriculum.118 South and Lall recognize that the Mon system is not perfect, occasionally demonstrating “less than ideal teaching practices.”119 In addition, the Mon system is also imperfect in that it is an education system that is run by the education branch of an ethnic armed group, rather than independent ethnic educators working in collaboration with the government. However, the NMSP education system still provides a good example of a system that incorporates ethnic elements while also integrating students into the national education system.

In 2014, the teaching of Mon and other ethnic languages in government schools in Mon State expanded, and the combination of ethnic elements with the government’s curriculum means that ethnic students can learn their own language while also having the ability to attend university in Burma. Independent Karen educators could draw from this example in establishing an ethnic curriculum in Karen State that fits within Burma’s national education system. This would allow the returning students to continue studying a curriculum with Karen language and

116 Program Coordinator for ADRA’s Thai-Myanmar border-based programs, interview by author, tape recording, Mae Sot, Thailand, July 10, 2013.
118 Ibid., 318-319.
119 Ibid., 318.
history, while at the same time providing them the opportunity to pursue higher education in Burma.

**Improving Higher Education Institutions**

Although the educational reforms within Burma have focused on how to reform higher education institutions, these discussions should also include ideas of how to incorporate returning refugee youth who are hoping to pursue higher education. For example, Aung San Suu Kyi has emphasized that her first priority in higher education reform is the re-creation of campus life. However, when looking at how to best incorporate refugee youth into higher educational institutions in Burma, it may be more effective to focus on revamping the distance education programs, which provide a more affordable and accessible option for these youth.

The government’s first step in creating opportunities for refugee youth to pursue higher education in Burma is to recognize the educational certificates that they received in the refugee camps, or to create a mechanism that establishes what certain levels of education received in the camps would be equivalent to in the Burmese system. The Burmese government’s recent willingness to recognize some Burmese migrants’ diplomas and incorporate them into the higher education system in Burma shows that the government may also be more willing to recognize the certificates of returning refugees. In March 2013, Burmese migrant students in Thailand were allowed for the first time to take the matriculation test, which is required to attend college in Burma. This has created a greater sense of optimism that the Burmese government will recognize the certificates of refugee youth and allow them to matriculate in Burmese universities.

After recognizing refugees’ educational certificates, the Burmese government should emphasize making higher education more accessible to Burmese youth, including returning refugee youth. The best way to do this is providing better quality distance education programs. The British Council (an international development partner assisting with the CESR) reported,

> Even though some of the initial pressures to encourage distance learning were political, over the subsequent decades, many students have actually preferred to follow the distance modality over the regular university, and perhaps especially some young men. They could then combine a full-time job with the absolutely minimal requirements of attendance at the distance universities … the majority of the country’s students have voted against campus life, by enrolling in one of the two huge distance universities. Arguably, their interest is to secure certification at minimal cost and in minimum time, in ways that allow continuation of work or employment.

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122 Educational NGO representative, interview by author, tape recording, Mae Sot, Thailand, June 19, 2013.
It’s likely that many returning refugee youth will prefer distance education programs for similar reasons or because they prefer to stay in Karen State or their own village. Eh Gu explained that he wanted to return to his hometown because his parents and relatives were there, and Eh Soe stated that he wanted to return to the village where he was born and raised because he had an attachment to that place and because he needed to take care of his aging parents who were still living there. Both Eh Gu and Eh Soe also hoped to pursue higher education, and thus they should have the opportunity to receive high-quality higher education through improved distance education programs.

In revitalizing the distance education programs, Burma should continue to try to learn as much as it can from the international development partners during the educational review process.\textsuperscript{124} The Burmese government should also seek to learn from the successful distance education models that are available to refugees on the Thai-Burmese border, namely the ones established by Australian Catholic University (ACU) and by Open Universities Australia (OUA). ACU’s program could serve as a good model because it has a center where students can come to learn, but it also allows those enrolled in the school to work and then study at night and on the weekends. The Burmese government can also learn from these border programs’ challenges. For example, the students in OUA’s program found some courses challenging because they didn’t have the same background knowledge as an Australian student.\textsuperscript{125} Similarly, refugee students enrolling in distance education programs in Burma may require effective bridging courses, and the Burmese government should provide this to help them successfully integrate.

The discussions on how to reform the education system should give more attention to reforming the distance education programs and providing more funding for these programs so that the students enrolled in distance education programs are able to receive a higher quality education. It’s likely that refugee youth would be more willing to return to Burma if they knew that there was an affordable, accessible, and high-quality higher education program there, and the expansion of this program would also create more opportunities for more students in the refugee camps to pursue university degrees, which is currently limited to a select few refugee youth.

**Conclusion**

Although the policy recommendations in this thesis are focused on how to integrate returning Karen refugees into the educational system in Burma, these recommendations would also help other students and young people in Burma. Establishing a decentralized educational system would help all ethnic minority students whose mother tongue is not Burmese. Research has shown that bilingual education helps students to have more self-esteem, to participate more in class, and

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 21.

to have better results in learning a second language.\textsuperscript{126} This is equally relevant for students who speak other ethnic languages in Burma (e.g. Chin, Kachin, Shan, etc). In addition, reforming the distance education programs would not only benefit returning refugee youth, but also internally displaced persons and people living in remote areas. Youth who do not have the means to travel away from their communities and attend universities in other areas of Burma still deserve to have access to high-quality higher education programs, and thus the Burmese government must emphasize increasing the quality of these distance education programs.

The policy recommendations also have wider implications for maintaining a peaceful and stable country. The Karen National Union fought for 63 years for ethnic rights and greater autonomy, and many other ethnic armed groups (the Kachin Independence Organization, the Shan State Army, the New Mon State Party, etc.) have also fought for these rights in Burma. If the Burmese government does not allow for the teaching of ethnic languages and histories in schools and does not grant greater autonomy to ethnic minorities, it risks further animosity and instability. Thus, establishing a decentralized education system is essential to maintaining peace and stability in Burma, and it would also enable Karen students to contribute to the development of the country.

\textsuperscript{126} South and Lall, “Comparing Models,” 303.
India’s Rural Development Challenge: Politics, Caste, and Special Economic Zones

Rauvin Johl

Introduction

India’s economic development has been stunningly inequitable. This inequity is the result of historic social disparities as well as ineffective post-colonial development strategies and the country’s shift to neo-liberal policies. Due to India’s heavy investment in capital-intensive industries and complicated labor laws, undereducated or rural citizens face a dearth of employment opportunities while Indians who attend university more easily find employment. This employment inequality is one of many factors causing India’s rural populace to lag behind its urban counterparts in terms of education, health, and other development metrics. This research project analyzes the effects of lower caste political parties (LCPs) on inequitable development in India. Lower caste political parties attract constituents based on identity rather than ideology, creating a strong patron-client system. Recent scholarship has hinted that these parties produce disincentives for communities to diversify employment options, which in turn hinders social and economic development.

To measure the relationship between LCPs and development, this study examines the connection between the successes of special economic zones (SEZs) – free trade regions intended to encourage economic growth, foreign direct investment, and local employment – and LCP presence. SEZs were heralded as an innovation in development, a tool to bridge the urban-rural gap. However, the projects are floundering in many regions due to large-scale protests initiated by citizens affected by the program. The weaknesses and failings of SEZs have been attributed to the political environment created by lower caste political parties.

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I will argue that LCPs do not directly affect the success of special economic zones. The LCP political apparatus can be used by protestors fighting against SEZs, but SEZ success is ultimately hindered by the flawed design of the program rather than politics. The SEZ program emphasizes foreign direct investment without a thorough understanding of how projects will impact local communities. Accordingly, the backlash against SEZs is most often a result of a lack of transparency and unfair land compensation packages. However, in states with high concentrations of LCP presence and a less vigorous civil society, lower caste parties can be used as a tool of protest due to their perceived transparency and legitimacy. This finding demonstrates that if the Indian government wishes to close the rural-urban employment gap it will need to refocus and refine the SEZ program rather than simply change the location of projects.

Background:

The State of India’s Development

Before delving into the relationship between LCPs and SEZs it is important to examine the nature, causes, and effects of the Indian development gap and the relationship between SEZs, LCPs, and the development disparity. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines development as poverty reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), as well as democratic governance and efficient energy use with an emphasis on sustainability. The UNDP considers development to be an accumulation of decreased poverty and hunger, increased education, and increased health. According to these standards, India has had mixed results in its development efforts. The country is on track to meet the MDG of halving the proportion of the population below the poverty line and is also on track to eliminate gender disparity in secondary and primary education and to achieve universal primary education. However, the under-five mortality rate and maternal mortality rate remain high and the qualitative indicators surrounding health and education are not as optimistic as India’s MDG achievement suggests. 40% of children under three years of age in India are underweight to a severe or moderate extent and a third of the population lives on less than a dollar a day. Child nutrition and poverty are both crucial components of development, so India’s continued problems in those areas are significant. 95% of children ages six to ten are enrolled in school, which led the UNDP to declare that India has achieved universal primary
education. But school enrollment does not take into account education quality. Teacher absenteeism is a serious problem in Indian schools. In a spot check of 3,000 government primary schools, a full quarter of teachers were found absent. This indicates that although India has made significant advances towards providing equal access to primary education, there are still improvements to be made, particularly in rural regions.

There is a measurable gap between rural and urban development in India. This is not a new trend, but it is a significant one. The relative rate of poverty decline between 1994 and 2004 occurred faster in urban centers than in rural communities: in 2005 the rural poverty rate was 31.8% while the urban rate was only 25.7%, which was 6% lower than the rural rate. Monthly calorie consumption is also lower in rural regions, resulting in incongruent rates of calorie poverty – rural Indians are more likely to under consume than urban individuals. Large differences in poverty levels persist despite immense development strides in non-agricultural states. In states such as Himachal Pradesh, whose population is close to 7 million and Punjab, whose population is 27 million, less than 20% of the population lives below the poverty line. Conversely in Uttar Pradesh, the agricultural heartland of India, more than 30% of the population lives below the poverty line. With a population of almost 200 million, Uttar Pradesh is India’s most populous state. This makes the high level of poverty in the area particularly concerning. The mixed development outcomes between states are a result of India’s historic development trends and initiatives, which have focused a disproportionate amount of spending on urban development.

**Brief History of Indian Development**

Understanding India’s development history is crucial to an understanding of the Indian development gap. Historic policies emphasizing urban and middle-class development rather than rural and lower class programs have helped create a divide along urban-rural lines. India became an independent country in 1947 after the British signed the Indian Independence Act. The fledgling nation had an average life expectancy of 32 years and a 12% literacy rate, making economic and social development one of the nation’s number one priorities.

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11 Ibid., 39.
13 Ibid., 93.
16 Ibid., 10.
country’s first Prime Minister, aimed to develop the country through economic self-sufficiency and heavy industry.\textsuperscript{19} He placed an emphasis on the importance of industrial development and encouraged the construction of steel plants and large format dams. This strategy was not particularly effective; between 1960 and 1980 the country averaged only 3.2% growth, in stark contrast to countries situated similarly to them in terms of growth and infrastructure pre-1960. South Korea averaged 8% over the same period and China managed to average 6% despite decades of turmoil. Nehru’s emphasis on industry and large-scale development initiatives is seen as one of the root causes of India’s lopsided development.\textsuperscript{20}

Nehru’s development policies were in sync with the World Bank trends of the time, but failed due to an under-emphasis on rural reform.\textsuperscript{21}

When it gained independence, India was impoverished and focused on agriculture.\textsuperscript{22} Subsistence farming was the main form of employment. Instead of undertaking land reform measures in order to boost agricultural yields, Nehru focused on projects that benefitted urban dwellers, like extensive damming projects, many of which were never completed. Rural irrigation programs were never given priority and land remained as unequally distributed as it has been during British rule. Government initiatives focused heavily on the middle-class – rural education programs were rare and university level education received the same amount of annual government funding as primary schools.\textsuperscript{23} This emphasis on tertiary education led to one of the most far reaching and long lasting aspects of Nehru’s development strategy – the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT).

The Indian Institutes of Technology were five universities which played a key role in India’s economic expansion during the 1980’s. The IITs educated Indian youths on engineering and steered them towards technology-heavy careers.\textsuperscript{24} Thanks in part to these schools and the money invested in tertiary education by Nehru, India now produces a million engineers a year.\textsuperscript{25} The country has become a popular location for firms to outsource production.\textsuperscript{26} This creates a lopsided system in which people with engineering degrees and experience with English more easily find employment, but those in rural areas do not. The share of agriculture in the Indian economy has been decreasing steadily since the 1950’s – from 51.9% of GDP in 1950-51 to 13.7% of GDP in 2012 – but the number of individuals employed or seeking employment in the sector has not seen a corresponding decrease.\textsuperscript{27} The one million Indians employed in the technology sector now produce more in IT and

\textsuperscript{19} Luce, \textit{In Spite of the Gods}, 25.
\textsuperscript{20} Bhagwati, \textit{Why Growth Matters}, 98.
\textsuperscript{21} Luce, \textit{In Spite of the Gods}, 27.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 27.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 34.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{26} Luce, \textit{In Spite of the Gods}, 51.
software export revenues each year than several hundred million farmers earn from agricultural exports. This divide has serious implications.

India’s development policies have not made economic growth work for the poor. Recent surges in gross domestic product and export revenues have had positive impacts on India as a whole, but those benefits are not distributed equitably throughout the country. The weak educational infrastructure in rural regions and limited agricultural productivity dampens the effect of national economic growth on at-risk populations. The difference in urban versus rural investments is one of the primary reasons why economic growth has not done as much for India’s rural poor as for urban dwellers. States with low human capital development do not experience reduced poverty in the face of economic growth. Instead, poverty reductions occur primarily in the sectors where populations are more educated, urban, or both. The central government’s inability to provide rural citizens with quality education and agricultural reform creates a cyclical crisis, with poor rural farmers trapped in the shrinking agrarian sector.

Nehru hoped to pull Indians out of poverty by providing them with industrial and manufacturing careers, but for most citizens those employment opportunities never materialized. However, economists and development experts continue to attempt to create strategies to make growth more effective for the poor. Economic growth and poverty alleviation are not inextricably connected but can be correlated. Economic growth can result from openness to foreign trade and investment, which in turn allows a country to specialize in areas of comparative advantage and increase its gross domestic product. This was not the strategy employed by most of today’s developed Asian economies – South Korea in particular succeeded as a result of its isolationist techniques. But the potential for foreign investment to serve as a catalyst for growth has been emphasized in 21st century economic scholarship. Growth can also be a result of more efficient resource allocation policies and effective government and banking institutions. In 1990, India underwent extreme economic reform largely in the form of liberalization measures, which undid many of Nehru’s attempts at self-sufficiency. As a result, the poverty ratio declined from 48% to 35% in 1991 and between 1990 and 1995 GDP growth averaged 5%. In states with strong human capital development programs – largely in the form of quality education and job training programs – this growth has translated to development. In states such as Kerala, the combination of increased agricultural output, increased industrial exports, and increased education levels have resulted in significant decreases in poverty. This relationship between output, employment, growth, and

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28 Luce, In Spite of the Gods, 56.
30 Datt, Is India's Economic Growth Leaving the Poor Behind?, 107.
33 Ibid., 17.
34 Datt, India’s Economic Growth, 99.
poverty alleviation has encouraged the Indian government to consider rural industrial projects as a potential poverty alleviator and development initiative. SEZs in particular are framed as a way to bridge the gap between rural and urban communities and help decrease rural poverty.

**Definitions and History of Terminology**

**Special Economic Zones**

The SEZ program in India was launched in 2005 after the Lok Sabha (*House of People*) passed the SEZ Act of 2005. This act provided a framework for building hyper-liberalized economic enclaves – with minimal taxes, tariffs, and regulations. The zones were intended to promote exports by attracting foreign direct investment and domestic corporate investment which would in turn lead to infrastructure development and increased employment in India’s rural regions. Legislators hypothesized that the zones would be successful due to the decreased employment restrictions within each zone. India has been stereotyped as a hostile environment for corporate investment due to its extensive and convoluted workplace safety laws. Businesses with more than 100 employees face stringent restrictions and are forced to meet at times outdated labor codes; for instance the Indian government requires a certain number of sand buckets per factory employee for fire safety reasons. Many economists and politicians have posited that the state of India’s labor codes is partially responsible for the sharp divide between urban and rural employment opportunities. Labor laws have encouraged the state and corporations to focus on capital-heavy but labor-light industries, such as the technology sector. As a result, the demand for skilled labor in India continues to grow and unskilled workers are left behind. Educated Indians with strong English language skills find that there is an abundance of jobs available to them, while less educated or rural citizens face a shortage of employment opportunities. Special economic zones were intended to lessen this gap by encouraging investors to buy and develop property in rural regions. The resulting factories – which focus on a range of productive activities including handicrafts, jewelry, textile, electronics, and hardware production – are a potential source of rural employment.

The SEZ program was based on a similar model in China. However, the Indian and Chinese programs differ in several important regards. The Chinese model was state-led, with each SEZ requiring centralized approval and oversight. The Indian program is more localized; although the federal government approves SEZs, the specifics of each SEZ are managed and approved by individual states. This encourages states to offer increasingly attractive benefits to investors in an effort to persuade companies to build their factories in one state rather than another. As a result, concessions offered by the states have been increasing steadily since the

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37 Ibid., 50.
38 Ibid., 50.
The Indian SEZ Act only requires that 50% of the area acquired for SEZs be used for productive purposes, giving developers freedom to develop the remainder as they wish. This land is sometimes used for social infrastructure like housing and malls, but is often let lay fallow. The Indian program is also of a much larger scale than its Chinese inspiration. Within the first 16 months after the SEZ rules were established in 2006, 464 SEZs were approved and the figure now stands at almost 600. The Indian government estimates that currently proposed SEZs will require over a half million acres of land. The program—through widespread and provided much political support—is not without conflict; many communities have opposed the creation of SEZs in their area. This opposition to the formation of SEZs is at times attributed to the presence of lower caste political parties.

Definitions of “Lower Castes”

Prior to an analysis of the characteristics and evolution of lower class political parties, it is necessary to have a basic understanding of the Indian caste system. The Indian caste system is an endogamous, hierarchical group with membership based on birth and reincarnation. Caste membership has religious and socio-economic consequences, with some castes being afforded more rights and privileges than others. The caste system is often simplified into five categories—Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, Sudras and Untouchables—with the Brahmans being the most privileged group and the Untouchables acting as social pariahs. However, the system of categorization is more complex than those five terms delineate, with caste groups varying from region to region. The caste system was officially abolished by the Indian constitution but continues to live on in social interactions.

There are several groups of underprivileged classes that regularly face structural discrimination under the caste system. These groups—scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and other ‘backwards’ classes—are given special concessions by the Indian national government, such as job reservations in the public sector. According to the Indian government, a scheduled caste is a subset of the population that faced “extreme social, education and economic backwardness arising out of the traditional practice of untouchability.” These individuals are also sometimes referred to as “Dalits.” There are approximately 400 untouchable or Dalit castes in India, many but not all of whom qualify for affirmative action benefits. Scheduled tribes are tribal groups and ethnic minorities who faced similar historic discrimination. Other ‘backwards classes (OBCs) is a term used by the Indian government to refer to “backward classes of citizens other than the Scheduled Castes…not adequately represented in the services under the Government of India

40 Ibid., 933.
41 Levien, “The Land Questions,” 935.
43 Ibid., 648.
and any local or other authority within the territory of India or under the control of the Government of India”. 46 OBC is a catch-all term used to describe groups that faced historic discrimination but who do not fit into traditional scheduled caste and tribe definitions. All three groups are often characterized by low literacy rates, limited access to state resources, and social exclusion. 47

**Lower Caste Political Parties**

India is the world’s most populous democracy. It is home to 1.2 billion citizens and houses more than 50 distinct political parties. The country has a parliamentary democratic system patterned after the British system. 48 There are two houses, the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. The Lok Sabha has 550 seats and operates on a first-past-the-post system, which means that whichever candidate has a simple majority wins regardless of whether or not they receive an absolute majority of votes. The Rajya Sabha (Council of States) has 250 members who are elected by the state assemblies and serve six year terms. 49 Some Lok Sabha seats are set aside for members of scheduled castes and tribes. At present, 47 seats are reserved for scheduled tribes and 84 for scheduled castes. 50

Since the 1990’s, two political parties have dominated the Indian political system – the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress Party (Congress). Both are umbrella parties; they attempt to garner support from varying subsets of the population regardless of caste, class, or ethnic affiliation. 51 Recently the two major parties have faced threats from smaller parties especially in state-level elections. Ethnic political parties, also known as lower caste political parties, are becoming increasingly popular, particularly in Uttar Pradesh but also in other regions including Jammu and Kashmir and Haryana. 52 These lower caste political parties are a response to the “catch-all” political strategy of the Congress and BJP. 53 LCPs market themselves to the lower tiers of Indian society, including the Dalits, scheduled castes, and other backwards classes. Such groups by no means vote homogenously, so the term LCP refers more to how the party represents itself to communities rather than to how constituents respond. 54

**Prominent LCP Parties**

The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) claims to represent the interests of Dalits, or untouchables, in Indian politics. They are the political party most associated with the lower caste political movement, and are one of few parties that explicitly represent

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46 Ministry of Social Justice, 1.
47 Chandra, Why Ethnic Parties Succeed, 16.
49 Ibid., 20.
50 Ministry of Social Justice, 1.
the cause of the scheduled castes against the upper castes. The word “Bahujan” means “the majority of the people” which lends dramatic insight into the party’s goals. The BSP’s goal is the consolidation of caste and religious minorities in India, as minority groups collectively constitute a majority of the population but regularly find themselves underrepresented in the upper echelons of local and national politics. The party’s target constituency is scheduled castes; as a result Dalits are well represented in this party. The BSP is not the only lower caste party, the Samajwadi or Socialist Party (SP) also appeals strongly to the lower caste and disenfranchised. They specifically market themselves to the Other Backwards Classes and hold power mostly in Uttar Pradesh, though they are attempting to expand their reach. Together the BSP and SP represent the two largest factions of lower caste and class peoples in India—the scheduled castes and Other Backwards Classes.

**The Relationship Between LCPs and SEZs**

So how do special economic zones and lower caste political parties relate to rural development? Special economic zones were created in order to expand the economic prosperity of India’s cities into the countryside. However, scholars such as Luce have pointed out that the rise of lower caste political parties are problematic for such programs. Lower caste political parties are patronage parties; voters expect to receive material benefits from LCPs if they vote for them. As a result, LCPs do not fall neatly on the conventional political spectrum – unlike the BJP and the Congress Party they cannot be easily labeled as “center-right” or “center-left” – LCPs focus on providing concrete material benefits in exchange for votes. The groups targeted by LCPs are often those most in need of material support. Accordingly, the LCPs do not have an incentive to encourage rural growth. Increasing quality of life for their constituents could potentially lead them to vote for traditional ideologically driven parties rather than LCPs. Given this, LCPs would have an incentive to discourage the establishment of SEZs in their strongholds. Furthermore, since their launch in 2005, SEZs have faced immense backlash in the form of community protests. This begs the question, do LCPs affect SEZ success? Are they one of the driving forces encouraging these protests? If so, this could have broad implications for how the Indian government approaches rural development programs and SEZ creation in LCP-heavy regions. If there is no correlation between LCP presence and SEZ success, then perhaps the reasons for SEZ failure lie within the program itself.

**Methodology**

This study uses two case studies to examine whether LCP presence affects SEZ success. To do this, I first created an SEZ success matrix in order to determine

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56 Ibid., 15.
57 Jaffrelot, *Re-Nationalization of India’s Political System*, 1106.
58 Ibid., 2000.
60 Luce, *In Spite of the Gods*, 126.
what it meant for an SEZ to succeed or to fail. I then explored the reasons why SEZs fail in areas without LCPs to ensure that my case study analysis would focus directly on the relationship between LCPs and SEZs rather than linking failure with outside causes. I assessed the correlation between SEZs and LCPs using two case studies based on SEZs in Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. The cases were selected based on the level of LCP presence in the State housing the project and the availability of data concerning the surrounding community. Based on the successes or failure of my case studies, my analysis would then attempt to determine whether or not LCP presence affects SEZ outcomes, or whether outcomes instead rely on program characteristics.

**Defining SEZ Success**

The Indian government defines SEZ success very narrowly. The goal of the program is overwhelmingly considered to be increasing exports, so the primary focus is on the value of exports from functioning SEZs.\(^\text{62}\) This is the only metric listed on the SEZ program website and annual reports. Accordingly, a successful SEZ will simply be operational – it should involve functioning machinery and employ human labor or use local capital to produce exportable goods. The Indian government labels SEZs as tools of economic development, but defines development narrowly in terms of exports, gross domestic product, and foreign direct investment. This metric for success is constricted; it does not take into account the effect of the SEZ on local communities or the level of employment created by the SEZ. Accordingly, the definition used in this paper will vary slightly from the government standard. To be considered successful an SEZ will still need to be operational, involve employees, and export goods or services. However, success must also involve increases in non-agricultural employment options in rural regions. This means that jobs created by an SEZ must be accessible to local or migrant workers, regardless of skill level. An SEZ that creates only high skill positions – for instance a call center that requires advanced language skills – will not substantially increase rural employment and thus cannot be considered a success. Wage rates were also an important consideration, as the reduced labor regulations in SEZ areas create the potential for worker abuse or poor working conditions. Additionally, the length of time that an SEZ takes to become operational will be considered as part of its success. If land is bought but not developed for several years then the SEZ is not a success, as it removed a source of employment from a community without providing any returns. Long waiting periods between the approval of an SEZ and the beginning of construction can cause the state government to de-notify or rescind the SEZ’s approval, a process that takes months or even years. For the purposes of this paper, an SEZ will be considered a failure if it does not open – due to the land being purchased but never being developed or if a purchase falls through – or if it does not provide hospitable employment opportunities for lower-skill workers.

**Examples of SEZ Failure**

With over 500 approved SEZs, there is plenty of room for failure. Prominent examples of SEZ failure that meet both this paper’s and the Indian government’s definition of failure include instances in Goa and West Bengal. In 2008 Goa became the first Indian state to scrap all SEZ projects, even those already under development, after locals protested the SEZ program on the grounds that their land had been acquired without consent or appropriate compensation. In Singur, a West Bengal town, the government of West Bengal announced they were allowing Tata motors to acquire over 1,000 acres of fertile land in order to establish a car plant in Singur. Protests began instantly and evolved into a five-month long peasant movement. The project was eventually relocated to Gujarat. A similar incident occurred in Nandigram, West Bengal in 2007. The Indian government approved a chemical corporation’s SEZ in Nandigram. Upset at their imminent displacement, villagers protested the SEZ and 14 civilians were killed after police brutality turned the incident violent. These examples illustrate SEZ failure. In all three examples, the SEZs either did not become operational or closed due to local discontent. However, SEZ failure cannot be connected to LCP presence unless one analyzes the reasons as to why SEZs fail in states without LCPs.

Reasons for General SEZ Failure

Before examining the link between SEZ failure and LCPs, it is important to understand why SEZs fail in regions without LCP presence. Generally, SEZs fail after protests put pressure on the State to terminate the project. Protests against SEZs in areas without lower caste parties that lead to SEZ failure are the result of several intersecting factors including land acquisition policies, political context, and the diversity of the protest movement.

Land is the single most important asset in rural India. Given this significance, it makes sense that land acquisition policies could cause conflict. The central government does not play a significant role in land acquisition for SEZs – each state competes to attract investments. This means that interested states aggressively market their investment destination by offering increasingly attractive subsidies and concessions. States offer long lists of concessions to each investor in order to attract developers. Land itself is acquired through several different methods. It is most often acquired via imminent domain, but other methods do exist. For example in Rajasthan, the Jaida Development Authority (JDA) used a plot method, through which farmers got 25% of their land back in the form of adjoining plots near the SEZ and received compensation for the remainder. When land is acquired

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67 Levien, “The Land Questions”, 950.
68 Ibid., 939.
69 Bedi, "Special Economic Zones," 43.
through imminent domain, farmers do not need to agree to the sale and do not receive alternative land plots; the land is simply purchased by the state at an established “fair” rate. The compensation provided in those instances is at times unfair, as its value is assessed based on the land’s past agricultural value rather than its potential or future value. This leads to a “rate of accumulation by dispossession.” Land acquired for SEZs often appreciates by more than 50% within the first five years of purchase. Uniformly unfair land acquisition sparks resistance more often than episodic inequity. Standardized inequity overcomes caste and class barriers to unite the landowners and other community members against SEZs. As a result, resistance is largely concentrated around SEZ projects that occur through eminent domain rather than other methods, like the JDA plot strategy. This is not the only reason for SEZ resistance and failures – struggles are also localized and based on contextual factors.

Goa is an example of the localized nature of SEZ struggles. The closure of SEZs in Goa demonstrates that factors influencing SEZ failure include state responsiveness and the possibility of retribution against protest. SEZ protestors often attack the unfair aspects of SEZs that are local to the situation in each community. They do not protest the policy as a whole, though they might disagree with it. The main goal of protests against SEZs like those in Goa, Singur, and Nandigram is to gain concessions or a relocation of the SEZ, not a dismantling of the national program. As a result, the accessibility of the state is of paramount importance to protestors. Protests are most likely to occur in states where there is a history and acceptance of protests and where the state is viewed as accepting and open to such protests. If politicians are considered to be unresponsive or antagonistic towards demonstrations, then SEZs tend to be approved at a more regular rate. In Goa, the Chief Minister was willing to meet with activists and protestors to discuss ways to resolve their concerns over SEZs. On the other hand in Karnataka, another Indian state, letters sent to government officials went without response. As a result, protestors became disillusioned and the protest ended without achieving change. Furthermore, in Goa the accessible nature of the state meant that citizens were not afraid of retribution. Goan protestors went on the record as saying that if the previous Chief Minister, Pratap Singh Rane, had been in power they would not have succeeded in abolishing SEZs in the state, nor would they have tried, as he was perceived as more violent and more pro-SEZ than his successor.

SEZs are also likely to fail when they affect broad and diverse subsets of the local population. In Goa protestors were a diverse group composed of politicians, urban professionals, rural community leaders, and non-professional urban citizens. The presence of urban protestors alongside rural community members helped

70 Levien, “The Land Questions”, 939.
71 Ibid., 933.
72 Ibid., 935.
73 Bedi, “Special Economic Zones,” 43.
74 Ibid., 45.
75 Ibid., 44.
76 Ibid., 47.
increase the power and credibility of the movement.\textsuperscript{77} It demonstrated that the protest represented the will of a mix of castes, classes, and political leanings.\textsuperscript{78} One of the protest’s leaders also represented the Fishworkers Movement, a local organizing force with experience protesting state policies, which helped increase the efficiency of the protest. The resistance was not politically affiliated; there were not LCPs involved in the Goan protests nor were there any other political parties affiliated with the movement.\textsuperscript{79} The protest leaders did not consider politicians trustworthy, so although some politicians were involved in the movement, the organizers of the movement consistently reinforced that they were not a politically affiliated protest.\textsuperscript{80} Goa did not have an LCP presence of any kind, but the SEZs in the state were all scrapped. The circumstances in Goa demonstrate that in general, SEZs fail due to the land acquisition policies, political environments, and the social diversity of protest movements in the state. However, the Goan example says little about the outcome of SEZ programs in states with LCP presence. The subsequent portion of this paper will focus on an analysis of two case studies in an attempt to discover connections between SEZs and LCPs and to determine if SEZ outcomes are affected by the political environment in which they are housed or by their structure.

\textit{Case Study Selection Process}

Case studies were selected based on the level of LCP presence, which required the creation of a method for measuring LCP activity. LCP presence was measured using the share of the vote that two prominent LCP parties, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and Samajwadi (SP) parties, achieved in state assembly elections between 1998 and 2009.\textsuperscript{81} There are 35 states and union territories in India, so after sorting states by LCP level, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal were selected based on level of LCP presence and the length of SEZ presence.

Located in northern India, Uttar Pradesh is known for its high level of agricultural economic activity. It is the fourth largest state in India and it is the most populous with a population of almost 200 million.\textsuperscript{82} The state’s Chief Minister, Akhilesh Yadav, is a member of the Samajwadi Party, a lower caste party. LCPs are extremely popular in the state and have had control of the government for over a decade. Uttar Pradesh currently houses eight operational SEZs.

West Bengal lies on the eastern edge of India. It has a population of approximately 90 million and is also a major agricultural producer.\textsuperscript{83} The Chief Minister is Mamata Banerjee, a member of the All India Trinamool Congress (TMC).

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\item\textsuperscript{77} Bedi, “Special Economic Zones,” 43.
\item\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 44.
\item\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 44.
\item\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 51.
\item\textsuperscript{81} Chandra’s method was used to estimate ethnic voting patterns. This method relies on a number of assumptions including the assumption that all votes for an LCP came from their target voting group, that the percent of the target group in the electorate is the same as the percentage in the population, and that the target group turned out to vote.
\item\textsuperscript{83} Banerjee, “Land Acquisition” 1.
\end{itemize}
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The TMC is a regional party rather than an LCP and was formed by Banerjee as a factional party after she left the Congress Party.\(^4\) The LCP rates in West Bengal are low, with the BSP and SP each taking less than 1% of the total vote. West Bengal currently has four operational SEZs. Finally, Goa is the smallest Indian state and it lies on the Arabian Sea. There are no LCPs or SEZs in the state. The combination of varied LCP presence and differing geography made these three states strong case study regions.

Once states were selected, specific SEZs were chosen for further analysis. SEZs for study were identified based on the location, type, and age of the SEZ. SEZs established in the early stages of the program were preferred, as they would have more data available. Additionally, SEZs that focused on non-IT related fields were also selected, as non-tech sector companies are more likely to hire low-skilled labor than IT-heavy ones. Accordingly, although IT SEZs do boost employment, they do not help the displaced and are rarely designed to aid low-income communities. IT SEZs are often framed as purely for the good of the country, rather than for the good of displaced landowners. In the end, three case studies were chosen: Noida in Uttar Pradesh, Falta in West Bengal, and the state of Goa, which has no operational SEZs.

**Findings and Analysis**

If lower caste political parties shape the success of SEZs, then an analysis of the SEZ programs in Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal should show a difference in the success of SEZ programs, as Uttar Pradesh is an LCP heavy region while West Bengal has little to no LCP presence. However, this was not the case. The Noida and Falta SEZs are both successful projects according to the government success metric as well as the matrix created for this paper. Despite the differences in political circumstances surrounding the two projects, both have fared well in the decades since their establishment. The contrast between these successes in areas with mixed LCP presence and the failure of the SEZs in Goa, an area devoid of LCPs, indicates that SEZs fail due to contextual reasons rooted in the programs themselves, more so than the environment surrounding them.

**Noida SEZ:**

**Economic Effects of the SEZ**

The Noida SEZ, located in the state of Uttar Pradesh, is one of the oldest special economic zones in India. The zone has existed since 1985, and was grandfathered into the SEZ program after its launch in 2003. Due to its age, the SEZ is classified as a national SEZ and is controlled by the Indian national government. The Noida SEZ spans 310 acres and has cost the Indian government more than 1177 million Rs (US$190 million).\(^5\) The facility houses a variety of companies, such as gem and jewelry exporters and electronic software developers, and provides


employment for 20,000 individuals.\textsuperscript{86} In total, more than 250 companies have purchased space in the Noida SEZ. As a result, the SEZ is responsible for over 133751 million Rs (US$21 billion) in exports.\textsuperscript{87} Given its age and size, there is an abundance of data on the benefits and shortfalls of the Noida SEZ. Studies such as those by Aggarwal (2007), Tantri (2011), and Kumar (2009) have analyzed the outcomes of the SEZ in terms of net employment, gendered employment rates, educational rates in surrounding areas, worker satisfaction, and net exports. Furthermore, the Noida SEZ is one of the few SEZs with a full webpage in both English and Hindi. The webpage is administered by the central government and provides details on the organizational structure of the SEZ, its annual reports, minutes from SEZ authority meetings, and details on each of the 202 developed units in the SEZ. The Noida SEZ can be considered a success both in terms of the Indian government’s SEZ success matrices and the matrices used for this paper. The SEZ has been continuously operational since 1985, has been an official SEZ since 2003, and employs 20,000 individuals in a variety of fields including low-skill positions.

Community Impact

The Noida SEZ is located close to New Delhi, one of the largest consumer markets in the country.\textsuperscript{88} This position was a strategic choice, as it provides a market for produced goods as well as a labor source. The communities surrounding the SEZ have seen significant increases in income and education levels since the program was launched, although these gains cannot be specifically tied to the emergence of the SEZ.\textsuperscript{89} According to SEZ management, skilled, unskilled, and contractual employees at Noida all made at least 4% more than the minimum wage in Uttar Pradesh. In 2007, the minimum wage in the state was 1914 Rs (US$30.95) per month and the minimum monthly wage in the SEZ was 2000 Rs (US$32.34) per month.\textsuperscript{90} However, laborer surveys contradicted the management and showed that the actually minimum wage was 1250 Rs ($20.21 US$), which is below the state minimum.\textsuperscript{91} However, most workers expressed satisfaction with their wages, as they were higher than non-SEZ wage. Given the age of the SEZ, there is little data relating to the original land purchase and its effects on the agricultural community. However, given the proximity of Noida to New Delhi, communities near the SEZ have benefitted from better infrastructure growth – for example a more extensive road system – than most other areas in Uttar Pradesh.\textsuperscript{92} Overall, studies on the effects of Noida on the peoples in close proximity to the project have indicated a


\textsuperscript{87} "Noida Special Economic Zone."

\textsuperscript{88} Aggarwal, \textit{Impact of Special Economic Zones}, 2.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 45.

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 23.

\textsuperscript{91} Aggarwal, \textit{Impact of Special Economic Zones}, 24.

general sense of acceptance and contentment with the project, though there are whispers of labor mistreatment in regards to wage levels.  

Falva:
Economic Effects of the SEZ

The Falta SEZ is located in West Bengal, a state on the eastern coast of India.  

Like Noida, the Falta SEZ was established by the national government of India in 1984.  When the SEZ Act was passed in 2003, the Falta SEZ began the process of becoming an official SEZ and in 2006 it was registered as an SEZ.  The Falta SEZ has an extensive web presence, which is controlled by the Indian government.  The public has access to annual reports, a directory of companies within the SEZ, and other relevant documents in both English and Hindi.  Falta has shown consistent but modest increases in exports since its opening.  Since 2006 the value of exported goods from Falta has grown from $150 million US$ to more than $700 million US$.  However, the SEZ is import-intensive, meaning that between 2011-2014 it has imported more than the value of its total exports.  Falta imported $756 million US$ worth of raw materials but its total export value was only $730 million US$.  This import-export deficit means that according to the government definition of success, Falta cannot truly be considered successful.  Nonetheless, the SEZ meets the criteria to be a success in terms of community impact.  The Falta SEZ uses 90% of the land acquired for productive purposes and has a wide variety of sectors represented in its units.  The SEZ houses chemical plants, textile factories, sport and leather goods producers, and tea packaging companies.  There are 72 registered and operational corporate tenants in the SEZ, though only 52 of those companies have fully-functional facilities.  The wide variety of sectors represented by the Falta SEZ allows the facility to provide both high-skill and low-skill employment.  Approximately 55.5% of exports from Falta are manufactured goods which require low to medium skilled labor.  This diversity of employment combined with the fact that the site has been productive for three decades means that the Falta SEZ can be considered a success in terms of positive community impact.  Although it remains to be seen if the facility can sustain itself given its import-export deficit, the SEZ does provide an array of employment opportunities.

Community Impact

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93 Aggarwal, Impact of Special Economic Zones, 24.
96 Ibid., 5.
97 Ibid., 18.
99 Ibid., 3.
The land for the Falta SEZ was acquired from several different sources. 60% was purchased from the Calcutta Port Trust, a state-owned enterprise. The remaining 40% came from local villages. Two of these villages, Akalmegh and Uttar Simulberia, lost land to the SEZ while 80 acres of land was acquired from Gopalpur in order to resettle displaced villagers from Akalmegh and Uttar Simulberia. In total, the Falta SEZ affected approximately 630 households. 48% of those households lost cultivable land due to this displacement, which resulted in 70% of displaced household members changing their occupation. Displaced households were not the only peoples affected by the SEZ. Nearby community members expressed dissatisfaction due to the SEZ, as it required the development of road infrastructure in surrounding communities. This negatively affected boaters in the region, who had made a living transporting goods via waterways. However, a survey of 1017 displaced and unaffected households conducted by Paul and Sarma in 2013-2014 indicated that 30% of respondents felt that the Falta SEZ had resulted in better access to service and utilities such as water and electricity. Predictably, the villagers who lived near Falta but had not lost their land reported higher satisfaction with the project than displaced community members. But the Falta SEZ has been successful in employing displaced peoples. In fact, between 25 and 36% of working men in the displaced populations were employed by Falta while 50% of working women from both displaced and unaffected populations work in Falta. Overall, displaced peoples were marginally more likely to be employed by the SEZ than unaffected community members, but displaced peoples were less likely to complete their secondary school education than unaffected individuals.

Relationship between SEZ success and LCPs

The contention that SEZs are more likely to fail in areas with a high LCP presence due to disincentives for LCPs to support the program does not hold up in the case of Falta and Noida. Both programs have met the government’s goal of exporting goods and services while providing rural employment opportunities. Falta’s situation is shakier than Noida’s due to its net trade deficit, but overall both facilities have met the goals outlined by the government. In Uttar Pradesh this success is partially a result of the state government’s support of the program, which is notable as the state has been controlled by an LCP since 2002. The BSP and SP have alternated control over the state, most recently with the SP beating the BSP and ousting them in the 2012 elections. Contrary to the theories of Luce and Sarma, the SEZ program has simply become another bargaining chip used by LCPs in order to garner votes. This is evidenced by the political platforms of LCPs in the run up to the April 2014 elections. The SP recently released its national Lok Sabha election platform, which included the establishment of SEZs as one of its key goals.

100 Ibid., 2.
101 Paul, The Livelihood Effects of Industrialization on Displaced Households, 5.
102 Ibid., 6.
103 Ibid., 8.
104 Ibid., 14.
platform was announced by SP party chief and former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav and included a pledge to raise the retirement age and extend scheduled caste and tribe benefits to Muslims. The inclusion of SEZs alongside other targeted promises demonstrates that LCPs can use SEZs to their advantage by playing up the ability of SEZs to create alternative employment opportunities for farmers. In that way, the SEZ program becomes an asset to LCPs rather than a weakness.

Additionally, in the case of both Noida and Falta, SEZ programs were centralized and efficient. The federal nature of these projects helped speed the opening process, while the ability of both to deliver on employment goals cultivated local support. Even in Noida, where the wage rates are allegedly lower than the state minimum, locals accept the program as an alternative to farming or unemployment. While this low-wage labor system is less than ideal, it does help to alleviate the rural-urban employment gap and provides necessary alternatives to the shrinking agricultural sector. Given these benefits, it follows that the LCPs in power in Uttar Pradesh and in the minority in West Bengal would support the SEZ program, or at the very least passively accept it. In the end, the situation in Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal demonstrate that SEZ success is largely situational and dependent on local context. But if LCPs are not a driving force behind SEZ failure, then why do SEZs continue to fail in many Indian states?

Why SEZs Fail

SEZ success is stalled by the flawed design of the program, which emphasizes abrupt change without an understanding of how SEZs will impact local communities. Accordingly, protests against SEZs are most often a result of a lack of transparency and unfair land compensation packages rather than political interference. The reality is that SEZs fail because they lack community support and effective regulation. Protests like those in Singur, Goa, and Nandigram were the result of local communities lashing out against the coercive dispossession policies of the central Indian government. Corporations do not negotiate directly with farmers when establishing SEZs; instead the Indian government purchases land and sells it to real estate firms, which lease or sell that same space to larger corporations. The farmers and local business people whose land is purchased by the government, often via imminent domain, are cut out of the profit cycle. The payment they receive in exchange for their land is often as little as half as much as the value of the land after the purchase. When locals realize the extent to which they have been short changed, tension is inevitable. This tension turns into outright protest when the sense of mistreatment pervades a large enough group. LCP involvement has a limited effect on the failure of special economic zones because most protests against SEZs are community-led and apolitical. Indians, particularly lower-caste Indians, are often suspicious of political entities and associate them with corruption. Accordingly, it follows that community members would be unwilling to partner with political parties

107 Pal, Pattern of International Trade through West Bengal, 9.
109 Bedi, “Special Economic Zones,” 44.
especially when the partnership would require the political structures to work against the state’s political will. The anti-political positioning of SEZ protestors makes even more sense when analyzed in light of the Nandigram killings.

In January 2007 farmers in Nandigram, a small village in West Bengal, were told their land was to be give to an Indonesian company in order to construct an SEZ. Nandigram was a lower class village, and though it was not prosperous it was solvent. Many villagers had opted to remain in Nandigram and continue to work in the agricultural sector even as their sons and daughters moved to urban hubs. The land was considered to be a far more stable way of life, and households in Nandigram were able to regularly produce food surpluses for sale. When the state government announced the imminent arrival of the SEZ, villagers were aghast. The West Bengali government was controlled by the Left Front, a party alliance composed of various socialist and communist political groups, including the Samajwadi Party. Many of the Left Front parties were crucial participants in the Quit India movement and were viewed as allies of the poor and of peasants. The Left Front’s shift in policy was not taken lightly – protests began almost immediately. In an attempt to convince Nandigram’s populace of the importance of the SEZ program, several town hall meetings were held; but ultimately public opinion would not turn, so the state began sending notices to homes in Nandigram informing them that they were required to vacate their property. These notices appeared before the government had begun processing payments for the land. The protests spread and quickly turned violent; police officers shot into the crowds, killing at least 15 people and wounding over 75. The city was shut down for 48 hours, during which homes and village shops were plundered and more locals were beaten. When the violence finally died down, the governor sided with the police force, refusing to apologize to the families of those injured or killed, refusing to visit the town, and refusing to accept blame.

The tragedy at Nandigram has two primary significances. Firstly, it demonstrates why subsequent protestors, like those in Goa, have been leery of accepting support from political entities. Although the Left Front’s opposition party, the Trinamool Congress, did provide some support to the protestors, for the most part the protests and the victims of the protest were on their own. The Left Front, once a positive force for change in the region and a proponent of non-violent protests, proved that it was unwilling to compromise and the behavior of opposition parties in the region demonstrated that they were unwilling to enact change. Thus, Nandigram signaled to anti-SEZ activists that they would not have political support in their efforts, an attitude that continues to shape anti-SEZ movements, like that in Goa. Additionally, the violence in Nandigram demonstrates why lower caste parties do not affect the success of special economic zones in the manner that Luce and Chandra expect. Although the LCPs play on the ethnic or caste identity of voters in order to achieve power and exchange goods, services, and employment opportunities for

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101 Ibid., 79.
102 Ibid., 81.
103 Ibid., 84.
votes, this does not necessarily translate into distaste for development projects. SEZs are beneficial to the state – they provide an influx of income into the state and curry favor with the national government. Hence, LCPs like the Samajwadi party are willing to support SEZ projects even when they are not in the best interest of the communities they affect.

**Uttar Pradesh: Examples of LCP Involvement**

Thus far, this paper has established that LCPs do not necessarily discourage the development of SEZs and that SEZs generally fail due to flaws inherent to the program. However, in some situations, lower caste parties have been mobilized as a tool against SEZs. These situations are limited and contextually based, reinforcing that the primary driving force against the SEZ program is the local communities in which the programs are proposed.

As discussed earlier, Uttar Pradesh is home to the highest proportion of lower caste parties and nine special economic zones. And like many states, Uttar Pradesh has seen protests against SEZs. One of the state’s most contentious projects was a road construction effort that would connect the Noida SEZ to the city of Agra. The project was projected to cost Rs 40,000 crore (US$6.55 billion) and would displace hundreds of farmers and use up hundreds of acres of highly fertile land.\(^{114}\) The Noida road construction project, though not itself an SEZ, is unique in that it involves LCPs on both sides of the issue. The Bahujan Samaj Party, India’s largest lower caste party, ran the state government at the time of the project. The state’s Chief Minister, Mayawati, was the leader of the BSP and was strongly in favor of the road projects. Speculation as to why she so strongly supported the project varied, some attributed her support to corruption and political patronage, alleging that she was receiving kickbacks while her citizen’s land was taken.\(^{115}\) Other saw the project as a way to modernize the at times backwards region.\(^{116}\) Regardless, the expressway received little community support and protests occurred. However, unlike in Goa, the state government was not responsive to protestors. Protests were quashed quickly and at times violently. As a result, other LCPs took up the cause. In the absence of the safety and responsiveness that assisted the Goan protestors, the Samajwadi party emerged as the primary supporter of protest.\(^{117}\) Party officials condemned the road project, sent representatives to protests and helped rally their supporters.\(^{118}\) Thus, the Noida expressway was an intersection between two different LCP parties in the state with the highest LCP presence. The involvement of the Samajwadi party in the protests against the Noida road construction project demonstrates that although lower caste parties do not significantly affect the success

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\(^{114}\) Farzand Ahmed, "On the Fast Track; Amid Opposition, Mayawati Launches the Rs 40,000-Crore Ganga Expressway Project to Put the State's Economy on a High Growth Trajectory," *India Today*, Feb. 4, 2008, 44.

\(^{115}\) Ibid., 45.


\(^{118}\) Anuja, “Uttar Pradesh,” 1.
or failure of SEZs, in certain contextual circumstances the parties can serve as a rallying point for protests.

Conclusion

India’s development has been uneven, with more strides being made in the country’s urban center than in its rural regions. This disparity is in part a result of India’s historic development programs, which have emphasized urban education and urban infrastructure development but neglected rural land reform programs. The emphasis on urban post-secondary education institutions has made India an IT powerhouse, and has encouraged the development of special economic zones. These zones are intended to lessen the development gap by providing rural jobs and produce significant revenue for the state. However, the recent failure of special economic zones in towns such as Singur and Nandigram has led to speculation that the project is flawed or that it lacks political and community support. Lower caste political parties, which provide political favors to ethnic groups in exchange for votes, are often mentioned as a potential threat to SEZs. Although from a theoretical perspective the goals of lower caste parties and special economic zones seem compatible, the patronage-based nature of LCPs has led to speculation regarding the relationship between the two entities. However, though development initiatives may have the potential to decrease constituent interest in lower caste parties – as those with material stability need not leverage their ethnic identity in order to receive employment or compensation – LCP presence does not necessarily result in the failure of SEZs. Nonetheless, in states with high concentrations of LCP presence and a less vigorous civil society, lower caste parties can become a tool of protest – as they have in Uttar Pradesh. In the end, most special economic zone failures can be attributed to flaws in the program itself. Accordingly, if the Indian government wishes to continue with the SEZ program, it would do well to reevaluate the program’s goals and methodology, and to scale the program down to a more manageable size.
South Korea-Japan Relations Under Lee Myung-bak: 
The Role of Historical Issues in the Modern Context

Ellen Park

Introduction

Although South Korea and Japan have many reasons to cooperate across different areas, the bilateral relationship has not been as consistently positive as many would expect. Many South Korean presidents enter office with the promise of improving relations, yet they end their term with worsened bilateral relations. At the start of the Lee Myung-Bak administration in 2008, many analysts expected improved relations because of Lee’s background as a conservative businessman, especially in the context of the global economic turmoil. However, by the end of his term in 2012, relations not only fell short of positive expectations, they also reached one of its worst levels.

Currently, South Korea and Japan cooperate on a number of issues. Both countries share similar values, such as democratic freedoms and the support of free markets, and these are exemplified within their areas of cooperation. Major exchanges include cultural and economic exchanges. Additionally, cooperation on security issues center around the shared desire for stability in the region. The greatest common areas of concern are North Korea and China. The uncertainty surrounding the actions and intentions of the North Korean regime are of great concern, as both countries are potential targets of North Korea’s provocations and possible missile capabilities. Likewise, the emergence of China as a competing dominant power has taken center stage in both countries’ agendas. Japan has shown great concern, especially as China has been increasing its assertiveness over

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territorial claims, including the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands under Japanese rule. South Korea, on the other hand, has used the rise of China for its own benefits, hedging its stance on a variety of issues between China and the other major power in the region, the United States. The uncertainty over how China will act or react to any developments, which results from China’s one-party rule, creates an uneasy environment for all countries within the region.

The bilateral relationship between South Korea and Japan is heavily influenced by the relationship both countries have with the United States. Both countries share a military alliance with the United States, established initially in 1951 for Japan and in 1954 for South Korea. Both Japan and South Korea are guaranteed military assistance from the United States in the case of an attack from a third party. As a result, the United States wants to see increased cooperation between its two allies to prevent an escalation of conflict and a possible exchange of fire within the region.

Given the complicated and interconnected relationships that both countries are committed to, there is more reason to believe that Japan and South Korea would cooperate more often. However, as conveyed by the series of events in their modern relationship, this is not always the case. The development, and eventual decline, of bilateral relations during the Lee administration was a depiction of the complicated relationship between the two countries. This study aimed to identify what the key factors were in causing the relationship to deteriorate. This was accomplished through an analysis of Lee’s policy toward Japan. Positive relations were defined as Lee taking a lighter stance toward Japan, while a harder stance indicated declining bilateral relations.

**Background**

**Historical Background of South Korea-Japan Relations**

South Korea and Japan share a long, complicated history—a relationship with economic, diplomatic, and cultural exchanges spanning over centuries. The contemporary dynamics in East Asia are still heavily affected by this deep but important relationship. It is critical not to neglect the role that history continues to play throughout modern South Korea-Japan relations, as history is still prevalent in the mindset of the South Korean people. Though these events occurred decades prior, South Korea still fears that Japan will return to its colonial motivations, striving to dominate the region as a global power at the cost of its neighboring countries. This fear stems from South Korea’s position throughout history; as the country strives to become a major power, sovereignty is a well-protected concern.

As the link to the rest of continental Asia, the Korean peninsula was a key asset to Japan’s quest for dominance at the turn of the 20th century. In 1905, Japan declared Korea its protectorate, and in 1910 Japan annexed Korea. The Japanese

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would have control until 1945, when the Allied Powers in World War II defeated the Japanese. This period of colonization would continue to be at the heart of many key disputes between the two countries today.

After World War II, South Korea struggled to develop as a sovereign country. As a result, on May 16, 1961, a military coup led by Park Chung-Hee took over the weak democracy. Park’s strong ruling hand, though heavily criticized, was an essential piece in allowing the signing of the controversial 1965 Treaty on Basis Relations with Japan. Scars from the Japanese occupation were still deep, and much of the South Korean public continues to criticize Park for closing the door on future compensation claims and pursuing economic development without considering other costs to the South Korean public. It was through this normalization of relations, however, that the government was capable of pursuing the large projects that led to its exponential export-led economic growth, what is also known as the “Miracle on the Han River.” The results of the 1965 normalization treaty still carry implications today, as the treaty is still used in debates over the compensation for labor and sex slaves during the occupation: Japan claims that the treaty addressed compensation and that this responsibility was given to the South Korean government, which failed to follow through, while South Koreans argue that the treaty was signed under authoritative rule and thus did not represent the South Korean people’s idea of a proper apology.

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Major Disputes Today

Many of the areas of conflict between South Korea and Japan involve historic issues. Major issues of conflict include the Dokdo/Takeshima islands, the naming of the Sea of Japan/East Sea, the compensation of former comfort women, and visits to the Yasukuni Shrine. Many disagreements also abound from how these issues are depicted in Japanese textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education of Japan.

One of the major recurring disagreements is the ownership of the Dokdo/Takeshima islands in the East Sea/Sea of Japan. Although South Korea has current administrative control over the islands after the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1952, Japan also claims that historic evidence points to Japan as the rightful owner. Natural resources from the islands are limited to an entry point for fishing grounds, and the strategic importance of the islands is minimal. However, the islands are an area of central argument because of their symbolic importance: they are a symbol of South Korea’s sovereignty as a nation, as well as a symbol of Japan’s willingness to defend its territory, especially in light of other territorial disputes with China and Russia. Japan’s claims to the islands are often made in textbook recommendations and official reports, such as the annual Defense White Paper. Koreans argue that Tokyo’s claims to the islands are signals of Japan’s return to its militant past and are viewed as an attempt to regain territory.

A related problem to the island dispute is the naming of the waters where the islands are located. Japan refers to the waters between Japan and South Korea as the Sea of Japan, while South Korea has been pushing for the use of the name East Sea since 2000. Most maps today usually use the Sea of Japan or list both terms, but this issue still remains a point of contention between the two countries. Both sides cite historical maps, mainly from the seventeenth century, but Japan’s claim is more accepted throughout the international community.

Another dispute that has gained greater importance recently is Japanese compensation to former comfort women. Comfort women were women forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese military during World War II. Not exclusive to Korean women, South Koreans are still seeking official recognition of these crimes through a formal apology as well as monetary compensation for the women. The Japanese government issued an apology in the 1993 Kono Statement, but many

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South Koreans say that Prime Minister Yohei Kono’s words do not reflect a sincere apology. At the same time, many Japanese right-wing politicians want the government to revoke the Kono Statement, denying that the women were forced into sexual slavery. As the number of surviving comfort women begins to decrease, there is an increased urgency to provide direct compensation before they can no longer receive it.

Violations from the Japanese occupation are further embodied in the disagreements over the Yasukuni Shrine. The Yasukuni Shrine honors those who died while in service, including 14 Class A war criminals that were executed for war crimes. Visits by public officials have provoked heavy criticism from South Korea, as offerings are given at the shrine to honor the dead. South Koreans view these offerings by Japanese officials as evidence that Tokyo still honors its militaristic attitudes from its past and fails to recognize the crimes of those buried there.

Lee Myung-Bak – Background and Expectations

As a result of this complicated relationship, South Korean presidents must balance cooperation with Japan and sensitivity to how the public perceives interaction with the former colonial power. Given the increased interdependence between South Korea and Japan, many presidents promise improved relations and greater cooperation at the beginning of their terms. What starts as a positive attempt always sours by the end of each five-year term, and South Korea-Japan relations then reenter another cycle under the next president.

Lee was expected to break this cycle. As the former CEO of Hyundai Engineering and Construction, as well as the former mayor of Seoul, he seemed poised to bring improvements in South Korea’s economy, including improving economic relations with Japan. The public welcomed his conservative Grand National Party (GNP) after the decline of the rival Democratic Party. The Japanese government under Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda was eager to begin cooperation under Lee’s “future-oriented ties,” which promised to look ahead in South Korea-Japan relations instead of dwelling on past differences and conflicts. If Lee was to follow through with this promise, many of the historical disputes that caused major problems for South Korea-Japan relations for previous presidents had to be placed aside. However, by the end of Lee’s presidency in 2012, relations with Japan were at a low point because these disputes, especially those regarding historical issues, are not issues that one person can unilaterally forgive.

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Research Question and Possible Explanations

Actual South Korea-Japan relations during the Lee administration contrasted predictions of improvement, and bilateral relations were at an all-time low at the end of his term. The goal of this research was to analyze why relations ended up at this negative state and to identify the factors responsible for the deterioration of South Korea-Japan relations during the Lee administration. Key players in this bilateral relationship are the South Korean government, the South Korean public, the Japanese government, and the Japanese people. There are three possible hypotheses of the decline in bilateral relations during Lee’s presidency. The first is that the negative relationship was a result of the South Korean public acting as instigators and the government reacting to the public’s actions. The second possibility is that relations deteriorated because the Korean government used the anti-Japanese sentiment card to improve its own declining public image that was the result of internal, domestic events. The third hypothesis is that the antagonistic relationship is solely Japan’s fault, and that Japan is the one that provokes negative actions. This study concluded that the decline in relations was not the result of one factor exclusively but was a combination of Japanese provocative actions and Lee’s desire to maintain a positive image.

Methodology

For this study, it was first necessary to create a chronology of the major events that occurred during the Lee administration. A list was compiled of major domestic, multilateral, and international issues from January 2007 through December 2012 were compiled. Major events from the year before Lee’s inauguration in February 2008 were included for context. These events were collected from the Center for Strategic and International Studies’ Pacific Forum’s Comparative Connections reports, the New York Times, and the Chosun Ilbo, a major Korean daily newspaper. Multilateral issues included events involving the U.S.-South Korea relationship, the inter-Korean relationship, and the relationship between China, Japan, and South Korea.

The three hypotheses point to four different actors as the initiators of unfavorable bilateral relations: the South Korean public, the South Korean government, the Japanese government, and the Japanese people. In order to test the hypotheses, it was necessary to analyze whether each of the actors was reacting or initiating different events. Therefore, each of the data sets was analyzed with the original chronology. The actions of the Japanese government and the Japanese people were analyzed as one actor, as the South Korean public and government usually interpreted actions by either party in the same manner.

In order to analyze the role of the South Korean public, several data sets were used. First, protests and other acts of public discord were noted throughout the chronology in order to determine what preceded and what followed these events. Second, editorials from four major Korean newspapers on the topic of South Korea-Japan relations were also collected and coded by topic. These topics included historical issues, multilateral topics, and Japanese domestic issues. The opinions of the Japanese and the Lee government were given a numerical value on a scale of -2
to +2, -2 being a negative depiction and +2 being a positive depiction. The editorials were divided quarterly, and the number of editorials each quarter that were on the topic of South Korea-Japan relations was recorded as well as the mean opinion of the Japanese and the Lee administration for that quarter. The average opinion of both the Japanese and the Lee administration for each year was also recorded and graphed. The editorials were collected from the Korea Times, the Korea Herald, the Chosun Daily, and the Hankyoreh. A total of 236 editorials were used: 88 from the Korea Times, 40 from the Korea Herald, 47 from the Chosun Ilbo, and 61 from the Hankyoreh. Chosun Ilbo is one of the major conservative papers in South Korea, while the Hankyoreh is an influential liberal paper. Both the Korea Times and the Korea Herald are right-center newspapers published in English.

In order to test the hypothesis of the South Korean government as the main cause, the public’s view of Lee and his government’s approval ratings were evaluated. Public opinion polls of the Lee administration were collected and graphed. For an overview of Lee’s approval ratings throughout his administration, data from the Gallup Poll’s Political Index\(^\text{18}\) were used to illustrate Lee’s approval ratings during each quarter of every year. Additionally, data from the Asan Monthly Opinion Survey\(^\text{19}\) and other South Korean survey agencies were used for more approval ratings for specific periods of analysis.

To analyze the role of the Japanese as instigators, moments of provocations initiated by both the Japanese government and the Japanese public were noted throughout the chronology. The frequency of these events, along with preceding and following events, was noted. Major Japanese domestic events, such as elections and changes in Prime Ministers, were also noted.

**Observations**

*Dynamic of Bilateral Relations throughout Lee’s Presidency*

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\(\text{Figure 2: Graph of Dynamic of Bilateral Relations, 2008-2012}\)


\(^{19}\)Asan Monthly Opinion Surveys from February 2012 through October-November 2012.
Throughout Lee’s presidency, bilateral relations between Japan and South Korea can be divided into three periods. The first period is one of negative relations after a brief positive start from 2008 through 2009, while the second period consisted of relatively positive relations from 2009 through 2011. Lee’s presidency ended with negative relations until the end of his term in 2012.

Immediately prior to Lee’s presidency, relations with Japan were relatively negative, with the issue of comfort women being one of the key factors of tense relations. With the election and inauguration of President Lee in 2008, relations with Japan were at one of the best levels throughout Lee’s term. The positive relationship remained until May, when the Japanese Education Ministry announced new curriculum guidelines that would indicate the disputed Dokdo/Takeshima islands as Japanese territory. Relations between the two countries plummeted and remained negative throughout the rest of 2008, further agitated by the release of Japan’s Defense White Paper in September and other Dokdo/Takeshima-related disputes. This negative relationship continued into 2009 as the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute continued with the release of South Korea’s Defense White Paper in February and Prime Minister Taro Aso’s offering to the Yasukuni Shrine in April. The positive aspects of the relationship at this time centered mainly on economic issues, especially after the start of the Global Economic Crisis in 2008.

Bilateral relations improved with the victory of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) and the selection of Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama in August. There were few provocations by the Japanese, and the release of new textbook guidelines indicating Dokdo/Takeshima as Japanese territory led to a much quieter South Korean response than the previous year. The relatively positive relations continued into 2010, continuing even as Hatoyama resigned as Prime Minister and Naoto Kan took office. The reaction to Japan’s Defense White Paper in September was relatively quiet as Japan showed more support and cooperation with South Korea, especially in dealing with North Korea after the March 26 sinking of the Cheonan and the November 23 shelling of Yeonpyeong Island by the North.

The start of 2011 followed this trend until March. Although South Korea offered condolences and support after the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami, relations became contested with the resulting environmental consequences of the partial meltdown at the Fukushima nuclear plant. There was much criticism about the way the Japanese government handled water contamination and radioactive materials. Beginning in July, Japan started to initiate more provocations, as the number of claims toward the Dokdo/Takeshima island dispute rose throughout the month. After Korean Airlines flew a new jet over the islands in June, Japan began making stronger claims. The relationship continued to deteriorate after the South Korean Constitutional Court ruled in August that the South Korean government violated the constitutional rights of former comfort women by not seeking

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20 Within the chronology, events were coded as Positive, Negative, or Neutral and assigned a numeric value (+1, 0, -1). The quarterly averages of these values are shown in Figure 2.
compensation from Japan on their part, thus calling on the government to increase their efforts.

The issue of comfort women carried over into 2012. Along with the issue of compensation, Dokdo/Takeshima continued to be an area of dispute between the two countries. Both governments attempted to increase cooperation through military agreements, especially with the growing uncertainty of the new North Korea regime, but the Lee administration suffered and failed to pass both agreements because of strong disapproval from both the South Korean public and internal political opposition. Once again, Japan asserted its sovereignty over the Dokdo/Takeshima islets at the end of July in its Defense White Paper. Shortly after, President Lee visited the disputed islands on August 10, being the first South Korean president to do so. What followed were a series of strong actions from both sides, and bilateral relations continued to decline as cooperation between the two countries decreased. President Lee entered his lame duck session in December and left the presidency with bilateral relations not only worse than expected, but at a point lower than they were in a long time. Despite Lee’s attempts to improve relations between South Korea and Japan, bilateral relations declined significantly/severely, the consequences of which can still be seen today.

Protests and Public Actions

Much of the South Korean public’s actions throughout Lee’s term were reactions to an event. Most protests were in response to a statement made by either the South Korean government or the Japanese government. Any declaration of Japanese sovereignty over Dokdo/Takeshima instigated South Korean protests. Former comfort women also held weekly protests in front of the Japanese embassy, continuing the weekly ritual that began in 1992. It was during Lee’s presidency that these weekly rallies expanded to other countries. Even though the South Korean public held protests against Japan’s claims, these protests did not capture as much attention compared to, for example, the protests over U.S. beef imports that began in May 2008.

Interestingly, most of the acts of public provocations that the South Korean people initiated took place in the United States. This included publishing full-page advertisements in major American newspapers such as the New York Times and the Washington Post, and media displays such as the showing of a video clip in Times Square in February 2010, all with the goal of raising awareness of the South Korean claims to the Dokdo/Takeshima islands and the call for compensation for comfort women. Most of these initiated actions were taken by groups within the Korean-American population, as opposed to the Korean public residing in South Korea. Protests in South Korea followed Japanese provocations or major international events, such as the G20 meeting in 2010. They almost never spontaneously began within the South Korean public itself.

Editorials

For all four newspapers, the depicted opinions of both the Japanese and the Lee administration were scaled for positive, neutral, or negative perceptions.
Throughout the study period of 2007-2012, the overall opinions of both the Lee administration and of Japan were mostly negative. The political orientation of each newspaper had a greater impact on the depiction of the Lee administration more so than the opinion of Japan. There were large fluctuations between the lowest possibility (-2) and higher opinions, although averages never reached the highest possibility of +2.

![Opinions of Japan](image)

Figure 3: Opinions on Japan, Yearly Averages

The overall opinions of Japan in the editorials were negative, although there were periods of improved opinions. All four newspapers began with negative depictions at the end of the previous administration in 2007, with minimal increases at the very beginning of Lee’s term in 2008. The opinions on Japan then dropped for the rest of 2008. Both the quarterly averages and yearly averages showed more positive depictions beginning around 2009 in all four newspapers, a trend consistent with overall South Korea-Japan relations at that time. Throughout this period of relatively positive relations, the editorials were less negative in their opinions on Japan. The Hankyoreh, a major Korean newspaper, does not have any editorials on the topic of Japan during this period of relatively positive relations, from the beginning of 2010 through the third quarter of 2011. As bilateral relations between the two countries began to worsen, the negative opinions of Japan in all four newspapers declined at a much steeper rate. Overall, on the topic of Japan, the yearly averages of the editorials never went above neutral (0), with the exception of the Korea Herald in 2009, at a yearly average of +0.29.
The opinions of Lee and his administration in these editorials are much less consistent, following no distinct pattern. There are more editorials that do not have any mention of Lee (with the exception of the Korea Times). The patterns of the opinions of the Lee administration vary between the four newspapers, and the role of political orientation is evident, as the Hankyoreh never had a quarterly average over neutral (0). The only commonality between the four newspapers is that they all started 2008 with a positive depiction of Lee, with the exception of the Hankyoreh, which did not have an editorial discussing Lee until the second and third quarters in 2008. All four newspapers overall had very negative perceptions on the Lee administration, reaching at times the lowest possible depiction (-2), but never going higher than a positive/neutral stance (+1). The highest depiction of Lee was when bilateral relations were at the strongest in 2010, but the opinion was still relatively low compared to possible depictions. Both the Chosun Ilbo and the Korea Herald had the highest yearly averages in 2010, although they were 0 and +0.67, respectively. However, 2010 was the year with the lowest yearly average, with an average of -1.3 for the Korea Times. Despite similar political orientations, the depictions of Lee and Japan were inconsistent across newspapers.

Public Opinion
Public approval of Lee throughout his administration bore a strong resemblance to the overall pattern of ROK-Japan relations throughout his administration. The general trends were very similar and can also be divided into three periods, but a closer look at the dates revealed that the changes in direction were several months apart, with the rising trend in public approval preceding the rise in bilateral relations and the decline in public approval preceding the decline in bilateral relations. This trend showed that public approval was a key factor in the condition of bilateral relations. The positive start to Lee’s approval at the beginning of his term correlated to the positive bilateral relations at the start of his administration. His approval then plummeted following the May 2008 U.S. beef protests. Positive public opinion of Lee remained on average below 40% until the fourth quarter of 2009. Just months prior, the dynamic of South Korea-Japan relations started to turn positive with the start of the new government under the DPJ and Prime Minister Hatoyama in the beginning of September. Lee’s approval rating started to rise, and the public’s positive view surpassed its negative view by October 2009.

South Korea-Japan relations enjoyed a relatively positive period at this point, and Lee’s approval rating also experienced relatively positive results. Although it never reached the same level as the start of his term, Lee’s approval rating was still above 40% throughout this period. There was a slight dip in the second quarter of 2010, where the negative public opinion of Lee surpassed the positive view, but this was most likely due to the Cheonan sinking on March 26, 2010 and to the criticism of how the government handled the event after emotions from the event quieted down, as a similar decline in public approval can be observed after the North Korean shelling of Yeonpyeong Island on November 23, 2010.

After the final quarter of 2010, Lee’s approval rating started to decline, dipping once again below 40%. This drop in Lee’s approval rating occurred before bilateral relations started to deteriorate. Bilateral relations began relatively positively, with meetings between foreign ministers on increased economic and security cooperation. This declined shortly after the earthquake and tsunami disaster on March 11, 2011 because of the environmental and nuclear fallout from the breakdown of the Fukushima nuclear power plant. Lee’s approval rating continued to fall, following the decline of bilateral relations.
Lee’s approval rating remained low after the Korean Constitutional Court’s ruling on the comfort women issue. As different attempts to bring the issue of compensation for comfort women failed to produce the desired effect, Lee’s approval rating reached its lowest within this period during the transition from 2011 to 2012. The declining bilateral relations reflected the growing disapproval of the Lee administration for the rest of his term, as Lee struggled to maintain approval ratings above 30% throughout the rest of 2012.

**Japanese Provocations**

Provocations by the Japanese can be divided into two categories: routine acts and non-routine acts. Routine provocations occurred every year, generally around the same time, and the content of the act was the same. Routine provocations included the annual Defense White Papers and the release of textbook recommendations. These were always on the Dokdo/Takeshima island disputes, in which Japan would declare the islands to be Japanese territory. The severity of the South Korean response varied, ranging from a statement of “deep regret” to recalling the ambassador and personal visits to the island from high government officials. The strongest South Korean responses to routine provocations were in 2008 and in 2012, resulting in the Prime Minister’s visit in 2008 and President Lee’s visit to the islands in 2012.

Non-routine provocations were the events that could be not predicted, as they were unique to that particular situation. These often were results of the Dokdo/Takeshima island dispute, but other common provocations involved visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, the naming of the Sea of Japan/East Sea, and the issue of comfort women. The severity of the South Korean responses to these provocations also varied depending on the event, but most of the non-routine provocations during Lee’s administration did not result in a strong South Korean response.

One exception was the boycott of Korean Airlines by Japanese government officials in July 2011. In June, Korean Airlines flew a test flight for one of its new Airbus A380 passenger jets over the disputed Dokdo/Takeshima islands. A month later, the Japanese Foreign Ministry instructed all employees and diplomats to not use the carrier for one month in protest. A largely symbolic gesture, South Korea protested the boycott, stating that it had the right to fly over its own territory. In protest, Korean officials denied entry to Japanese law officials trying to visit the neighboring Ulleung Island, the piece of Korean territory closest to the disputed islands. The South Korean ambassador to Japan was returned several weeks after the initial boycott, and a key aide to Lee visited the islands shortly after. Around this time, Japan released its annual Defense White Paper, and a Japanese diplomatic minister in Seoul was summoned. After a period of relatively positive relations, the boycott of the Korean Airlines began the decline in relations that lasted until the end of Lee’s term.

**Analysis**

An analysis of the data revealed that two of the factors were responsible for deteriorating relations, while the third factor did not play a direct role in the dynamic
of South Korea-Japan relations. Both Lee’s public approval as well as the actions of the Japanese affected the dynamic of bilateral relations. The role of the South Korean public was minimal, and it only played a role when the South Korean public negatively reacted to Lee’s actions; thus it was not a separate variable on its own but was encompassed in the second variable, Lee’s public approval. Of the four categories of data analyzed, the strongest indicators of this pattern were the occurrence of Japanese provocations within the chronology and the public opinion data on Lee. The distribution of the editorials varied greatly between each of the newspapers, showing no pattern that could be effectively analyzed for correlation.

Given these two main factors, there were four possible scenarios, as is illustrated in Figure 6. Negative relations occurred when there was both a Japanese provocation as well as a declining public approval of Lee. When there was no Japanese provocation and Lee enjoyed positive approval ratings, bilateral relations were much more positive, and Lee would take a lighter stance toward Japan. When there was either only a Japanese provocation or Lee had a declining public approval rating, the condition of bilateral relations varied. It is not until a Japanese provocation occurs that the Lee administration acts harshly against Japan. Likewise, the Lee administration’s response to Japanese provocations did not always lead to a harsh response without declining public approval.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Japanese Provocation - YES</th>
<th>Japanese Provocation - NO</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lee approval – BAD</td>
<td>Conditions for bad relations; Lee takes a tougher stance toward Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee approval – GOOD</td>
<td>Conditional</td>
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Figure 6: Possible outcomes for Lee’s stance toward Japan

The remainder of this section will illustrate this point by analyzing bilateral relations within the three periods during Lee’s term: a first period of rapidly declining relations after a positive start from February 2008 through September 2009; a second period of improved relations from September 2009 through March 2011; and a third period of negative relations from March 2011 until the end of Lee’s term in 2012.
After Lee was inaugurated in February 2008, both countries enjoyed a brief period of positive bilateral relations, as Lee promised a “forward-looking” pragmatic approach to working with Japan. Lee enjoyed high approval ratings at the start of his term, enjoying approval ratings above 50%. However, the period of positive public approval was cut short with the start of large public protests in May 2008 over U.S. beef imports. Although it was an issue separate from South Korea-Japan relations, the reopening of U.S. beef imports despite fears of mad cow disease led to plummeting approval ratings, reaching a low of 17% in July. The protests ran from May 2 until August 15; halfway through this time—on July 14—Japan announced its guidelines for middle school teachers, in which it declared the disputed Dokdo/Takeshima islands as Japanese territory. Although this was a yearly occurrence, Lee summoned the ambassador and recalled the Korean ambassador on that same day, and within the next two weeks, other exchanges and meetings were canceled. South Korea’s assertive actions were topped off when Prime Minister Han visited the islands on July 29, the first Prime Minister in South Korean history to do so. During that same month, the United States Library of Congress and U.S. Board of Geographic Names made slight changes to the names and ownership of the

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21 Values for the condition of bilateral relations were multiplied by 10 to accommodate graph scale. Approval Rating numbers are from the Gallup Poll.
22 “Hankuk Gallup Daily Jeoung-chi Gi-pyo (Gallup Korea Daily Political Indicators),” Gallup Korea Daily.
islands, from Tok Island to the neutral Liancourt Rocks. This small change led to strong criticism of the United States by both the South Korean government and the South Korean public.

Tensions started to quiet down, and the ambassador returned to Tokyo on August 5. Protests against the U.S. beef imports finally ended after over 100 days on August 15; on the same day, Lee made a speech on the anniversary of Liberation Day for Japan to “face up” to its historical issues. Lee’s public approval never fully recovered to its pre-protest level, still remaining below 30%. As long as Lee’s public approval remained below 40%, the condition of bilateral relations also remained relatively negative.

It is during this continuation of large public protests against the Lee government over the U.S. beef imports that Lee took a strong stance toward Japan. When a similar claim to the islands was made in the annual Defense White Paper later that year in September, the South Korean government only responded with a statement, as the public approval rating was much higher, reaching above 30%.

During this first period, Lee’s sudden decrease in public approval led to a harder stance toward Japan’s yearly provocative statements. After enjoying high public approval at the start of his term, Lee continued to fight against declining positive perception throughout the rest of his administration, often at the cost of bilateral relations. This first period of Lee’s presidency was characterized by a high number of Japanese provocations and a decline in Lee’s public approval ratings and, thus, the decline in bilateral relations.

Second Period: Improved Relations, September 2009-March 2011

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24 The Liancourt Rocks is the neutral name for the disputed Dokdo/Takeshima islands agreed upon by most of the international community.

25 Celebrated on August 15, this holiday celebrates the day Korea was liberated from Japanese colonial rule.

26 “Hankuk Gallup Daily Jeoung-chi Gi-pyo (Gallup Korea Daily Political Indicators),” Gallup Korea Daily.

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Although bilateral relations between the two countries were much lower than expected, they entered a more positive phase as Lee took a much softer stance toward Japan. Positive relations between the two countries started almost simultaneously with a change in government in Japan. With the start of Prime Minister Hatoyama’s term on September 15, 2009, and the victory of the left-leaning DPJ, there was much hope among the South Korean public and government in Japan’s new leadership, as depicted in newspaper editorials across different ideological leanings. During this time, Lee’s public approval was approaching one of its highest levels, sitting at just under 50% in October 2009.27 Despite the release of a high school teachers guide in late December claiming the disputed Dokdo/Takeshima islands as Japanese territory, the South Korean response was much quieter, as Foreign Minister Yoo Myung-hwan expressed regret directly to the Japanese Ambassador instead of a large public display of disapproval.

Despite GNP setbacks in local by-elections, along with a series of scandals involving Lee’s appointed officials in July and August, 2010 was a year of improved relations and cooperation between South Korea and Japan. This was most likely a result of both countries having to deal with internal conflict as well as the ominous external environment in East Asia, especially North Korea’s behavior. During this period, it was much easier for both countries to focus on more urgent issues, both domestic and regional, instead of on exasperating historical issues amongst themselves.

The biggest reason for cooperation between South Korea and Japan in 2010 was two North Korean attacks on South Korea. The first was the sinking of the Cheonan on March 26 by a North Korean torpedo; the second attack was on November 23, when North Korean artillery bombarded Yeonpyeong Island in the Yellow Sea. Almost all countries worldwide offered condolences and support, and Japan was no exception. As two countries closely cooperating on handling the North Korea issue, other historic disagreements took a backseat as the focus was switched to the bigger issue of dealing appropriately with North Korea.

Domestically, both South Korea and Japan had to deal with internal disputes. Hatoyama resigned as Prime Minister in June as a result of a financial scandal. Likewise, a number of high-level officials in Lee’s administration were involved in a series of scandals. Prime Minister Chung Un-Chan resigned in late July after a failed city-planning project in Seoul. Lee’s appointed replacement Kim Taeho had to withdraw his candidacy in August amidst bribery allegations. In September, Foreign Minister Yoo also resigned because of a hiring scandal involving his daughter; later again in November, Defense Minister Kim Tae-Young also resigned amidst criticism of the government’s response to the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island.

Despite these domestic disputes, Lee still maintained improved public approval ratings, remaining above 40% during 2010.28 Lee kept this same range of

27 Ibid.
28 “Hankuk Gallup Daily Jeoung-chi Gi-pyo (Gallup Korea Daily Political Indicators),” Gallup Korea Daily.
positive public approval until the spring of 2011. These improved public approval ratings are most likely a result of Lee’s response to the North Korean attacks. As a conservative, Lee took a hard stance toward North Korea; the South Korean public approved of his hard stance immediately after the attacks, most likely as a result of the anger South Koreans felt because of the loss of life and inflicted damage.

During this time, Japan still continued its yearly provocations, such as its Defense White Paper and textbook guidelines, all of which declared the disputed Dokdo/Takeshima islands as the sovereign territory of Japan. However, the South Korean government only expressed “deep regret” in statements instead of acting against these perceived affronts. The number of Japanese provocations during this time was also limited, again most likely as a result of the increased need for cooperation given the tense climate of the region.

A number of external conditions and events contributed to the need for increased cooperation, and Japanese provocations during this period were limited as the new administration and ruling party pursued improved relations. Despite a series of scandals and losses in elections, Lee could not act as harshly toward Japan without a provocation to instigate a response. Due to fear of the public’s response, the South Korean government had to devote attention to giving an immediate and strong reaction to North Korean provocations. This second period of Lee’s presidency was characterized by a low number of Japanese provocations and improved public perception of Lee and, thus, an improvement in the condition of bilateral relations.

Third Period: Legacy of Deteriorated Relations, March 2011-December 2012

Despite improved cooperation between South Korea and Japan, bilateral relations eventually declined to its worst levels during the last year of Lee’s term. DPJ rule was shaken with the March 11, 2011 earthquake and tsunami, striking the Tohoku region and leading to a series of nuclear accidents with the partial meltdown of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant shortly after. South Korea, just like the international community, offered its condolences and assistance. However, the supportive tone was shortly replaced by criticism of the Japanese government and its handling of radioactive materials from the nuclear meltdown.

Receiving strong criticism for its management of the three crises, the Japanese government had to face criticism from both the international community as well as domestic disapproval. In response to its declining perception both internationally and domestically, the Japanese government made a series of strong gestures of disapproval in regard to a Korean Airlines flight flying over the Dokdo/Takeshima islands until Prime Minister Kan’s resignation in
August 2011. It was only when Lee’s own public approval started to face a decline that his government began to take a harder stance toward Japan. In response to the declaration of the islands as Japanese territory on April 1 in Japan’s Diplomatic Blue Paper, Lee chose not to strongly retaliate, as his public approval rating was near 40%, averaging close to his highest public approval ratings during the previous period.

However, in July, the Lee administration reacted more strongly to Japanese actions. A series of provocations by the Japanese government reasserting its claim to the Dokdo/Takeshima islands coupled with a drop in Lee’s public approval ratings led to a stronger response by the Lee administration. Such events included the boycott by Japanese diplomatic employees of Korean Airlines on July 14 after the company flew its new jet over the disputed islands in June, the denial of entry into South Korea of Japanese officials attempting to visit nearby South Korean islands on August 1, and the release of Japan’s annual White Defense Paper on August 2. Lee’s public approval increased by almost 10% within these couple months of back-and-forth banter between Japan and South Korea over the islands.

Toward the end of 2011 into 2012, Lee’s public approval experienced a drop as a result of several events. On August 23, the Korean Constitutional Court ruled that the South Korean government had violated the rights of former comfort women by not seeking adequate compensation. Additionally, the disputed free trade agreement between the United States and South Korea, or KORUS FTA, was passed on November 22. The opposition party heavily disapproved of the agreement, and protests both by National Assembly members and the South Korean public ensued leading up to its passage. As a result of KORUS FTA, Lee’s public approval dropped to 27%, the lowest it had been since 2009. During this time, the lack of a

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31 Ibid.
major Japanese provocation—most likely a result of Prime Minister Noda’s new administration—kept bilateral relations stagnant.

The beginning of 2012, Lee’s last year in office, was a difficult start for Lee’s public approval. Due to a series of corruption scandals involving both relatives and public officials, Lee’s positive public perception dropped to below 30%. Although other scandals had plagued Lee’s presidency, the negative effect of these scandals was stronger because of other extenuating circumstances, notably the fact that one of the main scandals involved Lee’s brother. Additionally, Lee’s government was receiving heavy criticism over how it handled the provocations from North Korea in 2010. In June and July of 2012, South Korea and Japan attempted to pass a pair of security agreements, which would have allowed the sharing of intelligence information and increased cooperation in overseas peacekeeping operations. Seen as immense progress for the two countries, especially in light of the uncertainty surrounding the new regime in North Korea, the signing of the two agreements was postponed and eventually scrapped as a result of backlash both by the South Korean public and by parliament officials. In turn, Lee’s public approval also declined, once again plummeting to below 30%.

After Japan released its yearly Defense White Paper on July 31, Lee made an unexpected visit to the disputed islands on August 10, the first South Korean president to do so. What followed was a rapid deterioration of bilateral relations as ambassadors were recalled, meetings between ministers were canceled, and major leaders exchanged strong words. Lee’s public approval rebounded slightly, up 2% from July, but his public perception never fully recovered to the same levels as was seen in the second period of improved relations.

While the presidential election campaign was underway and Lee entered his lame duck session, the right-leaning Liberal Democratic Party once again came to power in December in Japan, with Shinzo Abe nominated as Prime Minister. The end of Lee’s five-year term left behind an environment of tense bilateral relations. Lee experienced another decrease in public approval, and as the presidential election increased pressure to regain a positive perception, Lee took a harder stance toward Japan’s increased number of provocations. This third period of Lee’s presidency is characterized by a high number of Japanese provocations and a decline in Lee’s public approval ratings and thus a decline in bilateral relations.

Conclusion

Throughout Lee’s presidency, bilateral relations between South Korea and Japan went through three periods, initially beginning with a rapid decline in bilateral relations, followed by a second period of improved relations but ending with negative relations. Through the research conducted, this study concluded that both Japanese provocations and a negative public perception of Lee were the causes of this declining relationship, despite initial predictions that Lee’s presidency would see an improvement in bilateral relations.

32 Ibid.
At the end of Lee’s term in 2012, it was apparent that the condition of bilateral relations deteriorated from the start of his term in 2008. One major question that still remains unanswered is if improved bilateral relations are really important, and if so, what it is that changes with these improvements. There are several answers to this question, and all affect and are affected by the dynamic of relations within the region, especially in regard to China’s rise.

This research can be further applied to U.S. relations within the region. The United States began a “pivot” to Asia in 2009, refocusing resources and emphasis on Asia. As the United States aims to establish stronger ties and a clearer presence in the region, the alliances with Japan and South Korea serve as a key entry point to other countries because it represents an example of the United States’ commitment to the region. Less cooperation between South Korea and Japan gives the United States much difficulty working in the region, as it is often caught in the middle of disputes rooted in historical disagreements. To the United States, historical disputes hold back progress in the region, and predictable, consistent cooperation between the two countries is most desired. However, as Lee’s administration illustrated, disputes over historical issues are inevitable within East Asia, especially between South Korea and Japan. Even though Lee began his term with a pragmatic approach—looking toward future cooperation instead of past disputes—the gravity and effects of these historical disputes cannot be ignored.

A key component of the U.S. shift toward Asia is China’s role and how countries will cooperate with the growing power. Another question is if the status quo is the best possible scenario, given the uncertainty of China’s position and intentions on many issues. With the condition of current bilateral relations, where Seoul and Tokyo cooperate on most contemporary issues but banter on historical antecedents, there is room for increased cooperation between South Korea and China, although its proximity with the United States prevents Seoul from leaning too heavily on China. If there is too little cooperation between South Korea and Japan, Seoul would begin to rely more heavily on the other major power in the region, something the United States fears. If there is too much cooperation between South Korea and Japan, China will begin to worry about the stability of its own position and will most likely build up its military capacity to feel secure. In order to prevent a shift in the power balance between China and the United States, bilateral relations between South Korea and Japan would arguably have to remain the way it is today.

Even though bilateral relations generally involve two countries, within the context of the East Asia region, the relationship between South Korea and Japan is affected by and impacts the dynamic of relations within the region as a whole. Although bilateral relations during the Lee administration were the result of Japanese actions and Lee’s reactions to his declining public approval, the larger implication for this relationship is how it fits into the bigger picture of the East Asia region. When looking at future South Korean presidential administrations, it is thus important to consider how both the domestic situation as well as the relationship with Japan factors into the development of regional relations.

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Europe
The Political Pariah

An examination of the 2012 electoral strategy of France’s National Front

Guillaume Julian

Introduction

Since its inception in the 1970’s, France’s Front National (FN) has elicited an intense reaction from every aspect of French society: from political scientists and politicians to activists and voters. Indeed, the FN’s brand of far-right ideology has made it both an outlier and a pariah among French political parties. What makes the FN so fascinating is how this party, with a history and record of racists and xenophobic positions and no coherent economic policy, can succeed in France. Furthermore, the FN’s roots in the far right naturally elicit historic antecedents of right wing extremism in France. Yet, for all its controversy and shortcomings, the FN has been a legitimate force in French politics stretching back to the party’s creation in the early 1970’s.

France has long had a contentious relationship with fascist and far-right political parties and movements. In the wake of WWII, Fascism as a legitimate form of political governance was largely discredited and almost universally vilified, yet it did not completely dissipate. The case of France’s National Front (FN) and its founder and longtime leader Jean-Marie Le Pen (JMLP) is particularly fascinating as, although not fascist in the traditional meaning of the word, the party espouses many ideas associated with the far right. The FN, since its foundation in 1972, has continued to have unprecedented electoral success, at least in terms of stability and continuity, for a party of the far right of the political spectrum. Indeed, since 1988 the FN has continuously received over 10% of the vote in every presidential election. The only other two parties to achieve such a feat are the main center-left and center-right parties. Such an accomplishment is a clear indication of both the ubiquity and legitimacy of the FN in French politics. Given the party’s electoral success, the purpose of this paper is to explore the FN’s staying power through the lens of its own political strategy. Looking specifically at 2012, this paper will delineate the political strategy of the FN and determine if a link exists between the FN’s strategy and its electoral result.

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Background

Following Nicolas Sarkozy’s overwhelming victory in 2007, the FN appeared to be in an unrecoverable decline. Many observers saw Nicolas Sarkozy’s style and aggressive courting of FN voters as a strategy that would lead to the eventual death of the FN. In addition to this perceived ideological drain, the FN was plagued by a series of financial troubles that forced it to sell its historic party headquarters. These issues contributed to the very low electoral score the party obtained during the 2008 municipal elections. In the first round of balloting they received around 0.93% of the total vote, in the second round they fared even worse, receiving only 0.63%. In these elections, the FN did not win a single mayoral mandate, compounding the perception of the FN as a dying party.

Yet despite these troubles and the multitude of pundits and commentators predicting the decline of the FN, the party obtained its highest electoral score in its history in the 2012 presidential election regarding votes and percentage. How did a party that was left for dead following a crippling defeat in 2007 and in financial dire straits in 2008 manage to completely reverse its fortune and achieve its greatest electoral results? To properly answer this question, it is important to look both at the strategy of the FN, which was characterized by an unprecedented change at the top of the party, and the events that created the 2012 presidential election. Marine Le Pen (MLP), JMLP’s daughter, took over the presidency of the party in 2010 and immediately embarked on a mission to change its perception among voters and its ideological positioning.

The key to the FN’s unprecedented electoral results lies in MLP’s desire and ability to position herself between the militant base of the FN and the disenchanted voters who had never turned to the FN. To that end, MLP embraced an anti-globalization and anti-liberalist stance that enabled her to tailor her message to a new audience. This renewed focus on economic issues, coupled with a movement away from the xenophobic past of the party, accounted for a great deal of MLP’s newfound success. By placing herself at the convergence of different economic, social, and political issues, MLP was able to appeal to a wider range of voters, which, in turn, translated into greater electoral results.

MLP’s shift on policy was part of a much larger strategy to change her party’s perception by the French public. This strategy significantly contributed to her incredible electoral results and is, to date, the greatest example of political pragmatism on the behalf of the FN, particularly as it arose in a moment of dire need. This chapter will examine the events that influenced 2012 and the shifts that occurred.

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within the FN, which ultimately led to the clearest example of the political pragmatism.

2012: the Themes and Key Issues for the French Electorate

2012 and its lead up were undoubtedly tumultuous, both for the FN and for the French public as a whole. According to a survey conducted in November 2011, the respondents indicated that out of a predetermined list of concerns, the four greatest were employment (45%), purchasing power (36%), retirement (32%), and social inequalities (26%). In second-to-last place was immigration, clocking in at a mere 10%. Clearly, these early polls show that the prime concerns of the French people were entirely economic and thus, to appeal to the French electorate, candidates needed to tailor their messages accordingly.


Despite the overwhelming importance of economic themes for the French electorate as a whole, MLP faced the tough balancing act of reconciling the general public sentiment with those of her own supporters. In opinion polls of self-identified FN voters and militants, 50% believed the main issue of the campaign was curbing illegal immigration, followed closely by unemployment with 47%, and security and

\[\text{Figure 4.01} \]

**Concerns of the French Electorate**

**November 2011**


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5 The survey was conducted by giving the respondents a group of predetermined answers and asking them to rank the top 3, hence the total exceeded 100%
purchasing power tied at 34%.\textsuperscript{6} This deviation from the rest of the French electorate explains the dichotomy that MLP faced when crafting her message for 2012.

Despite the overall importance of economic issues, the electorate still viewed security and immigration as pivotal issues. In one poll, voters were asked to rate the favorability of words associated with certain issues (i.e. “immigration” or “Socialism”). In this exercise, the four words that had the most negative connotations were Islam (81% negative), immigration (70% negative), Capitalism, and globalization (both 69% negative). Interestingly, all of these concepts would play a key role in establishing the platform of the FN. Despite the fact that the marquee issues of the FN were not rated highly by the French in terms of importance, the general sentiment of frustration at the dire economic state of affairs made the FN’s campaigning and messaging a much simpler affair.

\textbf{2012: The events that created the election}

\textit{The Sarkozy Presidency: A Paradox in both Style and Substance}\

Sarkozy undeniably reshaped the French presidency and, so doing, the style of governance of the Fifth Republic. During his first year in office, Sarkozy assumed the mantle of the ‘hyper-president,’ directly involving himself in all areas of his government. Sarkozy’s proactive, pragmatic, and at times provocative style of leadership was a stark contrast to that of his predecessors who preferred to give the image of a supra-political figure: above partisan conflict and political bickering. Sarkozy not only acted as head of state, but also took on the role of \textit{de facto} head of government and head of party, centralizing the power around himself and his advisers in an unprecedented way. This change in governance style sent shockwaves through the traditionally rigid French political sphere.

The first couple years of the Sarkozy presidency turned out to be a “rupture,” or break, from the system as Sarkozy had promised. However, instead of focusing on liberalizing the economy, Sarkozy turned out to be a far more social-liberal president, much to the discontent of his base who viewed him as a French Ronald Reagan or Margaret Thatcher.\textsuperscript{7} Following a campaign marked by the themes of security and immigration, Sarkozy’s governance was characterized by a dichotomy between his tough-on-security image and a tepid commitment to the structural reform and anti-system crusading he had promised.

This first of such splits occurred when Sarkozy formed his first government. Seeking both to completely decimate his socialist opposition and portray political unity, Sarkozy proceeded with an unconventional overture to politicians from different sides of the political spectrum. In the first long-term government of the Sarkozy presidency\textsuperscript{8}, led by Prime Minister Francois Fillon, eight ministers and state administrators were appointed.

\textsuperscript{8} The first government of the Sarkozy Presidency, dubbed Fillon I, only lasted 32 days between Sarkozy’s inauguration and the subsequent Parliamentary elections. This is a reference to the government formed after the elections, known as Fillon II.
secretaries were chosen from outside the ranks of the governing UMP. Notably, Sarkozy chose socialist politician Bernard Kouchner for the powerful foreign ministry and centrist Hervé Morin as Defense Minister. Concurrently, Sarkozy catered to his electorate, many of whom had been attracted to the FN previously, by creating a new ministerial post to deal with issues of immigration and national identity. The Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity, and Co-development was headed by a longtime friend of Sarkozy, Brice Hortefeux, and was an evident example of responding to the ideological far right. Thus Sarkozy’s government was an odd example of both political overture and underlining the hard-right concepts on which he had campaigned in 2007.

Sarkozy’s image as president compounded the dichotomy between the actions taken at the beginning of his term. Often derided by commentators and pundits as the “blingbling” president or the “American,” Sarkozy did little to quell the constant criticism. Despite his non-traditional image, Sarkozy chose to project his more compassionate side by adopting measures that irked much of his conservative base and his populist supporters. In once such example, Sarkozy announced that a communist-influenced letter be read in all French schools on October 22nd the anniversary of the letter writer’s execution. Many leaders, including in the FN, condemned this decision as they saw in it a tacit recognition of the communist party, which they claimed did little to help the resistance against the Nazis.

Both of these examples show the paradox that was the Sarkozy presidency. In terms of both style and substance, Nicolas Sarkozy was able to attract the anger of the very base that had propelled him to the Elysée Palace a few years prior. In the context of the FN, the tumultuous Sarkozy presidency alienated many of the FN’s natural electors who had turned to him in 2007. Tellingly, 13% of those who voted for Sarkozy in the first round of 2007 switched their vote to MLP. Furthermore, in January 2012, a few months before the presidential elections, 30% of FN voters supported MLP.

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11 The issue of identity is a very controversial one in France. When it is brought to the fore by politicians, racial undertones are often suspected. For more on this topic, see the July 29, 2010 article in l’Express: Quand l’UMP flirte avec le racisme.
12 References to ‘American’ in French politics are often derogatory, referring to the type of neoliberal economic practices championed by politicians such as Ronald Reagan.
14 Ibid.
15 Guy Môquet was a young communist opponent to the Nazi rule of France. In his letter, he writes of his love for his parents and for his country. By making schools read the letter, Sarkozy wanted to underscore the courage and importance of the resistance against Nazi rule.
sympathizers said that Sarkozy was a worse president at the end of his term than at the beginning and 56% stated that he was neither better nor worse. Only 8% saw Sarkozy as having improved on his record.

The Economic and Euro Crises

Despite Sarkozy’s dubious record and evident alienation of his populist base, the key themes of the 2012 campaign were not determined by the personalities of the candidates but by the events they would be faced with as president. Key among these was the ongoing economic and euro crisis, which held hostage much of Sarkozy’s action as President and became the key issue of the 2012 campaign.

When Sarkozy came to power in 2007, he inherited an economy from Jacques Chirac that, while far from healthy, was growing at a slow pace and creating jobs. One year into his presidency, Sarkozy saw the collapse of the world financial system and had to abandon his plans for job creation and sweeping institutional and structural reform at the expense of crisis management. These crises were not, however, the spark that brought to the fore the major structural problems facing the economic union. Soon after, Europe was gripped by a major sovereign debt crisis caused by a lack of coherent unified monetary policy.\(^\text{18}\) From the day Sarkozy took office to the first quarter of 2009, the CAC 40\(^\text{19}\) fell more than 57%.\(^\text{20}\) Similarly, the unemployment rate went from a low of 7.5% in the second quarter of 2008 to a high of 10% at the time of the 2012 election – an increase of 25%.\(^\text{21}\)

Sarkozy was thus faced with a war on two fronts: a crisis of confidence at home and a structural crisis that was testing the very idea of the European economic experiment. From an electoral standpoint, these crises highlighted two “bêtes noires,” or anathema, in the French political world: liberalism and Europe. The French public, and indeed French politicians stretching back to De Gaulle, has traditionally been skeptical of the liberal capitalistic market championed by the United States, and this crisis just served to underscore this point.\(^\text{22}\) The undisputed beneficiary of this renewed unease concerning the liberal market economy was the FN, which, as in previous years, preached the values of French isolationism toward the European Union and against neoliberalism.

The growth of the European Union and the advent of supra-national sovereignty provided the perfect outlet for the FN’s sovereignist positions. What’s more, the neoliberal foundations of the common market and single currency had hastened the perceived decline of French industry and had deeply rooted the grasp of globalization in Europe. In addition, the free movement of goods and people had contributed to an influx of immigration, particularly from eastern European

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19 The CAC 40 is a benchmark of French industries as measured by the 40 highest market capitalizations in the Paris stock exchange.
A 2011 study by the Fondation Jean-Jaurès indicated that the socio-economic groups most likely to vote for the FN were increasingly concerned with the European Union. This unease was mostly due to its neoliberal nature and the belief that it overexposed France to the ills of globalization.\textsuperscript{23,24}

Much to the FN’s content, an anti-EU platform enabled it to tout an anti-globalization economic line in a modern and pragmatic way, all the while fitting the traditional FN topics of insecurity and immigration into this overarching argument. In addition, the proximity of the UMP and the PS on issues regarding the European construct further incentivized the FN to pursue an anti-EU stance that further distanced them from the UMP and the PS. Indeed, since the very beginning of the EU, major political figures from the traditional French left and right had contributed to its creation and development. From Valéry Giscard-d’Estaing on the center-right to Jacques Delors on the left, Europe was one of the few historical areas of convergence between the left and the right. Taking this proximity from a political standpoint, the FN’s denunciation of Europe in 2012 would enable it to attract voters who were disenchanted with the parallels between the PS and the UMP on the issue of Europe.

Thus, the economic crisis played a crucial role not only in setting the themes for the 2012 election but also for redefining the rhetoric of the FN. This crisis highlighted both the importance of issues such as purchasing power and unemployment while leading some voters and politicians alike to question the utility of ongoing European economic integration. Eventually, this vital point led to a greater focus on Europe and liberalism in the FN’s platform. However, this shift would likely not have come around had it not been for a monumental change at the top of the party. Indeed, after almost 40 years, JMLP stepped down from the presidency of the FN.

\textbf{From Jean-Marie to Marine: the Decontamination of the FN}

During the turbulent economic and political environment of the Sarkozy presidency, the FN was undergoing a renaissance of its own. On April 9, 2010, JMLP announced to \textit{Le Figaro} his intention not to run for the presidency of the party that year or the presidential elections of 2012.\textsuperscript{25} He subsequently endorsed his daughter, MLP, for the party presidency. On January 16, 2011 at the FN’s party congress in Tours, MLP was elected party president with 67.65% of the votes, easily surpassing her challenger Bruno Gollnisch.\textsuperscript{26}

The most profound change that occurred during this leadership transition at the top of the party was the renewed ambitions MLP had for both herself and the
party. While JMLP had shown political pragmatism, his ideology was very much rooted in the Poujadiste tradition and defined his role as that of an anti-system mouthpiece rather than as a legitimate candidate with an innate desire to govern.\textsuperscript{27} MLP, on the hand, wanted to make the FN into a legitimate party capable of serving as an alternative to the Socialists and UMP for governance. Simply put, MLP wanted to win; to do so, she recognized that the rhetoric and strategy of the FN would need to be massively overhauled to make the party more attractive to potential voters.

This monumental shift in the ambition for the FN brought about a strategy aimed at modernizing both the image and policies of the party; this strategy later became known as the “dédiabolisation,” or decontamination, of the party.\textsuperscript{28} Most notably, MLP wanted to break with the idea that the FN was a remnant of fascist France.\textsuperscript{29} The first, and most crucial step, in breaking with this neofascist tradition was to separate the FN from many of the hard-right ideological groups that contributed to its reputation.

Marine, then 42, sought to rejuvenate the FN and to break from what she saw as its antiquated and neofascist perception that had been cemented during the 2007 election. Le Pen immediately undertook a massive campaign to change the image and rhetoric of the FN. The basis for her action was an ideological break from her father, whose abrasive rhetoric regarding the Holocaust, the Algerian War, and immigrants had alienated much of the FN’s base—a shift Sarkozy had effectively capitalized on during the 2007 elections.

One of the first major policy changes of the FN under MLP was the party exclusion that she undertook for members who openly embraced fascist and neo-Nazi ideas.\textsuperscript{30} MLP used these exclusions numerous times in an effort to purge the party of its more extreme members. This tool is a clear example of the sort of political pragmatism that would become a mainstay under the new leadership of the FN and was a definitive break, at least in style, from the leadership of JMLP. Much of this strategy revolved around MLP herself. Young, pragmatic, detached from the earlier struggles of her father, and a woman, she incarnated in and of herself a radical change from the antiquated perception of the FN. This message resonated not only in France but also to Europe and beyond where MLP quickly became the poster-child for a modern and pragmatic brand of extremist politics in Europe.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{29} James Shields, ”Marine Le Pen and the ‘New’ FN: A Change of Style or of Substance?" Parliamentary Affairs 66.1, 2012.
\textsuperscript{30} One such example arose in 2011 when a young regional councilor from Rhône-Alpes, Alexandre Gabriac, was excluded from the FN for being photographed doing a Nazi salute. Gabriac later went on to found the “Jeunesses Nationalistes” or Nationalistic Youth which embodies they very brand of fascism MLP is seeking to remove from the party.
\textsuperscript{31} MLP’s decontamination strategy became so popular that even the New York Times wrote an in-depth portrait in 2011 titled Marine Le Pen, France’s (Kinder, Gentler) Extremist. The article went on to explain MLP’s efforts to rebrand the FN as well as her ideology including the incorporation of traditional left-wing economic planks.
Concurrently, MLP recruited a new class of young party cadres to complement her relative youth and to represent both a stylistic and substantive break from the party’s old-guard. One important addition was that of Florian Philippot, a graduate of HEC business school and l’ENA (the French school for administration) who had previously served as a “haut fonctionnaire” with the ministry of the interior before being seduced by MLP’s pragmatic attitude. He initially served as an advisor to MLP before ultimately being named one of her campaign directors in 2012. In addition to Philippot, MLP also recruited her niece, Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, to represent a new generation of Frontist activists. Marion was elected to the French National Assembly in 2012 and is currently the youngest member of that body.32

Marine Le Pen and the Birth of Colorblind Populism

In the early days of the FN, its rhetoric and ideology was deeply rooted in a brand of fascism that valued xenophobic, anti-Semitic, and anti-Islamic rhetoric. As a result, immigration became a recurring electoral issue for the FN to federate its electoral base. Since the party’s first presidential race in 1974, the FN used immigration to justify many of the problems plaguing French society – from insecurity to unemployment. In the wake of the decontamination strategy, it was crucial to maintain this key electoral issue, which had, for so long, federated the various courants of the extreme-right in France all the while adhering to her modern, pragmatic approach.

To mark this change, MLP created a new brand for the FN based on the principle of colorblind populism. This idea is predicated on the notion that the reasoning behind the FN’s populist positions can be found beyond racially fueled ideology. To crystallize this idea, MLP created new policies and a new discourse aimed at both softening the party’s image and maintaining its electoral base. In her book, So that France May Prosper (Pour que Vive la France), MLP chastises both the UMP and the PS for their weak stances on immigration and goes so far as to allude that the confluence in their policy is due to collusion in their politics.33 Contrary to JMLP, MLP focuses her assessment of immigration on a criticism of the market-based neoliberal economy: “immigration is none other than the ultimate manifestation of a generalized ‘free exchange’ which first applied to goods and services but has now impacted mankind in a sort of consented slavery.”34

Colorblind populism also led MLP to find economic justifications for immigration, thus effectively toeing the line between her party’s historic base and its new pragmatic slant. In her 2012 presidential program, MLP obviously calls for a massive decrease in immigration to France – from 200,000 per year to a mere 10,000, a 95% decrease. What is most notable however is not the decrease, which was a mainstay in Frontist policy in all previous elections, but rather her attitude toward the immigrants themselves. Contrary to the racist statements of JMLP who

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32 Despite her youth, Marion is an ardent believer in the FN’s hardline policies, going so far as being quoted in the press saying, “When you're the single French person in the middle of 10 Tunisians, the majority will impose their way of life on the minority.”


34 Ibid.
often chastised French citizens from immigrant origins, MLP clearly stated in her campaign platform that a focus on the French would be applied without regard for origin. In various interviews and speeches conducted prior to the election, MLP stated that she would be in favor of immigration if the economic conditions merited them, an argument that actually attracted many of the immigrants the FN previously repudiated. For MLP, the true problem was in fact the burden that immigration placed on the poorest members of society, particularly first generation immigrants who were firmly integrated into French society. The FN went so far as to attract these immigrants by claiming that their story is one of positive integration – a far cry, she claimed, from the new wave of immigrants who rejected the French ideal. The very notion of accepting immigrants would have been inconceivable to the leadership of the FN 10 years earlier and is a direct result of MLP’s decontamination efforts and embrace of colorblind populism. The result of this rhetoric was a number of highly publicized first- and second-generation North African immigrants who openly endorsed the FN and MLP on the basis that immigration was having serious repercussions on the economy and on security. It is extremely ironic that the party founded on the rejection of these very immigrants would later openly court their votes – further proof of a paradigm shift in the policies of the FN under MLP.

Despite these efforts, MLP had a great deal of difficulty shaking the FN’s image of a xenophobic, racially fueled party. In an opinion poll conducted a year after the presidential election, 65% of French voters had a negative opinion of MLP, and the poll concluded that 58% of French voters considered MLP to be racist, a sign of the increased urgency of MLP’s rebranding. By making immigration an economic problem, MLP is both keeping with the themes that appeal to her base while attracting new voters concerned with the poor state of the economy in 2012. Nevertheless, the generalized perception of the FN’s stance on immigration is one of xenophobia fueled by racist elements within the party. Therefore, MLP needed to show in her policy platform that her actions were coherent with her reasoning on the issue of immigration.

Nevertheless, the advent of colorblind populism is the greatest contribution of MLP’s decontamination strategy and is a true reflection of her desire to reorient the rhetoric of the party. This action, in and of itself, is an indication of a shift away from strict ideological confines toward a more pragmatic vision fueled by a desire for electoral gains. Although many critics questioned the viability of the FN post-JMLP, the lead up to 2012 proved to be a watershed moment for the FN. The rhetorical shift

35 JMLP was well known for his various rants on French citizens of immigrant origin. Notable cases included the French national soccer team and Nicolas Sarkozy himself.
characterized by a renewed European focus and the birth of colorblind populism greatly contributed to the electoral success of MLP and the FN in 2012.

The election:

The stage was set for 2012. With the mix of an unpopular incumbent, a challenging economic climate in France and in Europe, and the FN undergoing its biggest change since the party’s formation as a backdrop, MLP embarked on her 2012 presidential campaign. In typical FN fashion, there was no smooth sailing for the first-time candidate. Indeed, despite the leadership change, the early days of MLP’s candidacy were filled with the traditional game of cat-and-mouse that is the 500 signatures collection.

**MLP’s Early Campaign, the Left Front, and the Signatures Saga Part VII**

As with every Presidential election since the formation of the FN, the presence of the Frontist candidate on the ballot was subject to the infamous 500 signature endorsements from elected officials throughout France. In 2012, the candidates from the major parties (The UMP, the PS, EELV, and MoDem) had no trouble getting the 500 endorsements – a sure sign of both the large size of those parties and their relative lack of controversy in French politics. What is interesting, however, is the relative ease with which the *Front de Gauche* (FDG) and its candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon gathered their 500 votes.\(^{41}\)

Under the principle that extremes are vilified in French politics, the FDG should have had an equally difficult time acquiring the 500 signature endorsements. Not so, in fact Mélenchon was able to acquire more than two times the needed amount, 1100 in total.\(^{42}\) Granted, 950 of those were from within his own party but much of it also had to do with the implications of publicly sponsoring Mélenchon over MLP. The reticence of elected officials to endorse MLP caused of another whirlwind in the press debating weather or not MLP would be present in the elections and also throwing into question the democratic nature of France’s presidential criterion. As a show of resistance, MLP organized a rally in front of the French Senate while the body was deliberating a bill that would have made the list of signatories private. A genuine concern perhaps, but the possibility of political instrumentalisation cannot be discounted.

As always, MLP and the FN were eventually able to collect the 500 signatures and finally, on March 13\(^{40}\) 2012, officially embarked on their 2012

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41 Mélenchon, a former socialist minister for vocational training under the Jospin government (2000-2002), had a very public split with the socialist party in 2008 over the adoption of a social-democrat party line before the 2008 party convention. He joined with an eclectic group of former communists, anti-capitalists, and smaller extreme left parties to form a new neo-communist party: the FDG. Mélenchon’s new party was built around two main pillars: rejection of capitalism, and a repudiation of the European Union – both issues close to the FN. In fact, the political proximity is rather alarming were it not for the deep, visceral, hatred present between the two parties and indeed the two candidates.

42 “Parrainages: Mélenchon En a plus Qu'il N'en Faut,” *L'EXPRESS.fr*, L'Express,
presidential campaign. However, in line with the strategies of JMLP, MLP was able to set the themes of her initial campaign days on the rigid institutional structure that only profits the UMP and PS to the detriment of other voices, all the while limiting her discussions on more tangible policy issues. Thus, she was able to position herself as an underdog before her official campaign even began.

**The FN's Policies and Message for 2012**

2012 geared up to be the year of the economy. Figure 4.01 shows the importance that the electorate gave economic issues – a direct result of the economic woes plaguing France. Despite the economy’s prevailing importance to the French public as a whole, the FN voters still saw the importance of immigration and security, further underlining the importance of MLP’s balancing act. To grasp this shift in policy, it is important to understand the shift in rhetoric that took place during the campaign.

A poll released in February 2011, a little more than a year before the first round of the Presidential election, indicated that MLP would be in first place following a first round of balloting against Nicolas Sarkozy and any potential PS challenger. This revelation sent shockwaves through a French political world still reeling from the events of the 2002 election. The FN, in the midst of its political rebirth under MLP, took this poll as a sign that its anti-globalization focus was the panacea for the party’s long-time electoral woes. Upon discovering the results of this new opinion poll, MLP commented on the importance of the FN’s key themes: “The French public needs to give itself a real choice between a national economic model and a globalized model represented either by Nicolas Sarkozy or by Dominique Strauss-Khan or Martine Aubry”.

Evidently, MLP took this poll as a stamp of approval toward her political shift. In the months preceding the election, MLP published a book intended to be an informal campaign manifesto detailing her ideas and her goals for 2012. It is hardly a coincidence that MLP exclusively dedicated the first 164 pages of a 255-page book to a lambasting of globalization and a derisive attack on the consumer-driven society. The remaining parts of the book are dedicated to a delineation of the patriotic values of France, an examination of the role of the state in society, and MLP’s take on reforming the public school system. In a review of the book in French online news aggregator Atlantico.fr, Yvan Blot, a former member of the National Front, goes so far as to accuse MLP of adopting a Marxist stance and

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44 Dominique Strauss-Khan (DSK) and Martine Aubry were, at the time, largely seen as the two favorites to represent the PS in the 2012 Presidential election. DSK was managing director of the International Monetary Fund and Martine Aubry was First Secretary of the Socialist Party. For more information on the socialist primary see Pierre Bréchon, “L’élection dans son context: candidats et forces en presence,” In Les élections présidentielles sous la Ve République, 3. éd. Ed. (Paris: Documentation Française, 2013): 67-70.
46 *Pour Que Vive La France* mentioned in previous sections of this chapter.
47 Le Pen, *Pour Que Vive La France*, 1-164.
ironically refers to her as *Marine la rouge* or *Marine the red.* In his editorial, Blot cites the various left-wing thinkers that MLP herself quotes in the book – not least of which is Karl Marx’s *Das Capital.*

MLP’s greatest criticisms of the financial market are almost entirely based in the sort of class conflict that was present in early communist and socialist thought. When discussing the international financial system, MLP viciously attacks American investment bank Goldman Sachs:

> This is how a new class of system abusers was born, comprised of speculators of all kinds, playing with incredible sums of money on computers which only vaguely represents real economic activity. This speculative finance ultimately contaminated the world, a fact only exacerbated by deregulation that enabled the indiscriminate propagation of this disease.

This sort of rhetoric is the prime example of MLP’s new strategy based on a deep criticism of neo-liberalism and international finance – themes generally attributed to the PS and the FDG. This point serves to exacerbate the message shown in figure 1.02, which demonstrates the proximity between the extreme-right and the extreme-left.

Included in her economic analysis was a large section on the economic argument behind limited immigration. True to style, MLP opened this section with a quotation from another famous left-wing politician, Pierre Mendes-France, stressing the importance of limiting immigration as an economic imperative.

In this chapter, MLP underlines the basis of her colorblind populism argument: underlining the futility of immigration during periods of unemployment and deploring the general acceptance of immigration by the PS and the UMP. The key takeaway from her section on immigration is the idea that favorable government programs create immigration, which she refers to as “*pompes aspirantes*” or “vacuums.” This idea would go on to become the major talking point for MLP on immigration that fit perfectly into her new anti-globalization rhetoric.

Furthermore, MLP developed the idea of the confluence between the two major political parties, the UMP and the PS. This idea became a key talking point of her campaign, in which she sardonically referred to them as the ‘UMPS’. This moniker was based on the notion that the two major parties, which had governed

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49 Atlantico.fr was created in 2011 to be a French media aggregator similar to the Huffington Post. Atlantico maintains that it holds a liberal and independent editorial line but many outlets, including Liberation, have associated it with the right (note not extreme right) on the French political spectrum.
50 Le Pen, *Pour Que Vive La France*, 64.
51 Ibid., 68.
52 It is noteworthy that the author of the Atlantico.fr article was a former FN member, granted his article could include a level of bias, yet it also indicative of a certain unease among FN members regarding MLP’s anti-capitalist rhetoric.
53 Le Pen, *Pour Que Vive La France*, 80.
54 Ibid. 80-89.
55 Le Pen, *Pour Que Vive La France*, 89.
56 Ibid.
France continuously since the beginning of the French Republic, had both championed and touted the same pro-globalization economic line. This development was meant to indicate that the FN, with its refutation of globalization and embrace of a ‘patriotic’ platform, was turning toward a more economic-driven political positioning.

MLP’s book underlined the predominance of her anti-liberal economic message, which would prove to be the defining characteristic of her campaign. When MLP released her official program, she made the pivot to economic patriotism abundantly clear. MLP dedicated the first four pages entirely to economic issues with a focus on the repudiation of globalization. Yet again, the theme of the denunciation of the European Union was ever present with MLP calling for France to leave the common currency. Interestingly enough, the program does follow some of the traditionally left-wing themes that Blot criticized in his review of MLP’s book. For instance, an entire section is dedicated to ‘fiscal justice,’ in which the traditional economic class structure system is put into question.

The most important detail that arose out of MLP’s program was the idea of ‘economic patriotism,’ which signaled a bridge between traditional populism and a renewed focus on the role of the state in the economy. This policy is another example of MLP’s pragmatism in terms of the FN’s messaging. Clearly, MLP recognized that a shift on economic issues that was too pronounced would lead to a great deal of pushback from her longtime allies. By characterizing her economic program as a patriotic ideal, she was able to balance the longtime allies in her party who may not have agreed with her policies and the new class of voters the FN was trying to attract. The duality of appealing to small businesses while calling for an increase in the government’s role in the economy, particularly through nationalizations, is another example of the conflict between tradition and modernity that MLP brought about.

MLP’s campaign mirrored the ideas and rhetoric of her book in her first major campaign events, strictly adhering to the idea of economic patriotism. In one of her first major campaign appearances, MLP gave a speech in Chateauroux on the importance of rural France, and the role of government in protecting it. Rural France had been the site of the first electoral victories for the FN in the 1980s and it therefore made sense for a speech to be entirely dedicated to a refocusing on rural issues. Contrary to the 1980s, however, MLP only had a fleeting focus on immigration; indeed, she only mentioned the word twice in the entire speech. This absence was severely contrasted with the words ‘France’ and ‘Francais,’ which were

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57 Valéry Giscard-d’Estaing, the third president of the fifth republic, was a member of the centrist UDF party, traditionally associated with the Gaullist movement. Technically he was not a member of the traditional right, but his government was formed in conjunction with the Gaullist party and Jacques Chirac was his Prime Minister.
58 Le Pen, Mon Projet Pour La France Et Les Français.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
mentioned a total of 79 times. Overall, the main theme of her message was a continuation of the patriotic economy idea characterized by a repudiation of Europe and a call for a more involved state in rural affairs. Again, MLP blamed the ‘UMPS’ for abandoning rural France in favor of Paris and other large cities.

MLP’s speech at Chateauroux showed the polyvalence of her post-decontamination messaging, in other words, her ability to apply a generic anti-liberal, anti-EU, and anti-establishment rhetoric to a tailored audience, in this case rural France. In a big campaign rally in Toulouse in March 2012, MLP gave a version of her stump speech where she again followed the same rhetoric. The largest part of MLP’s speech was dedicated to an illustration of the similarity between the UMP and the PS and how their respective governments had let finance run free and led to an explosion in insecurity. MLP brought up the same recurring themes of Europe and unregulated liberalism to bemoan the nefarious state of the French economy; the most interesting aspect of this speech, however, is her rhetoric regarding Arabs and French immigrants of Arab origin.

In her address, MLP launched a vicious attack aimed directly at the gulf-state of Qatar, which had been heavily investing in France, including purchasing the Parisian soccer club Paris Saint-Germain. In her criticism, MLP accused Qatar of communitarianism by creating a fund for French citizens of Arab origin: “Why do the UMP and the PS not have anything against a 50 million euro fund created last December by the Qatars for “French citizens of Arab origin“ in the banlieues? Does this not contribute to communitarianism against the republic and developing a strategy to benefit a foreign country on our soil?” This renewed focus on Arab identity in the context of the of the economy skillfully bridges the gap between the FN’s core base that still harbors strong sentiments against Arab communities and the new, economy-centered electorate. Overall, this juggling act is a phenomenal example of the kind of pragmatic political changes MLP’s decontamination strategy brought about.

The 2012 campaign was, however, not as clear cut as a series of speeches, and a key event brought to the fore the issue of immigration. In March 2012, a 23-year-old Islamist named Mohammed Merah perpetrated a series of attacks against French military personnel and a Jewish elementary school. The media turned Merah’s killing rampage into a massive affair that received unprecedented media coverage. According to an article in the business newspaper Les Echos, the affair had a higher media presence over four days than the Fukushima nuclear disaster or the Dominique Strauss-Khan sex scandal. The tremendous impact this event had

63 Ibid.
64 Le Pen, "Discours à Chateaurou." 
65 This inherently means the relationship between an individual and his community. In French politics, this concept is often seen through a negative lens as it undermines the idea of one French Republic and identity. In particular, Arab and Muslim communities are often scrutinized by the FN and right wing parties for their perceived communitarian actions.
66 Le Pen, "Discours à Toulouse."
67 "Toulouse: Minute Par Minute - Mort De Merah, Le Déroulé De La Journée," MYTF1NEWS, LCI.
on public discourse notwithstanding, this event had little repercussion in the polls. \(^{69}\) Yet, the events themselves were enough for MLP to capitalize on them and bring back immigration into the public debate.

On this question, MLP made a major immigration speech outside a correctional facility in the suburbs of Paris where she blasted Nicolas Sarkozy for his weak stance on immigration. \(^{70}\) In numerous speeches and interviews following the affair, MLP repeated a line which became a key talking point of her campaign: “Citizenship is inherited or is merited.” \(^{71}\) Although the campaign was occasionally sprinkled with various incidents meant to appeal to the populist base of the FN, the main rhetoric of the campaign focused on the economy and the inclusion of economic principles in traditional FN rhetoric. \(^{72}\) For this reason, 2012 proved to be the greatest example of political pragmatism in the history of the FN and shows a strong correlation between the public opinion and the rhetoric of the party.

### 2012 Election Results

On April 23, 2012 after the first round of balloting, MLP received a total of 17.9% of the admissible votes, putting her in third position behind the PS’s François Hollande (28.6%) and the incumbent Nicolas Sarkozy (27.2%) and thus eliminating her from the race. \(^{73}\) Despite the fact that she did not qualify for the 2\(^{nd}\) round, this result was the best in the FN’s history in terms of both percentage and overall vote count. MLP managed to increase JMLP’s 2002 best by 1.4% and over 1.5 million votes. For comparison, if MLP had achieved the same total of votes in 2002, she would have surpassed both her father and Jacques Chirac. So despite the fact that she did not make it to the second round, it is undeniable that her rhetorical change had a deep impact on the French electorate, which led to a greater electoral result.

Looking specifically at the breakdown of MLP voters, it is clear that she was able to attract a large swath of the French public. In terms of employment, MLP got between 17 and 20% of the vote of all range of employments from the unemployed (18%) to private and public sector employees (20% and 19% respectively). \(^{74}\) When examining education levels, MLP only scored underneath her total average with individuals who received some higher education for all individuals with less education, she scored extremely well. Most interesting however was the propensity of individuals not associated with a political party who voted for MLP. 26% of these unaffiliated voters cast their ballot for MLP, second only to Nicolas Sarkozy with

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\(^{69}\) A poll conducted by the BVA polling bureau on March 26 showed a marginal increase in the importance of insecurity (from 6 to 8%) and a decrease in the importance of immigration (from 10 to 8%)

\(^{70}\) Abel Mestre, "Marine Le Pen Dénonce Le "laxisme" De Sarkozy Sur L'immigration," *Le Monde.fr*

\(^{71}\) "Marine Le Pen Fustige Le «système» Et L'immigration | Élysée 2012," *La Presse*, AFP, limmigration.php

\(^{72}\) One such example of an affair was the scandal over the proposed banning of a method of killing animals linked to the creation of Halal meat. Many Muslims took MLP’s attack against Halal as a sign of her continued struggle against Arab immigrants and their community in France.

\(^{73}\) “Ipsos - Sondages élection Présidentielle.”

\(^{74}\) Ibid.
27%. This figure clearly demonstrates the utility of MLP’s trans-partisan appeal. Despite MLP’s best efforts to appeal to women voters, she still maintained a large gender gap (21% of men and 15% of women) which, in the future, could be the source for even greater electoral successes.

Conclusions

A 2011 poll among likely MLP voters delineated their reasons for choosing MLP: 38% indicated that it was because of deep-rooted beliefs in MLP’s ideas, yet the overwhelming majority, 61%, indicated their vote was to send a message to the other parties. This fact best summarizes the situation facing the FN as they continue to grow and develop. Taking control of a rigid party structure governed since its inception by JMLP was no easy task for MLP. Her decontamination strategy was only one step in what would eventually be a long process to rehabilitating the image of the FN. What is undeniable is that MLP’s initial changes immediately addressed the major economic concerns of the French public – a sure sign of economic pragmatism. Furthermore, the development of the FN’s argument and rhetoric showed a break from the strict party confines found under JMLP to an approach geared toward winning elections. It is this key detail that makes 2012 the most blatant example of political opportunism and reinvention characteristic of the FN’s success.
Analyzing the Impact of Public Libraries Powering Social Development: Romania as a Case Study

Margaret Kavaras

Introduction

Romania presents many challenges to development and serves to highlight issues for EU expansion in the Balkans and Southeastern Europe. As the second poorest state in the European Union, Romania faces many issues in overcoming its Communist past. Integrating diverse ethnic groups still poses difficulties for social cohesion across the country, especially among cultural and linguistic minority groups such as the Roma and Hungarian communities. Civic engagement is historically low, leading to poor citizen participation in government and democratic processes and, therefore, little change in a system of political graft, bribery, and corrupt elites. Furthermore, the EU Commission reports that Romania’s “poor administrative capacity contributes to low absorption of EU funds,” rendering the EU hesitant to offer financial support for projects to modernize Romania. In addition, there is a significant urban/rural divide, resulting in limited Internet and information access in rural areas, though such tools are vital to connecting Romanians to employment, health, and education opportunities, as well as the wider European community.

To address the issue of limited Internet access, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s Global Libraries project introduced the Biblionet Romania program in partnership with the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), the Romanian Ministry of Culture, and the National Association of Libraries and

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Librarians (ANBPR). In 2008 Biblionet, a five-year program, began working with libraries to create programming and services for social, economic, and educational advancement through free Internet access, public meeting space, and librarian-led programs. At the program’s conclusion in 2014, Biblionet provided 1500 new computers, scanners, and software products to libraries. Additionally, it worked with the ANBPR to develop library infrastructure and training courses for librarians to become effective agents in identifying and meeting community needs.

The purpose of this study is to understand how public library services in Romania impact community development, ethnic inclusion, and access to information resources. This research seeks to use qualitative data to assess the attitudes of Biblionet program creators, librarians, and library users towards the role the library plays in their community, along with perceived changes following the improvement of Internet access made available through the five-year Biblionet program. The analysis will focus on addressing current knowledge gaps regarding Biblionet’s impact and what role, if any, the library plays in community development. Questions this research will answer include, why library use still remains very low (only 16% of the overall population) and whether library services are including various ethnic groups and contributing to ethnic integration within each community. Researching these questions will contribute to the discussion on Biblionet’s goals of creating sustainable programs, addressing local needs, and making quality information sources available at all levels of society.

Further, this research will provide insight as to what challenges still lay ahead, and what improvements are necessary to use public library-led development as a model.

According to current studies, the discrepancies in library use versus need, and the high importance the general population places on the libraries’ role in meeting community needs, form an interesting research question. If the majority of Romanians feel the library is effective and merits more funding, why has this not translated into higher levels of use, subsidies, and advocacy for public libraries? Answering what would cause more people to use the library, and what effect increased rates of use would have on the community, may shed light on the extent to which libraries can contribute to social development. By examining Romania as a case study, this research has broader implications for understanding the role and impact public libraries have as actors in civil society development and digital inclusion in democratizing societies, especially in post-communist states.

**Background**

*Why Libraries?*

Libraries have been modernized in the past decade to act as locally staffed and supported institutions that are part of the community itself, making them accessible and trusted sources of information. They are not “short-term” projects
but rather an institution built into public life, and able to evolve with it. Working closely with their communities, libraries are also in a position to directly identify and address the needs of various populations. They often collaborate with NGOs and serve as points of access into society, acting as a resource to learn about a region or community and as public spaces that can be used for a variety of social purposes. As this research will show, libraries in Romania often act as a hub for community development, partnering with schools, NGOs, cultural organizations, and community centers. As defined by the Romanian library law, a public library ensures equality of access to information “regardless of social or economical status, age, sex, political affiliation, religion, or nationality,” and can therefore address multiple levels of society in both urban and rural areas.

One of the most compelling arguments for focusing on libraries for meeting development goals is how their mission closely aligns with the EU 2020 growth strategy. Innovation lies at the heart of the EU 2020 outline, a set of goals to revitalize the economy, create equitable growth across member states, and draw Europe out of the financial crisis. In the interest of addressing the decline in European research and development, innovation must be supported through “enhancing digital content and technology, supporting open access to scientific information, and bringing culture and economy together.”

The Horizon 2020 program and Innovation Union are part of the EU 2020 strategy, and have direct implications for libraries. This initiative has €80 billion to invest in research and development, and seeks to attract researchers and private investors from all over the world to Europe’s information society. The flagship program states, “the goal is to ensure Europe produces world-class science, removes barriers to innovation and makes it easier for the public and private sectors to work together in delivering innovation.” As of 2012, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector “represents 4.8% of the EU economy, generates 25% of total business expenditure on research, and invests in ICT account for 50% of all European productivity growth.” As ICT becomes a major component of Europe’s economy and growth, “information poverty becomes closely allied with economic poverty: the poorest nations have the least access to information.” Library services directly correspond to the EU 2020 overall goals of:

1) smart growth, developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation; 2)
sustainable growth, promoting a low carbon, resource efficient and competitive economy; and 3) inclusive growth, fostering a high employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion.\textsuperscript{15} Giuseppe Vitiello (2000), a library expert, suggested early in the 2000s that libraries could be significant to EU goals. He states, “libraries are hybrid institutions: a third is devoted to the cultural segment, a third to the educational, and a third to the informational segment.”\textsuperscript{16} In other words, modern public libraries have the potential to play a decisive role in development and growth in a society increasingly dependent upon digital technology and information access.

**The Changing Library: Communism to Present**

The communist system in Romania drastically changed the role of libraries for nearly half a century, turning them from learning centers into propaganda tools that helped disperse communist party doctrine. Though many publications were forbidden if they contained anti-communist rhetoric, many libraries retained “secret fronds” of banned books withdrawn from circulation, making the library under communism both an institution of state mandated propaganda and an underground resource of forbidden information.\textsuperscript{17} Romania’s communist past has left societal legacies that are still apparent today and are evident in libraries’ “poor infrastructure, poor data collections, restricted access to information, lack of modern equipment, and inadequate communications technologies.”\textsuperscript{18} However, certain aspects from the pre-communist period still remain, such as the union of public libraries with “cultural houses” in rural areas, which were created under the King Carol I Foundation, established in 1891.\textsuperscript{19} It’s mission was to “promote, sustain and create culture, and to reach the country’s remotest places.”\textsuperscript{20} This language still echoes today in the assertions of the most innovative library program coordinators, who describe the necessary role the library must play in maintaining, promoting, and creating culture.

**The Romanian Library Today**

Romania currently has a total of 2,876 libraries, including 41 county libraries, 263 city libraries, and 2,572 rural libraries.\textsuperscript{21} One of the key issues the

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, 435.
\textsuperscript{20} Hermina Anghelescu, Public Libraries in Modern and Contemporary Romania: Legacy of French Patterns and Soviet Influences, 1830-1990, PhD Dissertation (University of Texas at Austin, 2000), 213
\textsuperscript{21} Susannah Quick et al., *Cross-European survey to measure users’ perceptions of the benefits of ICT in public libraries*, Final Report, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (TNS, 2013), 4
Biblionet program sought to address was the understaffing, underfunding, and subsequent closure of rural village libraries. Rural areas have limited access to Internet connections, and the divide between education and employment opportunities is the steepest in comparison to urban centers. The local government, typically the local mayor and county council, is responsible for designing the library budget. Each of the 41 counties in Romania receives state funds to allocate for different county projects. In 1998, the Ministry of Culture ratified legislation that stipulates:

Public libraries shall be established and function as subordinated to the local or central public administration authorities, to other public authorities or institutions, and function according to their own regulations approved by these authorities or institutions.

This law does not coordinate a national library policy, however, and instead leaves budgetary decision-making for libraries at the discretion of local authorities. Article 29 declares, “The activity of the county libraries shall be financed from the budget of the respective county.” The legislation does not specify a minimum amount of funding, though it requires the local public administration to fund the continuance of the library’s functioning.

**Structural Challenges to Development**

Romania, like many transitioning societies, still struggles under high levels of government corruption and low levels of civic engagement. According to one Freedom House report, which examines the progress of former European and Eurasian communist states, Romania’s overall democracy score is 3.5, where 1 represents the most free and 7 the least free. This is lower than regionally similar states such as Poland (2.18), the Czech Republic (2.14) and Hungary (2.89). Although corruption still poses challenges for Romania, ascension to the European Union in 2007 was a positive step for development. However, Venelin Ganev (2013) found that obtaining EU membership also had certain negative effects that changed the nature of state-driven development in Romania. Ganev argues that Romania’s motivation to continue with development and state building efforts that were initiated by the prospect of joining the EU lagged after accession was achieved. Between 2007 and 2012, Romania became more corrupt according to Transparency International’s country report, which states, “After Romania joined the European Union, public commitment of central and local authorities has declined considerably,

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23 National Legislation: Romania, LAW no. 334.
24 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
and efforts to combat corruption of NGOs were affected by the withdrawal of major funding program.”

Understanding the nature of corruption in Romania is valuable to development studies due to the detrimental effect it has upon societal development in young democracies. As Transparency International states:

> Corrupt politicians invest scarce public resources in projects that will line their pockets rather than benefit communities, and prioritize high-profile projects such as dams, power plants, pipelines and refineries over less spectacular but more urgent infrastructure projects such as schools, hospitals and roads. Corruption corrodes the social fabric of society. It undermines people's trust in the political system, in its institutions and its leadership. A distrustful or apathetic public can then become yet another hurdle to challenging corruption.”

In Romania there is continuing distance between the populace, promised immediate economic and social improvements upon entry to the EU, and their political elite, who have failed to follow through on proposed actions. The politically apathetic culture that results from distance between the state leaders and the society they serve has negative consequences for development, such as diminishing citizen’s motivation and sense of political efficacy.

**The Effects of Corruption on Public Libraries:**

A politically apathetic public has had widespread ramifications for public libraries in Romania as institutions that rely upon the local government for funding. There is at present very little impetus to increase financial support for the library; and worse still, as several librarian interviewees noted, library director positions are often awarded to local elites and campaign donors as political favors. Library scholar Dr. Hermina Anghelescu wrote about this phenomenon as emerging in the past decade, as libraries began to rebuild and occupy a new place as a community focused public institution. These politically appointed library directors often have no training or knowledge of librarianship or even administrative management, and library development and quality suffers due to misappropriation of funds and poor capacity building.

The purpose of the public library and the information services it provides is “to promote equal opportunities among citizens for personal cultivation, for literary and cultural pursuits, for continuous development of knowledge, personal skills and civic skills, for internationalization, and for lifelong learning.” These are all

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31 Hermina Anghelescu, interviewed by Margaret Kavaras, Busteni, Romania, July 5, 2013.

important factors in establishing an informed citizenry in any participatory democracy, and libraries have the potential to act as locally trusted, community-led agents of civil society promotion and information access. Despite the value of access to information, public space, and Internet connection, Romanian libraries face a number of challenges: limited government support and funding, poor salaries for librarians, very few degree programs for library and information science, and continually low rates of use among the population.

**Biblionet Program Impact: Current Assessment:**

In March 2013, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation commissioned TNS, an independent research company, to conduct a cross-European survey to measure users’ perceptions of the benefits of ICT in public libraries. Across Europe, the TNS study found that libraries that received the largest spending budgets had the highest rates of use. In Romania, surveys and interview data from this report highlighted the impacts of the Biblionet program from 2008-2013. This correlation provides strong rationale for increasing library funding in Romania where greater use could also lead to greater impacts on civil society and democratic development.

TNS survey research found that the most common library users were job seekers and the unemployed, who actively research information on employment. Approximately 40% of those using library computers in the past year had accessed the Internet for employment purposes. This highlights the important role Internet connection plays in connecting citizens to jobs and opportunities. According to the Gates Foundation’s assessment of Biblionet, 64% of the Romanian public felt libraries merited more financial funding than at present. Notably, in almost every category Romanians rate the value of library services higher than the EU average.

**Methodology:**

Over a one-month period in July 2013, I traveled to six ethnically diverse regions of Romania and conducted 30 interviews with librarians, library users, and Biblionet program leaders. Romania has 18 national minorities living within its borders, each with its own history tracing back to rule under various empires. Most numerous are the Hungarians (6.5%) and the Roma (3.3%). Other minorities are regionally concentrated, such as the Turks, Tatars, Serbians, Ukrainians, and Russians. To ensure that I interviewed a diverse selection of librarians and library users, I selected Transylvania, Moldavia, Wallachia, Dobrogea, Banat, and Crisana for regional study (see Map 1 below). The majority of those interviewed were librarians and library users. In Bucharest, I interviewed three Biblionet program

33 Anghelescu, “European Integration,” 435-454.
34 Quick et al, “Cross-European survey,” 1-5.
directors. At a regional librarian-training course led by Anghelescu, I conducted a classroom discussion with participants. For comparative analysis, I visited libraries in both urban and rural areas.

*Map 1* - Romanian Regions

Even in the small sample I collected, certain patterns emerged in the data that matched closely with the results published in September 2013 from the large-scale Cross-European Impact Assessment of public libraries. In addition, the qualitative nature of the study allowed for understanding nuances that the Cross European Statistical analysis could not address, such as why library use was so low, and the perceptions of library users on the role and value of the library in their community.

**Significant Ethnic Populations by County:**
1. Covasna County (*Transylvania*) - 73.7% Hungarian
2. Harghita County (*Transylvania*) - 85.2% Hungarian
3. Bihor County (*Crisana*) - 25.3% Hungarian, 6.3% Romani
4. Timis County (*Banat*) - 13,273 Serbians, 6,000 Ukrainians, 8,500 Germans (73% of all Germans in Romania)
5. Constanta County (*Dobrogea*) - 20,800 Turks (90% of Romania’s Turkish population), 19,600 Tatars (96.6% of Romanian Tatar pop.)

authorities determine library budgets, and while allocation varies, often public libraries are not prioritized for spending. 39 Multiple interviewees affirmed this fact, as one head librarian from Constanta County explained:

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39 Anghelescu, “European Integration,” 438
In the countryside you don’t build a highway in every county, or in every city, its not like that. Its kind of, around politics, and generally speaking, the culture fields are the last and final thing considered for the finances, always.40

To offer relevant, modern services that draw in users and develop communities, local governments must invest in their libraries. As the respondent elaborated:

This is the big issue here, how to convince them [the local government] to finance the libraries in order to show that the people will come to the library if you can provide modern services, if you can provide them with ...new books for children for example, but if you say “Ah, nobody enters the library, [the government will say] why should I give money to them?”41

His perception is significant, and was echoed in interviews with librarians across Romania. Another the head librarian in Oradea county stated that opening the library to more partnerships in the community would ensure sustainability, but that currently only NGOs work with the library and they provide only short-term (1-2 year) grants. She stated:

[We have] NGOs but not political partnerships, and not very strong social partnerships [the library] is a low priority, and it is a tragedy.42

From her perspective, attracting more library users is the first step, because then the issue will become more interesting to local politicians who determine funding for the library.43 Current Biblionet assessments do not address the view that the necessary first step for raising library visibility and incurring financial support is by attracting more users. However, a contradictory situation emerges - libraries that receive more funding offer better services and have higher rates of use, but politicians are less likely to increase the budget for libraries with low rates of use.

More funding could increase library usage and impact by increasing the capacity to provide quality materials, skilled librarians, and updated collections. Both data from the Cross-European survey on user attitudes and numerous academic articles published in library journals support this theory. For instance, the 2013 Cross-European Survey data shows that libraries spending the highest amount per capita had the highest user rates.44 However, Romanian library spending per person is currently only €1.8, far below the European average of approximately €20.45

As of 2010, national spending on culture makes up 2.09% of Romania’s total public expenditures.46 Public libraries only receive 1.44% of the cultural spending budget; out of the 2010 total cultural spending of 703,000,000 RON

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40 Head librarian interviewed by Margaret Kavaras, Constanta County, Romania, July 8, 2013.
41 Ibid.
42 Head Librarian interviewed by Margaret Kavaras, Oradea County, Romania, July 26, 2013.
43 Ibid.
44 Quick et al., “Cross-European Survey.”
45 Ibid.
(US$220 Million), only US$3.1 million was used for libraries.\textsuperscript{47} For perspective, spending on libraries fell far below the amount spent on other institutions in the same category, such as historic monuments (US$14.9 Million) and museums (US$31.7 Million).\textsuperscript{48} Romania spends 173.7 RON or about 41.2 EUR per-capita on culture.\textsuperscript{49}

Dr. Hermina Anghelescu, who played an integral role as a consultant to the BMGF and IREX in creating the Biblionet Program, indicates that the $27 million grant for development has drastically modernized and increased library use since its inception in 2008.\textsuperscript{50} She posits that:

From a social standpoint, the impact of Biblionet...has been significant. In certain cases the program has created more awareness about the role of the public library in the community, which has determined local leaders and decision makers to change their perception on the public library and to commit matching funds for its remodeling and services.\textsuperscript{51}

This reveals that funding has had a significant impact on shifting the role and perception of the library from being an outmoded, closed stacks “museum for used books” to playing an active role in community life and modern information provision.\textsuperscript{52} Maintaining progress after the $27 million grant expires in 2014 poses the biggest challenge. Future sustainability presents a major issue, as five years is not a long enough period to completely reform a system. To lobby for greater funding, libraries will likely need to increase their advocacy capacity, and branch managers will need to form better negotiation strategies and awareness campaigns. This is difficult to achieve though, as advocacy for public services is not an intrinsic part of Romanian culture, touching upon the second main challenge to development—public mentality.

\textbf{Public Mentality}

While it is clear that libraries have an important impact on communities (discussed more later), societal distance from legislators and cultural legacies prevent citizens from advocating for public libraries. A head librarian in Constanta County explained this reasoning as follows:

If the mayor says: “People of the city, I want to give more money from the budget on the next year, to build a new church, you agree? [Hypothetical people’s response] "Yeah, we agree!" [Mayor] But I don't want to give money to build a new library [hypothetical people] "yeah, we agree!" We are used to saying yes to all the things that other people, from the top, decide are good for us. It is our mentality, we are used to saying, “oh, that's our father, the big

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\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} Hermina G.B. Anghelescu, "Romanian Librareis at the Beginning of the Millennium: A Brief Statistical Overview," Forthcoming, 242.
\textsuperscript{51} Anghelescu, "Romanian Librareis at the Beginning of the Millennium: A Brief Statistical Overview," 243.
\textsuperscript{52} Anghelescu, “European Integration,” 438.
father government thinks for us, he knows what is better for us. We don’t have to think anymore.”

This mentality is reminiscent of the repressive past, where “Ceausescu’s national Stalinism managed to crush [domestic] civil society altogether, leading to an absolute lack of freedom to organize independently around common interests.”

Several interviewees identified meeting space for clubs, cultural organizations, and support groups as one of the library’s positive impacts on the community. When asked whether the library had tried to form an advocacy group with these patrons who were deeply affected by library access, interviewees stated that most people are not motivated to interact with the government. The notions of volunteering and advocacy are not common, and are thus viewed as someone else’s responsibility. As another head librarian in Oradea County affirmed:

Biblionet trained us in your [American] concept of advocacy, but that concept doesn't work in Romania...it is not culturally common, we fight it. We know what must happen, but we don't find the important people who will say 'yes, I will promote the library.' You, in your culture, have friends of the library groups who promote the library, who do the work of advocacy...we have people capable of this, like retired people, but we don't have the culture to volunteer.

When asked how that culture could be changed, to become more open to volunteering and advocacy, she stated:

That's very, very hard. We have to gain everyone, one by one, and we need to involve a large amount [of people], we need a huge energy to change people.

As Anghelescu (2005) describes, “the Romanian society perceives libraries more as cultural institutions than as information agencies,” or as places to preserve books rather than to seek new information, education and opportunities. To help Romanian libraries surmount “numerous obstacles of all kinds, mentalities, old practices of a totalitarian system, insufficient resources, staff shortages, and an outdated image,” Biblionet worked to change the perception of libraries. They provided quality technology and training to bring libraries up to modern European standards over the five-year implementation period. Tudor Cretu, a fiction author and Biblionet County Coordinator for Timisoara, emphasized:

Biblionet reinvented the library, in many places it brought to people to libraries who would not have come just for books, who would have never entered a library if it were just for books. So it turned it into a more complete place.
For library usage to increase, there is also a need for more equitable access in underserved communities, which means targeted programs are necessary to change user perception. As libraries are a major component of democratic societies, arguments for changing public mentality state that libraries in Romania must be improved if the country aspires to become an active member of the modern economy and society. As an author invested in the success of public libraries, Tudor Cretu has made attracting new library users his primary focus in Timisoara. He created library-sponsored activities to bring materials and services out of the library and to the public. Cretu prides himself on the innovative strategies Timisoara County has used to involve more people, but he concedes that there is still internal disagreement over the role of a public library:

There is a mentality clash even within libraries, because not all people understand that you can no longer rely only on people who only come to the library for books. Organizing events is as important as providing books, and at the same time it is the most direct service to the community. This is what has been done here, and it works. You will see, this library holds events in the center of the city, with tens to hundreds of participants. That says it all; about people and about the way you choose to get involved in the public and in social life. It's not about creating readers directly, its about having participants at the events, and some of them become readers.

He stresses that in order to increase use, libraries will have to work to change their image and positively alter people’s mentalities towards library use. Offering quality programming and library materials requires well-trained, educated librarians. At present, fewer than seven Romanian universities offer degrees in library and information science. In the mid 1970s, library science degrees were discontinued, and anyone holding an undergraduate degree could work as a librarian. Though this policy was reversed in the 1990s, the library science field is still not highly regarded. The salary for a librarian is low, only US$100-200 per month, although the importance of digital literacy continues to grow. This discourages students from pursuing a degree in information science. Instead, most librarians are not educated in library science, and hold an unrelated academic degree in the humanities (literature, history, foreign language etc…) or were in education prior to becoming librarians. Romanian library laws stipulate that interested candidates for a librarian position must attend a 2-year professional development program organized by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Continuing Education to acquire the necessary skills.

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60 Anghelescu, “European Integration,” 451.
61 T.C., Biblionet County Coordinator interviewed by Margaret Kavaras, Timisoara County Library, July 22, 2013.
63 Ibid, 441.
64 Ibid, 442.
65 Ibid, 441.
Political Factors

The lack of training and library science education contributes to the final major obstacle to library development—the system of political appointments. Public libraries in Romania are funded through the county authority, and successful budgeting depends on the strength of partnerships between the library and the local council.\(^{67}\) However, mayors have begun giving library directorships as a political reward for their campaign backers, instead of employing librarians in library administrative leadership.\(^{68}\) This practice results in inefficient spending, poor collection development and little support. A librarian in Oradea County confirmed the enormous challenge this corrupt practice presents. She contrasts the Zalau County library, which successfully attracts users and is a visible asset to the community, with Oradea libraries:

The managers of the libraries are politically named. [The Zalau library manager] is not a political appointee, she is a librarian and knows how things work. She is a very strong woman, you must be very strong otherwise, you are finished. Here [in Oradea] we have political managers, both of them [are appointees]. They are only concerned with pleasing their superiors.\(^{69}\)

She continued to describe the problem of politicians who simply have neither interest in the library, or in educating citizens. She surmises their interests are in perpetuating the current system that benefits their own political position:

I see the same types of leaders since ‘89...I saw an article, and one of the reporters said, "Here in Romania there are very few [politically] educated people, and the conclusion was, we don't have a wide range of people from whom we can choose our politicians, we don't have [politically] educated people."\(^{70}\)

This appeal for stronger leadership was reflected in the words of another librarian in Timisoara who stated that the most important step was to get more people to use the library in order for there to be an impact on community development. For this to happen, libraries must be innovative. Creative programs and innovation require leaders who are invested in library success, as she affirmed, “the library must be new, it must be useful to people, and it must advertise…everything rises and falls on leadership.”\(^{71}\)

Library Impact on Community Development:

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69 Head Librarian interviewed by Margaret Kavaras, Oradea County, Romania, July 26, 2013.
70 Ibid.
71 Librarian interviewed by Margaret Kavaras, Timisoara County, Romania, July 22, 2013.
Despite the difficulties libraries face in strengthening their presence in the community, the sentiment librarians frequently impressed upon me was that they care deeply about the issues that affect the library and will continue their efforts to maintain the institution, regardless of how cynically they view development prospects. Librarians understand the value of the services they provide, as a librarian in the Timisoara stated, “It is important to have access to the library because we have to keep up with global development. Libraries help people catch up.”

The fact that many librarians pay to travel across the country to attend continuing education training programs is evidence of their dedication. I conducted a classroom discussion in Busteni, Prahova County, and found this to be the case for many of the 35 rural librarians assembled for weekend training course. In general, librarians consider the services they provide through their libraries essential to the community, and every librarian interviewed for this research unanimously responded that if the library did not exist, it would be, “disastrous, chaotic, and tragic for the community.”

Public Space:

Library users, similar to librarians, discussed the valuable role the library plays in their lives. One library user in Oradea, an international student, described the library as the best quiet space for study because she feels motivated by the other people all working around her. Another female university student in the Timisoara Arts library expressed the same sentiment:

I like to read when I see everyone reading, you feel good when you see the interest of other people, and you think "oh, what is he reading, what is he doing here? It is that feeling, that the library sets an example for all the persons who want to find information and to get involved in the world. It is a place for intelligent people to gather, a center for ideas.

In many ways, one of the most important and often overlooked roles the public library plays is in providing public space. It serves as a place where individuals can work, groups can meet, NGOs can learn about communities, and cultural organizations can host activities. For example, in Oradea, the county library hosts film clubs, discussions, and Chinese language classes. In addition, whenever organizations come seeking public space, they contact the library. According to a librarian in Oradea:

Recently the Waldorf School had a program, and there was another about conflict resolution and nonviolence techniques in which I learned about finding solutions for getting over conflict...they [both] worked with the library materials, and they said [when deciding to come to Oradea] "where is a public

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72 Librarian interviewed by Margaret Kavaras, Timisoara County, Romania, July 23, 2013.
73 Quoted terms used in multiple interviews with librarians in response to the question: “How would things be different if the library did not exist in this community?”
74 Library User interviewed by Margaret Kavaras, Oradea County Library, July 26, 2013.
place where people come freely”...Oh, Library! Both of them, the Waldorf School and the non-violence training, came here and this was open to the public. 76

Libraries act as resources and free spaces for locally organized support groups and clubs to meet—an important aspect of civil society creation. In Techirghiol, a small rural library, a women’s cancer support group regularly meets, and in the Covasna library, a commune in Transylvania, retired teachers get together and create reading lists for schools. Often, the library serves as the only public space in the community in which people can come freely, stay as long as they desire, and organize discussion—creating the necessary space for civil society to develop.

Public Perceptions of the Library

It is especially interesting to note that although overall library-use remains low, those who regularly visit the library consider it extremely valuable, citing it as important public space to meet or study in, the only place to access the Internet, and often, a primary source of information on health issues. Examples given by respondents, too numerous to include here, reflect the positive impacts the library has on individual’s lives, and transitively, on community development. In an interview in the rural Covasna commune library, one patron described how she cannot afford her own Internet access. When a family member was diagnosed with cancer, she came to the library to understand the disease and find information on treatments. In another example, a librarian in Timisoara discussed how in her view, the English courses she leads have the most important impact on community development:

I had two ladies, senior citizens, who told me that their children were in America and one of them had a five year old nephew who doesn’t speak Romanian, so she came here and said “Teach me English, so I can speak with my nephew!” So the results can be seen, and some young people have actually found jobs after coming to classes— they didn't have the opportunity to study English in school and for job interviews, they needed English. So they came here and learned. 77

In her view, the combination of offering classes, providing books, and having access to the Internet all combined to improve the lives of individuals in the community, and therefore had a positive impact.

As confirmed in an interview with Hermina Anghelescu, the library has a significant impact on those who use it—the problem remains the low overall rates of use. 78 However, an important cultural nuance also became apparent over the course of interviewing. When asked early on in the interview, “How do you think using the library affects the way people in the community interact with one another,” several interviewees stated that they did not feel the library had a significant overall impact on the community. However, when questioned on how they personally use the

76 Head librarian interviewed by Margaret Kavaras, Oradea County, Romania, July 26, 2013.
77 Librarian interviewed by Margaret Kavaras, Timisoara County, Romania, July 22, 2013.
78 Hermina Anghelescu interviewed by Margaret Kavaras, April 26, 2014.
library, most described the numerous reasons the library was valuable to them, and indirectly described ways the library involves the community (such as offering space for social groups to meet, or showing films and holding discussions afterwards). In addition, all interviewees unanimously asserted that it would be detrimental to the community if the library did not exist. This seems to indicate that library users think of the library in terms of its value as a personal resource, a space for the individual. It was not intuitive to discuss the library as a community actor—a fact that could perhaps be attributed to the “very traditional picture of Romanian libraries as closed stacks in which the reading room has rows of desks and a custodian in front monitoring the readers.”79 This is not surprising, given that initiatives to reinvent the library as an active community center only began in the mid 2000s with the Biblionet program. Among interviewees who did not feel the library had a major impact on the community, the most common sentiment was that the library was meant for individuals seeking a space to study, educate themselves, and find quality information.

**Role in Education and Personal Growth:**

The library’s role in education may seem obvious, but many interviews drew attention to the unexplored variety of educational purposes the library supports. In addition to facilitating students’ academic research and providing resources for all ages of learners, the library also plays the most prominent role in non-formal learning. Described by Vitiello:

> Libraries are key elements of lifelong learning policies... knowledge is a strategic factor of development for citizens, firms, administrations, and institutions. Access to information means the empowerment of all citizens in exerting their responsibilities in the on-going process of societal change.80

As a space for knowledge, the library empowers some citizens to educate themselves in ways to start their own projects for development. One library user in Constanta County described:

> In general, library access has affected my personal views and beliefs about the world. I felt more empowered, and the link between university [study] and accessing the [public] library allowed me to feel that I can make a difference because I can learn, and the library facilitates that learning process.81

A current graduate student in Human Rights, she continued to describe her own ideas for development programs to engage Romanian youth through starting after-school organizations that provide courses for student’s professional development such as interview skills, debates, career help, and English courses.

> The library is not only an empowering space for those seeking to make their own ideas into a reality, but also a place where people can come for self-

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79 Anghelescu, “European Integration,” 441.
81 A. A., Library User interviewed by Margaret Kavaras, Constanta County Library, July 11, 2013.
improvement and personal growth. A library user in Navodari commune stated that she uses the library for continuing education, because she does not have time to attend night courses or training sessions. She reads to develop her own skills and abilities, and needs the library because books and university courses are very expensive. When asked how she thinks the library affects ways community members interact with one another, she responded, “Usually it is in the best way. If many people [in the community] read, they will develop themselves, and they will understand other people better.”

The sentiment that the library can be a space for personal growth was echoed in a very prescient high school student’s interview responses. Baile Tusnad, a small community in Harghita County is isolated in the Carpathian Mountains. The student Interviewed described how she attends a larger school 45 minutes away, where she lives in a student-boarding house during the school year and works in the kitchens to pay for her stay. The library has always been a place of learning and ideas for her, and she describes having read most of the books in the tiny Tusnad library while growing up. The library “helps her see the best side of the world” and in her view reading helps open the mind to all there is in the world outside. She also believes that this can have a positive effect on the community as well. When asked what the important issues in the community are and if the library can aid in solving them, she stated:

Here it is very important to learn how we can live together and how we can live better, because, we are all different here, and people have different opinions and it can be a big problem for us, not being able to speak about our problems, and cooperate, and have tolerance.

When asked if she meant that there were different opposing sides in the community, she clarified:

I don't think it's sides, I think it is just people, and groups, and they are thinking about things differently, and when there is a community problem it's difficult to speak and have a position, or for them to decide things together. There needs to be more discussion between different groups, and if more people were coming together at the library and discussing life, maybe they could understand other people more, and they could do things better.

This conscious linking of personal growth to increased tolerance, open mindedness, and community development was reflected across many interviews. While it seemed that most library users conceptualize the library as a place for individual education, growth, and development, many also viewed this as having a positive impact on the community as a whole. In the Timisoara Arts Library, another user elaborated:

Talking to people here at the library, and feeling the vibe of this place, it has the feeling like you are home. I like to read, and it helps you learn not to judge

others, to look from others point of view, see other opinions. Here you learn how to not have that judgment on others, how to see things much clearer, and it helps you to discover the thinking and wisdom of other persons. The library helps you to feel that this place is the world for you, you come here and you read something, and you learn something, and you find out, "Wow, this is me." You find your intent here--you find yourself here.\(^\text{84}\)

In describing their perception of the library’s impact on the community, each interviewee underscored valuable roles the library fulfills, both in their personal lives and in community life as well. They brought to light significant impacts that cannot be measured in surveys or defined in statistics, such as the role information access has played in personal empowerment, continuing education and career development, and building a more open minded society. As one head librarian in Constanta thoughtfully concluded:

I think that we can do more; we can do better what we are already doing. We have to think about uniting our efforts. Then libraries will not be alone, they can build a network, not only information, but can do a services oriented network, on advocacy, on PR, on developing the projects with the NGOs, for minorities, you name it...when you are united you will be stronger because your voice will be heard.

I try to help my colleagues from other libraries in the counties to understand that they can change actually, they can change people, and they can change things by changing themselves, that this will change the other people around them, by forcing them to think about what can you do better, to build a strong library and to give better services for the community even without money.\(^\text{85}\)

**Library Impact on Inclusion**

Libraries occupy an increasingly important space for social and digital inclusion. In several interviews, librarians described the library as a “community hub” for cultural life. Often connected to the community center, many minority cultural organizations use the library as a space for holding meetings, preparing for festivals, and practicing performances. Migrants, ethnic minorities, and those without Internet access all rely on the services provided by libraries. The Biblionet Cross-European Impact Report suggests that “the traditionally ‘digitally excluded’ or ‘socially excluded’ groups such as the Roma, ethnic minorities, migrants, and those who finished their full time education at a relatively early age form a ‘core’ of regular Internet users, and are particularly reliant on the service.”\(^\text{86}\) While overall the percentage of patrons using the library specifically for personal access computers (PACs) is low (about 18% of library users and 3% of the total Romanian population) PAC users in Romania use the service frequently and rank its importance much higher than PAC users in other EU countries.\(^\text{87}\)

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85 Head librarian interviewed by Margaret Kavaras, Constanta County, Romania, July 8, 2013.  
86 Quick et al., “Cross-European survey.”  
87 Ibid, 20.
Ethnic Inclusion:

It is important to acknowledge that each library in Romania is unique and programming attempts to respond to each community’s size, ethnic makeup, and diverse information needs. Therefore, ethnic inclusion theoretically exists everywhere in that the library is envisioned as a welcoming environment to all persons, but variation exists in the extent of programs and materials offered to accommodate various minority needs. Overall, 68% of Romanian library users surveyed in the Cross European Impact Assessment described the library as “warm and welcoming and well over two-thirds asserted that it is “accessible to everyone.”\textsuperscript{88} In my research, specialized programming to attract minority members of the community often depended on the library size, budget, and whether minority groups expressed interest in services. In rural areas, library programming was usually minimal, budgets were small, and the library relied on “word of mouth” advertising and communication to determine what services to offer.\textsuperscript{89}

Targeted programs, software, and materials were most common in areas with larger minority populations. Constanța County, renowned for its multiculturalism, offers materials in local minority languages such as Tatar, Turkish, and Macedonian.\textsuperscript{90} These books were donated by minority organization in the community, who use the library to host cultural events. As one librarian in Ovidiu commune explained:

\begin{quote}
The library plays a role in supporting cultural groups. For example, there was a Tatar festival, where they offered lessons on Tatar traditional dance. The library here provides materials and helps these groups.\textsuperscript{91}
\end{quote}

It is interesting here to consider that when asked directly if the library creates any specific programs for minority members in the community, the librarian said no. However, the library supports and provides materials and space for minority group activities, programs, and festivals. Ethnic minorities often have their own groups, organizations, and outside funding support, and the library forms partnerships to facilitate their inclusion in the community, but does not directly provide and design programs for them.\textsuperscript{92} This sentiment commonly expressed was that the library is an open space for all to exhibit or share their culture, acting as a facilitator, rather than an active creator, of programs for minorities.

In other cases, such as in Galati County, there has been a recent influx of migrants, refugees and minority groups. Arabic speaking minorities, who have fled the wars in Afghanistan and Syria, now form a new group of library users in Galati. The library has responded by offering specific Arabic language materials, and adding

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid, 18.
\textsuperscript{89} B.A., Librarian interviewed by Margaret Kavaras, Covasna Commune Library, July 17, 2013.
\textsuperscript{90} Librarian interviewed by Margaret Kavaras, Ovidiu Commune Library, July 10, 2013.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{92} Biblionet Program Officer interviewed by Margaret Kavaras, Biblionet Headquarters, Bucharest, July 4, 2013.
Arabic labels and instructions near books, multimedia, and computers to accommodate the refugee population. A librarian described the situation as follows:

They [the refugees] came into the library--they heard about the library services, and they came for the access to the Internet. They also spend their free time here. When they first came, it was hard to communicate because we did not have a common language, but discovered that some spoke French, and that way we could understand.93

The Galati county library notably had a very well developed, well-funded branch, with multiple rooms with books, up to date periodicals such as Foreign Affairs magazine, The Economist, international newspapers, and a wealth of multimedia materials. There were several meeting rooms, a ‘theater’ with videos and DVDs as well as televisions for watching films, and an area specifically for listening to music. I conducted my interviews on a Sunday morning, and the library was markedly busy, each room filled with patrons. When I questioned how the Galati library sought to attract users, the librarian informed me that:

Many people seek out this library because it is very advanced. This library does outreach very well, they were one of the first libraries to receive Biblionet computers, and are a model library. They have a local TV channel that advertises library services, and information about the library is published in a local newsletter.94

When questioned about the relationship the Galati library has with the county government, she further explained that they share a good relationship and that the library has also had a long-time relationship with the Culture Department at the local press.95 For these reasons, funding is not an issue, and the library is able to both offer a wide variety of materials and services and advertise their programs. Perhaps the best evidence of the library’s successful advertising was the fact that many non-Romanian speaking refugees were aware of the library’s existence and came to use the services.

Digital Inclusion

Groups in Romania that are traditionally considered digitally excluded are minorities, migrant workers, and those in poor, often rural areas where ICT development lags behind urban centers.96 Internet use and dependence on libraries for PACs is higher in Romania’s rural areas, according the Cross-European Impact Report.97 For many users, the Internet at the library works better, or is faster than home access. As one student described, she often comes to the library to use the Internet because it is faster and more reliable than at home, where she shares the

93 M.P., Librarian interviewed by Margaret Kavaras, Galati County Library, July 14, 2013.
94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
96 Quick et al., “Cross-European survey.”
97 Ibid.
family computer with her parents and three sisters. In addition, the library is where those who cannot afford Internet access at home come to keep in touch with family and friends through email and Facebook, or to use the new technologies provided by Biblionet such as scanners, webcams, and printers. A librarian in Covasna commune described helping a patron scan CVs and photos to send to a Swiss company as part of any employment application.

Another librarian in a rural library described how the local school requires students to have a library card to ensure they have information access. Students, by far the largest population of library-users in Romania, depend on the library to study for their exams and apply to university. Digital access in libraries ensures that all students have the ability to use the Internet for educational purposes, potentially increasing opportunities for students in rural areas, and strengthening social cohesion across the country.

Interviewees described ways that digital access has helped engage the elderly, students, minorities, and the unemployed. Below is a chart compiled from library data collected by TNS comparing various age groups with their Internet use:

![Fig. 1: Areas of Library Use and Interests for Different Categories of Users. 17,397 total library users were surveyed, broken down as follows: Age 75+(93), Age 65-74 (228), Age 55-64 (1106), Age 25-54 (4534), Age 16-24 (3521), Age <16 (8126. Source: Biblionet Romania Program, Pop-Up Survey (TNS, 2012)](chart)

From the data, it is apparent that students primarily use the library for education, and the elderly (65+) form the largest group using the Internet for researching health

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99 Librarian interviewed by Margaret Kavaras, Covasna Commune Library, July 17, 2013.
100 Ibid.
101 Quick et al., “Cross-European survey.”
information. In addition, digital access to communicate with relatives and friends was important to all age groups. The Cross European Library Impact survey also found that Romanians rated the importance of digital access in libraries much higher than the EU average across all categories, including improving education, improving health, improving access to government information, and improving skills to find work.\(^{102}\)

In Busteni, I co-led a classroom discussion with library expert Hermina Anghelescu, who was teaching a course for rural librarians from around the country. During the discussion, I collected the opinions of various attendees on the role their libraries play in bridging the urban-rural ICT divide. One participant stated that in rural areas:

> [People] have limited income and have no means to pay for personal Internet access, so they see the public library as a means to communicate and stay in touch with their relatives who chose to go abroad to work. The public library keeps the connection between rural areas with those abroad and facilitates this communication because the Biblionet program has trained librarians.\(^{103}\)

Furthermore, public libraries in Romania are a key point of access for connecting rural citizens to EU funding, grants, and opportunities through various forms of e-government. Another participant described the role the library plays as follows:

> Since Romanians are eligible for all kinds of funding from the European Union, they have to apply online and the librarian serves as a facilitator to all of the requirements...so primarily in rural areas they [citizens] are eligible for agricultural funds, so this [EU] entity which oversees agricultural funds came and they trained librarians on how to access European funds and how to submit the application.\(^{104}\)

In this way, libraries can serve as leading institutions for facilitating EU integration through providing the necessary ICT access and trained librarians to connect citizens to EU opportunities. When asked if they believed library access had increased political engagement or a sense of political efficacy within their communities however, several participants stated that their rural libraries had not reached that level of maturity yet. One participant described, “libraries still need several years [of development] before that is feasible, but this is a goal, it is something we hope to do.”\(^{105}\)

**Policy Recommendations:**

1) **Continued financial support:**

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\(^{102}\) Quick et al., “Cross-European survey.”

\(^{103}\) Librarian interviewed by Margaret Kavaras, Busteni Training Workshop, Prahova County, Romania, July 5, 2013.

\(^{104}\) Librarian interviewed by Margaret Kavaras, Busteni Training Workshop, Prahova County, Romania, July 5, 2013.

\(^{105}\) Ibid.
Supporting the Romanian National Library Association (ANBPR) will be key to sustaining progress and strengthening library impact. The ANBPR administration and monies do not go through the government, and have made significant development improvements since 2008, which lends to its leadership legitimacy. The EU commission reports that Romania has “Poor administrative capacity that contributes to low absorption of EU funds.” However, funding and strengthening the independent ANBPR specifically, instead of providing more general grants to the Romanian government for development, is necessary for library-focused support. Financial support that directly funds libraries could help transition Romania towards greater digital and social inclusion within the EU.

2) Continue training of librarians:
The rapid advancements libraries made since receiving the 2008 Gates Foundation grant is encouraging, but maintaining growth will require time and continued effort. During the five-year program, many librarians received training in digital literacy, EU engagement, and information science. Continued training efforts and international partnerships are needed to offer dynamic librarian education courses that evolve with changes in digital technology. In addition, structured training in advocacy is necessary for librarians to further engage with local authorities.

3) Increasing the number of universities offering library science degrees:
Programs based on up-to-date library and information science are needed to increase the number of librarians employed in Romania, and standardize ICT procedures. Increasing course offerings at accredited institutions would also increase the legitimacy of the profession, and standardize procedures for advocacy, training, and development across Romania. This could also help ensure sustainable practices and long-term capacity building, and may increase the number of librarians employed in Romania.

4) De-politicize library directorships:
In order to strengthen the public libraries capacities to maintain the positive changes implemented through Biblionet, it is imperative that library directorships are earned through a merit-based system. This will require greater oversight in hiring practices. Still recovering from 42 years of the communist system, Romania’s libraries as centers of free reliable information and cultural inclusion are in a position to remain key players in development and should be given greater priority.

5) Expand capacity building and inclusion:
To further Romanian domestic development and European integration, the EU must play an active role in supporting public libraries. As shown in this research, libraries can play a vital role in closing the urban/rural resource divide by providing information and ICT access to remote rural areas. Greater funding and advocacy for these efforts is needed to strengthen the capacity of rural
commune libraries. Doing so is one way to meet the goals of the EU 2020 growth strategy for integration through poverty reduction, education, employment, and social inclusion.

**Conclusions:**

In conclusion, in order to continue social development and democratic consolidation in Romania via public library access, it is necessary to reflect back on the findings from this research and the successes and areas for improvement revealed by the Biblionet program’s impact. Overall, findings suggest that low rates of library use among the Romanian population can be attributed to:

- Lack of Funding (for materials, programs and librarian training)
- Political Challenges and Corruption (political appointees, not librarians managing the library budget)
- Public Mentality (public attitudes towards the quality and purpose of libraries/public services/learning institutions)
- Need for Advocacy/Attracting Users (the need for publicity about library services and what value they can offer to library users)

Despite remaining challenges to library-led development, those who use public libraries benefit from the services in innumerable ways. Interviewees stressed the vital role libraries play in their personal growth, education, health, opportunities, and success. Although many library users interviewed did not discuss the library in terms of its impact on the community as a whole, responses highlighted ways in which the library improves individual’s lives and therefore indirectly impact the community. Among both librarians and library users, most responses posited that attracting more users would garner more support, advocacy, and funding for the library. More materials and programs would also increase use and impact social development.

Libraries were found to contribute to development by being the only place community members could access the Internet for free. In addition, many found the public space valuable for collaborative learning, socialization, meeting space, and quiet study. Both librarians and library users unanimously stated that it would be damaging to the community if the library had to close, and cited the library as being a key resource for seeking employment, education, and health information. Additionally, most libraries were partnered with local cultural centers, minority organizations, and schools to collaborate and share resources and space for events. These close ties provide another important role for library-led development: acting as a hub of community life and cultural engagement.

Currently, the future of Romanian libraries remains unclear and securing library funding, training librarians, and building capacity all pose major obstacles to further growth. In the interview with Anghelescu, she summarized the achievements of the Biblionet program while emphasizing more lasting impacts might have been achievable through a more inclusive program approach. According to Anghelescu, IREX could have made a more significant effort to include Romanian librarians in leadership positions and spent valuable grant money in hiring some 40 Romanian employees from the NGO sector who had little knowledge of Romanian libraries.  

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106 Hermina Anghelescu interviewed by Margaret Kavaras, April 26, 2014.
In her view, the IREX project managers were not able to address sustainability issues or issues with Romanian libraries and ANBPR administrators, who were already deeply involved with the challenges facing libraries.

In order to avoid this “cookie-cutter” approach, the second lesson learned for improved implementation according to Dr. Anghelescu would have been to include trained librarians in the process. Only one of the IREX project managers was a librarian, and when the Romanian Biblionet program was presented at international conferences, IREX members traveled and spoke on behalf of the program’s success and impact, and ANBPR members were not included. This illustrates a challenge present in many international development initiatives: the need to form strong and equal partnerships between members and leaders from the local community, while navigating the organization’s protocol.

Anghelescu discussed this issue, deeming the short-term nature of the project the key factor that led IREX to treat it as a short-term business venture capable of revealing immediate success stories. While the program was, in her own words, “a god-send in many ways,” at a time when libraries did not have the resources to remain open through the financial crisis, there were still areas unaddressed at Biblionet’s conclusion. Without a well-structured exit strategy, the transfer of leadership from IREX managers to ANBPR members leaves questions of sustainability. The organization currently does not have a permanent headquarters, and is temporarily set up in borrowed space in the National Library of Romania’s administrative building. In the immediate future, the ANBPR will need to focus on maintaining the improvements made during the Biblionet program and strengthen their leadership capacity. Librarian training provided by Biblionet has helped inform the process for advocacy and illuminated the steps that are necessary for development to continue. Future aid and support for the organization would benefit from lessons learned during the Biblionet program, such as the need to empower local partners early on in decision making and implementation, and make greater use of Romanian library experts and consultants. It is clear that libraries are an important factor in Romanian societal development; but future success, it seems, will depend on strong leadership in order to maintain the improvements begun during the Biblionet program.

107 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
110 Ibid.
Greenland of Opportunity

Modeling the Prospects for Sustainable Resource Development in Greenland

Madeline Livingston

Introduction

Climate change has rarely ever offered consolation to the global economic environment. However, in the case of the Arctic state of Greenland, changes in the world’s overall climate have fundamentally transformed its economic prospects and hope of eventual independence from Denmark. The Arctic is warming twice as fast as the rest of the earth and evidencing the environmental degradation that temperature shifts can induce.¹ In Greenland, polar ice caps have been receding, a process that has led to the discovery of minerals, oil and gem deposits. The Arctic will become an epicenter of international trade by eventually supporting a Northern trade route that has been forecasted to rival the shipping and financial clout of Dubai and Singapore.² Furthermore, the Arctic holds 30% of the world’s undiscovered resources.³ The market relevance and ideological significance of natural resources in the Arctic and specifically Greenland must not be underestimated. However, Greenland will only be able to achieve economic independence from its former colonial ruler if resource exports stimulate economic growth and generate profits that remove the need for the annual Danish block grant⁴ to Greenland. Literature on resource abundant countries suggests that economic growth is often replaced by the “resource curse,” which refers to the negative effect that resource wealth has on institutions, educational quality, state-society linkages, and democratic governance. This analysis examines the relationship between resource development and democratic consolidation outcomes in Greenland.

Research Question

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² Borgenson, S., “The Coming Arctic Boom”, Foreign Affairs.
⁴ The Danish block grant transfer 3.2 billion DKK annually to fund government activities. This amount correlates to roughly 60% of Greenland’s gross national product (GNP) (Sørensen, 2008)
This thesis begs the question: can Greenland escape the resource curse? While the existing literature identifies several variables that may be affected by a resource shock, this thesis specifically strives to evaluate institutional quality, education and political culture. The variables are assessed based on their impact in moderating the negative effects of an exogenous shock. In light of these variables, this analysis makes an original contribution to the literature by applying the resource curse theory to the modern and unique case of Greenland. While various reports have assessed Greenland’s vulnerability to the Dutch Disease, this analysis is the first to address the decreases in democratic quality that Greenland’s young democracy may face as a result of a resource shock.

This research unpacks the causal chain between Greenland’s resource discovery and the resource curse by identifying institutions, education and political culture as channels for the effects on democratic governance. Through the application of the resource curse theory to the unique context of Greenland, this thesis posits that if Greenland’s institutions, education and political culture remain at current levels, Greenland will suffer from decreases in democratic effectiveness. This thesis identifies next steps that are feasible given specific anomalies within Greenlandic society such as a small, dispersed population and linguistic fractionalization. This paper concludes with recommendations for Greenland to become a robust democratic state based on similar cases in the state of Alaska, the emerging democracies of Panama and Colombia, Norway, Sweden and the Northern Canadian provinces. This thesis’ empirical research concludes that Greenland can take steps to avoid the resource curse by bolstering institutional capacity to provide extensive checks and balances on Greenlandic politicians. As of 2014, Greenland has nearly 4 years until extraction of mineral resources can begin. High initial levels of governance and strong checks and balances are crucial to avoiding the resource curse. During the next four years, this thesis proposes that Greenland focus on strengthening institutions through improvements in educational attainment and increased political participation in order to control the pace of resource development and preserve democracy in Greenland.

**Methodology**

This thesis focuses on how the exogenous shock of a resource windfall will affect democratic effectiveness through the causal mechanisms of institutional quality, education and political culture in Greenland. This research utilizes the model below to conceptualize the relationship between the independent variable, a resource shock and the dependent variable, democratic governance.
To test this model’s implications for Greenland, the research design utilizes qualitative analysis in the form of a political participation survey, a focus group and various interviews with citizens, government officials and academic experts.

**Limitations**

This thesis must address limitations in the breadth of the analysis and recommendations. The bulk of this research was completed in Copenhagen, Denmark, and the primary language of conversation was English. The students and citizens interviewed were university-educated Greenlanders, which in the words of one interviewee, is not the norm. Therefore, this research is biased by the scope of interviewees available and lacks the viewpoint of less educated and older Greenlanders. These Greenlandic citizens tend to have different opinions than the young, highly educated Greenlanders regarding natural resources and the Greenlandic relationship with Denmark.

**Contribution to the Scholarship on Greenland**

Although Greenland operates under independent rule, data collected in Denmark are often meant to represent Greenland. This approach negates the fact that Denmark and Greenland are separate entities with variances in population, political culture, economic basis, and educational quality. The dearth of data on Greenland, independent from Denmark, necessitates the generation of original qualitative research on public opinion and perceptions of institutional capacity, educational quality and political participation.

**Theoretical Background on the Resource Curse and Causal Mechanisms**

*Unpacking the Link between the Resource Curse and Democracy*

This thesis’ supposition that natural resources hinder democracy originates from the seminal hypothesis that states that rising income, if linked to oil wealth, will shrink or negate the effect on rising democracy levels. The “oil hinders democracy” hypothesis explores causality in the relationship between oil exports and democracy by identifying three separate effects: the rentier effect, the repression effect and the modernization effect. This theoretical background is meant to inform this thesis’ analysis of Greenland’s prospects for resource development. Greenland’s natural resource abundance is concentrated in rare earth minerals and thus, it is important to note that the “oil hinders democracy” hypothesis only finds evidence for the presence of the rentier effect in mineral-rich countries. In regard to democratic effectiveness, the rentier effect refers to the tendency of resource-rich states to disable state-society linkages and suppress demands for democratic governance.

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are in the “infancy of statehood become rentier states.” Many scholars of the resource curse believe that mineral rich states eventually succumb to the “rentier state,” which refers to the non-necessity of mineral rich states to collect taxes from the population. In place of taxes, the rentier state maintains control over the population by creating economic dependencies through their authority to redistribute natural resources rents to the population.

In states that are developing political institutions while simultaneously developing the natural resource industry, there is the risk that corruption will distort the political institutions. Political and economic elites benefit from the dearth of institutional restraints on corruption, and thus do not have incentives to “reform, improve infrastructure, or even establish a well functioning bureaucracy.” States that are still consolidating democratic traditions face the erosion of institutional quality upon a resource windfall. Resource windfalls negatively impact democratic consolidation by distorting the political incentives to establish or improve democratic institutions that control corruption and grant oversight to citizens.

In order to suppress demands for public oversight and democratic governance, rentier states limit group formation and inhibit political coordination goods. The literature of strategic coordination originates from research on why economic growth is not always accompanied by political liberalization. Scholars track the use of strategic coordination by autocrats who wish to repress political opposition in order to remain in power during periods of economic growth. In order to both maintain economic growth and prevent opposition groups from forming, the government raises the cost of political coordination goods without raising the cost of economic coordination goods. “Political coordination goods” refers to public goods that “affect the ability of political opponents to coordinate but have little impact on economic growth.” These goods include: political rights, human rights, press freedom, and accessible higher education. When governments limit these goods, they successfully maintain an autocratic or illiberal democratic state. States that utilize strategic coordination inhibit the formation of opposition groups, and especially successful when limiting the freedom of the media.

Additional scholarship on resource shocks and democracy has detailed the importance of strong checks and balances on the government in order to promote citizen voice and accountability as well to prevent corruption. Scholars elaborate on

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12 Ibid.
13 Bueno de Mesquita, B., Downs, G. “Development and Democracy.” Foreign Affairs 84.5.2005
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
the Ross (2001) “oil hinders democracy” hypothesis by testing the extent to which natural resource rents erode mechanisms for public scrutiny. The scholars find that natural resource rents gradually erode public scrutiny and may do so through the state decision to lower tax rates on citizens. The research on public scrutiny concludes that states with large resource rents “need a distinctive democracy” that is particularly strong on checks and balances. In resource rich states, institutions play a pivotal role in maintaining the quality of democracy. In effective democracies, institutions often have the “strong checks and balances” needed to withstand political incentives that will harm democratic quality. However, in young democracies, institutions may have less established traditions of preventing corruption, enforcing the rule of law, providing regulatory oversight, and promoting accountability and voice.

Institutions and the Resource Curse

Institutional quality is a dynamic variable in analyzing the presence of the resource curse in countries. Institutions serve as a mechanism to facilitate the relationship between citizens and their government. In the context of this analysis, institutions are defined as, “the rules of the game in society” or the “humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction” and “structure incentives in human exchange, whether political, social, or economic.” This thesis is primarily concerned with government, fiscal, and supervisory institutions that play a role in natural resource management and decision-making.

In the literature, decreases in institutional quality are seen as a negative outcome of the resource curse. However, many scholars actually believe that the occurrence of the resource curse is dependent on how robust a country’s institutions are upon discovering natural resources. These scholars posit that a state’s initial levels of institutional quality serve as a determinant of the resource curse. In states with low institutional quality, incentives do not exist for the creation of more robust political institutions, as these institutions will regulate the power of politicians, the allocation of resource rents to supporters, and, the formation of opposition. Simply

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19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., 18.
25 Ross, “Does Oil Hinder Democracy?”
put, an institution either provides incentives for politicians “to take or produce.”

“Taking” is equivalent to rent seeking, which will weaken institutions over time.

The initial levels of institutional quality determine the capacity of institutions to prevent rent-seeking and maintain control over corruption. Additional literature expands upon the role of institutional quality levels prior to resource shocks. Scholars find that positive long-term effects of resource wealth are dependent on the initial level of governance. The scholarly consensus clearly identifies institutional quality as the most important factor in assessing a country’s prospects in regards to the resource curse as “the countries that have escaped the resource curse and those that have not divide themselves into two distinct groups as regards institutional quality.” High initial levels of institutional quality are essential to maintaining democratic effectiveness during resource extraction, as political institutions are responsible for upholding checks and balances and mechanisms for public scrutiny. Within the framework of this research on Greenland, institutions are assessed based on the extent to which they currently discourage incentives to rent-seek and enable citizens to provide input into natural resource decisions. Literature on democratic institutions underscores the importance of education in increasing the ability of citizens to provide checks and balances on the government and contribute to a more effective democracy.

Education and the Resource Curse

Education in resource-rich states can be examined as a mechanism for ensuring democratic governance as rising education levels contribute to a highly specialized and informed public. However, research on education levels in resource-rich states concludes that resource shocks often have a negative relationship with education and human capital accumulation. The premier scholars of this argument highlight the role of the Dutch Disease in contracting the need for labor in the manufacturing sector. While an economic analysis of education expenditures in resource-rich countries is outside the scope of this thesis, an understanding of the Dutch disease’s impact on the education system is crucial to understanding how economic policies may negatively impact democratic functioning. As the demand for higher education declines in resource-rich countries due to contraction in the labor market, spending on education will decrease.

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29 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 Gylfason, 5.
33 Ibid.
The literature posits that resource rich countries tend to see decreases in secondary and tertiary education spending, which contributes to the slow economic growth aspect of the resource curse. While this argument may become relevant upon extraction, this thesis focuses on the impact that low educational quality has on Greenlandic democracy currently. Low levels of educational attainment and quality negatively impact democratic functioning by reducing the ability of citizens to bargain with political elites and provide public scrutiny. Research on modernization and economic development highlights the role of rising education levels and rising occupational specialization in producing democratic outcomes. Further research on education and human capital accumulation in resource rich states indicates that for low levels of democracy, human capital depends negatively on natural resources and for high levels of democracy the relationship is reversed. The scholars conclude that in non-democratic countries, natural resources are detrimental to education whereas in democratic countries, natural resource wealth enhances education. This theoretical overview highlights the importance of democratic institutions in upholding education and producing informed citizens to provide public scrutiny.

**Political Culture and the Resource Curse**

The state focus on education ultimately determines how robust civic engagement is within society and ensures that democratic values are upheld in the midst of a resource shock. In the context of this thesis, political culture aims to represent how citizens contribute to the political functioning of society. Political participation allows for citizens to provide checks and balances on governance that are “corrective by revealing needs.” Additionally, scholars have highlighted the role of political participation in “maintaining political vigilance among its citizens’ and “improving the quality of democracy.” A “mutually-supportive” relationship between democratic governments and their citizens functions by the consent of the governed, which is achieved through civic engagement.

Furthermore, scholars agree that in addition to increasing institutional capacity, it is essential to build an informed civil society in order to avoid the resource curse, as there is "no substitute for building a critical mass of informed citizens." This research argues that it is essential to build a multidisciplinary "informed elite of ministers, civil servants, business people and civil society organizations." However, the quality of political participation is dependent on the

35 Ibid., 22.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
sophistication of the electorate. This theoretical background on the relationship between a resource shock and democratic consolidation, and the causal mechanisms of institutions, education and political culture allows for this thesis to model the prospects for resource development in Greenland.

Analysis of Greenland

This analysis proposes that Greenland is highly susceptible to the political resource curse. While existing analyses have examined the likelihood that Greenland will suffer from the Dutch Disease, this research differs in its original focus on the observed effects of resource development on democratic consolidation and democratic legitimacy in Greenland. The literature on the resource curse posits that institutional quality or the initial level of governance upon the time of a resource shock is a determinant of whether the resource curse will occur. This thesis assesses the role that institutions, education and political culture play in moderating incentives for political elites to rent-seek or engage in non-transparent behavior following the discovery of natural resources in Greenland.

Institutions & Governance in Greenland

Institutional quality is the most significant determining factor in predicting whether resource wealth inflows will negatively alter democracy within Greenland. As stated, this qualitative study concludes that Greenlandic institutions do not currently have the capacity or structures needed to prevent corruption, thus stalling the democratic maturation process. As mineral extraction has not yet begun in Greenland, this research analyzes the state of institutions in their initial conditions. The initial conditions of institutional quality are most crucial in avoiding the resource curse, and provide a benchmark for later research on the quality of institutions upon vast inflows of wealth.

Struggles in Greenlandic Governance: Deficits in Institutional Capacity & Institutional Memory

Greenlandic political and regulatory institutions suffer from the small size of the population, as well as the even smaller size of the university-educated population. In the political participation survey, participants were asked how they expected their life to be impacted by natural resource production. One participant responded, “It will probably make me wealthy as I am one of the few with knowledge and education.” This mindset reflects how the low levels of education in Greenland contribute to the formation of a small group of political elites that stand to gain from natural resources.

Additionally, the participant’s position as “one of the few” refers to the dearth of qualified labor for roles within government institutions. This sentiment was echoed

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42 Ibid.
43 The Greenlandic Government, Parliament, the media (state-owned), the Bureau of Mineral and Petroleum
44 Survey Respondent, surveyed by Madeleine Livingston via SurveyMonkey, 14 March 2014.
in an interview with a judge in Greenland, who mentioned that, “It is very hard to have a sustainable number of people that are actually involved in drafting policies and strategies.” The judge continued to comment that, “Institutional memory is short…it is very difficult for the public service to act in that environment. That’s why the public service is weak, civil society is weak, and the media is weak.” Within the government, staff turnover is very high and there is a lack of continuity within government agencies, making it hard to assure consistency within state practices. The judge as well as other interviewees cited problems with turnover as one of the primary causes of weakness within political institutions.

Institutional capacity deficits affect the ability of Greenlandic institutions to govern natural resources and enact democratic processes to the fullest extent. Currently, the Bureau of Mineral and Petroleum (BMP) is the primary institution governing natural resources. Past reports on Greenlandic institutions have criticized for BMP “wearing too many hats.” Their approach to natural resource governance involves the business-getting aspect and the preparation of impact assessments. Thus, they are simultaneously responsible for promoting growth in and regulating the natural resource industry. One interviewee commented that, “it is going to be a challenge to ensure enforcement of the regulations.” The enforcement problem that has resulted from a dearth of qualified workers highlights the necessity of watchdog organizations. In addition to the shortage of employees, legislation is complex and difficult to understand, which presents for Greenlandic citizens in comprehending public information and arguments in public debates. These factors present challenges to transparency and accountability in the Greenlandic state. The low levels of institutional quality, given high turnover rates and minimal skilled workers, places Greenland at risk for developing the resource curse as institutions may not have the ability to exert control over corruption and enforce legalized accountability and transparency mechanisms.

The “Zig-Zag Policy” Course: Twisted Politics & the Political Elite

In this thesis, a qualitative examination of how resource wealth will impact democratic consolidation in Greenland hinges on an understanding of the legal and institutional capacity for political institutions to control corruption. An analysis of legislation and institutional capacity concludes that while the legal framework exists, institutions cannot always carry out the processes given a deficit in qualified employees and institutional memory. The second part of the examination must focus on the presence of corruption in society, and the likelihood that corruption will occur once resource extraction begins.

Corruption was a topic of discussion in the interviews and focus group completed for this thesis. In these interviews, all but one interviewee acknowledged

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45 Judge Interviewee, interviewed by Madeleine Livingston, 10 March 2014.
46 Ibid.
48 Student Interviewee, interviewed by Madeleine Livingston, 8 March 2014.
49 The Nordic Consulting Group, 1.
the presence of corruption. However, it is important to note that in Greenland, corruption is not seen as inherently criminal but rather, as “hard to avoid.” Given that Greenland consists of a small, interconnected society, most people have a family member or close friend who holds a position in a political or regulatory institution. Additionally, an economist interviewed, stated,

“The very fact that the distance between politicians and those who are regulated by laws put in place by politicians is very short...there are various means through which you can enrich yourself if you have the right connections. There is a large part of society that is entirely unconnected to these possible benefits. The benefits only accrue to a small class in Greenland, the ruling class.”

The interview provided insight on the fact that corruption in Greenland revolves around nepotism, and the ability of the political elite (“the ruling class”) to gain from having the right connections. The expert and consultant on Greenland had similar sentiments, and commented that in her experiences running anti-corruption workshops, she consistently found that most participants did not see nepotism as inherently wrong. She found that this mentality differs between the smaller settlements and the capital city of Nuuk, which has a high concentration of secondary school and university-educated constituents.

The “zig zag” policy path refers to how the Greenlandic ruling class of politicians and business managers twist “sensible policy” paths to “undertake legislation, which will not hurt those people that they are tied to.” This sense of control or influence implies that political incentives become policy outcomes, regardless of if they are corrupt. Organizations like Transparency International have been initiated in Greenland in order to provide a watchdog for corruption in the government. In an interview with the expert and consultant on Greenland, she described the process of establishing Transparency International in Greenland. She specifically reflected on the decision to make the organization Transparency International as opposed to the Greenland Anti-Corruption agency. She explained that,

“If it was not upheld by international standards, it would have been subject to culture and changes based on ‘this is how we do it in Greenland.’ Her experience with government resistance to anti-corruption organizations led to a discussion of how relations have become “increasingly hostile” between the Greenlandic government and Transparency International. She commented on the abundance of “scandals” in the past months in regards to natural resource decision-making, specifically the vote on uranium. Her reflections on how tensions have increased between Transparency International, the extractions ministry (BMP), and the government over the past few

50 Expert Interviewee, interviewed by Madeleine Livingston, 13 March 2014.
51 Ibid.
52 Expert and Consultant Interviewee, interviewed by Madeleine Livingston, 10 March 2014
53 Ibid.
54 Expert Interviewee, interviewed by Madeleine Livingston, 13 March 2014.
55 Expert and Consultant Interviewee, interviewed by Madeleine Livingston, 10 March 2014.
56 Ibid.
months, given an increase in scandals, convey a decrease in political interest in transparency, credibility, and accountability.

In addition to evidence on the existence of corruption in Greenlandic society, this thesis seeks to evaluate examples of corruption, and how they may impact democratic effectiveness in Greenland. In Greenland, corruption can be analyzed as relates to the nepotism within the government, housing privileges, and even resource wealth. Aleqa Hammond, Greenland’s current head of state, recently came under scrutiny when her partner assumed the role of personal adviser to the head of Siumut party in Greenland. Although Ms. Hammond denies accusations of nepotism, the appointment has resulted in upheaval within the Siumut party, causing one high-ranking Siumut leader to resign. In an interview with a Greenlandic student in Denmark, the student commented that this was by no means a coincidence as her partner was unqualified for the position. While this act of nepotism is not specifically related to natural resources, it is important to note that nepotism is a polarizing issue as citizens in the capital city of Nuuk tend to see this as wrong whereas, “citizens from smaller settlements have a different perspective of right and wrong.” Additionally, nepotism occurs throughout state-owned companies as well where board members from the elite political and economic class appoint themselves to various positions and “earn salaries that are completely out of kilter” with the rest of society.

Political elites tend to use their economic and political clout to influence sectors of societies such as public housing. Although Greenland is the world’s largest island, land is scarce due to limited buildable land, and thus, housing is often hard to find. The economist interviewed for this research specifically highlighted rampant corruption within the housing industry as an example of benefits accruing to the political elite. In his research, he found that “if you rank people according to their incomes and draw a line indicating the net subsidies for housing, they (the political and economic elite) were receiving incredibly large subsidies.” In addition to these benefits, the elites gain from access to information. To attract Danes, the government invested in a series of houses and apartments, and eventually ended up selling them. The politicians were the first to know that these were going on the market and bought them at very low prices. While these examples are less extreme, the housing sector evidences that the political and economic elite benefit from their position and utilize information asymmetry among the population to achieve economics gains.

The precedent of corruption involving economic and political gains for elites leads to the conclusion that corruption is likely to occur in the natural resource industry. One interviewee indicated that she had heard of politicians being given access to drill oil. Even if this example does not come to fruition or is false, her

58 Student Interviewee, interviewed by Madeleine Livingston, 8 March 2014.
59 Ibid.
60 Expert Interviewee, interviewed by Madeleine Livingston, 13 March 2014
61 Expert Interviewee, interviewed by Madeleine Livingston, 13 March 2014.
62 Student Interviewee, interviewed by Madeleine Livingston, 8 March 2014.
perception of corrupt behavior within the government is indicative of institutional trust. Perception of corruption within the political sphere of Greenland weakens the bond between “collective decision-making and people’s power to influence decisions through speaking and voting, which defines democracy.” Additionally, these examples of corruption highlight the dearth of accountability mechanisms that currently exist. The Greenlandic populace’s ability to hold political figures accountable reflects their low control of power and the fragile civil society within Greenland. Greenland needs particularly strong checks and balances in order to avoid corruption within the government. However, as Greenland is a young democracy, these accountability measures are often undersupplied. This thesis posits that a resource shock will negatively impact the quality of democracy as institutions and the current populace does not currently have corruption in control.

“Missing Elements:” Democratic Maturity & Instances of Democratic Failure

This qualitative research evidences that institutions are weak and may not have the capacity to restrain political elites and provide checks and balances on government decision-making. As this thesis seeks to examine the effects that the resource curse will have on democratic effectiveness, it is necessary to assess failures in democracy or instances of weak democratic tradition as related to natural resource decision-making. When asked about democracy in Greenland, one interviewee poignantly stated, “If you look at democracy in itself, you have to have certain things in society to even have democracy. I am not even sure we have all these things or that you can consider us democratic.”

In discussing the missing elements of democracy in Greenland, she specifically focuses on how active the citizens and how transparent political decision-making is. She sheds light on the high voter turnout in Greenland by mentioned that a lot of people vote but that there is dissonance between what the politicians are doing and what people are hearing. Another interviewee echoed these sentiments and specifically mentioned the current government’s resolve to “not going by any democratic rules.” This thesis assesses several cases in order to provide evidence of “missing parts” in democratic governance in Greenland in regards to natural resources.

In past decisions on resource development, the Greenlandic government has engaged in negotiations and voting procedures that lacked transparency. In 2012, Transparency International prepared a research report on public integrity in order to analyze the extent to which the current system can resist the pressures of corruption. This report concluded that the lack of distance between officials of the public administration and citizens could have negative consequences for the impartiality of the Greenlandic government. Additionally, the report highlighted

63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 Expert and Consultant Interviewee, interviewed by Madeleine Livingston, 10 March 2014
66 The Nordic Consulting Group, 6.
67 Ibid., 15.
that decisions on large commercial projects were “rushed through without stakeholders getting a real opportunity to be heard in the process.”

Previous dealings with Alcoa that did not uphold an inclusive decision-making and were not well researched were specifically referenced. While the report comments that the government has improved the decision-making process, interviewees for this thesis commented that rushed decisions were a recurring problem, especially in regards to oil and mineral prospecting.

In addition to “rushed decision-making,” the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) have criticized the Greenlandic government for deficits in public discussion. The report entitled “Public Involvement in Greenland” characterized Greenland as being too “pro-business.”

This ICC-WWF report emphasized that the Greenlandic government consistently acts as though the Greenlandic people are “100% behind big oil and big mining money.”

The Danish Secretary-General of the WWF commented that there have been very few public debates in which the proceedings were not rushed and there was enough time for questions. While the report is critical of the Greenlandic government, the Secretary-General does acknowledge the difficulty of organizing public debate in a young democracy, notwithstanding a democracy that is also geographically and linguistically complex.

Following the publication of the public integrity report and the joint ICC-WWF report, Greenlandic authorities voted to lift the ban on uranium mining with mixed societal approval. Specifically, a member of the Greenlandic parliament referred to the recent lifting of the uranium ban as a “democratic failure.” This vote represented both a political and ideological shift from the government of Denmark and served to assert Greenland’s right to their resources. However, this vote also showcased an alarming lack of democratic decision-making. During the first reading of the proposal, coalition parties decided to push the vote to repeal the zero-tolerance policy through with minimal involvement by the parliament and the general public.

Interviewees for this analysis referred to the public debates leading up the uranium decision as a “joke.” One interviewee commented that “anyone in Greenland was sure that the debate was not important,” acknowledging that citizen voice has no place in political decision-making.

This decision effectively granted the government the full “power to license corporations to mine and export uranium, without the involvement of parliament, and without further public involvement.” This failure to grant the people of Greenland full participation in making a decision that will likely change their country

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68 Ibid., 41.
69 The Nordic Consulting Group.
71 Weaver, R. “Greenland failing to inform public about large projects” 2013. Arctic Journal.
72 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
75 Expert and Consultant Interviewee, interviewed by Madeleine Livingston, 10 March 2014.
76 Olsvig.
dramatically evidences a failure of to allow for collective decision-making. The uranium decision also evidenced the weakness of certain democratic political processes within Greenland. In assessing the democratic legitimacy of public hearings on uranium, one interviewee commented,

“Certain processes are not being upheld. I think I have been to a number of hearing processes and many have been a complete joke. This is something about democratic maturity. How do you handle deviant opinions that are not what you want to get? If we never go back to them before the final decision then of course there is a gap in expectation. If we haven’t spoken together in that process before I see your decision, then I feel like I am not being listened to. There is a lack of feedback mechanisms in the hearing process.”

Her analysis of public hearings and the dearth of feedback mechanisms indicates that Greenland’s political processes are not democratically mature and thus, may be vulnerable to decreases in quality during natural resource decision-making.

Furthermore, this interviewee highlights the difficulty of managing deviant opinions in a young democracy. Additional examples of democratic failure revolve around instances of Greenland intentionally or unintentionally limiting political coordination goods by cutting funding to the national broadcasting in Greenland (KNR) and the ICC. In the case of KNR, funding was cut because the radio and television programming was not pro-government enough. While the press in Greenland is considered to be free and unregulated, the ability of the government to determine the bandwidth of the media by decreasing its budget is an example of limiting political coordination goods.

Following the uranium vote, the government announced an 80% budget cut for the ICC as of November 2013. These cuts are so radical that recent reports indicate that the ICC will most likely need to shutdown in Greenland by 2018. The Greenlandic government’s decision to cut funding negates the importance of the ICC in civil society. While the official response from the government indicated that budget cuts were made to improve waiting lists in hospitals throughout Greenland, the chair of the WWF commented that, “it is a sign of a strong democracy – even if they sometimes take positions that are contrary to the government’s view.” This decision may result in the complete removal of the Greenlandic chapter of the ICC, an organization dedicated to promoting Inuit rights. These decisions will further restrain Greenlandic civil society from working as a watchdog and counterweight to Greenlandic political decision-making. The Greenlandic government’s oil and mineral strategy forms the final example of democratic failure and democratic immaturity. One interviewee that worked extensively on the report entitled “To the Benefit of Greenland,” highlighted the poor condition of the Greenlandic strategy. He began with an anecdote on how the Greenlandic government learned of the “Benefit” report and then proceeded to push through the oil and mineral strategy only a day prior to the publication of the “Benefit” report. The interviewee commented

77 Expert and Consultant Interviewee, interviewed by Madeleine Livingston, 10 March 2014.
78 Ibid.
79 McGwin.
80 Expert Interviewee, interviewed by Madeleine Livingston, 13 March 2014.
that the production of the strategy was “a very undemocratic” and “rushed” process as the strategy then had a three-week period of hearings before it was made final. He commented on the irony of how rushed it was and that it is now the basis for moving forward.\footnote{Ibid.}

Additionally, as an economist, the interviewee was particularly critical of the strategy’s plan for managing revenue and regulation of the existing sovereign wealth fund. Although he had consulted with the government various times on the importance of increasing the regulation on the sovereign wealth fund, there was only a brief mention of a fund within the strategy for oils and minerals.\footnote{Ibid.} The strategy referred to taxation of natural resources but did not include where the revenue was actually going. He concluded that the government must be in charge of appropriating the funds. In essence, he states that, “they basically control themselves, which is never good. They shouldn't have the final say. It should be a broad consensus in parliament that should decide how to do this.”\footnote{Ibid.} These cases of democratic failure and immaturity are specific to natural resource decision-making, and thus may indicate a precedent for further decision-making in Greenland. This analysis of institutions in Greenland concludes that institutions do not currently have the capacity to prevent a resource shock from having further negative effects on democratic legitimacy.

**Education & the Resource Curse**

*The Crucial Link: Democracy, Education, and an Informed Electorate*

This research focuses on determining whether Greenland can avoid the resource curse, and more specific to this section, to what extent may education play a role in preventing a resource shock from decreasing democratic effectiveness in Greenland? In interviews, the Greenlandic education system consistently arose as the most crucial area of weakness in society. As the proverbial Achilles heel, the education system proves to be a major hindrance in building institutional capacity, creating effective civil society institutions, and maintaining an informed electorate. Educational attainment remains systematically low in Greenland because there is not a robust tradition of education in Greenlandic society.\footnote{Ibid.} According to the literature, a state with an educated and informed electorate is able to provide public scrutiny and provide a form of opposition to political elites. The Greenlandic education system does not adequately prepare all Greenlandic citizens to provide public scrutiny and to be a formidable opposition group to the government. Currently about half of the Greenlandic society has completed secondary school and these citizens are disproportionately located in Nuuk and other large cities as opposed to small settlements. This educational disparity creates a situation in which the citizens that

\footnote{Ibid.}

\footnote{Ibid.}

\footnote{Ibid.}

may be most affected by the mining developments in Greenland are not able to provide adequate public oversight given the difference between traditional Greenlandic and the Greenlandic spoken in political fora.

Additionally, although scholars posit that democratic countries do not experience a decrease in education or human capital accumulation due to a resource shock, Greenland is a young democracy and may not have consolidated to the point of avoiding the negative impact on the educational system.\textsuperscript{85} If resource wealth negatively affects the education system, it may be related to the job opportunities that will be created for mineral resources. The skill level necessary for mining is relatively low and thus, human capital accumulation in Greenland probably will not expand.\textsuperscript{86} In speaking with an interviewee regarding next steps for Greenland as resource extraction begins, she stated,

“No one knows what it takes. A good question that Greenland hasn’t taken a stand on is – what do we see Greenlanders doing? Working mines? Being geologists? Working in the office? Working in the support industry? Do we see them being on oil rigs? Very different things to educate people for. The buzzword is education and competency building. Of course there is some basic skills that you can educate people to do, you can learn them to speak English, you can generally increase their skills in reading and writing. But what are you actually engineering people to do?\textsuperscript{87}

Her comment highlights the current state of indecision regarding employment in the natural resource industry in Greenland. Her classification of education and competency building as development buzzwords that provide limited direction convey the difficulty of creating an action plan for Greenland’s educational improvements. This analysis of education concludes that Greenland’s current education system does not adequately prepare Greenlandic citizens to participate fully in providing public scrutiny and preventing decreases in democratic effectiveness. Higher levels of educational attainment and perceived educational quality are necessary in order for Greenlandic citizens to actively participate in public debate and demand accountability from the government.

**Political Culture in Greenland**

*Public Scrutiny and the Silent Majority*

In previous research on public integrity in Greenland, the Greenlandic political culture has been characterized as “silent,” “respectful of authority,” and “close-knit.”\textsuperscript{88} Throughout the interviews completed for this analysis, the first two terms were contested by interviewees and the latter was always accepted. The public integrity report evidences that the small size and close-knit environment of Greenlandic society makes it susceptible to corruption and political patronage due to

\textsuperscript{85} Cabrales, A., & Hauk, E.
\textsuperscript{87} Expert and consultant interviewee, interviewed by M. Livingston, 10 March 2014.
\textsuperscript{88} The Nordic Consulting Group, 21.
lack of separation between citizens and the public administration. Additionally, the report highlights the paucity of political traditions for “holding public servants and politicians accountable.”

Greenland’s cultural characteristics, as identified by this integrity report, place the state in a uniquely difficult position for maintaining democratic legitimacy. While voter turnout is high at 72%, there is a dearth of research that indicates how informed the electorate is regarding natural resource activity in Greenland.

In assessing political culture in Greenland, regional differences must be taken into account. Throughout interviews, the consensus was that a small group of people, primarily from Nuuk, are politically active and are very critical, especially on the internet. One interviewee refers to the large group that remains silent in comparison to the politically-active group in Nuuk as the “silent majority.” She explained that this grouping also accounts for Transparency International’s public integrity report’s conclusion that the Greenlandic political culture is characterized by silence. In elaborating on the silent majority, this interviewee explained the general fear of criticism in the population. While she did note that there is a limited group of politically active Greenlanders, she focused her attention on the behavior of the large group that “nods and likes on Facebook sometimes but is not open about their opinions” within the public sphere. She commented that after teaching in Greenland and living there for many years, some of the most “vocal in their criticism, would never dare say so.” She further stated that criticizing the government openly is “dangerous” and “you think about what you say” as almost “all companies are state-owned and many people work in institutions that have state funding.”

To clarify her point, she elaborates on the dependence of the private sector on the public sector in Greenland by stating, “85% of spending in Greenland is government and if not spent by the government, it is spent by government owned company.”

Her commentary reveals the need of both individuals and private companies to remain on friendly terms with the government. In her description, criticism of the government would result in not being in business. She additionally added that Transparency International challenges the conventions of Greenlandic society to a degree because the chair of TI works as an independent private lawyer and thus, his livelihood is not dependent upon the current government. However, the chief executive officer of Air Greenland expresses the more common predicament by stating that, “it is difficult to criticize your owner, main customer and the one who appoints your board.” In elucidating government repercussions for public scrutiny or criticism, the interviewee specifically references the example of the government

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89 Ibid., 10.
90 Public Official Interviewee, interviewed by Madeleine Livingston, 21 Feb 2014; Student Interviewee, interviewed by Madeleine Livingston, 8 March 2014; Expert and Consultant Interviewee, interviewed by Madeleine Livingston, 10 March 2014.
91 Expert and Consultant Interviewee, interviewed by Madeleine Livingston, 10 March 2014.
92 Ibid.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
97 The Nordic Consulting Group, 20.
cutting funding to the national television because they weren’t pro-government enough.  

Research on public scrutiny and the resource curse highlights the role of the media in providing an outlet for criticism of the government decision-making. While there is widespread access to media and complete freedom of the press in Greenland, financial resources, which are determined by the government, are often prohibitive to avenues of media scrutiny such as investigative research. The media is not independent of the government and therefore, does not serve as a space for voicing public scrutiny or obtaining impartial information. Greenland has various mechanisms that “make it less obvious for people to speak out.” Greenlandic citizens tend to “self-censor” due to their “dependency on the state for employment and housing,” which explains why political criticism is often confined to the private sphere. This thesis’ qualitative analysis of public scrutiny in Greenland concludes that the Greenlandic political culture does not support public scrutiny as qualitative data indicates that only a small portion of total society is openly critical of the Greenlandic politicians given fear of repercussion by the government.

The Language Divide & Nationalistic Tendencies

In the past year, independence rhetoric has evolved into nationalistic sentiments regarding the Greenlandic language. Many interviewees cited the rise of an “us vs. them” mentality in Greenlandic politics. Linguistic fractionalization in Greenland is an element of the political culture as the language shapes the structure of political debate and who is able to participate. The language divide contributes to difficulty in achieving access to information regarding natural resources. Linguistic fractionalization in Greenlandic society also poses a barrier to open debate in Greenland. Research highlights the vast differences between spoken Greenlandic and the Greenlandic used in bureaucratic settings. This linguistic variance leads to confusion in public debates and inhibits understanding.

Recent nationalistic tendencies within the government led the economist interviewed to also comment that, “the winds are blowing in a direction of you will not be accepted if you do not speak Greenlandic.” If this sentiment is realized, Greenland would face major communication difficulties as the bureaucracy in Greenland is mainly Danish-speaking, whereas, political life is Greenlandic-speaking. However, as mentioned, many Greenlandic-speakers have difficulty understanding the political speech of Greenlandic politicians as they oftentimes use language and terminology that is not part of spoken Greenlandic. Throughout the interviews for this thesis, Greenlandic citizens and experts alike commented on the emotional nature of the language “issue” in Greenland. However, in this analysis, linguistic fractionalization takes a more politically salient role in its ability to

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98 Expert and Consultant Interviewee, interviewed by Madeleine Livingston, 10 March 2014
99 Collier & Hoeffler.
100 Holmgren & Ronnle, 70-71.
101 Ibid., 69.
102 Focus Group Participants, interviewed by Madeleine Livingston, 8 March 2014.
103 Expert Interviewee, interviewed by Madeleine Livingston, 13 March 2014.
negatively impact public debates and access to information among Greenlandic citizens.

**Characteristics of Political Participation in Greenland: Generational Rifts, People Fighting and Passive Mentalities**

In addition to the divisiveness of language in Greenlandic society, generational and cultural characteristics will influence the ability of the Greenlandic populace to provide public scrutiny to the natural resource activities of the Greenlandic government. In regards to levels of institutional trust, generations can be divided into the “spectators of development” and the “bright, young Greenlanders.” These groupings refer to both the age and political opinions of two different segments of Greenlandic society. While the age cohorts are not exact, the “spectators of development” are those who remember and have internalized the period of Danish development in Greenland in the 1970’s. This group tends to blame Denmark for societal problems in Greenland and places trust in Greenlandic politicians.

By contrast, the “bright, young Greenlanders” are the citizens that make up the young adult generation and are educated in Denmark. This analysis’ focus group consisted of bright, young Greenlanders who explained this important generational distinction. They highlighted the fact that young, educated people in Nuuk have a more “modern” take on Greenlandic politics and independence as they tend to blame politicians for problems within Greenland, rather than Denmark. In fact, paradoxically, many members of the focus group were thankful for the relationship between Greenland and Denmark. In their eyes, independence was an eventual goal rather than an urgent item on the political agenda in the stages of Greenland’s early resource development.

In a society with such a small population, the politicians are inherently linked to the people. Therefore, placing public scrutiny on a politician often involves investigating someone you know personally. In discussions of public debates in Greenland, the interviewees for this research continually observed the prevalence of “people-fighting” in Greenland as opposed to debates centered on political or economic issues. One interviewee mentioned that Greenlanders both politically fight and vote with their heart as opposed to logic. The interviewee associated with Transparency International mentioned that she views the main challenge in Greenland as “the distinction between people and policy.” She attributes the occurrence of people-fighting in Greenland to democratic immaturity.

This research evidences that although Greenland is modernizing and the presence of a young, politically active class of voters does exist, the political culture will not moderate the negative effects of a resource shock on democratic effectiveness in Greenland. To support this finding, this thesis details the obstacles

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104 Focus Group Participants, interviewed by Madeleine Livingston, 8 March 2014.
105 Public Official Interviewee, interviewed by Madeleine Livingston, 21 Feb 2014.
106 Focus Group Participants, interviewed by Madeleine Livingston, 8 March 2014.
107 Student Interviewee, interviewed by Madeleine Livingston, 8 March 2014.
108 Expert and Consultant Interviewee, interviewed by Madeleine Livingston, 10 March 2014.
to public scrutiny in Greenlandic political life, which include a fear of criticizing the
government based on a precedent of repercussions, and the dependence of the
population on the government.

This comprehensive analysis of Greenlandic institutions, education and political
culture provides an understanding of how the variables would act as transmission
channels for the effects of a resource shock. This thesis posits that at their current
levels, none of the causal mechanism would prevent the resource curse from
occurring in Greenland. Resource extraction will not occur for the next 3-4 years,
which allows Greenland to improve and reform democratic functioning before the
state experiences a resource rent influx. This thesis’ theoretical background and
analysis supports the conjecture that significant improvements must be made to
institutions, education, and political culture over the next four years.

**Recommendations for Institutions**

*Democracy-Building Activities: Increasing Public Oversight*

Recommendations for enhancing the state of democracy will revolve around
strengthening tools for public participation through the creation of Regional Citizen’s
Advisory Council based on models of public oversight in Alaska. An additional
recommendation will focus on the potential role of Transparency International in
brokering the establishment of integrity pacts between extractive companies and the
government based on best practices in the developing democracies of Panama and
Colombia.

This analysis determined that low levels of institutional quality and a
political culture defined by silence have the potential to be detrimental to democracy
upon extraction. The low levels of public participation are a manifestation of both
the deficit in institutionalized mechanisms for response and the fear of criticizing the
government. This thesis culminates in a recommendation for the creation of a
Regional Citizen’s Advisory Council (RCAC) modeled after Alaska’s RCAC, which
arose following the Valdez oil spill. While citizens should demand further
transparency in the government, they should also assert their voice in “the operations
of government and industry” through a formal response mechanism. In Alaska,
the RCAC is responsible for proving oversight over oil spill disasters and preventing
and responding to incidents. The organization is funded by Alyeska, a consortium of
oil companies but remains independent. Additionally, Alyeska provides the RCAC
with access to their facilities and the contract remains standing as long as there is oil
flowing through the pipeline. The RCAC consists of a board of directors, staff and
committees who serve “to organize citizens to promote the environmentally safe
operations of Alyeska.”

In Greenland, an RCAC could work to involve more citizens in various

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109 Steiner, R. “Kazakhstan’s Oil: Creating a New Paradigm for Oil and Society.” *Caspian Oil
110 Ibid., 71-86.
111 Ibid., 74.
112 Ibid., 75.
113 Ibid., 77.
aspects of resource development such as permitting, licensing, exploration, transportation, government revenue collection and environmental compliance. As mentioned, resource rich governments need particularly strong checks and balances, a public good, which is often undersupplied in young democracies. Establishing a Greenlandic RCAC would create a space for citizen involvement that serves as counterweight government and industry in Greenland. This thesis recommends that steps be taken towards researching the feasibility of establishing an RCAC in Greenland. While the government has been hostile to opposition, the government would have an interest in being cooperative as such a council would help build more trust in the government. The London Mining Company may be an avenue for funding this RCAC. To take steps toward cooperation, the government could mandate this funding contingency in contracts and negotiations with London Mining.

**Sovereign Wealth Funds**

While the establishment of the integrity pacts combats corruption in the bidding process between the natural resource industry and the government, the role of the sovereign wealth fund focuses on preventing corruption in the management of natural resource revenue by the state. Sovereign wealth funds bolster the discipline and spending of these funds in order to restrain Dutch Disease as well as myopic political incentives to overspend. According to this thesis’ analysis, the sovereign wealth fund is only briefly mentioned in the official Greenlandic strategy for oil and mineral development and the report does not indicate where the revenue will go or how it is appropriated. In 2008, the state established the current fund through the Act on Greenlandic Mineral Resources Fund. This act stipulates that Greenland will set up the fund when revenues exceed 75 million DKK or roughly 14 million USD. The act dictates that dividends from the fund should be used for welfare spending but that income may be accessed directly to fund independence-related activities such as taking on more government responsibility.

In the Faroe Islands, a sovereign wealth fund was established during a fishing boom in order to prevent Dutch Disease in the economy and spread the income over several years. Put simply, mismanagement of the fund in the Faroe Islands led to the heavy investment in the fishing industry. The state financed investments in efficient fishing fleets with income from the wealth fund, which resulted in overfishing and the collapse of the fishing-dependent economy once fish stocks were depleted. Given the case of the Faroe Island’s mismanagement of the fund, the Greenlandic state should outline clearer stipulations for the management of revenue and the legislative process for the appropriation of funds. This research recommends removing the clause regarding the use of resource income to finance further resource activity given the disastrous effects in the Faroe Islands when funds

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114 Ibid., 75.
115 Ibid.
116 Ibid.
117 Ronne & Holmgren, 58.
118 Ibid.
119 Ibid., 66.
120 Ibid.
were used to create a more efficient fishing fleet. Appropriation of the dividends of the fund would be a channel for RCACs to voice research-driven recommendations for public spending. Additionally, the RCACs would foreseeably as watchdogs to ensure that revenue funds will not be secretly diverted into risky resource projects.

**Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as Support Mechanism for Transparency and Accountability**

This thesis recommends that international corporations that seek to do business in Greenland commit to ratifying the U.N. Global Compact and the Global Reporting Initiative as a mechanism of promoting transparency. These agreements may be facilitated by CSR Greenland, an organization dedicated to creating a multi-stakeholder dialogue on CSR in Greenland. The UN Global Compact’s ten principles are a guide to acting ethically in regards to human rights, labour, environmental and anti-corruption practices. This thesis posits that CSR Greenland must promote ratification of the UN Global Compact by offering consultation on the creation of CSR programs and the development of business integrity and anti-corruption metrics for corporations. Corporations may then revolve their CSR efforts around building a transparency action plan that consists of basic frameworks for social accounting, internal training and corruption awareness campaigns that will be the means to the eventual ratification of the UN Global Compact.

**Recommendations for Education**

**Institutional Capacity-Building for Education Systems: Evidence from Norway, Canada and Sweden**

Recommendations for the education system consist of capacity building for the Greenlandic people, the creation of natural resources as a knowledge industry and the cultivation of entrepreneurship. Investments in capacity building throughout Greenland are necessary in order to avoid the widening gap between Arctic urban areas and remote communities. Norway, Canada and Sweden evidence the effectiveness of capacity building in their northernmost communities at the individual and institutional level, respectively.

In both Norway and Sweden, capacity building efforts originated in the education system. Although Norway is small country comparatively, it boasts many acclaimed universities. Additionally, these universities are evenly distributed throughout Norway as opposed to being concentrated in the more urbanized South. The Sami University College in the North serves the indigenous Sami population in Norway and its post-secondary curriculum is targeted to the “needs of social, economic and environmental priorities in the North.” Similarly, the northern Canadian provinces have also made strides in improving their education systems.

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122 Ibid.
123 Ibid.
124 Ibid.
The University of Northern British Columbia, which opened in 1994, has three satellite campuses in Northern Canada and has dramatically increased the participation rate of post-secondary education for residents. Most significantly, 70% of those educated in Northern Canada now stay in Northern Canada, a trend that has enabled upward individual capacity to be translated into “stronger local and regional institutions.” Sweden exemplifies the improvement of Northern institutions through capacity building due to the provision of northern research centers and universities. Studies on regional productivity in Sweden highlight the importance of educational investments as a policy tool. 

**Attracting and Retaining Greenlandic Citizens**

Building a knowledge economy in Greenland would necessitate a highly educated sector of the population that is equipped to develop “know-how and expertise” in the extractive industry. However, the current trend reflects that the majority of Greenlanders with degrees above a bachelor’s are located in Denmark. In order to build institutional capacity within Greenland, the Greenlandic state must work to attract and retain highly educated Greenlandic citizens. In a Ramboll Group study on attracting families back to the Arctic, Arctic Director of Ramboll Nils Arne Johnsen stated, “The challenge is to make urban communities attractive to families with children, create industries around the extractive industries, attract investments, and find models to put some of the profits back into the local community.” Johnsen's reference to land usage and a stable policy environment reflect two crucial, inhospitable situations ongoing in Greenland. Housing is run by the government in Greenland. Housing legislation is incredibly complex and most citizens admit to having trouble understanding what they are entitled to in regards to housing. In regards to structural improvements, Greenland must create a more accessible housing system as well as harnessing specialized job growth around the natural resource industry and complementary industries such as construction and environmental research.

**Recommendations for Political Culture**

**Strengthening Civil Society**

Civil society organizations in addition to improvements in the structure of debate, may be harnessed to encourage political participation in promoting transparency within the public sector. The division of power within this framework creates a system of accountability that places the onus of holding the state accountable onto Greenlandic civil society. Civil society consists of the non-appointed individuals that are observers rather than direct participants in government activity. Power, especially as relates to natural resources, must be distributed

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125 Ibid.
126 Ibid., 6.
127 “Attracting Families is Key for Arctic Development.” 2013. Ramboll Group.
128 The Nordic Consulting Group, 21.
between “the state, the markets and civil society” in order to create a framework for accountability.

Additionally, civic organizations have the capacity to generate attention on specific circumstances through their local and global networks and thus, may produce audience costs that will make the Greenlandic public sector’s mineral and oil decisions increasingly salient. In addition to educating, these organizations must work to increase civic engagement in both urban and “rural” communities within Greenland. When citizens band together in an organization, it can educate the public sector on the diversity of their constituent base by linking and aggregating concerns of both urban and rural citizens and binding them in a common information network. Currently, an organization entitled the NGO Coalition is functioning well in Greenland and providing recommendation to the government on how to invest in citizen involvement. The NGO Coalition consists of ICC Greenland, Transparency International, WWF and many more. The organization was established in October 2013 in direct response to the opaque natural resource decision-making on uranium by the Greenlandic government.

Ratifying the Aarhus Convention and Increasing Communication on Resource Projects

The NGO Coalition for Better Citizen Involvement is an excellent example of the role that civil society can play in providing opposition to the government and promoting the exchange of ideas between citizens. The NGO Coalition has recently proposed that the Greenlandic government integrate the Aarhus Convention into Greenlandic law. This analysis fully supports this recommendation by the NGO Coalition as the Convention solidifies the role of the Greenlandic citizen in resource decision-making. The Aarhus legislation specifically pertains to public engagement in the environmental impacts of resource development. The Aarhus Convention “guarantees citizens access to information, public participation in decision-making, and access to justice in environmental matters.” The Aarhus Convention differs from a solely environmental agreement in that it enforces government transparency, accountability and responsiveness. The Convention seeks to empower citizens with the ability to provide input on decisions, development plans and legislation that will impact the environment.

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130 Ibid., 26.
132 The Nordic Consulting Group, 47.
133 United Nations.
135 Ibid., 6.
136 Ibid., 7.
Leveraging the Arctic Youth Council

This thesis’ analysis presents an interesting finding on how modes of political participation and public opinion vary drastically between the young, educated Greenlanders and older Greenlandic citizens. This finding supports the final recommendations for increasing public involvement in the Greenlandic political culture; leveraging the Arctic Youth Council. As the young Greenlanders will be the future leaders during Greenland’s peak period of resource extraction, their participation in a council dedicated to the exchange of ideas on Arctic sustainability and development is essential. While the problems that Arctic governments face are diverse, participatory states such as Norway and Canada can be excellent resources for best practices in providing public scrutiny as extraction is realized in Greenland. Additionally, as Greenland moves toward independence, the Arctic Youth Council may serve as a platform for diplomatic relationships with other Arctic nations.

Conclusion

This analysis concludes that Greenland is highly susceptible to the resource curse given the current state of its institutions, education and political culture. This research also finds that the cause of deficits in education and political culture stem from institutional weaknesses. Therefore, recommendations for mitigating the resource curse in Greenland must begin with institutional capacity building. This research highlights the importance of focusing on promoting public scrutiny prior to beginning extraction, as the initial conditions of institutions are most important for ensuring that incentives to rent-seek are carefully monitored. This thesis lays the groundwork for further research on democracy and natural resource development in Greenland over the next four years. In light of Greenland’s resource discovery, Greenlandic national identity becomes subject to self-determination. Greenland will hopefully pursue a course that shifts away from an identity founded in resource dependence toward the empowerment of citizens to participate in the Greenland of opportunity.
LATIN AMERICA
National Identity and Contentious Narratives of Territorial Exchange:
Bolivia, Chile, and the Legacy of The War of the Pacific

Brendan Buckland

Introducing the Imagined Community

To discuss the “imagination” of a nation it is necessary first to understand that the very notion of nationhood is imagined. Benedict Anderson articulates this idea most fully, and it is from his theory that I will expand in order to discuss the cases of Chilean and Bolivian national identities. Anderson defines a nation as being, “an imagined political community — and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”\(^1\) From his general definition it is important to break down the two components of definition of a nation, the community, and the imagination applied to it.

First, a nation, according to Anderson “is imagined as a community because regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.”\(^2\) According to this assertion, the horizontal relationship of members of a nation extends only to those within the same community. A member of a nation then, thinks not only of his own membership but of the collective membership of his countrymen to a larger community, distinct from others surrounding them. This conceptualization implies inequity among nations and how nations view one another, as other communities are not afforded the same horizontal plane of comradeship. This aspect of Anderson’s theory sets the stage for the tensions that this paper will explore in the instance of the imagined communities of Bolivia and Chile.

Second, Anderson says that these communities are imagined, “because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”\(^3\) It is this image that most impacts the framework for this paper. If

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2 Ibid, 7.
3 Ibid, 6.
individuals are capable of imagining their communion, or nation, certain realities influence their image of this community. My research seeks out manifestations of national imagining in an attempt to best illustrate the “image of communion,” or national identity, which Anderson theorizes.

This paper relies on Anderson’s thesis that nationalism is informed by the creation of such narratives in order to fill the “oblivion” of amnesia. Such narratives become subject to the experience of the narrator. The imagined community of a nation subjectively narrates a memory of a conflict that occurred over a century ago. Both of these national biographies are subject to the goals of the nation and contain major characters in the form of national heroes who contribute meaning to the image of the nation.

Anderson suggests that citizens came to live and die for their nation out of the power of the imagined horizontal fraternity shared within the nation. This paper will discuss a Bolivian and a Chilean who sacrificed their lives in the name of country. Out of the imagined horizontal community of the nation arise vertically ascendant figures who serve to guide the nations’ identity though their special status as heroes. These heroes play an outsized role in the construction of the national image of communion proposed by Anderson. While the two heroes are hardly the only figures that contribute to the biography of the nation, their roles in the War of the Pacific ascribe significance as to the way their image is constructed to remember the conflict. The power of the national hero as image of the nation is supported by manifestations of national identity: institutions, political rhetoric, historical narrative, and commemorative monuments. To demonstrate national imaginings resulting from the territorial exchange I turn to these heroes to illustrate two disparate constructed national identities.

**Historical Context: War of the Pacific and Territorial Exchange**

The War of the Pacific occurred from 1879-1884 and was fought by Chile against an allied Bolivia and Peru. For Bolivia and Chile, the declaration of war in 1879 had its roots in the uncertainty of the border between the two countries following independence and into the mid 19th century. Much of this uncertainty was due to the unforgiving geography of the expansive Atacama Desert. Initially, Bolivia and Chile, as well as their neighbor Peru, showed little interest in the largely unpopulated terrain, which acted as a natural borderland between the core areas of the three Andean countries. As late as 1833 Chile vaguely defined it’s northern border as the Atacama Desert, demonstrating a general disinterest to and ignorance

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4 In the interest of brevity and simplicity, this paper will focus on the national identities of Bolivia and Chile. The reason for the narrow focus is to concentrate on the issue of territorial exchange and its effects on national identity. While Chile did gain territory from Peru, the case was more complicated. Failed plebiscites did not decide the issue until 1929 when the two provinces of Tacna and Arica were split, with Tacna returning to Peru and Arica remaining Chilean territory. The outcome of the plebiscite and the intricacies of the Chile-Peru relations following the conflict are complex and created a separate legacy of bilateral relations, and for that reason they will be omitted from this study.

of the area north of the more settled Chilean heartland.\textsuperscript{6} Out of this uncertainty, tensions between Bolivia and Chile grew concordant with the value of the territory.

The appraisal of this territory changed dramatically in 1839 when a variety of natural resources were discovered along the coast of the Atacama, first guano and then sodium nitrate deposits, producing a windfall for Peruvian businessmen.\textsuperscript{7} This windfall did not go unnoticed by Chileans who looked at their neighbors with envy. With the potential for further extraction of undiscovered resources, defining the border between Bolivia and Chile took on greater importance for the future economic development of both nations. The 40 years that preceded the declaration of war in 1879 were characterized by disputes, especially between Bolivia and Chile, regarding the Territory of the Atacama.

The border fluctuated between 23° S and 25°S from 1842 to 1866 in a variety of treaties.\textsuperscript{8} Figure 1-1, a map surveyed by Josiah Harding in 1877 for the Royal Geographic Society places the border on 24° S in accordance with the 1874 Walker Martinez-Baptista Agreement, the final agreement before the war.\textsuperscript{9} In addition, Harding’s notes on the map reveal that the brown areas represent sodium nitrate deposits.\textsuperscript{10} These brown areas are located north of the official border on the 24\textsuperscript{th} parallel circled in red in figure 1-1. In other words the valuable deposits as well as the Port city of Antofagasta, circled in blue in figure 1-1, were located in Bolivian territory. Due to the value of these deposits and other mineral discoveries Chileans ventured into Bolivian territory in increasing numbers.

Prior to the first Chilean troops occupying the Bolivian port of Antofagasta, the city saw an invasion of Chilean businessmen with interests in mining. An 1874 census for the city showed that 4,530 of its 5,384 residents identified as Chilean and as many as 4,000 mines had been registered.\textsuperscript{11} Other estimates claimed that up to 93\% of the people living in the region were Chilean.\textsuperscript{12} While the accepted political geography tenuously supported the Bolivian claim to Antofagasta and the Atacama north of 24° S, the human geography began to tilt the scales in favor of Chilean interests.

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid., 6.
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., 8.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., 10.
\textsuperscript{11} Skuban, Lines in the Sand, 9.
\textsuperscript{12} Offen, Mapping Latin America, 142.
Chile successfully populated the Bolivian Litoral and extracted its resources largely because Bolivia was incapable of doing so. Lack of infrastructure and the geographic barriers of the Atacama Desert and the Andean mountain range meant that traveling from La Paz to the Pacific took a month’s duration in 1879. Bolivia did not have the money or expertise to improve rail-lines to their coastal ports, and historian William Sater explained the rule that in Bolivia, “the greater the distance from the capital, the more dubious the state’s authority.” The Bolivian Litoral was particularly remote from Bolivia’s population center in the Andean highlands and suffered from this lack of administration.

Regarding the resources in its territory, Bolivia was ill prepared to make use of its windfall. While some Bolivians moved to work in the mining industry, they fell second to Chilean labor, expertise, and capital. Bolivian mining interests and capital were still largely concentrated in colonial-era mines in the Bolivian highlands. The aforementioned lack of infrastructure also likely contributed to the barriers to Bolivian economic development of the Litoral Department. As a consequence of under-population and underdevelopment, the Bolivian public had little to mourn in terms of enterprise and settlement when their Litoral Department became Chilean territory. Instead, the general resource of access to the sea, and the image of the Bolivian seacoast was the most tangible loss of the territorial exchange. The sea and its symbolism would become the subject of Bolivian attention as they memorialized the conflict, as this paper will later explore.

While Chileans did not enter the War of the Pacific for purely economic reasons, the resources of the Atacama certainly were the prizes at stake. Chilean Minister of

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14 Ibid., 12.
Foreign Affairs José Manuel Balmaceda declared in 1881, “The nitrate bearing territories of Antofagasta and Tarapacá were the real and direct causes of the war.”

Enticed by more than just the pull of wealth, a domestic situation in Chile provided an additional push for economic expansion. These resources took on additional significance due to the economic crisis that affected the nation leading up to the conflict. The outlook was so bleak that in 1877, Chilean President Aníbal Pinto declared, “If a new mining discovery or other news in the same line does not come to improve our position, the crisis which has been affecting us for years will get even worse.”

Comments such as Pinto’s demonstrate the bleak state of the Chilean economy but also show the simple way in which Chileans thought they could reinvigorate it, through mineral wealth. Thus for Chile, the Atacama region contested in the War of the Pacific was valued for the natural resources that Chilean enterprises possessed the capital and expertise to effectively extract.

The stage was set for a dispute between neighbors and the prize would be the Litoral along with the different resources it represented to the two nations. Tensions between Bolivia and Chile erupted into the War of the Pacific in 1879 with the Bolivian action of a ten-cent tax per 100 pounds of sodium nitrate exported, a duty which the ANRC refused to pay. As a result the Chilean navy occupied Bolivian Antofagasta, prompting a declaration of war and the involvement of Peru due to a mutual defense pact it had with Bolivia.

Chile consolidated its control over the city of Antofagasta and the inland desert towns of the Litoral Department. Chilean troops were met with little organized resistance from Bolivian forces. The exception would be the Battle of Topáter, a contest that this paper will explore in greater detail in the following section.

In spite of skirmishes like the battle of Topáter, Chile’s land war with Bolivia was over quickly and Chile controlled much of the Atacama a few days after occupying Antofagasta. Chileans occupied this area well after the conclusion of the conflict. An inset of an 1894 map of Bolivia described the Litoral as Bolivian territory occupied by Chile. The map was produced by Justo Moreno, a member of the Sucre Geographical Society for the Commander of the Bolivian Army. The Bolivian cartographer included the territory as part of the colored mass of the Bolivian nation, suggesting that the territory still pertained to Bolivia. In reality, Chile had established control over the region and was not interested in relinquishing power of the resource rich Litoral. The Chilean occupation that Moreno’s 1894 map depicts continued until 1904, when the map was redrawn once more.

In 1904, the “Treaty of Peace and Friendship” between Bolivia and Chile officially transferred the Litoral to Chilean hands. Article two of the treaty granted the territory to Chile in exchange for 300,000 pounds sterling, Chilean absorption of

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16 Skuban, Lines in the Sand, 10.
17 Francisco Encina, Historia de Chile desde la prehistoria hasta 1891 (Santiago, 1940-52), XVI, 41.
18 Offen, Mapping Latin America, 142.
19 Ibid.
20 Sater, Andean Tragedy, 19.
21 Justo Leigue Moreno, Mapa Geográfico y corográfico de la república de Bolivia, 1894.
22 Ibid.
all pending Bolivian debts in the Litoral, and the technical assistance of building a railroad to connect La Paz to Arica, a port under Chilean control but gained from expansion during the War of the Pacific. The treaty also established a demarcated official border along 96 points in the Andes, east of the Atacama Desert. It was the ratification of the 1904 treaty that officially transferred the Litoral in perpetuity to Chile and converted Bolivia into the landlocked state that it remains today.

Ratification of the treaty, however, was contentious. Called the “polanization” of Bolivia when it was debated in legislature, the treaty was derided for creating dependence on Chilean seaports. While these may have been salient points of concern for the development of Bolivia as a nation, there was little recourse to contest the territory as the losing party of the conflict with little military power. Furthermore, there was hope that another unresolved territorial dispute between Chile and Peru over the Provinces of Tacna and Arica might include a port or sea access for Bolivia. As a consequence of this hope, and in spite of heated debate, the treaty was signed.

Bolivia was ultimately not included in the negotiations between Chile and Peru over Tacna and Arica and when the dispute was finally settled in 1929 it did not gain a port city. Many Bolivians resented the treaty of 1904 and there has been a concerted effort ever since its ratification to gain sovereign access to the sea whether it is through a corridor between Chile and Peru or in the original Litoral Department. Efforts dating from 1910 to present day have appealed unilaterally to Chile as well as to international organizations such as the League of Nations, Organization of American States, and United Nations, all to no avail. The details of these appeals are extensive and technical but what is important is that the desire to reclaim access to the sea is consistent over time. While individuals and parties have rallied around the cause of resolving Bolivia’s landlocked condition, they have done so because the popular desire for such a goal has perpetuated in the Bolivian imagination. In contention with this goal has been the popular Chilean desire for the status quo. The following section explores how national heroes from the War of the Pacific inform contemporary national identities in Chile and Bolivia that continue to contest the Litoral Province long after the supposed resolution of the conflict.

Divergent National Imaginings: The Heroic Image in Bolivia and Chile

Out of the War of the Pacific both Bolivia and Chile gain national heroes. The heroes become symbols of the conflict between the two nations and from their symbolic roles they take up an important role in the narratives of their respective

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24 Ibid., 59.
26 Ibid., 197.
29 Ibid.
nations. Eduardo Abaroa, to Bolivia, is a figure of resistance and pride, a martyr who died defending the province taken by Chile, and monuments celebrate his refusal to surrender. Depicted as an exemplary patriot, his heroic image carries with it the irredentist mission to return to the sea, and of the victimization of Bolivia by Chile.

Meanwhile Chileans similarly rallied around the patriotic figure of Arturo Prat, a fallen Naval Commander, elevated to heroic and symbolic status through monument and narrative. Prat became the image of military strength, an ideal countryman whose ideals mirror those of the nation. His projection of strength and the concept of Chilean primacy informs the Chilean position regarding the issue of Bolivian access to the sea.

These heroes, and the monuments to them, demonstrate two very different images of the War of the Pacific and its consequences. The monuments in their honor and the narratives taught to modern Chileans and Bolivians have important roles in informing national identity.

**A Hero for Bolivia: Eduardo Abaroa**

On March 23, 1879, Chileans and Bolivians met in one of the few battles of the War of the Pacific actually fought exclusively between the two countries. Out of this conflict, called the Battle of Topáter, emerged a figure of national importance to Bolivia. Eduardo Abaroa, a civilian residing in the Bolivian Litoral Department, was one of 135 Bolivians who organized to stop more than 544 Chileans from advancing further inland from occupied Bolivian ports. Outnumbered as they were, they fought unsuccessfully to defend a strategic bridge into the small town of Calama and eventually the majority retreated leaving Abaroa surrounded and alone. Without the figure of Abaroa, the Battle of Topáter would have been bitterly remembered by Bolivians, if at all. However, in these last moments of his life, Abaroa earned himself a special place among the canon of Bolivian national heroes.

Defiantly, he continued to exchange fire with the surrounding Chilean troops. After exhausting his remaining 300 rounds from two different rifles, the Chileans found him badly wounded but famously confrontational. When asked to surrender he memorably retorted, “Surrender? Let your grandmother surrender, dammit!” Abaroa received an answer in the form of rifle fire, although some versions further mystify his passing and vilify the Chileans by insisting they bayoneted him due to his refusal to capitulate. Either manner of execution was sufficient to make him the symbol of resistance to expansionist Chileans as well as a memorable victim of the bloody conflict.

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31 Ibid., 61.

“¿Rendirme? ¡Que se rinda su abuela carajo!” (Translation by the author)
As a civilian and local council member for his tiny home of San Pedro, Abaroa was an unlikely candidate for national importance.\(^{34}\) There exists little information on the details of his life before his infamous demise but Bolivians have filled the gaps of his life narrative with meaning, ascribing it national importance. His passing then, becomes largely symbolic, and his persona is remembered in appropriately heroic proportions.

Bolivian historian Roberto Querejazu Calvo wrote his history of the War of the Pacific, “Guano, Salitre, Sangre” nearly a century after the conflict. His veneration of the hero and his values is consistent with the image that Abaroa comes to represent for the Bolivian nation. Calvo, in his brief summary of the important facets of Abaroa’s life gives him all the qualities of a hero fit for a nation. He focuses on the hardworking honesty and simple needs of the Bolivian hero, as well as his sense of duty, and qualities of an ideal citizen.\(^{35}\) From this generous and rosy characterization Abaroa may be considered an ordinary Bolivian citizen with a happy and simple life. Abaroa’s life as a Bolivian citizen contributes to the injustice of his death at the hands of Chileans.

Bolivian historian and contemporary of Albaroa, Roberto Ugarde, similarly claimed that, “Abaroa lived peacefully between his work and projects, when on February 14th 1879 Chile defiled our soil, tore our flag, tainted our honor, and violated our rights.”\(^{36}\) According to the narrative suggested by historians, the interruption of his peaceful existence was the expansionist advance of the Chilean troops, and violating the sovereignty of the Bolivian nation. Abaroa reportedly asserted to his superior before battle, “I am Bolivian, this is Bolivia, and here I will stay.”\(^{37}\) According to historical narrative, Abaroa himself asserted the right of Bolivian sovereignty over its territory and refused to flee in the face of the threat of Chilean expansion. Abaroa’s historical example provided Bolivians with an example of a countryman who defended his nations territory and asserted sovereignty over the historically Bolivian Litoral.

Since Abaroa is depicted as a man of principle, Calvo’s account explains that above all what motivated the hero to fight was, “the imposition of the strong over the weak.”\(^{38}\) It is unclear whether this statement applies to the nations themselves or simply the battle in which the Bolivians were outnumbered. As the Chilean Army began to occupy the Bolivian Litoral, numbering up to 4,000 men, they found little resistance to their movements, and a nearly nonexistent Bolivian military presence.\(^{39}\) In this sense Abaroa’s experience, especially the lopsided contest in which he perished, supported the idea that the Chilean aggressors were the

\(^{34}\) Roberto Querejazu Calvo, Guano, Salitre, Sangre: historia de la Guerra del Pacifico. (La Paz: Editorial Los Amigos del Libro, 1979), 303.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., 303-304.

\(^{36}\) Ricardo Ugarte, La primera página en la guerra del Pacifico (La Paz: Impr. de La Tribuna, 1880), 28. “Tranquilo vivía Abaroa entre sus negocios y tareas, cuando el 14 de febrero de 1879 Chile profanó nuestro suelo, rasgó nuestra bandera, mancilló nuestro honor y avasalló nuestros derechos.” (Translation by the author)

\(^{37}\) Calvo, Guano, salitre, sangre, 306.

“Soy Boliviano, esto es Bolivia y aquí me quedo.” (Translation by the author)

\(^{38}\) Ibid, 303. “...el abuso del fuerte sobre el débil.” (Translation by author)

\(^{39}\) Farcau, The Ten Cents War, 60.
Goliath to Bolivia’s David. This idea grew with the notoriety of Abaroa and his death. From this image of the outnumbered Abaroa and in extension, Bolivia, a narrative emerged which placed Bolivia at the mercy of larger regional power in the form of Chile. This account influenced the Bolivian perception of the unfairness of its territorial loss.

In the face of this Goliath, Abaroa was converted into a symbol of his own, though not by defeating the giant. Instead, Abaroa’s symbolism derived from his martyrdom in the face of the injustice of the Chileans. His final words, explicitly slung at his Chilean adversaries, suggested a wounded disdain and disrespect for the conduct of Chilean advance into Bolivian territory. A month after Abaroa’s death, in front of the Literary Society of Sucre, Eduardo Subieta described Abaroa in symbolic terms by stressing the perceived injustice:

Eduardo Abaroa is the first victim, the first martyr of the unjust and cruel war of reclamation with which Chile shocks the world, affronts civilization, dishonors the nineteenth century, and compromises the continental peace and balance of America.⁴⁰

Subieta vilified Chile in a sweeping condemnation and depicted Abaroa as a direct victim of Chilean expansionism. This characterization of Abaroa may seem in conflict with the hero who stood up to Chile, but it was his failure to defeat the enemy that most elevated his figure in the imagination of Bolivians.

Eduardo Abaroa’s story reflected national feelings of victimization after the war. Subieta could not have known in 1879 that the War of the Pacific would largely be over for Bolivia. Although Abaroa was the first victim, the nation suffered a greater loss to the Chileans, the Litoral Department. Abaroa’s heroic legacy and his victimization at the hands of the Chileans resembled the Bolivian experience of territorial losses following the War of the Pacific.

In time, the figure of Abaroa, and the issue of access to the sea became inextricably linked. According to Calvo, the defiance of Abaroa converted him into a symbol of the Bolivian nation, and by killing him:

[The Chileans] made him immortal, they put him on a pedestal from which, with his image cast commemorated in bronze, he was to encourage his compatriots to never abandon their effort to recover [access to] the sea.⁴¹

Abaroa was immortalized in the form of monuments across Bolivia, and often in these monuments the loss of Abaroa’s life is closely related to the loss of the Bolivian Litoral Department. The largest monument is located in La Paz, in a large

⁴⁰ Ugarte, La primera página en la guerra del Pacífico, 33.

“Eduardo Abaroa es la primera víctima, el primer mártir de la injusta y bárbara guerra de reivindicación con que Chile escandaliza al mundo, insulta la civilización, deshonra el siglo XIX y compromete la paz y equilibrio continental de la América.” (Translation by the author)

⁴¹ Calvo, Guano, salitre, sangre, 304-305.

“Lo hicieron inmortal, lo colocaron sobre un pedestal desde el cual, con su imagen perpetuada en bronce, iba a alentar a sus compatriotas a no cejar en sus esfuerzos hasta recuperar una salida al mar.” (Translation by author)
A plaza named for him. The *Monumento al Héroe del Topáter don Eduardo Abaroa*, was erected in 1952 according to the design of Bolivian architect Emiliano Luján Sandoval. Sandoval filled the monument with meaning and symbolism, mixing the narrative of Abaroa’s heroic sacrifice and the national narrative. A few aspects of the design stick to the familiar narrative of the Battle of Topáter. Atop a symbolically fractured Topáter bridge, defiantly clutching his rifle, and struggling to rise, Abaroa is depicted in the final heroic moment of his life. Other features of the monument reach past Abaroa and the moment of his death, and reveal the influence of national imagining of the legacy of the War of the Pacific. First, Abaroa is named on the monument as the “Defender of the Bolivian Litoral.” Abaroa is only defender of the Litoral by extension of his role in a single battle in the province, but the monument draws direct connections to the loss of the province with Abaroa’s loss of life. The narrative leap that Sandoval and contemporary Bolivians are willing to take by linking Abaroa with the entire territory demonstrates how his image becomes part of a national biography that mourns and memorializes the loss of the territory.

In addition, Sandoval included a symbolic gesture to his countrymen in the form of the “accusatory finger” of Abaroa. Sandoval intended this gesture to remind Bolivians of their duty to take back the Litoral and the original finger was disproportionately large for emphasis. Though he later reduced the size of the finger, Sandoval’s message to Bolivians still demands: Honor Abaroa by reclaiming the sea. In the same way that Abaroa’s duty to the nation becomes a part of his persona, his image reminds Bolivians of an uncompleted duty to avenge their fallen hero.

Finally, the symbol of an anchor lies in the water below the monument. The inclusion of the anchor, interpreted as a symbol of access to the sea, demonstrates the link between Albaroa’s heroic figure and the issue of access to the sea. Abaroa died defending a town far inland from the Bolivian seacoast. There is little evidence linking him directly to the port of Antofagasta, and perhaps he never once swam at a Bolivian beach before his death. If the monument was simply commemorating the Hero of Topáter as its name suggests, the large anchor would have little purpose in the middle of the Atacama Desert. Instead, the monument serves a larger purpose of national imagining, linking the heroic story of a fallen hero with the reality of a lost seacoast.

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42 Carlos Gerl & Randy Chávez, *100 Años Emiliano Luján* (Gobierno Autónomo Municipal de La Paz, 2010), 8.
43 Due to edits to the length of this paper in adherence to the guidelines of *The Elliott*, some photos have been removed. Photos and Maps accompany the descriptions of territories and monuments in the extended version of this essay.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
46 From Gerl & Chávez, *100 Años Emiliano Luján*.
47 Ibid.
48 From Foro Militar General [http://www.militar.org.ua/foro/fuerzas-armadas-de-bolivia-t29535-630.html](http://www.militar.org.ua/foro/fuerzas-armadas-de-bolivia-t29535-630.html)
Eduardo Abaroa was and continues to be the heroic figure that serves to remind Bolivians of their victimization at the hands of the Chileans. For this reason every March 23rd, to commemorate the anniversary of Abaroa’s death, Bolivians celebrate the national holiday of the Day of the Sea. This celebration itself, on the 23rd of March, is another product of constructed national narrative and national imagining. Bolivians did not lose access to the sea when Abaroa died miles from the seashore. Instead, Bolivia became a landlocked state when their leaders signed the Friendship and Peace Treaty finalized in Chile on October 20, 1904. Even so, every March 23 elicits shouts of praise for Bolivia and death to Chile in the procession to the monument to Abaroa. This patriotic spectacle has concluded at the feet of the Monument in La Paz every year since 1952 when President Hugo Ballivián commissioned its work and established the tradition of carrying Abaroa’s remains through the streets of the city in the “March to the Sea.” The March to the Sea is a manifestation of national imagining, and Abaroa’s role in it.

As Abaroa is depicted as the victim of Chilean expansionism, Bolivians gather not only to mourn their hero but their territorial loss each year, reminding them of their own place as victims. Each year at the conclusion of the march they are presented with Abaroa’s accusatory finger. Abaroa and his defiant figure remind Bolivians to complete their duty to reclaim the sea. This memorialization plays a large role in the persistence of the Bolivian maritime claim. Contemporary Bolivia continues its long march to the sea, and in recent years has redoubled its efforts. Considering the legacy of Eduardo Abaroa in historical narrative, monument, and the Day of the Sea, it is not surprising that Bolivians would seek to change their landlocked state.

A Hero for Chile: Arturo Prat

Chileans who witnessed the bravery of Abaroa could not have known that in only two short months they would have a heroic figure of their own from the conflict. This hero would not arise out of the dry battlefield of the Atacama Desert. Instead, Arturo Prat’s story unfolded on the deck of a warship in Naval battle with Bolivia’s ally, Peru. Like Abaroa, Prat entered the collective imagination of the Chilean nation through the ultimate patriotic duty: dying for his country.

In May 1879, Arturo Prat was left as the naval commander charged to maintain the blockade of the port city of Iquique. In the harbor of the then-Peruvian port, his two remaining Chilean ships, the Esmeralda and the Covadonga, sat unaware of the approach of two superior Peruvian ironclads, the Independencia and the Huáscar, seeking to end the blockade of the port. The encounter was a very uneven contest, pitting aged and under-gunned Chilean vessels against ironclads with four and a half inches of armor and the power and speed to ram with devastating

51 Hugo Ballivián, Decreto Ley N° 2976, 14 de febrero de 1952.
Facing this certain defeat, Prat, the commander of the blockade on the ship *Esmeralda*, inspired his men with a speech that would immortalize his name and his actions, “Boys, the contest is unequal, but take courage. Never before has our flag been lowered for our enemies and I hope this is not the time that it does. For my part, I assure you, that while I am alive this flag will fly in its place and if I die my officers will know to fulfill their duty. Long live Chile!”

To remind his men of their duty, Prat focused on the symbolic refusal to strike the Chilean colors, a sign of surrender. Since the battle was likely to end in Chilean defeat, Prat alluded to his men’s sense of duty to the nation they fought for. Here, he expressed no doubt that he and his men had a duty to die for their nation, and would do so in order that the nation may live on. Prat’s devotion to the nation he defended demonstrated a commitment to sacrificing himself for the larger community of strangers with whom he shared a common nation. The only honor in such a lopsided contest was to fight bravely for Chile and Prat lead by example first with his words and finally, with his actions.

Prat’s rousing speech set the tone for the ensuing battle. The Chileans suffered many casualties and Prat’s ship would sink due to the effective ramming of the Peruvian ironclad *Huáscar*. Before the *Esmeralda* could sink, however, Prat further elevated his legend with his final desperate act. When the ships drew close from ramming, Prat screamed his final words encouraging his men, “Board boys!”

Along with only one other sergeant, Juan de Dios Aldea, he climbed aboard the Peruvian deck and was converted into a Chilean hero. Prat and his sergeant were quickly shot and died in front of their shipmates. Inspired by their commander’s action Prat’s men followed suit by boarding the ship, this time a dozen strong. Those sailors remaining on the rapidly sinking Chilean *Esmeralda* watched as the second attempt to board ended fruitlessly. But just as Prat implored, they refused to strike the Chilean colors.

The Chileans fought until the bitter end and the Chilean flag flapped defiantly until the ship sank beneath the waves. The Battle of Iquique was over and despite the loss of life and a ship; Prat and the crew of the *Esmeralda* defended the image of Chile. By stroke of luck or incompetence, the other Peruvian Ironclad had beached itself in pursuit of the Chilean *Corvadonga*. Since the Peruvian ironclad was considered half of the strength of the Peruvian Navy, its loss meant that the

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53 Ibid, 17.
54 Luis Uribe, “Parte pasado por el Segundo comandante de la ‘Esmeralda’” in Pascual Ahumada Moreno, *Guerra del Pacífico* (Valparaíso: Imprenta del Progreso, 1884), I, 295. “Muchachos: La contienda es desigual, pero, ánimo y valor. Nunca se ha arriado nuestra bandera ante el enemigo y espero que no sea esta la ocasión de hacerlo. Por mi parte, os aseguro, que mientras yo viva, esa bandera flameará en su lugar y si yo muero, mis oficiales sabrán cumplir con su deber. ¡Viva Chile!” (Translated by the author)
55 Sater, *The Heroic Image in Chile*, 18. “Al abordaje muchachos” (Translated by the author)
56 Ibid., 19.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
Chileans had “won” the battle even though they suffered greater loss of life and a ship of their own.\textsuperscript{59}

Out of this chance victory arose a hero of choice, and the leadership of Prat cemented his role in the Chilean imagination as a figure of national significance and power. Upon hearing of the Battle of Iquique, the Chilean public organized to honor Prat with a drive to fund a monument to his heroism.\textsuperscript{50} The effort to memorialize Prat marked his transition into a symbolic figure of national imagining. His role was to remind Chileans what it meant to be Chilean, and from his memorialization we may infer the image of communion of Chilean identity. Many honors to his sacrifice exist in Chile, but one in particular offers insight to the role Arturo Prat had in driving the construction of Chilean national identity.

The Monument to the Heroes of Iquique in Valparaíso, Chile remembers Prat and his men for their heroic patriotism.\textsuperscript{51} On May 21st 1886, in honor of the 7\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the naval battle at Iquique, the monument was inaugurated.\textsuperscript{62} Two years later the remains of Prat would be transported to the monument in a ceremony presided over by then-President José Manuel Balmaceda.\textsuperscript{63} In his dedication speech Balmaceda focused on the permanence of the monument and the future generations who would learn from it.\textsuperscript{64} The Chilean President suggests a process similar to one that Liisa Flora Voionmaa Tanner describes regarding the role of commemorative architecture in the Chilean capital, “Commemorative monuments have an important role in the symbolic construction of a modern nation. Although the political history of a nation is formed by ideas, the images and symbols that express [these ideas] are the public viewing in which a people or a country recognizes its own identity.\textsuperscript{65}

From this monument and the heroic figure of its subject, a deliberate attempt to construct Chilean identity takes form. Chileans, in visiting the monument to one of their greatest heroes, learn a bit about who they are as a people. Like Prat’s final speech, the monument elevates the role of the Chilean nation and Chilean pride. The monument depicts Prat along with Riquelme, Serrano, Aldea, and representation of the unknown Chilean soldier, all of whom gave their lives in battle. While the monument is dedicated to the heroes of Iquique, it is Prat

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{59} Sater, \textit{The Heroic Image in Chile}, 19.
\bibitem{60} Ibid., 20.
\bibitem{61} Due to edits to the length of this paper in adherence to the guidelines of \textit{The Elliott}, some photos have been removed. Photos and Maps accompany the descriptions of territories and monuments in the extended version of this essay.
\bibitem{62} Gustavo Bravo Arís, "Reseña de los monumentos más importantes en honor a los héroes del combate naval de Iquique" (\textit{Revismar} 5: 2007), 486.
\bibitem{63} Ibid., 487.
\bibitem{64} Ibid.
\bibitem{65} Liisa Flora Voionmaa Tanner “Del monumento conmemorativo a la escultura urbana Santiago 1792-2004” \textit{Escultura Pública} (Santiago: Editorial Ocho libros, 2005)

“Los monumentos conmemorativos, tienen un rol importante en la construcción simbólica de una nación moderna. Aunque la historia política de una nación está conformada por ideas, las imagines y los símbolos que expresan éstas constituyen la visión pública en que un pueblo o un país reconoce su propia identidad.” (Translated by the Author)
\end{thebibliography}
who takes center stage. Elevated above the other heroes, Prat stands tall, sword in one hand, Chilean flag in the other.

His final patriotic speech is given prominence, displayed for posterity and in its entirety. An addition to the monument in 1978 included the symbol of a flame representative of the spirit of Prat and the other heroes of Iquique. Text reminds the reader that the flame should make one reflect, presumably on the sacrifice of Prat, and make one feel proud to be Chilean. The update to the monument nearly a century after Prat’s death demonstrates the concerted effort to maintain his image and prominence as a symbol of Chilean identity. Prat’s image is not limited to his heroic sacrifice in war, and with time grows to perform various roles in Chilean national imagining.

In the years following his death, Prat’s image was fashioned in a variety of incarnations. A powerful role of the symbol of Prat was his place in education, especially cultural nationalism and civic education. In this role, Prat’s image became more important as a private individual, an ideal Chilean citizen, “Prized as a student, honored as a good husband, father, and son.” In the late 19th century Prat began to appear in the curriculum of schools teaching their students their civic duty to Chile while educating them on the patriotic victories of their forefathers.

The 1889 First Conference of Pedagogy in Santiago addressed the best practices in teaching national history in primary school, the example being the Battle of Iquique. In the example the teacher presented the familiar story of the battle but placed special emphasis on the deaths of Prat and his men who refused to strike the Chilean flag in defeat, “bequeathing with their heroism the grandest and brightest days for our country.” The lesson suggested that the highest duty to ones country was to die in its name. While the average primary scholar may not face the same degree of sacrifice in his young life or adulthood, the example was a reminder of those duties to country that arise in the average Chilean’s life. Not every Chilean may be like Prat, rather, he was an ideal to strive for. Students were reminded of this reality when the lesson closed with reference to the new monument to Prat in Valparaíso, then only three years old. The monument and its patriotic narrative, a symbol of Chilean identity to the public, were presented in classrooms as a method of ensuring the longevity of Chilean national identity.

This effort was supported by other education documents such as a 1900 curriculum for civic instruction for 4th year students. The 9th week of the school year focused on the triumphs of the War of the Pacific, as well as the occupation of

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66 Photo by author.
67 Photo by author.
68 Photo by author.
69 Translated by the author.
70 Sater, The Heroic Image in Chile, 125.
71 Ibid., 155.
72 Don Manuel Hurtado, “Mejor Método para la enseñanza de la Historia Patria en la Escuela Primaria.” Resumen de los Discusiones, Actas, I Memorias Presentadas al Primer Congreso Pedagógico Celebrado en Santiago de Chile en Septiembre de 1889 (Santiago: Imprenta Nacional, 1890), 188.
73 Ibid., 189.
74 Hurtado, “Mejor Método para la enseñanza de la Historia Patria en la Escuela Primaria.”
Bolivia and Peru by Chile’s victorious armies. The section on the War of the Pacific made special mention of Prat’s final speech to his crew and added, “that every Chilean child should know it by memory.” Thus, as Prat the patriotic historical figure was taught in the classroom, his image and example for the Chilean nation took the forefront. His example, beyond encouraging duty to the nation, took on dimensions that constructed a strong sense of Chilean identity.

As reward for his sacrifice at the Battle of Iquique Prat was depicted as a warrior willing to die for his country, and as such had proven that Chile still produced brave military heroes. Newspapers connected the narrative gaps in their nation’s biography by linking Prat with the liberators of the nation, “proving that the spirit that had freed Chile from Spain still lived.” A greater stretch of the imagination was the later use of Prat as a symbol of the concept of the raza chilena, a theory that, “claimed that the Chileans were unique because they were an amalgam of two heroic peoples, the Araucanian Indians and the Spanish conquistador.” In both examples, the newly minted heroic figure of Prat was associated to a historic source of pride and strength for the nation. Of course there was no direct link between Prat and the creole generation who liberated Chile, and even less evidence of direct raza chilena descent. However, such assertions by the press demonstrated the use of heroic figures as characters in a national biography that encouraged a prideful Chilean national identity.

This pride manifested itself in a narrative that built strong ties of horizontal kinship between Chileans, but looked down upon its neighbors. Before Prat’s figure ascended to represent the strength of Chilean identity over others, Chileans imagined themselves as different from the people of the neighboring nations. Ericka Beckman explored the role of race in the War of the Pacific and identified an important piece of Chilean self-imagining in the context of the conflict:

The cornerstone of Chilean imperial identity during the War of the Pacific was whiteness, a racial category that went far beyond phenotype to vouch for the virility, discipline, and morality of a homogenized “Chilean race.” Peruvian and Bolivian creoles, mestizos, Indians, blacks and Chinese, in contrast, were coded as racially degenerate, with inferiority measured in terms of effeminacy, laziness and backwardness.

Prat would, through his own heroic actions, represent the virility and discipline of the Chilean nation, absent any racial undertones. The success of Chile in the War of the Pacific against what many Chileans considered an alliance inferior Peruvians and Bolivians, however, perpetuated feelings of superiority. As Prat represented the

75 “Instrucción Cívica Programa de Geografía e Historia para educación primaria (1901), 231.
76 Ibid.
77 “Arenga que Arturo Prat dirijió a su tripulación, I que todo niño chileno debe saber de memoria.” (Translated by the author)
78 Sater, The Heroic Image in Chile, 57.
79 Ibid., 73.
exemplary Chilean, his place in the “Chilean race” declared a particular vision of what Chilean identity looked like.

Prat and other heroes of the War of the Pacific served to remind Chileans of their superiority as, “Chilean bravery in the war [had] shaped not only Chilean national identity but also how the war [was] constantly re-created in the collective memory-through public commemorations of the Chilean soldiers’ bravery.” 81 Chileans imagined the bravery embodied by figures such as Prat as a defining trait of their nation as a whole. Chilean victory in the war of the Pacific reinforced these feelings as Chilean historian Joaquín Fernandois asserts:

In this sense, the myth of the war, in other words its re-creation, became an image that identified the Chilean people as Chileans. It had high value for the popular culture and civic culture of the country in the twentieth century… the national victory achieved through the collective effort of the different social classes was in part due to the deficient preparation of Peru and Bolivia for the war. However, this was not an impediment to the country looking at it- and continuing to look at it- as a ‘stellar moment’.  82

Fernandois’ description of the “myth” of the war has to do with the recognition that the notion of Chilean bravery and perceived national primacy had little real effect on the outcome of the war. This reality did not prevent Chileans from imagining their victory in self-glorifying terms.

Prat’s heroic image greatly influenced the development of a national narrative that asserts Chilean power and reminds his countrymen of their victory in the War of the Pacific. The Bolivian Litoral is viewed as a spoil of that victory and Chileans have defended their claim to the territory for over a century in negotiations with Bolivia. Chilean attitudes towards Bolivian maritime aspirations are informed by the role that Prat plays in educating a nation of the heroic deeds committed to gain the Litoral from Bolivia. A consequence has been the limited success of negotiations between the nations and Chile’s refusal to restore any territorial gains of the War of the Pacific.

**Contemporary Challenges of Conflicting National Images**

The heroic figures of Eduardo Abaroa and Arturo Prat offer insight into the process of national imagination described by Anderson. As prominent symbols of the nations they died for, they serve a role instructing future generations of their countrymen in what it means to participate in their respective imagined community. The victim figure of Abaroa points an accusing finger at his descendants and contemporary Bolivians to still seek the reversal of the injustice of its landlocked state. In contrast, Arturo Prat reminds Chileans of their warrior identity and the strength of their nation in comparison to their neighbors. Figures such as Abaroa and Prat reinforce the legitimacy of the nation by narrating its past and projecting

meaning into its future. The conflicting nature of the meaning that these figures represent often raises tensions between Bolivia and Chile today.

The more than 135 years since the conflict have not dulled the Bolivian memory of losing the Litoral. In 2004, a government printed document, “The Blue Book,” outlined the perspective that “Bolivia has suffered other territorial losses, in the Plata, the Chaco [and the Amazon], but none have had such repercussions for the nation as the loss of its coastline.” These losses have not persisted in the memory of the nation the way that the loss of the Litoral has. This has to do with the role of Abaroa in contributing to a national biography that teaches Bolivians about the loss of the Litoral in a way that places importance on the Bolivian seacoast and the Chilean enemy. Former President of Bolivia Carlos Mesa wrote in 2008,

The sea became the main element of spiritual cohesion for the country…. The historical defeat is the big element of unity… our kids have been educated under two premises: hate Chile and maintain the imperative goal of recovering the access to the sea. The non-rational and permanent conclusion in Bolivian’s hearts is that Chile is the enemy, all that is Chilean is bad for Bolivia, and that Chile has never lost its appetite for taking away Bolivia’s territory and wealth.84

Mesa’s assessment of Bolivian identity today has its roots in the national narrative that emerged from the War of the Pacific. Enmity toward Chile, as exemplified by Abaroa’s heroic image after 1879, persists today. Furthermore, the goal to recuperate Bolivian losses from the War of the Pacific has not abated. The dispute over the territory remains open due to Bolivian persistence in asserting Chile has pending obligations to negotiate over the issue of access to the sea. Thus, temporary tensions largely stem from Bolivian actions and provocations. Bolivia has redoubled its efforts and has turned to the international community once again to force the issue.

The most recent developments between Bolivia and Chile over access to the sea have been the actions of current Bolivian President Evo Morales. Like many Bolivian Presidents before him, Morales has continued to press the issue. Morales reinforced usual political posturing and rhetoric with concrete actions like bringing the issue to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in April 2013. In many ways, the suit is a contemporary manifestation of 135 years of Bolivian frustrations with Chile and its refusal to negotiate a solution that awards Bolivia a sovereign port. In June 2013 the court agreed to hear the case and ordered Bolivia to file their written plea by April 2014. Chile was then required to enter a counterargument by February 2015.85

These recent events reflect the open-ended nature of the territorial dispute in the eyes of Bolivians. So long as that attitude persists, it will clash against Chilean dismissals of the Bolivian claim. At the time of writing this paper, the Bolivian claim has been filed and Morales himself arrived to deliver the written argument. Outside the ICJ he claimed, “This sea would be for the whole homeland. For us,
access to the sea is an inalienable right and Bolivia will never be at peace until this matter is resolved.”

Conversely, the Chilean perspective has been predictably dismissive of the suit, although it is obliged to craft a counterargument. Chilean Foreign Minister Heraldo Muñoz responded to the Bolivian claim by calling it “artificial” and dismissing its legal basis. Artificial or not, Chile has assembled a team to craft the counterargument to Bolivia’s claims. Coming off the heels of an ICJ decision that awarded 50,000 sq km of ocean to Peru in a dispute over maritime borders, Chile will address the pending case with considerable detail and gravity.

It is extremely unlikely that the ICJ will award the Litoral wholesale back to Bolivia, but the case is it’s best hope at resolving the issue of access to the sea by forcing Chile to the table to negotiate. The challenge lies in the decision of the ICJ, and the true test will be how Bolivia responds if the decision is not in their favor. 135 years is a long time to build national cohesion around access to the sea and a single decision by an international court might undercut the Bolivian goal. Even after the decision is handed down, Chileans and Bolivians are likely to continue to contest one another due to the legacy of Prat and Abaroa and their impact on conflicting national identities.

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86 Belinda Torres-Leclerq, "Bolivia submits case for coast to The Hague" Santiago Times, April 15, 2014.
88 “Chile, Peru and the ICJ A Line in the Sea” The Economist, February 1, 2014.
Reaching for Higher Education:
Examining the Student Perspective in Brazil

Amanda Mae Dudley

Introduction

Karina lives in an unpainted home with her brother, mother and stepfather. The home has three rooms: two bedrooms, and a living room. The kitchen table is placed under a tin roof, which provides some shelter from the hot sun, but little from the torrential rain. Sitting at this table, Karina retold her journey to become the first high school graduate, and now the first college student, in her family. Karina’s grandmother is functionally illiterate. Although her mother completed up to the fourth grade, her reading and math skills are low, forcing her to rely on Karina to help her with bills and other household activities. Karina was able to attend high school through Bolsa Familia, a program which gives conditional cash transfers to the mothers of children who attend at least 85% of classes on a monthly basis. The conditional cash transfers were immensely helpful to her mother, who makes below the national minimum wage as a housekeeper working in the informal economy. At 22, Karina is now working full-time and studying at Faculdade Anhanguera de Valinhos (FAV) at night. She is studying accounting because, in her own words, “accounting will enable me to work in the regulated economy, allowing me to demand minimum wage and even better. Who knows, with my accounting skills some day I may even have the opportunity to move away.”

But there is one thing Karina does not know. Upon her graduation from FAV, she will not, in fact, have received an internationally recognized degree. Accounting is only one of eleven majors offered at FAV and none of them meet the minimum standards for international recognition. The network of Faculdade Anhanguera schools is the largest network in the country, but none of its students are receiving recognized diplomas. Furthermore, the lack of diversity of majors offered by Faculdade Anhanguera schools, most of which fall under the category of business administration, creates homogenous alumni, devoid of doctors, engineers, or social scientists. Accredited schools in Brazil are few and far between and are dominated by the public universities, which remain out of reach for average Brazilians.

Since independence and to the modern day, quality public education in Brazil has remained the privilege of the few rather than a right for all. Through colonial rule, early monarchy, two military take-overs, and two democracies, governments and constitutions have failed to adequately provide education for their...
citizens. In the 21st century, Brazil is redefining itself as a global power. Yet, college enrollment for 18 to 24 year olds is at 15%, a figure that reflects insubstantial change over the past 25 years. In 2002, the World Bank reported that 13% of the same aged cohort were enrolled in university, the same percent that was reported in 1992 by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, DC. This reality exists regardless of the fact that from 1995 to 2007, high school graduation rates rose from 17% to 44%. Furthermore, the 15% is an exceedingly homogenous group: 58% percent are male and 66% come from the top income quintile.

Barriers to admission and attendance at the federal universities, which offer free tuition, are numerous even for Brazil’s middle class citizens. For most Brazilians the greatest barrier is economic. The majority of 18 to 24 year olds report being responsible, at least in part, for contributing to the family income. Moreover, the high quality secondary education needed to pass rigorous entrance exams is expensive and not found in the public high schools. Although reform programs have been proposed and often put into practice, none have succeeded in diversifying student bodies to accurately represent Brazilian society. The overarching reason, however, that the proposed reforms are unable to diversify the university population is because they fail to take into account Brazil’s unique culture.

The purpose of this thesis is to discover the barriers that the average Brazilian faces in attempting to achieve higher education. Through surveys and interviews, this thesis seeks to understand the Brazilian college student in order to answer the question why, despite good intentions, universities fail to educate a diverse and expansive Brazilian population. By understanding the demographic breakdown of university students and the barriers they perceive to university admittance and attendance, this thesis will determine what steps the Brazilian government must take in order to secure more equitable access to higher education for all Brazilians.

It is essential that the Brazilian government prioritize equitable access to university education throughout all regions of the nation, and across all socio-economic backgrounds. Equitable access, however, can only be achieved through solutions that are specifically designed for the Brazilian cultural and historical

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6 Holm-Nielsen, Higher Education in Brazil: Challenges and Options, 9.
7 Ibid., 10.
8 Through this research, it was found that of 150 surveys distributed to college students in 2013, 66% of students worked.
context. For this reason, this research begins by outlining the development of the Brazilian higher education system within its historic context.

Why Prioritize Diversifying Higher Education?

In 2012, Brazil’s 2.7% growth in GDP propelled it to become the sixth largest economy in the world.\(^9\) Despite its new status, many development indicators still look bleak. The majority of Brazil’s trade surplus comes from only two raw materials: soy and iron ore.\(^10\) Iron ore is traded primarily to China, who in turn exports finished iron goods to Brazil at exorbitant prices.\(^11\) Of Brazil’s 15 largest private corporations, only two are Brazilian owned.\(^12\)

Brazil’s economy, despite decades of determined development, does not currently have the skilled labor necessary to move past dependence on exporting raw materials and importing finished products. It is cheaper to export iron ore from Brazil to China and import the final product than to create the final product in Brazil.\(^13\) Furthermore, the scarcity of skilled labor coupled with the surplus of unskilled labor works to widen the gap between Brazil’s poorest and richest citizens. While unskilled laborers fight for job openings, skilled laborers have the freedom to make demands of employers.

This reality will continue until Brazil’s higher education is home to a more socioeconomically diverse student body. It is essential that Brazil grow its skilled labor force in order to truly become a global economic power. The university student body, however, will not become more diverse until culturally relevant changes have been enacted.

**Methodology**

As this study aims to understand the needs of Brazilian university students in order to make recommendations for educational reform, the methodology included surveys and interviews in order to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. The field research was conducted at three separate universities: Universidade Federal de Campinas (UNICAMP), Pontificio Universidade Católica de Campinas (PUCC) and Faculdade Anhanguera de Valinhos (FAV). The former two institutions are located in the city of Campinas and the latter is located in the neighboring town of Valinhos. At each of these locations, 50 surveys were distributed and 5 interviews were conducted with students and recent graduates. The information from these surveys and interviews was then applied to understanding the identity of Brazilian college students. Who are they? Where do they come from? What are their goals in pursuing higher education? This information was ultimately analyzed in order to ask: why, despite the best of intentions, has Brazilian higher education continuously failed its people?

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11 Ibid.
13 "Brazil 'overtakes UK's Economy',' *BBC News*.
The Data

The following table reflects the data collected from the 150 surveys distributed in total at all three locations. Although UNICAMP students’ families make on average more than twice PUCC students’ families and three times FAV students’ families monthly income, UNICAMP is the only school that has no tuition associated with attendance. Comparatively, PUCC is the most expensive school, with monthly tuition amounting to approximately two-thirds of students’ average monthly salary. Although the cost of attendance at FAV is lower than PUCC, tuition still accounts for roughly half of the average students’ monthly income. Both PUCC students and FAV students contribute positively to overall family income, whereas 100% of the students interviewed at UNICAMP did not work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Average Age</th>
<th>Percent Currently Working</th>
<th>Average Salary (monthly)</th>
<th>Family Income (monthly)</th>
<th>Tuition (monthly)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNICAMP</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0 reais/ 0 USD</td>
<td>11500 reais/ 5175 USD</td>
<td>0 reais/ 0 USD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUCC</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1500 reais/ 750 USD</td>
<td>5000 reais/ 2500 USD</td>
<td>1008 reais/ 504 USD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAV</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1050 reais/ 525 USD</td>
<td>3050 reais/ 1525 USD</td>
<td>484.46 reais/ 242.23 USD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

UNICAMP students also differ from their PUCC and FAV peers in their family histories of education. The two sets of pie graphs (next page) demonstrate the education level of mothers and fathers of the students from the three schools. It is evident that UNICAMP students come from a tradition of higher education, with 80% of fathers and 48% of mothers having achieved at least a bachelor’s degree (at a time when only 13% of Brazilians received any college education). Approximately 80% of PUCC students and 90% of FAV students are first generation college students.

These statistics, however, take light when analyzed in the context provided by the 15 in-depth interviews. A common theme throughout all 15 interviews was the influence that the interviewee’s family and the interviewee’s individual role in the family unit had upon their decision in pursuing higher education. 14 out of the 15 interviewees currently reside in their family home. While these 14 students are all living with their parents, there is a large divide between the roles that PUCC and FAV students have within the household and the roles held by their UNICAMP
counterparts. In her interview, Karina, the 22 year old FAV student, explained her relationship with her family, saying:

I have earned an income for my family since I was five years old. As a recipient of Bolsa Familia, my family earned money for sending me to school. I started work at 15, watching our neighbors children. Today, I work full time at an accounting firm. Working and providing towards family income makes me a valuable member of my family. My mother is a house keeper. Since this isn’t a regulated job, she makes under minimum wage. I’ve had the privilege to go to school, so I chose a major which would allow me to work in the regulated economy—accounting. I couldn’t earn money if I went to public school and then I don’t know how my mother would be. Being a part of regulated work will bring many benefits to my family so in a way, I am the provider for them (mother, stepfather and brother).

The basis for the equal relationship between FAV and PUCC students and their parents was described as a predominantly financial one. As equal, or at least partial, contributors to their households, despite living in their parents’ homes, FAV and PUCC students view themselves on equal footing with their parents. Furthermore, FAV and PUCC students have many negative things to say about their perceptions of their UNICAMP peers. One interviewee called UNICAMP students “crianças” (children), while another claimed that UNICAMP students are “sem responsabilidade” (without responsibility), in both cases implying that UNICAMP students are not adults on the same level as FAV or PUCC students and lacking financial responsibility. One particularly irritated PUCC student referred to UNICAMP students as “playboys,” a term which in Brazil implies a man who parties too much, has loose morals and comes from wealth. The purpose of bringing this information forward is not to judge whether or not UNICAMP students fit this profile but rather to understand the barriers to access of public education as understood by the students of private universities. Students from FAV and PUCC

### Level of Education of Student’s Fathers and Mothers

**UniCamp Fathers**
- 22% College Educated
- 58% High School
- 20% Post Graduate

**PUCC Fathers**
- 44% College Educated
- 34% High School
- 16% Post Graduate
- 6% Fourth Grade

**FAV Fathers**
- 36% College Educated
- 48% High School
- 8% Post Graduate
- 8% Fourth Grade

**UniCamp Mothers**
- 46% College Educated
- 52% High School
- 2% Fourth Grade

**PUCC Mothers**
- 60% College Educated
- 22% High School
- 18% Fourth Grade

**FAV Mothers**
- 44% College Educated
- 62% High School
- 8% Fourth Grade
consider themselves to be members of the working class, an identity which they believe to be at odds with studying in an institution such as UNICAMP, which would limit their ability to work.

The students at UNICAMP come from a family history of well-educated people. Their parents have planned for their education. The five UNICAMP interviewees each explained studying full time at private high schools, private middle schools, and private elementary schools before going to UNICAMP. Four of the five interviewees took special entrance exam preparation classes. One UNICAMP student, 19 year-old Marcelo, described his admissions process stating:

My parents always supported and pushed me to continue my education. My mother and father also graduated from UNICAMP so it was a dream of theirs to see me here. They are both engineers so studying engineering at their school has made me closer to them.

Another student, 17 year-old Regina, echoed this sentiment, stating:

Studying medicine is what my grandfather always wanted for me. He is a doctor and we joke about being co-workers some day. He has supported me a lot through my classes. Things have changed a lot since he got his medical degree, but he always surprises me with how much he has stayed knowledgeable.

While PUCC and FAV students base their familial worth in tangibly contributing to the family income, UNICAMP students’ familial relationships are based on sharing intellectual experiences. These are experiences that FAV and PUCC parents simply do not have. UNICAMP, FAV, and PUCC students all prioritize their relationships with their parents and their grandparents but the means to achieving these tight relationships are understood to be different.

For UNICAMP students, their role in the family is determined by continuing a legacy of excellence in education. From birth, their families have prioritized education. All five interviewees from UNICAMP attended elite private schools from kindergarten through high school, before opting to pursue public higher education because of its superior quality. In an analysis of higher education in developing countries, authors Paul Attwell and Katherine Newman explain how this switching between public and private institutions by economically advantaged families negatively effects the perception of public higher education:

Economically advantaged families act strategically, seeking superior educational opportunities for their children by private and public educational institutions. In doing so, they widen the gap in education attainment between affluent and poorer families. At the same time, public institutions lose legitimacy if they are viewed as closed off to those from lower social strata.\(^\text{14}\)

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The importance is in how the university is perceived. Because the federal universities are viewed as out of reach, even for middle class citizens, they are not considered a social service. All ten students interviewed from FAV and PUCC did not even attempt to gain admittance to UNICAMP. State and federally funded universities are considered unobtainable by lower class students because while attending these universities, one cannot work. This in turn diminished the students’ economic and symbolic value in the household. Furthermore, most Brazilians have not had the private education understood as necessary to pass the vigorous university entrance exam – the vestibular. From these interviews, it was apparent that students from UNICAMP, PUCC, and FAV measured their worth within family structures differently, although all three groups valued family. FAV and PUCC students consider themselves to be part of very different socioeconomic groups than their UNICAMP counterparts. It is essential, therefore, to understand how these societal divisions exist in order to assess their impact on access to higher education.

**Discussion: Brazil’s Lost Biologist**

I met my first interviewee, Anderson, in the back of his mother’s home. We spent an hour discussing his college experience as we folded tiny bright orange boxes which would hold the candies he would give as favors at his wedding. Once married, the two room casa no fundo would be his home. Within the story of a single person, Anderson truly synthesizes much of the discussion presented thus far.

Through our box-folding, he told me that he was the first in his family to achieve college acceptance – but it was not in the subject matter of his choice:

I always wanted to pursue biology. As a child, I dreamed of myself traveling the country – maybe even the amazon, who knows. But the private universities only have biology for education, and I never saw myself as a teacher – I don’t have your patience – so that dream sort of died. I studied business administration because its useful, it doesn’t force me to any one job, and it gives me access to regulated work. I did want to learn about the animals and the ecosystems, but I am going to have a family now and in Valinhos there are no jobs for biologists.

This discussion gives a face to many of the realities that have been discussed thus far. First, private universities are not seen as institutes of higher learning, but rather as a pathway to a future career. For this reason, while biology is taught at PUCC, it is taught with the focus of training future teachers. FAV does not have a science department. Second, a major goal for students pursuing private higher education is to secure a job within the regulated workforce – something that many of their parents were not able to do. Public universities are not perceived as accessible or useful to many students because of the opportunity cost of attendance, as well as an apparent lack of knowledge about the programs and potential careers available through public universities. My interviewee claimed that majoring in biology would not have been useful because there are no jobs for biologists in the southeast region of Brazil. Within 20 minutes of his home, there are two zoos. UNICAMP also houses a center
to research and care for the preservation of the environment. There are jobs for a biologist; information about these jobs and these possibilities, however, is not available to average citizens.

This research is valuable because it has prioritized examining the student perspective when asking why, despite the best of intentions, the Brazilian government has consistently failed to provide equitable access to higher education. In 2014, public universities remain out of reach to average 18-24 year olds, who prioritize working and contributing to household income as an essential part of their identities. At the same time, private institutions are allowed to run without accreditation, meaning students like Karina and Anderson work years and spend money to earn a degree that is unrecognizable. Despite the best of intentions, Brazil has consistently failed to effectively reform its system of higher education.

In 2014, Brazil is preoccupied with the organization and orchestration of the World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games. Although Brazil has surpassed the United Kingdom to become the sixth largest economy in the world, income inequality is still a defining feature of Brazilian society, where skyscrapers border favelas, and the emerging middle class struggles to gain a foothold. The reality of this vast income inequality is fueled by limited access to education. While unskilled labor is abundant, skilled labor is scarce. This dichotomy works to heighten the wage gap between unskilled and skilled laborers, thus perpetuating socio-economic inequality. In 2013, only 15% of 18-24 year olds were enrolled in college. This percentage must increase in order for Brazil’s population to become more skilled, and ultimately have access to better jobs. The growth of skilled labor will allow Brazil to effectively combat income inequality that has been a defining characteristic of Brazilian society since independence.
Reproductive Rights in Uruguay:
A Regional Policy Precedent?

Meghan A. Pierce

Introduction

The Southern Cone of Latin America.
Source: LatinNews.com

Uruguay, a small South American country of 3.3 million people, has recently attracted international attention for its increasingly progressive social policies. From its 2013 legalization of same-sex marriage, its 2013 legalization of marijuana, and its 2012 decriminalization of abortion, it seems that the country has left no cause unchampioned. Landing the coveted number one spot on the Americas Quarterly 2013 Social Inclusion Index, Uruguay earned high scores in political rights, civil rights, LGBT rights, percent of the population living on more than $4 per

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day, perceptions of government responsiveness by race and gender, and access to formal jobs by race and gender.\(^2\)

Uruguay’s reproductive policies, the focus of this investigation, are extremely unique in the Southern Cone, a region inclusive of southern Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay. The Southern Cone has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world, a key indicator for assessing socio-cultural and economic inequalities that adversely affect women and girls.\(^3\) While availability varies by country, strictly limited access to contraception, safe abortion, and reproductive and sexual counseling has dramatic effects on women’s health, and disproportionately affects women with less economic resources. Abortion is the least accessible of all reproductive services in the Southern Cone, sometimes even in cases of rape, incest, or danger to the life of the mother. Uruguay’s reproductive policies starkly contrast those of its conservative neighbors, particularly regarding abortion, which was decriminalized in October 2012. Given that strong reproductive policy reform is needed in the Southern Cone, this research will examine Uruguay’s capacity to affect policy change in the region, particularly laws and policies involving access to safe abortion.

The organization of this research proceeds as follows: First, an introduction to Uruguayan society and its culture of political inclusion will be provided. Second, the current state of reproductive health policy in the Southern Cone will be presented to provide context. From there, a history of the reproductive rights movement in the Southern Cone will be provided, followed by a delineation of the reproductive rights movement in Uruguay specifically. The 2012 decriminalization of abortion in Uruguay will then be presented as a policy case study. This will be followed by a discussion of Uruguay’s capacity to become a regional leader in reproductive policy in the Southern Cone, and will conclude with policy observations and reflections.

**Context**


The Social State of Uruguay

Uruguay is the second smallest nation in South America, situated between the two largest—Argentina and Brazil. During much of the 20th century, Uruguay was known as the “Switzerland of Latin America,” “an example of how democracy and enlightened social democratic rule—a democratic left—could triumph in Latin America.” Present-day politicians’ commitment to social inclusion and human rights is said to stem from the legacy of José Batlle y Ordóñez, President of Uruguay from 1903-1907 and from 1911-1915. Known as an “authentic humanist,” Batlle y Ordóñez implemented reforms focused on moral questions and social concerns at the time when Uruguay was most impressionable, having recently achieved independence from England and Brazil. His achievements included pensions, free public education and libraries, and laws concerning working hours, minimum wage, and the formation of labor unions.

As the 20th century progressed, Uruguay continued to establish itself as exceptional within the conservative Southern Cone of Latin America. In 1917, the Uruguayan constitution institutionalized the separation of Church and State. Crucifixes were removed from public spaces, divorce was legalized, and holidays in the Christian tradition were renamed: Christmas became known as “Family Day,” the Epiphany “Children’s Day,” and Holy Week “Tourism Week.” Soledad Gonzalez of Cotidiano Mujer, a Uruguayan feminist magazine, relays:

Uruguay is a very particular country in Latin America because it is a secular country; thus there was an early separation from the church. In public schools

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6 Ibid., 66.
7 Ibid., 66.
there are no crosses, we do not pray, but we have not prayed for dozens and dozens of years, thus, we do not have the same Catholic burden as the rest of Latin America.  

During the 1960s through the 1970s, Uruguay, like the other Southern Cone countries, became a proxy warfare battleground in the wake of Cold War tensions. Violent political subversion tactics attempted to quell Marxist-inspired guerilla groups in Uruguay, resulting in extreme human rights violations and institutionalized military rule. By the end of the 1980s, relative peace had been restored, the middle class had grown, and poverty was diminishing, paving the way for a renewed commitment to human rights and a reinvigoration of political parties. Factionalism, always a component of the Uruguayan political system, created the Frente Amplio (FA), a coalition of leftwing parties with roots in the Marxist movement. Many Uruguayan political scientists agree that today’s center-left FA has adopted key features of President Batlle y Ordóñez’s platforms, including statism and social equality. Feminism and commitment to human rights are also prominent features of FA rhetoric and policy.  

While not all gender-related policy originates from women lawmakers, women have traditionally been underrepresented in Uruguayan Congress, a phenomenon that will be discussed in Section IV. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Uruguay ranks 103rd out of 189 countries when measuring women’s Parliamentary representation: only 12 percent of the current members of the Chamber of Senators and Chamber of Deputies in Uruguay are women. The FA party, which has a woman president, boasts the majority of women representatives: of the four women currently elected to the Senate, all of them are FA members. Despite low representation (predicted to shift in the October 2014 elections), women in the Uruguayan legislature are known to build majorities and create coalitions to pass gender-related legislation. For example, the case study section of this investigation will discuss the Bancada Bicameral Femenina, a multiparty caucus which achieved parliamentary approval on a bill that permitted women safe access to first-trimester abortions.

Reproductive and Maternal Health in the Southern Cone: Statistical Context  

By the standards established by the 1994 International Confederation of Population and Development, which seek universal access to reproductive and sexual health services, reproductive and maternal health rates in the Southern Cone are far from adequate. Reproductive health in the region is notable for two reasons: 1) a

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8 Soledad Gonzales (writer for Cotidiano Mujer) interview by Meghan Pierce, Montevideo, Uruguay, December 19, 2013.
9 Tartakoff, "Continuity in Change: Leftwing Coalitions in Uruguay and Chile," 66.
11 Tartakoff, "Continuity in Change: Leftwing Coalitions in Uruguay and Chile," 70.
high maternal mortality rate, and 2) income inequality which dramatically affects accessibility to reproductive health services.

Maternal mortality is measured by the number of maternal deaths per live birth. Within the Western Hemisphere, the United States, Canada, and Costa Rica are considered “Group A” countries by reproductive health standards. Group A countries have a maternal mortality rate of less than 20 per 100,000 live births. Group B countries include all Southern Cone countries, which have a maternal mortality rate of 20-49 per 100,000 live births. The exception is Paraguay, classified as a Group D country with more than 100 deaths per 100,000 live births.

The accessibility and quality of obstetric care, both before and after delivery, varies from 100% in Group A to as low as 53% for some countries in group D. Contraception is available to 70% of women in group A, but to as few as 18% in some countries of group D. Given these facts, it is possible to infer that prenatal care is generally accessible in Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and Brazil, and relatively inaccessible in Paraguay, contributing to their disparate levels of maternal mortality.

Despite the comparatively better rates of maternal mortality in the Southern Cone to the rest of Latin America, maternal mortality remains a serious problem for all Southern Cone countries. In Group B countries, the most frequent cause of maternal death is complications of illegal/clandestine abortion, pre-eclampsia and eclampsia, and hemorrhage. In Group D, the causes of death are hemorrhage, pre-eclampsia and eclampsia, obstructed labor, and complications from unsafe abortion. Thus, in all Southern Cone countries, especially Paraguay, reproductive policy priorities include the improvement of sexual and reproductive health education, increased access to contraception, and improved access to abortion.

The lack of accessibility of abortion in the Southern Cone remains one of the region’s most controversial policy debates. However, it is proven that illegal/unsafe abortion is the number one contributor to maternal mortality in the Southern Cone. With the exception of Uruguay, which decriminalized abortion in 2012, women are generally unable to access abortion due the illegality of the practice. When safe abortion is unavailable, either because it is illegal or because it is inaccessible, women who are determined to avoid giving birth will resort to unsafe abortion, which is often carried out in hazardous conditions that put their health and life at risk.

Women who receive abortions from unqualified or illegal practitioners are at increased risk of death due to hemorrhaging and infection. With free and legal

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13 Ibid., 1.
14 Ibid., 1.
15 Ibid., 1.
16 Ibid., 1.
19 A. A. Acosta, E. Cabezas, and J. C. Chaparro, "Present and Future of Maternal Mortality in Latin America," International Journal of
access to safe abortion, instances of birth complications and maternal mortality drop significantly. Thus, there is an urgent need to decriminalize the practice. Abortion rates in the Southern Cone will also drop when contraceptive methods to prevent unwanted pregnancies reduce the need for the procedure in the first place.

Maternal mortality is a principal indicator for measuring socio-cultural and economic disparities that adversely affect women and girls. In the Southern Cone, great disparities in healthcare access exist between urban and rural areas, between the educated and uneducated, and along racial or ethnic lines, with indigenous groups experiencing the most exclusion. Due to these inequalities, poor women are more at risk for unplanned pregnancies, leading to an increase in the number of abortions, especially unsafe abortion where the practice is illegal or highly restricted. Wealthier women will find the means available to obtain a safer procedure, whether it is because they can travel to a clinic where the operation is safer, or so that they can pay a qualified practitioner for the procedure in secret. Income inequalities also mean poor women have less access to contraception, reproductive counseling, and sexual education. Thus, the need to reduce maternal mortality in the Southern Cone highlights the larger structural issue of income inequality in the region.

**Reproductive Policy Development in the Southern Cone: Opposition and Advocates**

The Southern Cone has witnessed innumerable social movements in the past 30 years, ranging from demands for human rights reparations in the wake of 20th century dictatorships, equal land distribution, fairer political systems, and improved labor standards. The reproductive rights movement in the Southern Cone, which began to gather strength in the late 1970s, has been profoundly influential in the creation of regional policy and laws surrounding access to abortion, contraception, and reproductive counseling. There are numerous actors working within the field of reproductive policy, all of whom contribute to the strength and breath of the movement.

**International Actors**

Reproductive policy in the Southern Cone has historically been influenced, both positively and negatively, by external developments and international actors. Such experiences vary tremendously by country. Some scholars claim that in traditional Cold War fashion, Southern Cone governments were given foreign aid for population reduction purposes, due to the concern that growing populations could threaten political stability and create conditions conducive to “the spread of Communism.” Contrarily, the structural adjustment programs enforced by multilateral finance institutions during the 1980s-1990s had debilitating effects on
health policy, as governments attempted to drastically decrease social expenditures. Arguably, foreign aid to the area of reproductive health has also had positive impacts. Blofield indicates that a lack of foreign aid was a major reason for the virtual drying up of the reproductive rights movement in Chile in the 1980s, whereas Argentina and Uruguay continued to receive international funding throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Today, Argentina and Uruguay have noticeably been more vocal and visible advocacy movements than Chile.

There are many prominent international organizations which support reproductive rights in the Southern Cone, most notably multilateral institutions like the United Nations Population Fund, the World Health Organization, and the Pan-American Health Organization, as well as nongovernmental organizations like Planned Parenthood International, the Center for Reproductive Rights, and Human Rights Watch. Such organizations work to monitor the creation and implementation of reproductive health laws, provide legal or medical counsel to reproductive issue areas, and produce reports and literature surrounding the status of reproductive health in the region. For example, the United Nations Populations Fund regularly publishes individual country profiles regarding population and reproductive health, which track countries’ progress toward the goals established by the International Conference on Population and Development.

**Political Actors**

No matter the strength of a movement, a robust social force alone cannot change policy. A movement needs political allies to push demands through a political system, for coalitions to be formed, for bills to be introduced, for laws to be passed, for programs to be implemented, and for government agencies to be created. Fernández Anderson hypothesizes that leftist governments in the Southern Cone are more likely to react to the demands of reproductive rights advocates than right-wing ones. For example, the administration of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in Brazil introduced a highly successful public health plan to subsidize birth control pills in Brazil 2007. During Nestor Kirchner’s administration in Argentina, the Argentine Congress saw a substantial increase in the number of bills introduced to legalize abortion or to make it less punishable.  

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24 Country profiles can be viewed here: http://www.unfpa.org/public/countries
26 Ibid., 4.
27 Gary Duffy, "Brazil to Subsidise Contraception," BBC Latin America (Sao Paulo), May 29, 2007.
28 Cora Fernández Anderson, "The Impact of Social Movements on State Policy: Human Rights and Women Movements in Argentina, Chile and Uruguay," Ph.D., University of Notre Dame 2011, 458
In the last 30 years in the Southern Cone, Presidents and legislators who have verbally expressed support for reproductive rights in their platforms are more likely to be sympathetic to women’s movement’s demands than those who expressed opposition. Furthermore, women politicians are more likely to respond to reproductive rights’ movements than their counterparts. This bodes well for countries like Chile and Brazil, who recently elected women presidents. Newly re-elected Chilean President Michelle Bachelet, former head of UN Women, has vocally supported reexamining laws concerning reproductive rights, which bodes well for Chile, a country where abortion is still criminalized in all cases. Despite these positive signs, there is still significant debate within the field of women’s studies as to whether political systems more inclusive of women would necessarily produce reproductive policy changes. As an important distinction, being a woman does not automatically imply that a politician is an advocate of reproductive policy. For example, Argentine President Christina Kirchner, under whose leftist administration gay and lesbian marriage was legalized, opposes women’s right to abortion even in the case of rape or incest.

The Conservative Opposition

A diverse and influential opposition to sexual and reproductive rights exists in the Southern Cone, promoted by the relationship between governments and conservative forces. Historically Catholic, conservative policies are oftentimes the result of the significant influence of the Vatican in the region, whether in overt or nuanced ways. It is important to note that not all conservative influences in the Southern Cone stems from the Catholic Church. For example, in Argentina in 2011, Orthodox and Evangelical churches published a joint document describing their “commitment to life,” testifying to the growing influence of other conservative forces in the region. Furthermore, not all Catholics in the region are opposed to reproductive rights. Members of Catholics for Choice, a group especially prominent in Brazil and Argentina, represent an important dissenting opinion among Catholics.

There are many ways that scholars have measured the influence of the Catholic Church on legal systems within the Southern Cone. Some have examined State-Church relations as defined by the constitution (In Argentina, for example, the Church and State are not formally separated), or the moral authority that the Church possesses over society as a whole. However, when defining the role of the Church in

32 Ibid., 301.
reproductive policy, there is more visible Catholic influence on the political elite. For example, some scholars claim that politicians who were educated in Catholic universities are less likely to be allies of women’s movements and are therefore expected to share the Catholic Church’s views on matters like abortion and contraception. Furthermore, advocacy by the Church against contraception, inaccurately describing it as an abortifacient (i.e. a substance that induces abortion), has influenced innumerable judges and politicians within the Southern Cone.

The Role of Civil Society and Feminist Advocacy

Sustained advocacy by feminist NGOS, university working groups, legal societies, and medical groups has been a major factor in advancing reproductive policy in the Southern Cone. Such groups work to promote reproductive rights issues during election seasons, file formal complaints with international human rights courts, and perform significant and widespread outreach through both online and public forums. Very powerful collaborations have been formed when different sectors—e.g. academic, health, legal, governmental, and non-governmental—have worked together to promote policy change. One of the most significant policy advances in the last decade, the decriminalization of abortion in Uruguay in 2012, is majorly attributed to the work of cross-sector advocacy groups—a topic that will be examined in the Uruguay case study.

The Reproductive Rights Movement in Uruguay: Successes and Challenges

A History of Political Cooperation

As in the rest of the Southern Cone, Uruguay’s women’s movements have origins in the country’s transition to democracy in the 1970s and 1980s. Early groups were politically focused, yet during Uruguay’s democratization, women’s groups became more specialized—in this case, reproductive rights groups will be considered. Uniquely, women’s political organizations in Uruguay included the issue of abortion as a topic for discussion during the process of democratization. Thus, the country was already experiencing successes in terms of reproductive policy early on.

As the history of social movements in the Southern Cone proves, there are two conditions required in order for a social movement to have a successful impact on policy: the strength of the movement and the ability of a movement to form political allies. A more confrontational political culture and the predominance of street protests do not necessarily lead to policy changes. For example, as Table 1 shows, Argentina has witnessed an extremely high level of street activism to demand

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33 Ibid., 457.
34 Ibid., 299.
36 Ibid.
access to safe and free abortion. However, the impact on state policy has been minimal. The Uruguayan movement has been more successful in having its demands addressed: in comparison with Argentina’s more confrontational style of politics, Uruguay has a stronger tradition of searching for consensus, evidenced in its common practice of forming bipartisan caucuses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Argentina</th>
<th>Chile</th>
<th>Uruguay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: NUMBER OF PROTESTS FOR THE DECRIMINALIZATION OF ABORTION IN ARGENTINA, CHILE AND URUGUAY, 2000-2007

As Table 2 indicates, Uruguay has one of the lowest rates of women in leadership positions in the Southern Cone. Interestingly, the number of women in Congress has not profoundly limited its capacity to advance gender issues, suggesting that the number of women in Congress is not as important as the commitment of those women in power to reproductive causes. Furthermore, women in both the Lower Chamber and the Senate do not generally oppose pro-reproductive rights legislation, even those belonging to the conservative Blanco Party. As mentioned in the Context section, the Bancada Femenina (Women’s Caucus) has mobilized women legislators across party lines to promote women’s rights since the early 2000s. Thus, the lack of opposition to reproductive rights among women leaders has allowed for robust debate on the issues in the Uruguayan Congress.

**The Role of the Catholic Church**

Also unique to Uruguay is a lesser degree of Catholic influence on policy making. This starkly contrasts neighboring countries like Chile and Argentina, whose politicians are often closely aligned with Church officials. For example, from the early 1990s in Uruguay, there was a clearly stated demand to decriminalize abortion. Whereas at that time in Argentina, the Menem Presidential administration had introduced an era of moral conservatism, evidenced in the President’s tight

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38 Ibid., 487
39 Ibid., 488
alignment with the Catholic Church. Dr. Karina Betthany, Professor of Social Sciences at the University of the Republic of Uruguay, points out:

Uruguay is a secular country, a country with separation between government and church, in reality since its first institutional moments as an independent country. Of course the church has influence, but you cannot compare it to the level of influence of the church in countries like Argentina, Paraguay, Brazil, or even Chile. The church has been an obstacle, and it has campaigned against sexual and reproductive health and particularly against abortion, but its weight is comparatively lower in Uruguay to other countries.\footnote{Karina Betthany (Professor of Social Sciences at University of the Republic of Uruguay) interview by Meghan Pierce, Montevideo, Uruguay, December 16, 2013.}


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Parliament</th>
<th>Ministries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% Senate</td>
<td>% Lower house/unicameral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraguay</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average Percentage</strong></td>
<td><strong>19.32</strong></td>
<td><strong>17.58</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lucy Garrido of \textit{Cotidiano Mujer} agrees:

No Uruguayan, even if she/he is Catholic, likes when the church comes to tell them what to do. And that is the greatest value of this country, and I think this is the thing that differentiates us from the rest of the region... We have had almost 150 years of secular, free and compulsory [education]. We’ ve had public schools with both rich and poor students, with both Jewish and Christian students, and this has happened thanks to secularism. It is something that we wholly defend.\footnote{Lucy Garrido (\textit{Cotidiano Mujer}) interview by Meghan Pierce, Montevideo, Uruguay, December 19, 2013.}
Despite the fact that Uruguay is a secular country, it is important to recognize the key areas in which the Catholic Church still influences policy. According to Lilián Abracinskas, founder and executive director of Mujer y Salud en Uruguay, “the problem is the influence of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The Catholic hierarchy acts as a powerful source between the powerful.”43 This Catholic influence on the political elite, as opposed to the entire Uruguayan population, has been apparent during the debate surrounding the decriminalization of abortion. For example, the Catholic hierarchy vocally threatened to excommunicate senators who were pro-choice in an attempt to delay the passing of new reproductive health laws, both in 2004 and again in 2008.44

Despite the Catholic influence on the political elite, all interviewees pointed to the lack of influence on Uruguayan public opinion. Lilián Abracinskas concludes:

[At the end of the day], what the church hierarchy in Uruguay does not have is civilian or popular adhesion. People might say they are Catholic, but the Church position on abortion might be horrible to them. People might be Catholic but be in favor of marriage equality. The church is an entity, but in terms of moral valuation or social positions, it has no bearing. People do not listen to the Catholic Church as a preferential voice.45

There are also multiple non-Catholic church groups who actually align with reproductive rights movements in Uruguay: For example, Methodist and Vandense churches have been in solidarity with the movement to decriminalize abortion since 2002.46

The Role of Civil Society Groups

The social allies of Uruguay’s reproductive movement are some of the strongest and most well organized in the Southern Cone. As Table 3 demonstrates, pro-reproductive rights groups include, but are not limited to: medical groups, unions, legal associations, university alliances, reproductive rights NGOs and non-profits, and select churches.

Table 3: SOCIAL ACTORS SUPPORT FOR WOMEN’S MOVEMENT DEMAND FOR THE DECRIMINALIZATION OF ABORTION IN ARGENTINA, URUGUAY AND CHILE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medical Associations</th>
<th>Argentina</th>
<th>Uruguay</th>
<th>Chile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes (2001)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

43 Lilián Abracinskas (founder and executive director of Mujer y Salud en Uruguay) interview by Meghan Pierce, Montevideo, Uruguay, December 17, 2013.
45 Lilián Abracinskas interview by Meghan Pierce, Montevideo, Uruguay, December 17, 2013.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>and Schools</th>
<th>Unions</th>
<th>Universities</th>
<th>Social movements</th>
<th>Churches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The first strategic actor in the reproductive rights movement in Uruguay is the medical community. Doctors and nurse practitioners, associated with legitimacy and moral authority, possess more social clout, especially regarding highly polarized issues like abortion and contraception. For example, in Uruguay, coalitions of public hospital doctors, the medical school at the University of the Republic of Uruguay, doctors’ unions, and the OBYN society of Uruguay have been formally supportive of the demand to decriminalize abortion since 2001. A second relevant social actor is that of lawyer’s associations, as many bans on reproductive services are defined in criminal codes. Again, Uruguay provides some of the earliest examples of legal involvement in reproductive policy.

Unions are also a relevant actor in the field of reproductive rights in Uruguay. The country continues to demonstrate its social exceptionalism in that only one central workers’ union exists, under which a cohesive Department of Gender and Equity is housed. The Department has been actively involved in women’s issues, including reproductive rights, since as early as 1980. Perhaps the deepest level of engagement with reproductive policy, however, comes from public universities in Uruguay. In 2002, the Campaign for the Decriminalization of Abortion received the official support of the University of the Republic of Uruguay, the leading public university in Montevideo. The University houses some of the most renowned feminist academics in the country, and regularly produces literature on reproductive policy.

V. Case Study: The 2012 Decriminalization of Abortion in Uruguay

Undoubtedly, the most groundbreaking development in Southern Cone reproductive policy in recent years was the 2012 decriminalization of abortion in

Uruguay. A striking example of the effectiveness of inter-sector collaboration, the 2012 decriminalization was the result of partnership between advocacy groups from medical, governmental, non-governmental, non-profit, legal, and academic fields. The approval of Law N° 18.987, “The Law of Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy,” permitted abortion services during the first trimester of pregnancy, reversing a previous law that criminalized the practice. In 2012, Uruguay became the fourth jurisdiction in Latin America and the first in the Southern Cone to permit abortion, following Cuba, Guyana, and Mexico City’s Federal District. Uruguay’s experience with abortion will thus be used as a case study within the context of broader Southern Cone reproductive policy.

**Lead-up to the Decriminalization**

Before the 2012 decriminalization, seeking an abortion had been a federal crime in Uruguay since 1938. Article 325 of the law stated, “a woman that undergoes an abortion or consents to one will be punished with a prison sentence that can range from three to nine months.” Furthermore, the law stated that, “Whoever else takes part in a woman’s abortion, through principal or secondary participation, will be punished with a prison sentence from six to 24 months,” therefore endangering practitioners of abortion, whether medically certified or not. According to the Penal Code, a judge could excuse a case of abortion on certain grounds, as long as the procedure took place before the third month of the pregnancy. Unforeseen circumstances that could also lessen the penalties included “monetary struggles, risk of the life of the woman, rape, and familial honor.” Nevertheless, the legal risk of seeking an abortion was extremely high.

Following the end of a military dictatorship in 1985, at which time Uruguay was restored to a democratic state, there were annual legislative initiatives to modify articles of the Uruguayan Penal Code, which criminalized abortion. Beginning in 1985, the Legislature debated five bills to modify the code at the parliamentary level, all of which were overturned. Because of the Penal Code’s regulations, abortion remained a serious social problem, as many women still pursued secret and/or unsafe abortions. In fact, estimates indicate that approximately 150,000 abortions took place between 1974 and 2003.

Despite the successively negative results in the legislative process, the debate surrounding abortion in Uruguay remained a prominent topic of public

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53 Ibid.

discussion, which shortened internal debates in Congress and expanded support for modification of the law.\(^{55}\) As a result, over the years, Uruguayans became more accustomed to publically discussing the previously taboo topic, a trend that would positively impact public understanding and perception of abortion.

**Activism Gains Momentum**

2001 proved an important year for abortion policy. The persistence of unsafe abortions and the increase in the number of women who died from the procedure coincided with a financial crisis, producing an intense social reaction. The advocacy work that had been gaining momentum for 20 years broke to the forefront of public attention, as the medical community began promoting harm-reduction approaches to abortions that were inevitably occurring. A program called *Iniciativas sanitarias contra el aborto provocado en condiciones de riesgo* (Health initiatives against abortion in unsafe conditions) began providing women with information on safer self-induced abortion methods (such as mifepristone, an at-home method in pill form) despite the many legal restrictions on abortion, some of which would change with the 2012 legislation. In fact, the program won the support of the national Ministry of Health, and was gradually implemented by many public-sector health facilities in the greater Montevideo.\(^{56}\)

In 2003, the *Coordinación Nacional de Organizaciones Sociales por la Defensa de la Salud Reproductiva* (The National Coalition of Social Organizations for the Defense of Reproductive Health), a collation of 20+ organizations working to promote the decriminalization of abortion, was created.\(^{57}\) The coalition represented an important step towards cooperation between trade unions, social groups, women's rights organizations, the youth sections of leftist parties, professionals, and some Protestant groups. Both the risk-prevention program and the unification of advocacy groups under the *Coordinación Nacional* were important developments that created a significant cohesion between feminist sectors.

**Decriminalization and Attempted Referendum**

In 2008, a bill was approved in the Uruguayan Senate to legalize abortion, thanks in part to lobbying by the parliamentary women’s caucus *Bancada Bicameral*

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 73.  
However, the law was vetoed by the then-President of the Republic, Tabaré Vázquez. On October 17, 2012, the Legislature was presented with a new bill that would decriminalize abortion during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, effectively nulling the previous law. After 14 hours of debate, the bill was passed in the lower house of Congress by a margin of 50–49. Finally, the Senate approved the bill with 17 votes in favor and 14 votes against. In addition to the support of Congress, the decriminalization also had the strong support of new President José Mujica, starkly contrasting the position of Vázquez. With Mujica’s approval, the bill became law. He stated, “If there is an economic question, of loneliness and anguish, the facts show that [this law] will save more lives. I cannot discuss this as a matter of principle, but as a reality.”

In June 2014, independent groups and select members of the right-wing Colorado and centrist National parties petitioned to overturn the law, but failed to gather enough votes for a consultation ballot to force a national referendum repealing the law. The failure of the referendum thus solidified and affirmed the Uruguayan people’s satisfaction with the new policy. As former President Tabaré Vázquez, who vetoed the original abortion law, is widely predicted to win the October 2014 elections, the referendum also confirmed a future conservative administration’s inability to revoke the law. According to Karina Betthany, “now that the law is approved, [Vázquez] has said publicly said that it has to be respected… It is clear that Uruguayans agree mostly with the law, and the political cost of attempting to nullify the law would be very high, meaning no one will challenge it, not even Tabaré Vazquez.”

The Realities of Decriminalization

Although the 2012 decriminalization marked an important step in terms of reproductive rights, both nationally and within the hemisphere, the policy is nonetheless highly restrictive. Indeed, according to the standards set forth by the International Conference on Population and Development, the law is far from

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58 Laura Ymayo Tartakoff, "Continuity in Change: Leftwing Coalitions in Uruguay and Chile," 70.
61 Pablo Fernandez, "Uruguay Abortion Vote: Uruguayans Decide If Pregnancy Termination Law Goes To Referendum," The World
adequate. It stipulates that women who want to have an abortion must justify their reasoning before at least three experts: a psychiatrist, a social worker, and a gynecologist. The bill requires that those individuals outline all of the potential health risks associated with abortion and propose alternative solutions, like adoption. Following these conversations, the woman has to wait five days which are considered a “reflection period” before going through with the procedure.63

These restrictions, in many ways, prevent women from quickly and safely accessing an abortion, and undermine a woman’s right to self-determination. The stipulations constitute an enormous burden for women traveling to clinics, who must remain in the area until the mandated five-day period has passed. Susana Rostagnol indicates:

[For a woman coming from a rural area], there is a significant cost for traveling, but even more significant is the psychological cost of having the "I want an abortion for this reason at this time" mentality, [and having to postpone the decision due to the waiting period]. It’s a very difficult decision, and when a woman and reaches the decision, she is often full of ambivalence. The wait is thus more torturous.64

Another weak point of the law is that doctors are allowed conscientious objection, meaning they can refuse a woman an abortion based on their personal moral reasoning. This is highly problematic for women who live in areas with limited healthcare. If the one accessible clinic refuses to provide abortion services, women are left with very few options. Susana agrees that, “[What is worst about this law] is that if a woman lives in a very small place, and if there is no clinic in that town, and the doctor has the right to not perform the abortion, she has no other option but to seek an unsafe abortion.”65 Thus, Uruguay’s abortion policy allows the very complicated intersection of a doctor’s right to conscientious objection and a woman’s right to abortion.

Today, networks of feminist organizations seek fewer restrictions involved in the abortion process. They also seek improved implementation of the law, especially in rural areas with limited health services. Since the law is still relatively new, attempts to measure its success are not altogether reliable. However, Uruguayan citizens, who proved their support of the new policy when the 2012 referendum was not passed, have responded favorably to its implementation. What is more, public support for safe access to abortion is growing every year.66

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64 Susana Rostagnol interview by Meghan Pierce, Montevideo, Uruguay, December 18, 2013.
65 Ibid.
Uruguay’s Capacity for Leadership in Regional Reproductive Policy

Global Discourse and Domestic Policy Change

In order to determine Uruguay’s capacity to serve as a leader in reproductive policy in the Southern Cone, it is necessary to first consider the transnational flow of social policy ideas in the region, and the theoretical capacity of international dialogue about reproductive rights to influence individual countries. Since the ICPD was held in Cairo in 1994, global dialogue about reproductive rights changed significantly. Access to contraception, abortion, and reproductive counseling came to be described as issues of health and of social equality, rather than objects of morality or religious values. Accordingly, the emphasis on maternal mortality as a key reproductive health indicator facilitated the spread of this discourse. Thus, new transnationalized ideas about the benefits of reproductive services provided local activists with ideas and narratives to push for policy reforms, as well as legitimized new policy development by governments. For example, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) cites Chile’s high rates of maternal health care accessibility, as well as Brazil’s effective HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns, as direct attempts to fulfill sexual health standards established by the ICPD.

While these examples illustrate the importance of internationally sanctioned ideas in affecting domestic policy changes, particular conditions must exist for international ideas to penetrate domestic discourse. While the ICPD and other international agreements helped to frame reproductive policy as a human rights and health issue, domestic politics in individual countries cannot be overlooked. For example, the ICPD’s support of safe abortion clashed significantly with Argentina’s traditional ideas of maternalism and familialism, which has limited the extent of policy change in the last ten years. Thus, while transnational discourse may be able to spark renewed dialogue about reproductive policy in Southern Cone countries, it must be framed in ways which resonate with the national historical legacies of individual countries. It is with this context in mind that Uruguay’s policy leadership will be examined.

Limitations to Leadership

Uruguay’s progressive social policies, especially its reproductive policies, have left many to wonder about the country’s capacity to establish a precedent within the Southern Cone. It is evident that the status of reproductive health rights in the region is at a crossroads: governments, civil society organizations, medical groups,

70 Ibid., 122
legal groups, and universities of Uruguay, Argentina, Paraguay, Chile and Brazil are pooling more resources into both conservative and progressive reproductive campaigns. However, the undeniable conclusion of this research is that the country of Uruguay is exceptionally unique in the Southern Cone, and its experience with reproductive policies cannot be easily replicated, at least not within the next 10-15 years. Uruguay’s highly individualized experience with social policy, described in the body of this research, has many aspects which cannot be easily replicated by its neighbors in the Southern Cone. Such individualities include Uruguay’s history of social inclusion and democratic participation, the powerful ability of civil society organizations to work across sectors to promote reproductive policy, the Uruguayan State’s de facto acknowledgment and support of grassroots mobilization efforts, the Uruguayan President’s direct support for the policy, the formal separation of church and state, and its relatively homogenous and well-educated population.

This opinion was mirrored uniformly across every participant interviewed. Karina Betthany summarizes:

What is happening here corresponds with the political, cultural, and historical context of Uruguay, which is not easily transferable to other countries. Do not forget that Uruguay is a very uniform country socially. Thus, you find big contrasts with [Southern Cone] countries like Paraguay, [which have large indigenous populations]. Given that this is a country that is very uniform, you will not find large disparities of opinion between people.  

With respect to abortion specifically, it is even worth considering whether Uruguay’s policy ought to be replicated internationally. While the country’s decriminalization of the practice does lower obstacles to seeking an abortion, the law imposes complicated roadblocks, including a week-long waiting period, a required consultation with a team of professionals, and the opportunity for medical professionals to refuse to provide abortion services under conscientious objection. While not absolutely prohibitive, the restrictions are highly burdensome for women, especially those from outside of the urban area of Montevideo, or those with limited economic resources.  Lilián Abracinskas firmly opposes replicating the law in other countries:

In terms of legislation, it is not a good law. It is not a law to promote other countries, because it establishes a number of barriers to access safe abortion. All of us that work on health know that barriers to accessing health services always end up hurting the population that was already injured before. The poorest women, women living in rural areas, younger women, and migrants are ultimately going to be most poorly affected. Women with more resources will be more likely to find a better selection of providers.  

When considering replicating Uruguay’s abortion policy in other countries, it is also important to consider that tools to measure health outcomes since 2012 are

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73 Lilián Abracinskas interview by Meghan Pierce, Montevideo, Uruguay, December 17, 2013.
unreliable, meaning policy makers are likely to overemphasize the success of the law. For example, some of the interviewees in this study, who had not closely monitored the abortion law’s impact since 2012, stated assuredly that there had not been one death from unsafe abortion since the procedure was legalized, implying that abortion had become universally accessible. Lilián Abracinskas quickly contradicted this:

First of all, there have been deaths from abortion since 2012. One death occurred in September of this year, and last year we saw two deaths of women from abortion. In terms of implementation, the law can look at the glass half full or half empty. This past Friday I was in a discussion with the Deputy Minister of Health, who says that everything is wonderful, everything is consolidated, [and that the law’s implementation] has been a highly successful experience. This triumphalist discourse [exists] because the government wants to prove that it is quickly implementing changes.74

Susana Rostagnol agreed that measurement of the law’s success is problematic:

What I find to be interesting is that when we measured the number of abortions annually in 2003, our estimate was 33,000. According to research conducted since 2012, there have been 1400 per month- very low! These gaps means there are many women who still resorting to the clandestine abortions, whether due to inaccessibility in their hometown, the stigma of abortion itself, or barriers imposed by the new policy.75

Thus, it is necessary to remain realistic about Uruguay’s implementation of the new abortion policy before seeking to replicate it in other countries.

Lessons Learned from Uruguay

While it is obvious that Uruguay is a unique country whose reproductive rights trajectory cannot be easily replicated, there are many lessons to be learned from its experience which can be applied more broadly. Firstly, there is the simple fact that Uruguay’s experience with abortion and other reproductive methods represents an overcoming narrative, an inspirational story of the power of political activism to affect national policy changes.

The precedent that can be copied by other countries is the political will to solve a problem that we all know exists. It is a precedent that can influence other governments in the region because we all know the answer: the non-response of governments to this problem does nothing but create misery and suffering of women, particularly the most poor and the most vulnerable.76

A second lesson is the importance of international human rights and reproductive rights conventions and treaties in legitimizing advocacy efforts. When courts within the Southern Cone are considering abortion or family planning court

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74 Lilián Abracinskas interview by Meghan Pierce, Montevideo, Uruguay, December 17, 2013
75 Susana Rostagnol interview by Meghan Pierce, Montevideo, Uruguay, December 18, 2013
76 Lilián Abracinskas interview by Meghan Pierce, Montevideo, Uruguay, December 17, 2013.
cases, having the backing of publications of conventions like the ICPD, justifies and legitimizes more progressive stances. Uruguay has already proved itself capable of influencing transnational dialogue and formal agreements about reproductive rights issues. The fact that the first Conference on Population and Development for Latin America and the Caribbean was held in Montevideo supports this. According to Lilián Abraskinkas,

This is the precedent that Uruguay should establish, that it is fulfilling its obligations within the framework of the international and regional arena. Uruguay presents itself as an example, and also helped to craft the Declaration of Montevideo, the outcome of the regional conference on population and development. The Declaration is definitely the most progressive statement since the commitments made at Cairo.77

A third and powerful lesson from Uruguay’s experience, which could be applied to the experiences of other Southern Cone countries, is the power of cross-sector advocacy. Advocacy movements in Uruguay demonstrate the momentum and clout that can be built when different fields apply their specific knowledge to a common cause. Most important to Uruguay’s experience, however, is the role of nongovernmental civil society groups, such as the well-known nonprofit Mujer y Salud Uruguay, or the feminist magazine Cotidiano Mujer. Many interviewees stressed the importance of such civil society advocates, who sought to publicize the dangers of illegal abortion before the issue was ever presented in the Uruguayan Senate. “The achievements of this country are now sold as the achievement of a government, but are actually the product of a tireless struggle, first of feminist organizations, after women’s organizations, and multiple other social actors.”78 Furthermore, it is those nongovernmental organizations that will continue to push to expand and revise the abortion law, as well as other reproductive policies, in coming years.

Conclusion

Providing women with safe and affordable access to reproductive health services is one of the defining human rights issues of the century. The importance of these services cannot be overemphasized: women in control of their own reproductive health are likely to have fewer children and will provide better living conditions for the children they do have. Women with improved access to reproductive health services will also be healthier, more educated, and will earn higher incomes. The Southern Cone maintains a high rate of maternal mortality because services like safe abortion, universal access to contraception, and legitimate sexual education are limited and, in some cases, considered criminal offenses. Thus reproductive policy issues in the Southern Cone will continue to be debated in coming decades.

Uruguay’s experience with reproductive policy is considered exceptional within the conservative Southern Cone region. This paper argues as its principle

77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
conclusion that Uruguay will likely not establish a reproductive policy precedent in the Southern Cone within 10-15 years. Compared to other Latin American nations, the country has a comparatively homogenous, well-educated society, with relatively low levels of cultural conflict. Unlike neighboring countries such as Argentina, the church and state are also formally separated in Uruguay. Furthermore, the Case Study section demonstrated that Uruguay’s abortion law is highly flawed, and therefore not recommended to be replicated in other countries. Indeed, it does disservice to the experiences and cultures of Chile, Argentina, Paraguay and Brazil to imply that a “one size fits all” set of reproductive policies can be implemented in every country in the Southern Cone. Despite this prediction, the paper maintains lessons can be learned from Uruguay’s experience.

Though highly unique, Uruguay serves as a successful example of the power of feminist advocacy, an experience which could serve to mobilize other groups within the Southern Cone. Due to its leadership within the realm of international reproductive health dialogue, Uruguay also demonstrates the power of transnational agreements to legitimize national reproductive policy. Finally, Uruguay’s experience proves the effectiveness of cross-sector collaboration to advance reproductive issue areas. While it is unlikely that all Southern Cone countries will adopt reproductive policies similar to those of Uruguay within the next decade, its experience nonetheless serves as an example of what is possible. Furthermore, it demonstrates the ability of a small country to take an influential stance on one of the greatest social injustices of the Southern Cone, as well as the Latin American region as a whole.
Middle East
Relationships Under Siege
How the Siege of the Church of the Nativity Strengthened the Relationship between Christians and Muslims in Bethlehem

Olivia M. Bee

Introduction
In order to best understand why the Christian and Muslim communities in Bethlehem are growing closer together, this paper will answer a two-part question. First, why was the Siege of the Church of the Nativity a catalyst for strengthening the relationship between the Christian and Muslim communities in Bethlehem? Second, how has the Siege of the Church of the Nativity sparked interfaith dialogue in the Bethlehem community? The Siege of the Church of the Nativity created a unique crisis among the Bethlehem governorate population, which would shape the relationship between Muslims and Christians in the Bethlehem governorate for years to come. Since the Siege of the Church of the Nativity came to an end, the relationship between Muslims and Christians in Bethlehem has been strengthened. It has been sustained by an increase in interfaith dialogue within the community. This gives hope for the larger, more global conflict between religious beliefs that often seems intractable. It gives hope that someday others can enter into interfaith dialogue despite the harm that may have occurred in the past. The Bethlehem community gives us hope that someday those of various faiths will not only embrace their similarities, but also celebrate their differences, and use this as a foundation to grow in greater harmony, peace, and mutual respect.

Background
At the time of Jesus’ birth, under the reign of Caesar Augustus, Bethlehem was a small town in Judea on the edge of the great city of Jerusalem. During that time it was of no great importance to Judea, let alone the world. However, over time as Christianity grew and pilgrims began to frequent the little town where Jesus had been born, Bethlehem grew in size and importance. Today, Bethlehem is no longer a little town, but a large governorate. It is located in the West Bank and borders Jerusalem and is comprised of three towns; Beit Sahour, Beit Jala, and Beit Lahem. Bethlehem is run by a governor who is appointed by the President of the Palestinian National Authority (PA). Throughout this paper, the use of the name “Bethlehem”

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will refer to the Bethlehem governorate as a whole.

Bethlehem, the town where it is believed Jesus was born, and as a result where the Church of the Nativity is located, is the capital and geographic center of the governorate. In 2007, the PA census determined that Beit Lahem had 24,367 residents. According to unofficial reports, less than 30% of the Beit Lahem population is Christian, with some reports claiming the population is nearing 15%. These percentages are much lower than those reported before the Second Intifada. This lower number is a result of the “Christian Exodus” that is currently occurring in the Holy Land. Since 2001, when the Second Intifada began, thousands of Christians have emigrated from the Holy Land to the United States and various countries in Western Europe as a result of the depressed economy.

Beit Sahour lies to the east of Beit Lahem. In English, Beit Sahour translates to “House of the Night Watch.” This town is aptly named as it is home to Shepherd’s Field, where it is believed an angel visited shepherds on the evening of Jesus’ birth to inform them of the event. In 2007 its population was 11,927, approximately 80% of which were Christian; and mostly of the Roman Catholic denomination.

Beit Jala, the smallest of three towns, lies to the west of Beit Lahem. In 2007 its population was 11,339. It is approximated that 75% of the population is Christian, the majority of Christians being part of the Greek Orthodox denomination.

It is also essential to understand the diversity of the Christian population within Bethlehem. Within the Bethlehem governorate this population is dominated by the Greek Orthodox and the Roman Catholic churches. There are also communities of almost every other Christian denomination within Bethlehem. The Roman Catholic community was established as a result of mass conversions from Greek Orthodoxy during the 19th century when European missionaries arrived in present day West Bank. It is very important to the Greek Orthodox community’s identity that they were in Bethlehem “first.” The notion of which community has been in Bethlehem the longest created tensions between the Catholic and Greek Orthodox communities. However, as time has progressed there has been a great deal of intermarriages between the two communities leading to greater trust and harmony between them. Therefore, today Catholics and Greek Orthodox alike prefer simply to identify as Christians. This is an example of the growing solidarity amongst the entire Christian community in Bethlehem.

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3 The Holy Land refers to the area surrounding Jerusalem that holds a large concentration of religious sites connected with Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
8 Christian denominations within the Bethlehem governorate include but are not limited to: Maronites, Syriac, Orthodox Copts, Catholic Copts, Armenian Orthodox, Armenian Catholic, Quakers, Methodists, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Lutherans, Evangelicals, and Pentecostals.
community in Bethlehem. To reflect the current sentiments of the Bethlehem Christian population, the term “Christian” will be used throughout this paper to refer to the Christian population as a whole; specific denominations will be mentioned when appropriate.

Due to Bethlehem’s large Christian population and tourist industry, the governorate has a diverse community compared to the rest of the West Bank. This makes Bethlehem a fascinating place to study, as it must every day balance its diverse identity with international influence, traditional values, and a highly religious social culture. Because of this unique social situation, the 39-day Siege of the Church of the Nativity in the spring of 2002 has had deep ramifications for the Bethlehem community. The actions leading up to the Siege of the Church of the Nativity, those during it, and following it, would come to strengthen the relationship between the Christian and Muslim communities in Bethlehem. The Siege has lead to the creation of interfaith dialogue programs in the Bethlehem area, which has allowed for more harmony and increased solidarity. Examining this relationship as a result of the Siege will provide a necessary contribution to existing literature on the current social, religious, and political dynamics in Bethlehem and facilitate greater understanding of the Palestinian people.

Methodology

I applied to the Elliott School Undergraduate Scholars program, proposing the research question, “How and why was the Siege of the Church of the Nativity a catalyst for strengthening the relationship between Christians and Muslims in Bethlehem?”

The perspective I provide to answer this question is based solely on qualitative research because it is the most effective form of research when telling a social history. For that reason, this paper relies mostly on primary sources. The primary sources are 10 interviews I conducted in January 2014 during a one-week trip to Jerusalem and Bethlehem funded by a grant from the Elliott School Undergraduate Scholars program. I chose these interviewees based on previously established relationships. Eight of the interviews were conducted entirely in English and two of the interviews were conducted in a combination of English and Arabic. An Arabic language tutor translated the sections of these interviews that were conducted in Arabic. Because English is the second or third language of the interviewees, I have adjusted some quotes for grammar in order for them to make more sense in English. These interviews were with Christian clergy and Christian and Muslim laypersons who reside in Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Names of various interviewees will be used while others will assume pseudonyms; the use of real names or a pseudonym was up to the discretion of the interviewee. All interviews, except one, were conducted using a recorder; the interviewee approved the use of a recorder before it was turned on.

With the culmination of the 10 interviews I came to the conclusion that not only did the Siege increase solidarity amongst the Christian and Muslim communities, but it also sparked interfaith dialogue within the Bethlehem community. Therefore, I began to work with a two-part question, “Why was the Siege of the Church of the Nativity a catalyst for strengthening the relationship
between Christians and Muslims in Bethlehem? How did the Siege of the Church of
the Nativity sparked interfaith dialogue in the Bethlehem community?”

In order to gain background on the Siege of the Church of the Nativity I
relied on the interviews I conducted as well as secondary sources. The secondary
sources are of various formats: books, news articles from various international news
sources, the 2007 Census administered by the Palestinian National Authority, and
scholarly articles about Bethlehem. The existing literature on the Siege of the Church
of the Nativity is insufficient, and what does exist is largely flawed as it relies on one
perspective in a multidimensional issue. There has only been one book written
specifically about the Siege of the Church of the Nativity: A Season in Bethlehem:
Unholy War in a Sacred Place by Joshua Hammer.

Hammer is a freelance journalist who spent a significant amount of time in
Bethlehem throughout the Second Intifada. He compiled his experiences, articles,
and other writings into a book about the Siege of the Church of the Nativity. The
book was published in 2003; therefore, it has not looked at the lasting impact of the
siege on the Community but rather, laid the foundation for why the siege occurred. It
is entirely based on Hammer’s personal experience and interviews with locals.
Almost all of his interviews were conducted with Greek Orthodox laypersons and
clergy. This created a biased book as it relied on one perspective. The singular
perspective leads to an overemphasis of the negative in the relationship between
Christians and Muslims in Bethlehem and downplays the positive in the relationship.

It is important to note that my research may contain biases and inaccuracies
as well. The Siege of the Church of the Nativity occurred 12 years before I conducted
my interviews. Historical memory inherently holds inaccuracies, as it is impossible
to remember events exactly as they occurred. The siege was also a tumultuous and
therefore emotional event for the Bethlehem community, which affects memory and
opinions. Therefore I will use all quotes in their original form and expressed in a way
that best reflects the nature and context of the quote. Then, all quotes will also be
contextualized with an explanation in order to aid the reader in understanding the
true sentiment of the quote and the interviewee’s opinion

Through these means my methodology provides a nuanced view of the
Bethlehem community, which allows for a more complete research paper and
understanding of the Siege’s impact on the Bethlehem community.

**History of Bethlehem and the Relationship Between Residents**

The governorate of Bethlehem was under the jurisdiction of the Ottoman
Empire until the end of World War I. At the end of World War I Bethlehem was
taken under British control as part of the British Mandate for Palestine. This only
lasted until the Arab-Israeli War of 1948, during which Israel declared independence
and Jordan annexed Bethlehem. During this time there was an influx of Arab
refugees from the newly created state of Israel into Bethlehem and during the Six-
Day War Israel once again seized control of Bethlehem.

With the conclusion of the Six Day War came the creation of the Popular
Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). The PFLP was founded by Dr. George
Habash, a Marxist Palestinian Christian who was a leading member of the Palestinian Liberation Organization up until 1967. Habash was known for using violent means to achieve political goals. In order to do this most effectively, he united various militant groups together under one front, the PFLP. In 1968 the PFLP joined with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and became the second largest faction in the government organization. As time progressed, Habash quickly became the face for violent resistance against the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

In the 1970s, the Islamic Waqf – an Islamic trust that owns and cares for the Muslim holy sites in the greater Jerusalem area – bought land in Beit Jala’s old city and built a mosque. This was the first physical sign of the growing Muslim population in the governorate. In the 1980s Bethlehem experienced a sweep of Islamic fundamentalism, as did the rest of the Palestinian territories. At that time, the mayor of Beit Jala, Farah Al-Araj, redrew Beit Jala’s boundaries and excluded the Muslim neighborhood of Doha in an attempt to maintain Beit Jala as a purely Christian town. Simultaneously, hundreds of Christian families begin to emigrate from Bethlehem to America and Western Europe; in the process they sold their homes to Muslim families. The Christian population once again began to decline as the Muslim population continued to grow.

On September 13, 1993 Yasser Arafat, then Chairman of the PLO, and Yitzhak Rabin, the Prime Minister of Israel, signed the Oslo Accords. This agreement was formally known as the Declaration of Principles; within it Israel recognized the authority of PLO and a two-step program was created to give Palestinians limited autonomy in exchange for “peace and an end to Palestinian claims on Israeli territory.”

On September 28, 1995 Arafat and Rabin signed Oslo II as an expansion on Oslo I. This allowed the first Palestinian elections in January 1996, which brought the PA into power with Arafat as its first president. Oslo II also expanded autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which allowed the PA to gain control of Bethlehem. The expanded autonomy forced the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) to withdraw from Bethlehem on December 22, 1995. This was met with a “joyous ceremony” held in Bethlehem’s Manger Square, which Yasser Arafat attended. While the Bethlehem population was excited and relieved to see the withdrawal of Israeli forces, and therefore become one step closer to independence, there was still hesitation concerning the legitimization of the PA. Many Christians saw this as the subsequent legitimization of extremism in the region because Arafat was also the founder of Fatah, the biggest faction of the PLO and a political party known for

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9 The PLO is an organization that was founded in 1964 with the sole purpose of creating an independent State of Palestine. Over 100 states recognize it as the sole representative of the Palestinian people and has had observer status at the UN since 1974.
10 Hammer, A Season in Bethlehem, 74.
11 Ibid., 74.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 The Palestinian Liberation Organization was the government precursor to the modern day Palestinian National Authority
15 Hammer, A Season in Bethlehem, xiii.
16 Ibid., 54.
maintaining a number of militant groups. By allowing such a party to come to power, it encouraged the continued funding of militancy in the region and made members of the Christian population uneasy.

Between 1995 and the start of the Second Intifada in 2000, Bethlehem remained relatively calm, although tensions between Christians and Muslims were increasing due to pressure from Israel, western support of Israel, and actions from the PA. One such example was the appointment of Raji Zaidan in 1996 as mayor of Beit Jala. Most Christians saw him as a puppet of the PA. Displeased with the appointment, a group of Beit Jala citizens wrote a letter to the United States embassy and accused the PA of “plotting to drive out the Christian population and replace them with Muslims.” The letter stated, “In ten years we fear that there will be only a few Christians left in Beit Jala.” The Second Intifada, rather than the actions of the PA, would begin to make this concern a serious reality.

The Second Intifada: Sharon's Visit to Temple Mount - April 1, 2002

On September 28, 2000, Ariel Sharon – a candidate for prime minister of Israel – visited the Temple Mount/Al-Haram Al-Sharif as a means of exerting his, and therefore Israel’s, authority over the land. Visiting the Temple Mount/Al-Haram Al-Sharif was a bold move on Sharon’s part. As a sacred space to both Muslims and Jews, which the Muslim community currently has jurisdiction over, Jews had been discouraged from visiting for political, security, and religious reasons. When Sharon announced he would visit the Temple Mount, Israeli security warned him that doing so would provoke attacks and possibly an uprising. Sharon ignored the warnings and instead entered the complex with 1,000 security personnel. Palestinian rioting began almost immediately in response to Sharon's visit. Five days of riots ensued. There were major clashes between Israeli security forces and the rioters and multiple deaths. The Second Intifada had officially begun.

Sharon’s visit to the Temple Mount/Al-Haram Al-Sharif was the straw that broke the camel’s back. Yet the visit was not the direct cause of the intifada; years of frustration and anger from the Palestinian community towards Israeli occupation ultimately led to the uprising. However, Sharon’s visit was planned at an inopportune time and served as a catalyst for the Palestinian peoples’ frustration and anger, which lead to riots and then the uprising.

The Second Intifada was filled with battles between the IDF and civilians and Palestinian militant groups such as the Tanzim, Ta’amra, Al-Aqsa Martyr...

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18 Hammer, A Season in Bethlehem, 75.
19 The Arabic word intifada directly translates to “shaking off.” In context, it translates to “uprising.”
20 This is a holy Muslim and Jewish site. It is believed the Ark of the Covenant was kept here during the reign of King David, and that the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven from that same location.
21 A militia created by Yasser Arafat in 1995 meant to battle Islamism in the West Bank. It has helped siphon support from Islamist groups to the PLO and PA. It has carried out multiple terror...
Brigades, and Hamas. These clashes came in the form of riots, direct attacks, and terrorist attacks. The Second Intifada attracted young Islamic fundamentalists who wanted to become martyrs. Some of these young people, mostly men, would carry out suicide bombings. Dying as a martyr was highly alluring to many young men, so much so that boys as young as eight years old would speak about wanting to become martyrs. The type of fighting that took place during the Second Intifada caused Israelis to view it purely as Palestinian terrorism. On the other hand, Palestinians viewed the Second Intifada as an attempt to shake off the occupation and show national pride. Muslim militants in Beit Jala encouraged the violence surrounding the Second Intifada beginning in November 2000. Early on in the Second Intifada a militant group known as the Abayat gang, led by Hussein Abayat, carried out shootings on the Israeli settlement of Gilo from vantage points in Beit Jala. The militants would position themselves on the rooftops of homes and businesses in Beit Jala; they would then open heavy machinegun fire upon Gilo almost every evening. Samir Zedan, a Christian Beit Jalan businessman and journalist, believed the militants chose Beit Jala to launch attacks because it offered the best vantage point from which to shoot at Gilo.

He and other Christians in Beit Jala also believed the militants tried to involve Christians in attacks on Gilo because they and the rest of the Muslim community were suspicious of the Christian community’s commitment to the Second Intifada. Therefore, Zedan felt as though the Muslim community thought the Christians were “unwilling to fight for what is rightfully theirs.” The Shootings were an attempt to involve Christians in the struggle. Other Christians in Bethlehem also disliked the increasing Muslim militancy. It was seen as a step away from formal government control, and instead a step toward total chaos. Alex, a 35 year-old Greek Orthodox resident of Beit Sahour and father of two girls, often expressed his dislike of the militant groups during our interview:

Something was happening here, between the formal power, the police, and the other military groups. I think most of the people didn’t feel safe because it wasn’t right, because the military groups were very powerful; more powerful than the police and the local government. It was not something you could feel good about, because there were many acts that came that were backed up by the law but were begun for personal reasons. I didn’t feel safe with the situation. I know the militants are Palestinians but it was not right.

Khader Abu Abbara was a Christian from Bethlehem who had been a senior leader in the PFLP. For many years he was a symbol of “violent resistance” against the Israeli occupation to Palestinian Christians. At a young age he had been

attacks and is widely considered an armed offshoot of Fatah (the main political party in the West Bank).

22 Hammer, A Season in Bethlehem, 149.
24 Hammer, A Season in Bethlehem, 71-72.
25 Ibid., 72.
26 Ibid.
27 Hammer, A Season in Bethlehem, 77.
attracted to George Habash; Abbara became increasingly radical as he grew older. So
much so, that he was considered an enemy of both the PA and Israeli government. However, he stood in solidarity with the Christian community when he too went against popular sentiment and condemned the shootings at Gilo. Abbara further refused to join the shootings because he believed militarizing the Second Intifada dragged Palestinian Christians into an “unwinnable armed conflict with Israel” and created frictions amongst Palestinians at a time when they should instead be unified. This decision placed stress on the increasingly fragile Muslim-Christian relationship, as it was a strong symbol of the Christian community refusing to support Muslim militants in Bethlehem.

The Israeli media increased its attention to the shootings at Gilo and the suicide bombings in Israel. Salah Ajarma, a middle-aged man from Jerusalem who worked at Bethlehem University throughout the Second Intifada, felt as though the Israeli media wanted to portray Israelis as victims, “Israel wanted to show the people ‘look at the fighters in Beit Jala, they are shooting at the Gilo settlement.’” He determined that by placing attention on the shootings, the Israeli government and military was given an excuse to invade the West Bank. At the same time, residents of Bethlehem and members of the various militant groups were using the killings of Palestinians by the IDF to feed their own frenzy. Said Alex, “I feel like [the militant groups] could use the dead and victims as a way of like ‘look the Israelis are killing us,’ but they don’t do anything to protect them. We don’t like that as Christians. We have smaller families and in our faith we do not believe in dying as martyrs for this cause.”

Bethlehem went through a drastic and pivotal political change in the fall of 2001. On October 4, Yasser Arafat appointed Mohammed al-Madani as governor of Bethlehem. Al-Madani was a former Fatah commander and a longtime aide to Arafat; he was trusted and garnered a large amount of respect from his colleagues and superiors alike. Arafat appointed al-Madani to Bethlehem because he was meant to preserve order and provide peace to the governorate in the midst of the chaos.

Al-Madani denounced all forms of violence in the region; he openly disproved of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, criticized the role of the Abayat gang in Bethlehem, and stated that extortion by the Tanzim was unacceptable. These were the first actions al-Madani took in an effort to reach out the Christian community and create solidarity between Muslims and Christians in Bethlehem. He continued to win over the Christian population by attending the Roman Catholic Christmas Eve mass in 2001 at the Church of the St. Catherine in place of Yasser Arafat – Arafat was not permitted by Israeli authorities to attend the mass that year. At the mass he displayed his respect for the Catholics in the region and Christianity as a whole by kneeling and kissing the hand of the Latin patriarch, Father Michael Sabbah. Al-Madani’s actions worked to create a foundation from which the two communities began to grow back together.

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28 Ibid., 79.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid., 77.
31 Ibid., 126-127.
32 Ibid., 127.
Christian View of the Relationship Pre-Siege of the Church of the Nativity

Prior to the Siege of the Church of the Nativity, members of the Christian community in Bethlehem felt that their life was a bit of a game, and “…the game was about survival, about negotiating a path of least resistance between the Israelis on one side, Muslims on the other.” The Christian community separated itself from the Muslim community and as a result strengthened ties within the Christian community in very subtle ways. Zedan often spoke about how he would not object to his son marrying a Christian of a different denomination, but he would draw the line at his son wanting to marry a Muslim. This is common throughout much of the Christian community; it is a bit of an unspoken rule that intermarriage between Christians is acceptable and therefore much more common. On the other hand, marriages between Muslims and Christians are rare; a direct result of the social stigma attached to this action.

The relationship between Muslims and Christians prior to the Siege of the Church of the Nativity varied in each of the three towns. In Beit Jala, Christians had a strong dislike towards the Muslim community as a result of the militancy that occurred in the late 1990s and early 2000s. They also had a strong distrust of the PA under Arafat’s leadership. This led the community to be very critical of the government and believe that Arafat and his party instigated the Second Intifada. Beit Jalan Christians were equally angry at Israel for the retaliation, as they believed it perpetuated a cycle of violence in the West Bank and Israel.

The relationship between the two communities in Beit Jala continued to deteriorate as Christian symbols in the town came under threat. The Arab Orthodox Club – a Christian only center where the men in the community would gather to drink and play cards – came under attack for the second time. The club was an important aspect of the Christian community as it allowed Christians to engage in activities restricted within Islam; activities that therefore, were frowned upon in society due to the Muslim majority in Bethlehem. Prior to the start of the Second Intifada, Fatah activists in Beit Jala launched a campaign to force the club to allow Muslims to join. Then, in 2001 the local government shut down the Arab Orthodox Club. This angered members of the Christian community as it took away one of the few outlets granted to them to engage in activities that were purely Christian. It was viewed as an attempt to remove aspects of the Christian identity from the Christian community. This subtle attack on the community was nothing compared to the violent crimes perpetuated against Christians in city. In early 2000, Beit Jalan Christians suspected Atef Abayat of killing two Christian sisters. They faxed a letter to Arafat as a response, demanding he take action and stop Abayat in order to

33 Hammer, A Season in Bethlehem, 71.
34 Ibid., 76.
35 Hammer, A Season in Bethlehem, 69.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid., 76-77.
38 Hammer, A Season in Bethlehem, 107.
“avert a civil war between Muslims and Christians.” The letter claimed that Abayat, along with others, was terrorizing the Beit Jala community:

They kill the innocents in their houses during daylight hours and rob us of our money, for the only reason that we were born as followers of Jesus Christ. We call upon you, President Arafat, in this critical period...to issue strict orders to the security apparatus to extinguish this phenomenon which might divide and destroy Palestinian unity.

The two communities were growing apart at a rapid pace, and both were fully aware of the implications.

In Beit Sahour the relationship between Muslims and Christians had almost always been a very strong one. Alex had said, “In Beit Sahour the relationship is very good because the Muslims that are here, were originally from the town, not from outside. So here it didn’t change a lot.” The Beit Sahour community is unique amongst the Bethlehem towns, as it did not have a large influx of Muslim Palestinian refugees following the 1967 War. Therefore, both the Christian and Muslim communities were very comfortable with one another and co-existed well.

In contrast to Beit Sahour, Beit Lahem had a large influx of refugees following the Six-Day War. These refugee communities built refugee camps in Beit Lahem: Aida Camp and Dheisheh Camp. While the families in the camps have now been in Beit Lahem for over 45 years, they are still not fully integrated into the Beit Lahem community. Alex believes the lack of integration has caused problems between the Muslim and Christian communities in the past, “If you look at Beit Lahem, the Muslims there are from other villages and they don’t know the culture. There were many problems and I think the relationship was not good.” Similar to Beit Jala, Beit Lahem has had a history of militancy, which residents attribute to the influx of refugees. This has strained the relationship between Christians and Muslims in Beit Lahem, as the majority of militant activities are carried out by Muslims in the community while, similar to Beit Jala, the Christians began to distance themselves from such actions.

**Muslim View of the Relationship Pre-Siege of the Church of the Nativity**

The Muslims I spoke to in my interviews had a more positive view of the pre-siege relationship between the two communities. Nisreen, a middle-aged Muslim woman who resides in the Aida refugee camp in Bethlehem, spoke confidently about the strength of the relationship between Christians and Muslims in Bethlehem. She believed that in Bethlehem, prior to the siege, no one cared about the religion of a resident. She gave examples of how those in Aida camp did not view religion as a dividing factor, but rather as a nonfactor. Nisreen cited school attendance as one way the community has consistently remained united. Children in Aida all attended the same schools. Christian and Muslim children attended the Christian private schools as well as the government funded public schools.

Salah, a middle-aged Muslim man from Aida who is Nisreen’s brother-in-law and sought refuge in the Church of the Nativity during the siege, shared the same
sentiments. Salah spoke about how no one in Aida Camp or Beit Lahem cared about what the other person’s religion was; they did not care whether a person is Jewish, Christian, or Muslim. He believed that the only problems that arise are problems between people, not problems between faith communities. If problems arose, they were a result of personal issues rather than issues of faith.

Both Nisreen and Salah also cited the role of the Church of the Nativity in bringing Muslims and Christians together. The Church, located in the center of Bethlehem, is viewed as a home for everyone regardless of his or her religious beliefs. Nisreen believed that the Church of the Nativity inherently welcomes all those who seek to enter. Regardless of their religious beliefs they can find a home in the Church because the Church has a strong history of welcoming those of any religion through its doors.

Ultimately, Nisreen and Salah believed that the relationship between Muslim and Christians has always been strong because they endured so many hardships together. Said Salah, “We suffered greatly together and because of this we grew up in this area with a very strong relationship between our neighbors.” Living in a refugee camp is far from easy, and in order to remain positive and have hope for a brighter future, it is important for people to create solidarity. In such difficult situations, people are typically brought together rather than driven apart.

**The Siege of the Church of the Nativity**

By March 2002 the Second Intifada was at its apex. The relationship between Christians and Muslims in Bethlehem was increasingly strained mostly due to the rise of militancy in the governorate. The Israeli government and military decided it was time to begin taking more serious action and preserve Israeli security and lives. On March 29, 2002 the potential for a full Israeli invasion of Bethlehem became a reality when Prime Minister Ariel Sharon launched Operation Defensive Shield. This was Israeli’s largest military campaign in the West Bank since the 1967 War. The Jerusalem Brigade was charged with sending three battalions, 1,000 men in total, into the Old City of Beit Lahem. Their plan was to push all militants into Manger Square because it would be the perfect area in which they could corner the various militant factions and their leaders. By pushing the factions into a confined area, the IDF hoped it would be easier to root out and the various militants and imprison them.

On the Easter Day in the Roman Catholic calendar, two days after Operation Defensive Shield was launched, the IDF enacted a 24-hour curfew over Bethlehem and Ramallah. When the curfew was put in place, everyone scrambled to get home as quickly as possible because they feared being stuck in a place other than their home for an indefinite period of time. By April 1, 2002 (Easter Monday) all of those not in their homes were in the center of Beit Lahm’s Old City; exactly where the IDF wanted them to go.

As a result of the historical and religious significance the area holds, it had never been attacked before. Therefore, Palestinian militants and civilians sought

40 Ajarma, Interview.
refuge in Manger Square because they believed the IDF would never attack such a sacred place. The Church of the Nativity exuded a sense of safety to the Bethlehem community. Brother Harout, a young Franciscan Friar who looks after Shepherd’s Field in Beit Sahour, claimed that people turn to the Church of the Nativity in times of struggle because life in Bethlehem revolves around the Church of the Nativity and Manger Square. It is a central gathering place for the Bethlehem community and as a prominent religious site it is a symbol of the milestones of life and history.

Very early in the morning of April 2, the attacks began. As tanks rolled into Manger Square, a total of 240 Palestinian militants and civilians ran into the Church of the Nativity for refuge. They stayed there for 39 days. During that time the water supply and electricity had been cut, and there was no way for food to enter the compound.

By May 1, both sides were so tired of the conflict and the food shortage in the complex had become so unbearable that 26 militants in the Church of the Nativity surrendered. On May 9, the negotiation committee finally came to an agreement. The militants who surrendered on May 1 would be exiled to the Gaza Strip. The 14 militants who remained in the church would be exiled to various countries in the Europe. Mostly civilians comprised the remainder of those who were still in the church; after examination by the IDF they would be allowed to go free. This solution was ideal for the Israeli government and military, but not for the PA. Father Ibrahim, a Franciscan friar who was the mediator between the various sides involved in the siege understood that this solution was not an easy one for Arafat or those inside the church to agree to:

The Palestinians accepted the Israeli suggestion that they be [exiled]. Arafat was the president at the time and he could not have agreed to this deportation; however, those in the church agreed to it in order to put an end to everything that was going on in the country, so the problems would be solved… They agreed to be sent away because it would save the entire country and the entire church.

It was a joyous moment when the militants and civilians exited the church after the peace agreement had been reached on the 39th day of the siege. Father Ibrahim vividly remembers the final day and the feelings of those around him:

Yasser [Arafat] was forced to accept the exile of the Palestinians. It was not an easy solution but we were exhausted. We had lost everything. When the solution was finally found, both Israelis and Palestinians asked for my presence during the phase of exiting the Palestinians from the Nativity Church. I was to guarantee the security. When I let the last militant out, they all thanked me and both sides understood that I was not in favor of one party or the other, I was just on the side of human beings and on the side of peace.

The Siege of the Church of the Nativity officially came to an end on May 10, 2002.

**Christian Reaction to the Siege of the Church of the Nativity**

Following the Siege of the Church of the Nativity, there were mixed feelings amongst the Bethlehem Christian community towards the Muslim community. Many
Christians were deeply offended that armed militants had entered one of their holiest sites seeking refuge, “the storming of the holy site by Tanzim had exacerbated the ill will felt toward the Palestinian leadership and its cadres by the Arab Christian community.” Furthermore, they were astonished that these men would be so brazen as to carry weapons around the place where Jesus was born. Alex had mixed feelings about the militants and civilians seeking refuge in the church, “…they are not the kind of people to give respect to other religions. There were problems inside the church and I am not pleased with the way they treated our church.” Sami was also very well aware of the differing opinions, speaking frankly he said to me:

Some people of course were not happy that church was used as a place to take refuge, and you have various opinions about that. Some people thought that the church never should have been brought into a political situation like this and it should have been spared. Some say that it is the natural place for people to take refuge, if you can’t take refuge in a church where else can you take refuge?

This sentiment was common amongst all the Christians I spoke with, whether they were laypeople or clergy. Overall, people had overwhelmingly positive views of the militants and civilians seeking refuge in the church.

Brother Harout was proud of his religious order, the Franciscans, for helping to preserve the sanctity of human life:

People were happy in Bethlehem because the church didn’t refuse the soldiers that came in the church, even though the church is not a place where you can hide yourself, it is an open place, it is open for everybody. But the friars, we could have expelled the people, but instead we said ‘ok everybody is welcome.’ We are against killing people, we are against the war, and so we didn’t say ‘go outside.’ Because if they went outside they would have died, so we said ‘this is how it’s going, and we will give you food’ and the friars gave food water and medical support.

Others within the community also took a lot of pride in their priests allowing the militants and civilians to remain in the church. Sarah, a middle-aged Catholic resident of Beit Jala, consistently boasted about how her priests were so kind to the militants and civilians who sought refuge in the church. When I asked Alex and Sami about Father Ibrahim and his role in the Siege their faces lit up; both thought he and the Franciscans were a shining example of peace and justice. The Christians I spoke with saw the Siege as a positive reflection on the values of the Christian community. Sarah put it bluntly by saying to me, “Our place is their place and their place is our place. We are all living here brothers and sisters. So when they enter we must help them.”

**Muslim Reaction to the Siege of the Church of the Nativity**

The Muslim community in Bethlehem was not at all surprised that the clergy allowed the militants and civilians to remain in the Church of the Nativity. Salah and Nisreen said this is because the church has always welcomed people, regardless of

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religion, ethnicity, or gender. Nisreen spoke openly about her love and respect for the Church of the Nativity, “Until now I didn’t feel that no one can prevent me from going to the church as a Muslim. Before the siege and after the siege I didn’t feel as though someone was preventing me from going to the church.” Salah was most moved by the fact that the priests suffered along with the militants and civilians, they shared the same daily struggles and triumphs, “We saw some priests that are like from Egypt or another country, but they are suffering like the Palestinian people inside the church… Father Ibrahim Faltas he was helpful, he visited the injured people and the sister helped the injured people.” Because the clergy opened their doors to the people for safety, Salah remembers that those inside the church tried to respect the clergy as much as possible, “We want to give the priests a safe area, we want to give them a much better life than others because they take care of the holy area, and we don’t want them to be in a bad condition…”

Ultimately, the Muslim community felt accepted by the clergy for the same reason that the Christian community was proud to have offered a place of refuge; the church is the center of life in Bethlehem and the one place everyone truly feel safe. For this reason, Nisreen felt as though both communities were united throughout the Siege:

For me I didn’t hear from any of the Christians around me, that they refused the Muslims to come to the church, or they didn’t say that the Muslims were the only ones who were responsible for the siege. Maybe some, but for me I didn’t hear from any of my Christian neighbors, and I didn’t hear anything from them. And also the martyrs, some of them are Muslims and some of them are Christian. And the Muslims shared the demonstrations for burying the Christians martyred, or the reverse.

Allowing the militants and civilians to seek refuge in the Church of the Nativity was a symbol of the lack of barriers between the two communities.

Members of the Muslim community were much less divided on this topic than members of the Christian community. This is largely a result of the Muslim majority in Bethlehem. In most societies, the majority group tends to feel as though they are consistently accepted and welcomed by the entire community. It is more difficult for the majority to recognize dissent or underlying tensions because it is likely that they rarely spend time with members of the minority groups. In this case, the Muslim community is the majority in Bethlehem. While Muslims spent time with Christians prior to the siege, this was typically done in a group context where the Christians were still a minority.  

As a result, the Muslim community has been largely unaware of the dissent within the Christian community. This has led to the Muslim community continuously feeling accepted by the Christian community and not recognizing the ramifications of certain actions such as the militancy that was occurring in the area prior to the siege. Salah and Nisreen’s reactions to the siege are the perfect example of how being part of the majority alters one’s perspective of the social situation.

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42 El-Youssef, Interview.
Various Factors Contributing to the Growth of Interfaith Dialogue and Harmony

Within the Bethlehem community there are a variety of factors that have contributed to the growth of interfaith dialogue. These factors have built upon the foundation the Siege of the Church of the Nativity established, and as a result interfaith dialogue, solidarity, and harmony has increased between the two communities. Most of these factors have helped create solidarity and interfaith dialogue because they unite the Bethlehem population against a common enemy: the State of Israel. Salah believes that unity is the best way for the Palestinian people to persevere through these difficult times, “…I feel that we are Palestinians, and when we say we are Palestinian we are more strong than separating as Muslims and Christians.” Every person I interviewed shared this sentiment. Despite their differences and the harm done to the relationship over the years, they each acknowledged that the solidarity of Palestinians – despite differences in faith – was the most important aspect to embrace in order to move forward.

The Wall and Separation Tactics

Opposition to the State of Israel has been the most effective unifying factor for the Bethlehem community. During the Second Intifada the Israeli government began to build a wall along the West Bank border. In some places the wall is merely a barbed wire fence. However in other locations, such as around Bethlehem, the wall is comprised of concrete slabs that are eight meters tall and three meters thick. In order to travel from Bethlehem into Jerusalem – where most Bethlehem residents are employed – Bethlehem residents must pass through a security check and have the proper permits to enter Jerusalem. These permits are granted for work, health services, and for religious holidays to allow families to visit one another.

All of the interviewees also spoke about how the state of Israel began attempting to drive a wedge between the Bethlehem Christian and Muslim communities. Israel has done so by making a concerted effort to highlight their support of the Christian community; mostly through publicizing how many permits Christians are granted to enter Jerusalem on religious holidays. Sami spoke at length about the arduous and complicated permit process, and how the Israeli government has used permits in an attempt to drive a wedge between the Christian and Muslim communities:

The State of Israel makes a big deal out of this actually by saying ‘we grant 20,000 permits to the Christians in the West Bank and 500 permits to the Christians of Gaza to be able to celebrate the Christmas festivities.’ That puts an edge between the Christian community and the Muslim community. Why are only Christians on their holy days granted permits and Muslims are not?

Through these actions, the state of Israel continuously tries to highlight the differences between the Muslim and Christian communities. They strongly publicize their efforts that the vast majority of the Palestinian Christian community is

43 El-Youssef, Interview.
granted permits during the religious holidays to visit family members in Israel.\textsuperscript{44} This is mostly in an effort to appeal to the populations of western nations, which are comprised of mostly Christians. To maintain international support, Israel must appeal to these populations. So far they have been incredibly successful in doing so. The Israeli government however, does not highlight how many permits it also grants to Muslims during religious holidays:

Although, during the holy month of Ramadan, on each Friday... Muslims can access Jerusalem without permits...thus they do give certain privileges to Muslims as well during their holy days. However the emphasis is on the Christian community, ‘we’re allowing the Christian community, we’re protecting the Christian community’, and so on and so forth, but in reality there is no difference, there is absolutely no difference and the treatment of the Christian community and the Muslim community.\textsuperscript{45}

Therefore, ultimately, there is no difference in how the Muslim and Christian communities are treated. Instead the Israeli government wants the international and local communities to believe there is a difference.

This plays well into the Israeli government’s agenda. They try to drive a wedge between the Muslim and Christian communities in order to break down solidarity in Palestine. However, events such as the Siege of the Church of the Nativity are a reminder of how the Palestinian people need one another. It is a reminder that they are stronger united than separated. Salah spoke at great length about Israeli tactics to divide the Bethlehem population:

Israel started to talk about like, Christian or Muslim. Usually with the Israeli occupation they want to divide the people so sometimes they give the Muslims a lot of permissions to go to Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, and sometimes they do not give any Christians permission. Sometimes they give Christians a lot of permits and don’t give any to the Muslims. So they play the game. As a Palestinians we know they play the game, and we do not feel that Muslims and the Christians in Palestine have, lets say, any conflict between us as religion.

These separation tactics began following the Second Intifada and the building of the wall around the West Bank. For the Bethlehem community, the Siege laid a foundation that the community could build off of for greater solidarity. This solidarity has been greatly needed as the Israeli government attempts to separate the population. However, the Bethlehem population remembers how they came together to support those inside the Church of the Nativity throughout the Siege. That support has been necessary to create solidarity amongst the community, which has helped combat separation tactics employed by the Israeli government.

\textit{Christians in Politics}

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
The Siege of the Church of the Nativity was not only a rallying point for the Bethlehem community, it also reminded the Bethlehem community of the integral role Christians play in the governorate. Every Christian I spoke with felt as though the siege brought to light the importance of the Christian community within the larger Bethlehem community. Sami said:

...The Siege of the Church of the Nativity, I think what it highlighted was the fact that the Christian community is part of the fabric of Palestinian society. It is not a minority that is distinctly different or has special treatment from the occupation forces; it is part of the community. Some Christians were killed during the Second Intifada and some suffered tremendously. The siege I think highlighted the fact that as far as the government of Israel is concerned, there is no distinction between a Palestinian Christian and a Palestinian Muslim.

Bethlehem Christians experience the same hardships as Bethlehem Muslims such as land confiscation, loss of employment, and difficulty in obtaining permits to enter Israel.

Following the siege, more concrete efforts were made to better integrate Christians into the Bethlehem community. Sami spoke about how the PA has ensured that the Christians have a voice in the government. This has translated in various ways; mostly through an overall push to integrate Christians at every government level.46 A PA presidential decree was issued prior to the siege, in early 2001, which mandated ten locations in the West Bank must have Christian representation at the local level. These locations must have a Christian mayor and a Christian majority in the city council regardless of what percentage of the population is Christian.47 The ten locations are cities that have historically had a Christian majority. In 2003 the PA legislative council issued a decree that six of the 66 Legislative Council seats are reserved for Christians. This breaks down: two of the Jerusalem seats, two of the Bethlehem seats, one of the Ramallah seats, and one of the Gaza seats.48 It is also mandated that both the Finance Minister and Minister of Tourism are Christians. Sami believes this has been an important step in ensuring the solidarity between Christians and Muslims in Bethlehem because they ensure Christians have a strong voice in the community:

These decrees are an acknowledgment I think of the importance of the Christian presence and Christian voice wherever there are Christians. And today some of these locations are no longer majority Christian because of the continuing exodus of Christians from the Holy Land. However they still have a strong Christian voice.

Alex has also been pleased with the advancements the PA has made. As a result he has greater trust in the government than he did before the Siege. He believes it is important to ensure that Christians are legally a part of the Bethlehem community. It provides a solid basis for continued solidarity that cannot be easily broken.

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46 Ibid.
47 El-Youssef, Interview.
48 Ibid.
Christian Institutions

The long legacy of Christian institutions in Bethlehem worked to create solidarity between the Muslim and Christian communities prior to the siege. The most prevalent institutions are the Christian schools throughout Bethlehem. The Bethlehem public school system is not up to par with the private Christian schools; therefore, almost everyone in Bethlehem sends their children to the private Christian schools. Approximately half of the student population at the private Christian schools is Muslim. All of Nisreen’s nieces are enrolled in private Christian schools. She believes it is important for children of different faiths to be educated together as it continues to foster a strong relationship between Muslims and Christians in the younger generations.

Sami believes the graduates of these private schools emerge as a more well-rounded persons because they are instilled with Christian values:

If you look at the Christian schools, really they are not providing services to a Christian clientele, they are catering to the community at large, and it is done with Christian values… this is the beauty of what is being given.

These graduates then make their way into leadership positions in the Bethlehem community. As a result, it is important that these graduates emerge from both faith traditions rather than a singular one. Many of the schools’ Muslim graduates have become the greatest protectors of Christians in the Bethlehem community.49 These graduates stand up for the Christian schools, Christian community, and the churches because they recognize the importance of the Christian community in Bethlehem.

Following the siege these institutions established their own interfaith dialogue programs to build on the foundation laid by the siege. The Holy Child Program in Beit Sahour is one such example. Every month a group of mothers began to meet to better understand one another and act a support group for each other. This group has evolved into a forum for interfaith dialogue during which the women discuss the similarities and differences between their faiths. The women were excited to learn about another faith. What is most rewarding about the group is how they have come to not only respect another faith, but also to treasure and protect it. As a result, they teach their children about the other faith and have continued to pass interfaith dialogue on to the younger generations.

Militancy and Islamic Fundamentalism

There are still factors that have threatened to tear the communities apart despite the progress made. In the years leading up to the siege, militancy was a problem that almost completely divided the communities. Since the siege, militancy has decreased significantly as a result Israeli actions during the Second Intifada and PA actions following the Second Intifada. The Siege of the Church of the Nativity was a result of Israeli attempts to root militants out of Bethlehem. While the Bethlehem community came together to support those inside the church during the

49 El-Youssef, Interview.
siege, members of the Christian community are thankful that the siege led to the elimination of militancy in the governorate. Alex understood that the siege was a result of the Israelis wanting to “get rid of these groups.” He believed this was a positive impact on the Bethlehem community because:

…the militancy wasn’t right. Nobody was leading the groups in a good way, it was just chaos. Young people who grew up in the occupation, and joined these groups, were not much better than the Israelis because they are also ruling the land by guns. But with the siege, the Israelis came and they ended that chaos.

Following the rooting out of militants, the PA began to pass legislation that strongly condemned militant acts. Alex spoke about the lasting impact of the siege on militancy in Bethlehem:

In the long run, I think it was good for us because there were many many many acts from these groups that made some people suffer, and it wasn’t right for them to do that, and nobody could take them to court or do something. But at least now there is a law, there is stability. It is much better for the people, for me, and for my family. It is hard to say that and not everybody could say that, its not like I’m happy that they killed people. I am just more relaxed because the situation got better because if these militant groups got bigger and more powerful, you would not see me here. I would take my family and leave. As Christians we do not like chaos, but for the others I don’t know, they don’t care.

As Alex’s statement indicates, this is a sentiment that is not openly expressed in the Bethlehem community.

When Christians I interviewed spoke about their relief over the IDF rooting out militants in the government, they did so hesitantly and quietly. Any statement they made that gave credit or thanks to the IDF was quickly followed by a statement that solidified their support for Palestine and the Bethlehem community. This hesitancy is a result of the stigma attached to Israel. Any statements that could be interpreted as support for the state of Israel would immediately make the community skeptical of that person’s commitment to the Palestinian cause.

Currently, militancy is not an issue in Bethlehem. However, the increasing threat of Islamic fundamentalism has begun to worry the Bethlehem Christian community. Alex explained, “If you look to the Arab world, what’s happening and what’s happening in Gaza, it’s not good, we don’t feel safe there. We are afraid the Islamic movements will come here and change many things.” These militant groups rooted in fundamentalism have attempted to create strife in the Bethlehem community. The Christian population recognizes these attempts and also recognizes that these groups represent a minority of the Muslim community. Said Brother Harout:

In these communities there are Christian mayors and the Palestinian government supports the mayor, because he should be mayor. The government also supports us by decorating the streets and giving attention to the Church because it brings money to the government. Sometimes Muslim extremists don’t like this. They want to have something against the Christianity. Like they
wanted to take down a Christmas tree in Beit Sahour. But it’s just two or three people who think these bad things. Not the whole community. So we don’t blame a religion, we can’t generalize what’s going on is only Muslim.

Alex and Sarah strongly emphasized that these militant actions were not to be blamed on the Bethlehem Muslim community as a whole. Instead, they are individual actions and therefore individuals, not a community, are to blame. They stressed the importance of Christian-Muslim solidarity during these difficult times.

The Christian Presence and the Siege

The Christians I interviewed attribute this focus on solidarity to the role of the Christians, and particularly the Franciscans, in the Siege of the Church of the Nativity. Father Ibrahim strongly believes that:

The community developed a feeling of strong respect for the Franciscans. This sentiment among people is still alive nowadays. It recognizes the presence of the Franciscan as the salvation of the Church of the Nativity and that without them the situation could have turned in tragedy. The obstinacy of the friars in defending their house, despite the pressure applied from the Israeli army to evacuate the church, as other clergy did at the beginning of the siege, obliged the parties to find a solution and an agreement. The resolution was reached, at the end, through diplomatic and political ways. Eight were killed during the Siege and 27 injured, but it could have been much worse. All of the 240 could all have been killed if the friars abandoned the church.

The Bethlehem community recognized the important role the Franciscans played in saving hundreds of lives. Sami believes that the need to seek refuge in a Christian holy site led to a stronger desire amongst the community to protect Christian holy sites and the Christian community:

I think the siege, because it was mostly Muslims who were trapped inside the church and found refuge in a Christian holy place, and the fact that the church did not kick them or surrender them to the Israeli authorities, really is something that established a great deal of respect. If you talk to any of those that were more intimately involved with the siege… what came out really is a very strong position of protecting a holy site regardless of who’s in it, which left a positive impact on the relations between Christians and Muslims.

As a result, the importance of the Christian presence in the Holy Land has been reaffirmed which has brought the two communities closer together. Sami said:

And I think, I think it got the Muslim and Christian communities closer to each other, this is a hunch. … I cannot prove it, you cannot prove a lot of things, but this is my hunch and my opinion… that the Christian community really highlighted the fact that we are no different.

Nisreen confirmed the sentiments felt by the Christians I interviewed, “I feel that the Siege made the people closer, even the Christians and Muslims. I can feel it from the reaction of the people, also when anyone ask about the Nativity Church Siege I think
the Muslims and Christians they tell the same stories, which means they lived this together, unified.”

**Interfaith Dialogue**

This solidarity has increased with interfaith dialogue efforts put forth by various organizations in Bethlehem. Sarah is a member of an interfaith dialogue group at the Arab Educational Institute in Bethlehem (AEI). The AEI works to improve the Muslim-Christian relationship by creating various small groups which residents can join. These groups meet biweekly and engage in discussions about various topics. Each meeting members will put forth a new discussion topic that helps the two religious communities better understand each other. AEI sponsored a small Christmas party in December 2013. At the party one person read the story of the birth of Jesus from the Bible and another person read the story of the Birth of Jesus from the Qur’an. Directors of different schools in Bethlehem were in attendance along with many clergy such as sisters, priests, and imams. Efforts such as these will continue to secure the solidarity between the Muslim and Christian communities in Bethlehem, which will also ensure a strong future for the community.

**Conclusion**

The Siege of the Church of the Nativity is a little studied part of Palestinian history; therefore, this paper is valuable because it is the first study that explored the effects of the Siege of the Church of the Nativity on the Bethlehem community. In doing so, it provided context to help better understand the current social, religious, and political environment in Bethlehem. This context helps us gain a stronger understanding of Palestinians as a people and the ways interfaith dialogue and reconciliation can occur following conflict.

It is true that the Siege of the Church of the Nativity is a unique crisis in the international realm. It is difficult to apply this conflict and reconciliation study to other conflicts throughout the world because the case of Bethlehem is rather singular. However, studying the outcomes of the siege and understanding why it was possible for two communities to grow together in solidarity gives us hope for larger, more global conflicts that often seem intractable. In 2009, former Prime Minister of the UK Tony Blair stated:

The issue of religious faith will be of the same significance to the 21st Century as political ideology was to the 20th Century. In an era of globalization, there is nothing more important than getting people of different faiths and therefore cultures to understand each other better and live in peace and mutual respect; and to give faith itself its proper place in the future.

The Siege of the Church of the Nativity is proof that this goal is possible. It is proof that after a conflict with religious undertones, two sides can come together and enter into interfaith dialogue in order to heal the wounds of the past. It is proof that the conflict itself can lay a foundation for greater solidarity, as it becomes a rallying point for a community. The Bethlehem community gives us hope that someday those of various faiths will not only embrace their similarities, but also celebrate their
differences, and use this as a foundation to grow in greater harmony, peace, and mutual respect. Finally, it gives us hope that the Palestinian community will remain unified in the face adversity. Sarah explained it best during our interview, “I think that with this kind of situation, we need to be together, I think that we need to be together because we hope to love each other and to help each other… and to give our help without waiting for something to happen, because everyone in Palestine needs each other.”
Between Social Stigmatization & Sexual Health

Improving Women's Health in the Islamic Maghreb

Alexandra Blackwell

Introduction

One of the most alarming health trends among urban youths in North Africa is the rising incidence of diseases and health problems associated with sexual activity. Due to the influence of foreign media sources, the increase in female literacy, the greater presence of women in higher education and the work force and the rise in practical tolerance of sexual liberalism, the social practices of youth are shifting considerably compared to those of their parents.¹ The rates of young people contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and having unplanned pregnancies have escalated over the past decade. According to estimates by the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF), the number of people living with HIV/AIDS in the Middle East-North Africa (MENA) region increased by almost 75% from 2003 to 2005, and has continued to rise.² Young women in particular face increasingly high prevalence rates of STIs, including HIV/AIDS.³ Whereas men having sex with men (MSM) used to be the population among which the most HIV/AIDS transmissions occurred, Arab women now comprise about half of the total population of people in the MENA region carrying the virus. Comparatively, rates of HIV/AIDS are diminishing in other social groups, such as MSM and drug users.⁴ Furthermore, the total number of pregnancies and births occurring out of wedlock among girls 15-24 years-of-age has continued to increase, defying the common trajectory of fertility rates in middle-income countries.⁵ The disparity between the rates of disease among young men and

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⁴ Ibid.
⁵ While the average fertility rate in the developing world does not exceed 2.9 live births, the average fertility rate in the MENA region remains high at 3.81 live births.

women is expanding. Women with STIs also experience elevated levels of discrimination and marginalization, which exacerbates this situation.

An analysis of the determinants of the sexual health of young women in North Africa is necessary to infer the best path to reversing these trends. Using Morocco as a case study, this research investigates those aspects of society and culture that have the largest impact on the sexual health of young women. To dissect such an expansive topic, this study explores the following questions: How have Moroccan social institutions, such as the urban community and religious and government institutions, reacted to transformations in the social behaviors of youth? How have those reactions affected women’s sexual health? How can health be improved within these social constraints?

The health infrastructure provided by a combination of Moroccan NGOs and government-funded programs are extensive enough that they should cover a large proportion of urban populations and contribute to downward trends in sexual health issues; nevertheless, the sexual health of young women continues to be negatively impacted. While multiple studies address the existence of sexual health issues among young Moroccan women, little work has been done to address the failure of current programs and policies or to prescribe solutions. Through an examination of interviews with Moroccan youth, members of sexual health organizations, and Islamic scholars, this paper uses a sociological approach to analyze the effects of a culturally transitioning society on sexual health. It argues that without grassroots efforts and the advocacy of local leaders, societies that revolve around the local community structure will continue to be controlled by fears of social stigmatization and rejection.

Methodology & Study Limitations

To answer these research questions, I relied predominantly on qualitative data gathered through fieldwork in Rabat, Morocco during my four-month stay as a part of a SIT World Learning study abroad program in the spring of 2013. While in the field, I made initial observations during the time that I lived with a Moroccan family and conducted interviews with young Moroccan women, NGO representatives, and Islamic scholars. I accompanied my fieldwork with research on views of women’s sexuality within Islam, the Moroccan government, and urban society, in addition to background research on general trends in adolescent sexual health. By combining these sources, I was able to analyze the impact of economic and social change on the sexual health of urban Moroccan women.

Interviews

To better understand social perceptions of premarital sexuality, it was necessary to approach the concept from the perspective of young Moroccan women living in urban communities. Almost 85% of those living with STIs in the MENA region reside in highly populated urban areas. As large Moroccan cities are also

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6 Ibid., 72-73.
7 “Plan Strategique National De Lutte Contre Le SIDA 2007-2011.”
facing the most significant changes in social values and practice, this study focuses on urban populations.

As a resident of Rabat’s medina, I was able to witness the daily activities of the medina community and had access to the people who lived and worked around me. I formed close contact with several young women who were relatives of my host family and other acquaintances. Our conversations were valuable in lending insight to the social norms of Morocco. Through discussing concepts of women’s sexuality and sexual conduct with women whom I had come to know, I hoped to acquire more personal information that might not be revealed to a stranger. I limited my interviewees to young women ages 18 to 30, and contacted 10 young women with whom I had formed a close connection. Interviews were recorded for note-taking and translation purposes; however, participants were reassured that their answers would remain anonymous, and each interviewee confirmed permission to record our conversation before beginning. Because the identities of the participants are not pertinent to this research, no names will be used so as to maintain the privacy of the participants.

In addition to conducting interviews with young Moroccan women, I met with several field experts and social leaders to attain varying perspectives on sexual health promotion. These experts included Boutaina Alami, a staff member at the Organisation Panafrique de Lutte contre le Sida (OPALS - the Pan African Organization for the Fight Against AIDS), and Khadija Mosleh, a government Development and Gender Consultant for l’Ecole Nationale d’Administration through the Association Marocaine de Planification Familiale (AMPF - Moroccan Family Planning Association). In addition, I met with Dr. Khalid Saqi, a faculty member at Dar Al-Hadith Hassania who is revered by Rabatis and was able to provide varying opinions within Islam on women’s sexuality and sexual health. While in the field, I also had the opportunity of working closely with Dr. Abdessamad Dialmy, a prominent Moroccan sociologist who specializes in the concepts of gender and sexuality within Islam. In addition to providing his own research and conclusions, Dialmy played a key role in connecting me with valuable sources.

**Background**

**Sexual & Reproductive Health**

According to the 2005 Arab Human Development Report, human development and social advancement include the provision of not only civil and political rights, “but freedom from ignorance, disease, want, fear and all else that diminishes human dignity.” The assurance of sexual and reproductive rights for youth is necessary to ensure their health; therefore, initiatives to advance the sexual health of individuals should be included in any systematic program of reform. Addressing the needs of young people is urgent in the countries of the Islamic

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8 Dar Al-Hadith Hassania is a government religious institution that focuses on the development of higher education and research in Islamic sciences and the Hadith.
Maghreb because of their unprecedented numbers. Investing in young people benefits the entire country, as doing so ensures that they are healthy, productive, and contributing to a nation’s ability to prosper and achieve development goals.

To properly examine the change in women’s health status in the region, it is necessary to understand the concepts that are being discussed. The definition of sexual health, as stated by the World Health Organization, includes but is not limited to the right, without fear of discrimination to:

- Access sexual and reproductive health care services;
- Seek and receive information related to sexuality;
- Receive sufficient education on sexuality and sexual practice;
- Decide to be sexually active or not;
- Have consensual sexual relations;
- And pursue a satisfying, safe, and pleasurable sexual life.

Though sexual health and reproductive health are unavoidably related, it is important to differentiate between the two. Reproductive health addresses the reproductive processes, functions, and system at all stages of life. It addresses concerns that can be entirely restricted to married women, and as such it is generally regarded as necessary and attainable even within conservative societies. Sexual health as a right, on the other hand, is much more controversial and is often ignored or hotly contested by governments in conservative states, as it is seen to condone having sexual intercourse with no intention of reproducing.

The MENA region first officially recognized the importance of sexual health to the overall wellbeing of a population at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1994. As stated in the conference’s Programme of Action, the regionally accepted definition of reproductive health also includes the attainment of sexual health. Reproductive health as defined by the ICPD refers to the following:

- Family planning information and services;
- Post-abortion care;
- Abortion services in those states where it is not against the law;
- Prevention and treatment of STIs including HIV;
- Treatment of reproductive tract infections;

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16 Ibid., 4.
• And information and counseling on sexuality, reproductive health, and responsible parenthood.  

Though the ICPD document does not explicitly reference sexual rights, it does state that, “reproductive health … implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life.” Government institutions, including those in Morocco, formally recognize these concepts; however, the significance of their meaning is often lost in local applications of international law.

State of Current Policy

Upon recognizing both the ICPD in 1994 and the “Cairo Declaration of Religious Leaders in the Arab States in Response to the HIV/AIDS Epidemic” in 2004, the Moroccan government has indicated its dedication to advocating “the rights of women to protect themselves from exposure to HIV/AIDS and to take advantage of the relevant medical and educational services.” Both of these documents were precedent setting for the MENA region and for the world, confirming the centrality of women’s rights and sexual and reproductive health to social and economic development. Nevertheless, under Moroccan law sex outside of marriage is illegal and must be met with punishment.

Social reservations have also given rise to disinclination among religious leaders and policymakers to discuss issues of adolescent sexual health. As a result, there are currently no national health policies directly targeting Moroccan youth. In addition, the lack of youth-friendly institutions has contributed to a widespread fear of the legal system, causing young Moroccan women to seek help outside of the formal healthcare bureaucracy.

Moroccan Society

Even in densely populated cities, life is centered on an intimate community. The medina, a colloquial Arabic term for the traditional walled-in section of each city, is the heart of urban Moroccan social structure. Each medina consists of several derbs (quarters), and each derb is home to multiple (often distantly related) families who have resided there for several generations. Due to their familial and historical connections, these communities are bound by a feeling of solidarity and common

17 Ibid., 4.
20 Farzaneh, “Facts of Life: Youth Sexuality and Reproductive Health in the Middle East and North Africa,” 17.
22 Ibid., 14.
23 Ibid., 10.
identity that instills a deep allegiance. Though these social connections are beneficial in a typically isolating urban environment, they can also be harmful. The lives of inhabitants rarely remain private, and the discovery of controversy can incite a brutal dismissal of individuals or entire families owing to the unforgiving tendencies of such a close-knit community.

As a constitutionally Islamic state, religion also has a major influence on Moroccan society both in the public and private spheres. Islam’s weight within society is apparent in modern discourse on women’s sexuality and adolescent sexual health. According to the 2005 Arab Human Development Report, about 90% of Moroccan youth say that adherence to religion is an important part of their lives. Despite a liberal progression of social behavior, conservative interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence continue to determine the reactions and opinions of the general public, as well as the reactions and opinions of the Moroccan state.

Sexual Liberation Among Moroccan Youth

Although religious, state, and social influences continue to uphold the taboo nature of sexuality, increased premarital sexual activity is a reality. The average age of marriage is rising for both males and females, leading to a growth in extramarital relationships and sexual experimentation. According to the Population Reference Bureau, such a change in marriage patterns reflects broader social and economic changes taking place: more people are moving to urban areas and adopting modern lifestyles, young people are pursuing higher levels of education, and women are much more likely to work paid jobs outside the home. As a result of these changes, behavioral norms for young Moroccan women are shifting, along with society’s understanding of notions such as “dating.”

Moroccans are getting married at a later age, which has led to new challenges for Muslim women who want to adhere to accepted standards for sexual conduct but are struggling with suppressing sexual desires for more than a decade after puberty. A widening gap exists between biological sexual maturity, which begins at puberty, and social sexual maturity, the age at which it is socially acceptable to get married. This gap contributes to the rise in extramarital sex in Morocco. Alternate forms of relationships and sexual practices are increasing with the age of marriage for both Muslim men and women, in spite of the continuing cultural importance of a woman’s virginity.

This longer period of “adolescence,” or the age in which young people are not socially considered old enough to make independent adult decisions, has also led to the emersion of a new concept of courting in Morocco. Today, 58% of Moroccan

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25 Ibid., 126.
27 Ibid., 11.
30 Ibid., 58.
women had their first boyfriend between 14 and 16 years of age.\textsuperscript{31} In addition, 85% of young people say they had their first experience with sexual intercourse between 14 and 19 years of age, all of which were outside of marriage.\textsuperscript{32} Despite conservative social norms, premarital sex is a reality among urban Moroccans.

Regardless of the reason, these shifts in Moroccan social practice are accompanied by a dearth of sexual health services and information for unmarried youth, resulting in a long period of time in which young people may be sexually active but are not supported by youth-friendly services, education or other substantial sexual health infrastructure.\textsuperscript{33} 40\% of recorded STI cases in Morocco are among young people ages 15-29.\textsuperscript{34} The proportion of women with HIV/AIDS has increased compared to other at-risk groups: 42\% of those carrying the virus are women, up from just 16\% in 1990.\textsuperscript{35} Important to note is that only one-third of women infected with HIV are married.\textsuperscript{36} Additionally, the probability of infection among women from 15-24 years-of-age is double that of men in the same age group.\textsuperscript{37} The increasing incidence of health issues related to sexual activity suggests that a significant proportion of young people are having sex outside of marriage without the knowledge or means to protect themselves against the potential consequences of their hidden sexual relationships.

**Social Institutions Within a Transforming World**

*Women & Sexuality in Islam*

In the context of marriage, sexuality is a prominent concept within Islamic text and interpretation. The sexual relationship between a woman and her husband is highly valued and even promoted. “Sexuality is not a taboo,” said Dr. Khalid Saqi, a religious leader in Rabat.\textsuperscript{39} He stated that if anyone does not want to talk about sex with another person openly it is because of their personal reservations, which he argues have more to do with culture than with religion. “The Qur’an itself talks about sexuality – in some cases, in a blatant way.”\textsuperscript{40} However, opinion towards women’s sexuality outside of the context of marriage remains less clear. According to Dr. Abdessamad Dialmy, sexual standards in Islam are paradoxical. In a lecture at the Center for Cross Cultural Learning in Rabat, Dialmy stated that although sex is allowed and even encouraged in Islam, several key discriminations are enforced: the

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 41.
\textsuperscript{33} Dialmy, “Women, Gender, and Sexual Practices in Arab States,” 7.
\textsuperscript{34} Zyne, “Les Jeunes de 2011,” 46.
\textsuperscript{36} “Plan Strategique National De Lutte Contre Le SIDA 2007-2011.”
\textsuperscript{38} Farzaneh, “Facts of Life: Youth Sexuality and Reproductive Health in the Middle East and North Africa,” 39.
\textsuperscript{39} Khalid Saqi is a professor and member of the Permanent Academic Committee at Dar Al-Hadith Hassania, a government institute that focuses on the development of higher education and research in Islamic sciences, as well as training staff and students in the Hadith science.
\textsuperscript{40} Khalid Saqi (professor at Dar Al-Hadith Hassania) in conversation with the author, April 2013.
discrimination between men and women, between heterosexuality and homosexuality, and between marital and non-marital sex.  

Muslim acknowledgement of the positive aspects of women’s sexuality has always existed with strong opposition.  

In the classical Muslim tradition, women’s sexuality is treated as dangerous and potentially disruptive to society.  

Fitna, or chaos and disorder, is thought to be the result of sexual temptation that is stirred by both women’s desires and the desire that women arouse in men.  

Muslim concern with fitna focuses on the responsibility of women for creating chaos – a conviction that causes girls to grow up with the belief that their bodies are a source of problems.  

A young Muslim woman is presented with a paradox between her private and public lives: she must remain modest and chaste in public to avoid causing social chaos, but she is also expected to make herself sexually available to her husband whenever he desires.  

A wife’s sexual satisfaction holds ethical importance as well, because a husband’s ability to satisfy his wife enables her to remain chaste.  

However, according to fiqh texts (Islamic jurisprudence that deals with the observance of rituals, morals and social legislation in Islam), sex continues to be a male right and a female duty.

Sexual relationships outside of marriage are met with great disdain for both men and women.  

In Islam, sexual intercourse is one of the pillars of nikah, or marriage.  

It is identified with prayer, alms, martyrdom, and acts of piety, because to accept sexuality within marriage is an act of faith.  

However, because sexuality is seen as a sacrament and rests on divine will, sexual intercourse can only be performed within a union recognized by God: marriage.  

“Any sex outside of wedlock is forbidden,” said Saqi.  “If it is done out of the official contract, it is not allowed.”  

He explained this by going back the very beginning: the creation of the world.  

According to Saqi, when God created the world he instilled all beings with instinct; however, humans were the only beings that asked to also be instilled with responsibility.  

As a result, humans possess instinct but they are also held responsible for following or not following that instinct.  

“There is a code that says, ‘Follow your instinct, but within these limits.’  

Therefore, when the question of marriage is proposed to humans, they are supposed to follow the rules of their religion or the rules of society.”

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43 Ibid., 8.
44 Ibid., 9.
48 Ibid., 98.
49 Ibid., 94.
50 Saqi in conversation with the author.
51 Ibid.
Saqi explained that within Islam these rules are very strict, but their aim is to organize society and stave off any problems that can soil spiritually clean marriages.\textsuperscript{52} He gave an example:

The Qur’an speaks of certain people that a man or woman cannot marry. The Qur’an does not allow sex to happen outside the known publicized contract because if we do it this way, people will know that those children are from an acknowledged marriage. We should know that boy is the son of such and such parents, and that girl is the daughter of such and such so that we don’t get into incest.\textsuperscript{53}

According to Saqi, when a person has sex outside of marriage, he or she is following the instinct but not the law, or the legal way.\textsuperscript{54} By following instinct away from law, a person is acting the way that an animal would. Islam supports that sexual desire is instinctive, and Saqi even went on to say that it is a blessing from God. “It’s one of the gifts that God has given us to enjoy. But,” he said, “let’s enjoy it in a civilized way... in a special way.”

The antithesis of nikah (marriage) is zina, or sex between a man and a woman who is neither his wife nor his slave.\textsuperscript{55} Zina is regarded as a break with the Muslim community because it is realized outside of God’s will, or outside of the limits laid down by God.\textsuperscript{56} Extramarital sex prompts strong condemnation within Islam because it is viewed as a revolt against God and creates social disorder.\textsuperscript{57} This social disorder comes in the form of unknown lineage and the possibility of incest. “Of course [having sex outside of marriage] is one of the greatest sins in Islam because the consequences don’t stop there,” said Saqi.\textsuperscript{58} According to him, that relation may cause the birth of a child who will grow up and want to get married. “In this case – with sex out of wedlock – it’s a big problem. How do you know you’re not getting married to someone who was fathered by your father?”

The Qur’an devotes at least 27 verses to the prohibition of zina, and some translations address it with a particularly violent punishment:

The woman who commits zina and the man who commits zina, lash each of them one hundred lashes. Do not let pity deter you in a matter ordered by God, if you believe in God and the Last Day,” Qur’an, Surah 24 An-Nūr (The Light), Verse 2.\textsuperscript{59}

In Islamic law, the mutual consent of two freely acting individuals holds little relevance to whether their sexual relationship is socially or legally acceptable; the lawful relationship between two individuals determines if sex is licit.\textsuperscript{60} Any sexual

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{55} Ali, Sexual Ethics & Islam: Feminist Reflections on Qur’an, Hadith, and Jurisprudence, 56.
\textsuperscript{56} Bouhdiba, Sexuality in Islam, 31.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 30.
\textsuperscript{58} Saqi in conversation with the author.
\textsuperscript{59} Ali, Sexual Ethics & Islam: Feminist Reflections on Qur’an, Hadith, and Jurisprudence, 56.
\textsuperscript{60} Ali, Sexual Ethics & Islam: Feminist Reflections on Qur’an, Hadith, and Jurisprudence, 57.
act, according to Islamic jurists, warrants either payment or punishment; therefore, lawful sex merits divine approval, while unlawful sex is blameworthy and garners punishment both on earth and in afterlife. Under Islam, and therefore under Moroccan law, sex outside of marriage is regarded as sinful for both men and women, and both are to receive equal punishment for committing this sin. Nevertheless, the social condemnation of a woman who engages in extramarital sex is much more severe than that of a man.

The enforcement of punishments for zina requires proof by either witness or confession for both men and women. However, women face another challenge. The dominant opinion within Islamic jurisprudence is that pregnancy in a woman who is not married is immediate proof of zina. Because marriage is the only situation in which sexual activity is licit – and in which pregnancy and childbearing are legitimate under Islam – unmarried women who get pregnant face heavy punishment and social chastisement. Fearful of the consequences, young women are likely to refrain from going to a doctor and will even give birth outside of the formal health care system. The existence of a child born of zina is considered threatening to familial and social structure because ignorance of the child’s paternity disrupts the system of inheritance. In this situation, the child’s mother is the only one to blame; and therefore, she solely faces the severe social and legal backlash that is often directed towards women in her predicament.

Regardless of the egalitarian nature of the legal impediments governing sexual conduct in Morocco, society ascribes much harsher consequences to women than to men for violation of chastity norms. Saqi said that to understand social stigmatization, one must distinguish between Islam and Muslims. “Religion is beautiful, but the people who practice religion may not be.”

The Moroccan Government & Sexual Health Initiatives

The Moroccan government continues to stall on policies regarding the health of youth, as there currently are not any national health policies directly aimed at the sexual health of adolescents. During the democratic transition brought on by King Mohammad VI’s 2011 constitutional reforms, Morocco’s mixed judicial system – which is shaped by both Islamic and democratic influences – has been confronted with a number of situations in which Islamic legal doctrines both converge and conflict with the civil judiciary. Complications have arisen particularly in political discourse regarding women. Policymakers will not raise concerns for sexual health

61 Ibid., 60.
62 Ibid., 56.
65 Ibid., 63.
68 Ibid., 70.
69 Saqi in conversation with the author.
as topics of policy or debate for fear of attracting criticism from Islamic leaders and popular parties.\textsuperscript{72} As a result, there is little to no government support for unmarried women seeking family planning assistance, and any government organizations that do address reproductive health are not accessible to adolescents.\textsuperscript{73} Young Moroccan women must, therefore, request the help of non-governmental organizations or find means of protection and sexual education on their own.

The government ran its first sexual health campaign in 2004 with support from the Global Fund.\textsuperscript{74} Focused on the prevention of HIV, the campaign openly promoted the use of condoms – a first for the Moroccan government and the region.\textsuperscript{75} However, this campaign targeted the general public and did not cater to women or Moroccan youth. Within the government’s National Strategic Plan and the Interim Plan for HIV/AIDS and STIs, adolescents are not identified as a specific target group, regardless of the plan’s call for interventions for high-risk populations.\textsuperscript{76} The Ministry of Public Health does have a national health program in schools to provide basic health services to students; however, this program excludes sexual and reproductive health services.\textsuperscript{77} In the absence of government-run sexual education at school, young Moroccans are left to learn about sex through their own experimentation, as they are subject to the suppression of topics such as physical maturation and sexuality in their homes and in public settings.\textsuperscript{78}

The lack of political initiative for adolescent sexual health has prompted a surge of action within the non-governmental sector. Moroccan ministries encourage non-governmental organizations to target populations and problems that they dare not address for fear of religious backlash.\textsuperscript{79} Boutaina Alami of the Organisation Panafricaine de Lutte Contre le Sida (OPALS) says that her organization deals primarily with HIV/AIDS education, but that through talking about preventing HIV they are able to cover protection during sex. “We don’t change our message, but we add to our message something about sexual health. HIV is a door to being able to speak about sex with young people in schools.”\textsuperscript{80} OPALS has several programs focused on adolescents, and they target Moroccan youth through workshops in schools. Recognizing that it is difficult to speak about these topics in Morocco, especially in government-funded facilities, Alami said, “We go to the school and do a speech or a focus group where we talk about HIV and then about drugs and then about sex.”

OPALS is working on a partnership with the Ministry of Education to be able to reach all of the public schools in urban areas, but she stated that they often encounter resistance in public schools. They also receive requests from private

\textsuperscript{72} Beamish, “Adolescent and Reproductive Health in Morocco: Status, Issues, Policies,” 1.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 21.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 4.
\textsuperscript{76} Beamish, “Adolescent and Reproductive Health in Morocco: Status, Issues, Policies,” 14.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 17.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 2.
\textsuperscript{80} Boutaina Alami (staff member at OPALS) in conversation with the author, Apr. 18, 2013.
schools and teachers who want to implement the program into their classes. Organizations such as OPALS, who must find their own funding, regularly face difficulties with obtaining enough resources and human capital to be effective. In addition, Moroccans often approach NGOs with caution, as the institutions are associated with foreigners with alternative interests, no matter their origins. Thus, issues of legitimization and government funding are common obstacles to the development of programs.

The Role of the Community & Family

Relationships and Dating Before Marriage

I began my research by speaking with various young women with whom I had become acquainted throughout my time living in Rabat. When I asked the women to start by telling me about romantic relationships among young people before marriage, each interviewee started off with a similar sentiment: things are different here than in the U.S. – relationships before marriage are not allowed. However, the more they talked, the more I realized that “dating” between adolescents is actually rather normal. Two of the girls said that they had their first boyfriend when they were 14 years old, though they both insisted that this was not a normal age for having a boyfriend. However, another interviewee said that today, young people can start dating whenever they would like: “In 2013, [young people start dating at] seven years old, eight, twelve. Any age.”

No matter the common nature of adolescent love affairs, parents still do not approve of these relationships – and as a result they are often kept secret. Adolescent relationships are just “relationships in the street,” as one interviewee stated. Girls and boys see each other in the street and talk and flirt, but they cannot spend much time alone or show affection in public for fear of prying eyes. I spent many evenings with one of my interviewees, who began referring to me as her cousin after countless invitations to meals and other family events. She is 18 years of age and is studying to pass the Baccalaureate. Occasionally I spent the night at her house, and for hours I would sit with her as she talked to a boy – a different boy almost every week – on the computer or phone and giggle with me about him. She did this every time I was at their house, but she always made sure to speak to him in English so that her mother and older sister would not understand who was on the other side of the phone that was making her laugh so much.

All of my interviewees said that girls do not tell their parents when they have boyfriends. “A girl might have a boy, but it is out of the view of her mother’s eyes.” This, according to my interviewees, is due to concern over the true intention of the relationship. If a girl and a boy spend a lot of time together and are seen being affectionate towards one another in the street – especially without other friends or family members around – people might begin to question the morals of the girl.

When I asked one interviewee why some families think it is bad for a girl to spend time with her boyfriend, she said it is because boys often take advantage of the fact that girls are less experienced:

82 Ibid., 21.
She sees this boy and she thinks, ‘that’s my boyfriend,’ and she thinks she has to have sex with him. But we can’t do that here. If you do that with the boy, he won’t marry you. He will find a new girl. [Boys] say all the time, ‘Your family is not a good family because you had sex with me,’ and then [everyone] will know this and [the girl] might have to leave her family and go somewhere else to live.

Although she described a chain of events that seems extreme just because a girl is seen holding her boyfriend’s hand in public, all of the interviewees shared a similar belief: girls who spend too much time with boys or are seen being affectionate before they are married risk rumors and social disrepair.

In spite of concerns over reputation, dating is a normal practice before marriage in Morocco – but only if it has the intention of securing a husband. One interviewee, a 20 year-old university student, had gotten engaged the week before I spoke with her to a man who was her professor at school. They had been seeing each other with the permission of the girl’s mother for six months before they got engaged because the man had professed his intention to marry her.

Social Views of Sexual Relationships

When discussing the norms of adolescent and young adult relationships, my conversations with the interviewees all lead to the topic of sexual activity without much probing from my side. However, any mentioning of sex came with a lot of head-shaking and stories of warning. “Sex before marriage is not allowed,” said one interviewee. “How society is going to look at [the girl] is really really different. They are going to look at her like she’s impolite, a lot of things.” Her response as to why society views it this way was religion: “Religion says no, even for having a boyfriend before marriage. So having sex before marriage – no. You can’t. This is the way of society, this is the way of religion, this is the way of the values of [people].”

Another interviewee, a 23 year-old woman who lives with her sister and has a full-time job as an Arabic teacher, explained her view as to why Islam prohibits premarital sex. She said that forbidding sex outside of marriage prevents problems such as having children out of wedlock. “In marriage, you have children and you work together, but before marriage it causes problems. It is haram (forbidden)... it is against Islam.”

All of the women with whom I met expressed strong affirmation for this religious law, as well as for the outlawing of premarital sex in Morocco. They also did not convey personal disdain towards women who choose to have sex before they get married. In fact, they seemed to suggest that girls who have sex are victims and talked about them sympathetically. However, the young women did distinguish a clear division in our conversations between themselves and the figurative “girls” with whom society laid judgment.

The Reality of Sexual Practice

Another obvious distinction was drawn between “some girls” and the interviewees when they discussed current sexual practice. All of the young women whom I talked to stated that they had never had sex. The young woman who is
newly engaged said that not only did she not know many girls who had been in a sexual relationship before marriage, but she had also never talked about methods of protection in school, with her parents or even with her friends. “It’s a, ‘You don’t talk about it, you don’t do it,’ sort of thing. There is a big difference between U.S. and Morocco. But,” she added after a brief pause, “we can’t generalize the idea. It depends on the person.”

Not all of the girls were so quick to remove themselves from anything to do with sex or discussions about sex, however. One of the interviewees, a girl whom I know to be very studious and family-oriented, explained the negative reactions to sex a little more personally:

If you have sex first, you lose your family forever. They tell you, ‘You did that, now go, we don’t care about you,’ and the girl doesn’t have work, the boy lives with the girl, and she has a baby. And it is hard. I know many girls who studied with me in high school who did that and now [they are] living alone and cleaning restrooms and working in a café just to take care of [their] babies. It’s hard.

Even though she expressed compassion for her friends who were facing hardships due to their parents’ reactions to their sexual activity, the young woman still demonstrated a common social reaction to girls deemed “promiscuous.” “If you have [sex with] many boys, like three or four or five… that is crazy. I don’t like when people talk to me about that. I don’t like that.”

Due to the sexual status of the girls I interviewed, obtaining first-hand information about the use of protection and contraceptives among Moroccan youths proved almost impossible. Nonetheless, a few interviewees were open about their personal knowledge on how girls obtain and use various means of protection. My “cousin” admitted that she did not know much about how or where to get condoms or contraceptives, but she did not think that girls could get them without their parents if they were younger than 21 years old. She shared that sometimes, when a girl gets engaged, the girl’s mother will take her to the doctor to get contraceptives. But otherwise, she did not think girls were able to get them on their own very easily. The Arabic teacher, who is several years older, disagreed. She said that most girls who have sex use contraceptives. “It is good if [girls] use them because it prevents problems, even if they are having sex before marriage.”

Discussing sexual practices with the young women was difficult because only a few of them would open up. I thought that my status as a friend of their families and as a girl of their own age – or in some cases even a few years younger – would make them feel more comfortable to speak about these topics. Even though I had spent time with all of them in the past and they knew me on a more personal level, several of the girls still seemed reluctant to share much information.

Sexuality within the Moroccan Community

For young women, the local community is essential to survival in Moroccan society. Family is perhaps one of the strongest ties to tradition and obedience, in regard to social institutions. The traditional familial structure, in which several generations all live under the same roof, is still very much intact. Such a structure
weaves its way throughout the rest of the community, resulting in a tight-knit society in which everyone knows the name and face of every person they encounter in the street. In the old medina in Rabat, a young woman cannot go far without her father or brothers being notified; however, most young people that I spoke with did not find any frustration with this. Young people spend a significant amount of time with their parents and extended family, both in private and public settings. Even with increases in the number of youth pursuing higher education, it is an expectation that young Moroccans – both men and women – live with their parents until they marry. The rigid social structure that the family instills is unfailing, and often demands a particular obedience and strict path of socialization that is resilient despite an increasingly contradictory atmosphere.

One aspect of the Moroccan society that ensures this obedience is the abiding value of honor. Honor remains to be one of the most powerful values for society in the MENA region, even among youth, as it is closely linked with religious norms. According to the Population Reference Bureau, women’s increased entry into the educational and professional fields has had little effect on conceptions of honor in Moroccan culture; “the question of sex and honor, for women, has barely been affected by the major structural transformations that took place in the past century.” Because a woman’s honor is directly related to her family’s reputation, these enduring values have enabled the justification of parent’s regulation of women’s lives in Moroccan culture. A young woman’s concern for upholding her family’s respect and honor is often her top responsibility. Therefore, her family enforces social norms – no matter their relevance to new generations – by strongly influencing her behavior.

In addition to being socially dependent on their families, women in Morocco are often economically dependent. This increases their reliance on the men in their families, making women more vulnerable to physical and sexual subjugation. As a result, young Moroccan women experience very low levels of empowerment in terms of their ability to make autonomous decisions and live independently.

For most women marriage is a goal from an early age, as it will enable them to fulfill their sexual needs while also gaining acceptance from their parents, extended family and the rest of society. Though the motivation for marrying early has receded with new social trends, youth still value the social norms prescribed by their parents and older generations. In a 2007 study of 2,000 Moroccan youths ages 15-24, more than 70% of young men and 90% of young women disapproved of sex

87 Farzaneh, “Facts of Life: Youth Sexuality and Reproductive Health in the Middle East and North Africa,” 5.
89 Ibid., 174.
outside of marriage. In addition, more than 80% of men and women thought girls should remain virgins until marriage, while only about 35% of those polled thought that young men should refrain from sex before marriage. The common belief that young women should remain more chaste than their male counterparts explicates the significant amount of social humiliation that their exposed behavior generates. Social stigmatization for women who partake in extramarital sex can be harsh in a Moroccan community. Consequences for being caught in a sexual relationship outside of marriage can bring about familial abandonment, loss of custody of children, and social rejection so intense that it sometimes leads to prostitution. Consequently, the unstable, secretive, and guilt-ridden nature of Moroccan adolescents’ sexual activity leaves youth more vulnerable to STIs, HIV/AIDS, unplanned pregnancy, and high-risk deliveries.

According to Saqi, having sex before marriage is stigmatized because it is a sin in Islam. Nevertheless, said Saqi, the Qur'an says that whoever atones from his or her sin is treated as someone who has never sinned. Therefore, “Stigma as an ongoing kind of idea is not good.” He acknowledged that the mother of an illegitimate child faces more stigmatization than the father, but he thinks this is heedless because both are treated the same in the Qur’an. “They’re both treated as sinners and they should both be punished. The stigmatization of the mother and not the father is biased because we’re in a patrilinear (sic.) society, but that has nothing to do with religion.”

Family planning and sexual health programs that are specifically catered to women and youth are essential for the success of those programs. Due to intimidation from both the legal system and from society, many young women are fearful of accessing resources provided by family planning organizations. In addition, the majority of Moroccan women (52%) have never visited a gynecologist or obstetrician, and 22% of women only visit when pregnant. Women might be resistant to visiting a doctor because of the difficulty of finding female health care providers, whom most prefer over male practitioners. The Ministry of Health has attempted to combat cultural and economic barriers by providing free condoms at youth centers in large urban areas, but adolescents can only attain them by asking for them specifically, which may deter easily embarrassed youth from accessing them. Condoms are not generally sold in stores, and even when they are the likelihood of the shopkeeper recognizing a young man or woman also acts as a deterrent force. In

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91 Ibid., 24-26.  
93 Ibid., 11.  
94 Saqi in conversation with the author.  
some cases, contraceptives are not promoted because the risk of STIs is seen as a necessary deterrent to premarital sex. Some Moroccans even believe that unwanted pregnancies and STIs are a just punishment for young women who practice illegitimate sex. One can assume that, even though a significant percentage of young Moroccan women are having sex before marriage, many of them are not accessing sexual health counseling or other resources through their parents, a doctor, or the state. In order for Moroccan adolescents to feel more inclined to access sexual health resources, organizations need to separate themselves from the influence and intimidation of conservative ideas.

Effects of Society on Women’s Sexual Health

The current reality in Morocco is that young people are having more sexual relationships before they get married than they did in the past. Nevertheless, sex is still taboo. Young people are reluctant to talk about it, and society reacts negatively to young women who are caught having extramarital relations. This results in an increasing number of Moroccans practicing sexual activities in secret for a longer period of time—a realization that is concerning for the future of the sexual and reproductive health of youth.

According to Khadija Mosleh, a university professor and gender and development consultant for the AMPF, the major family planning organization in Morocco, the sexual health of young people in the country is suffering tremendously. In a conversation I had with Mosleh regarding premarital sex, she stated that the majority of young people do not know anything about diseases contracted in sexual relationships. Therefore, Mosleh estimated that there are 400,000 new cases of STIs every year in Morocco—a rate that she claims is catastrophic. She stated, “There is a negative view with young people—they don’t tell their parents and they don’t get health services.” According to her, young Moroccans either cannot access methods of protection, or they simply do not use them. They do not go to the doctor when they are pregnant, and sometimes girls use traditional medicine for several months before getting medical assistance. “We need to change the way people consider condoms and other protection,” Mosleh said to me. Parting from the common theme that young people are not searching for answers, Mosleh believes that “young people are demanding information.”

The importance of preserving a young woman’s virginity until she is married is still present in Morocco. However, adolescents have found a way of getting around this imposition. Dialmy says that there are two current definitions of virginity. The first is the Qur’anic definition, which he explains to mean no sexual experiences—vaginal, oral, or anal intercourse, manual or mutual masturbation, or other forms of sexual stimulation—before marriage. Second is the conventional

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99 Ibid., 9.
100 Khadija Mosleh (gender and development consultant for the AMPF) in conversation with the author, Apr. 26, 2013.
101 Ibid.
meaning: the hymen is preserved, despite other sexual conduct. Many young women, according to Dialmy, practice other sexual activities that do not risk “deflowering,” as a way of dealing with the long period of time between sexual maturity and marriage. Though these acts serve as reconciliation between taboo and desire, risks such as STIs and HIV/AIDS are still very much an issue.

The trouble is, according to Mosleh, that young Moroccans refuse to use condoms. Although adolescents are not partaking in sexual activities that directly subject them to religious or social scorn, they are still engaging in sexual contact, which leads to the spread of diseases and other unsafe practices. She said that “scary ideas” about virginity and other social ideologies interfere with the image of condoms and contraceptives, leaving young people resistant to using protection and more at risk. When discussing ways in which young people can protect themselves if they choose to “sin and engage in extramarital sex” Saqi’s first reaction was not to say that Islam rejects the promotion of condoms. “Contraceptives… that is still sex. Of course, if you have sex and you have a child, it’s a double sin, because you’re causing a big problem to society. But,” he elaborated, “it is said, for example, that contraception minimizes the bad results.” Extramarital sex is a grave sin in Islam; however, using protection and reducing the risk of pregnancy – while also reducing the risk of STIs and HIV/AIDS – can minimize that sin.

Despite this argument, social ideologies still play a role. Boutaina Alami admitted that, even though she works for an institution that promotes the use of protection, she is not sure what she would tell her own daughter regarding how to protect herself during sex. However, Alami did state that parents communicating and maintaining an open mind is key. “If today I can speak with my daughter and tell her … ‘I prefer [you don’t] have sex before marriage, but if you do ask me and I can help you,’ it will be best.” Both Alami and Mosleh stressed the importance of good information and sexual education obtained through parents, teachers or other adults, not through friends or the Internet.

During our conversation, Mosleh stressed the way that social stigmatization and lack of education need to be combated. Although the weight of the concept of virginity in Morocco creates a challenge for the support of sexual relationships, she feels that government ministries – the Ministry of Education, in particular – need to take on more responsibility. “There need to be other ways, not only clinical. It’s not enough.” Mosleh suggested training professors and educators to have the ability to communicate and give good instruction to adolescents and to implement more services for young people that are free, both monetarily and free from discrimination or stigmatization. The AMPF has 26 centers throughout Morocco, seven of which specialize in young people. Institutions that are welcoming to youth and empower them through education on health are essential, according to Mosleh.

102 Dialmy, “Sexuality and Islam in Morocco.”
103 Ibid.
104 Ibid.
105 Alami in conversation with the author.
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
“Things are h’shouma (forbidden/shameful), they don’t talk about [sex]. But this is changing. Young people need strength from learning and talking about it – about all things – so that young people have freedom in decision.”

Due to social reservations about youth sexuality, programs in the region face a constant battle to provide functioning, youth-friendly services that meet the needs of their diverse populations. Controversies surrounding the sexuality of unmarried women make serving that population the greatest challenge. Concerns regarding the promotion of increased sexual education are understandable for a community that faces traditional religious beliefs and social practices – Morocco is far from being alone, in this sense. However, to prevent further increases in health detriments, religious and educational institutions need to accept and address these detriments within their youth populations.

**Moving Forward**

Moving forward, the immediate concerns of young women must be focused on first. Peer-support networks have proven to be successful at mediating the needs of young women, as they allow for them to maintain a level of anonymity. Such programs have been implemented in universities in Tunisia and Egypt in the form of peer education initiatives designed solely for women. These programs include peer support liaisons in female dormitories and a confidential anonymous telephone hotline for young women to ask questions on sexual health and other sensitive topics. The benefit of peer support networks is that they are accessible to young women who are often excluded from accessing existing programs due to environmental and cultural intimidation. In addition, peer-to-peer support makes women more comfortable to address issues that might be humiliating to discuss with a family member or health professional. However, the individualized nature of hotlines and peer support does not confront the overall rejection of sexual health promotion in communities, as these conversations would remain hidden from the general public. Health initiatives that rely solely on the combined decisions of individuals are slow to produce change because they continue to bump up against the constraints of society. Therefore, while such programs must be the first step in addressing sexual health disparities, they do little to impact society as a whole in the short-term.

Cultural change cannot be addressed quite as speedily, as it requires more than the implementation of low-cost programs. Any change that does occur must start at the community level. In North Africa, where religion plays a key role in the formation of social norms, local religious leaders should be included in discussions of human development. While acquiring the overwhelming support of religious leaders for the expansion of sexual health education may not be feasible, their

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108 Ibid.
111 Dejong, “Reproductive health of Arab young people,” 849.
opinions are still integral to the normalization of taboo topics. By discussing ways in which Islam can support contraception and sexual health education, such as matters of “reducing the sin,” as suggested by Saqi, religious leaders can begin a dialogue.112 Even if many religious figures oppose these ideas, having a public conversation on sexual health would promote the conversation at the community level, as well. 

The creation of a community dialogue would then allow for collective action, building capacity for organizing around these issues and impacting community resources.113 An example of such organization would be the formation of community groups where individuals can meet and discuss the debate surrounding topics of sexual behavior, in addition to the need for promotion of sexual health care.114 The historical success of civil society in North Africa suggests that such a process is likely to occur with any social issue, including the promotion of sexual health. However, any amount of lasting social change will be slow to occur. In addition, social aspects, such as the rejection of women thought to be having sex outside of marriage, that deter young women from publicly approaching sexual health issues could also deter community groups from forming and mobilizing.

As is shown in the lack of success of current sexual health policies in Morocco, national initiatives cannot be successful without community-level mobilization. In an attempt to maintain its international reputation, the Moroccan state ratifies international law and enacts national policies that are more progressive than the realities of society, leaving these policies to be ineffective. While Morocco possesses the infrastructure to implement change in sexual health, stigmatization and social norms on the community level prevent it from being fully utilized. Due to this reality, national campaigns are not of primacy. With religious dialogue and community promotion, sexual health issues will, over time, come to the forefront of politics and policy. It is at this point that external pressure from outside groups and State-led national promotion will be the most successful. The use of large-scale, time-bound communications campaigns is effective for persuading people to comply with health-seeking behaviors and to initiate and support social convention shifts.115 For communication to be effective, governments and development agencies must acquire communication specialists for facilitation of national sexual health campaigns, also creating jobs for an economy that is overburdened with unemployed youth.116

Upon the acceptance of this dialogue among constituents, political backing might be more feasible, as well. Such backing is necessary to uphold current policies, such as those instated by the ICPD, and to enact new ones, thereby addressing specific issues for women and youth. As political support is acquired, far-reaching goals such as the implementation of sexual health education in public schools could become a future reality. To ensure effective change in health behavior,

112 Saqi in conversation with the author.
114 Ibid., 5.
116 Ibid.
deeply instilled stigma must be relinquished. Such a daunting process requires significant time, as it also requires the creation of an “enabling environment” in which the attitudes of communities reflect the attitudes of local policymakers, religious leadership, and the intellectual community.  

**Conclusion**

The MENA countries face a series of transitions as they continue to improve their education and social infrastructure. Health is perhaps one of the most essential factors in the fulfillment of basic human rights. One of the biggest challenges for the health – and therefore the rights – of young people is that sex outside of marriage is socially forbidden. This prohibition allows for stigmatization to brew and, as a result, for women to live in fear of the way society might react to an adolescent decision. Negative social perceptions of premarital sex give rise to secretive and ill-informed sexual encounters between youths who possess little access to information on, or protection from, the realities of sexual relationships. The consequences of this hidden conduct, including STIs and pregnancies out of wedlock, continue to be major issues for the health of young women.

Despite the conservative religious values of some communities, family planning methods including sexual education, oral contraceptives, condoms and intrauterine devices, are necessary in order to improve the health status of young women. Through programs implemented by NGOs, family planning services have become more accessible to urban communities; however, without the support of religious institutions and leaders, those programs cannot hope to make a substantial impact on an entire population. In countries where religious ideology plays a major role in society and government, such as in Morocco, social development must be directly linked with religion and work within conservative culture. The value of Islam and the confines of community relationships among Moroccans should not be considered barriers to health; instead, dialogue on health promotion and prevention must incorporate these facets to ensure relevant and feasible improvements. The success of sexual health programs for women depends on cooperation between NGOs, the government, and religious institutions in order to ensure a successful health plan. Change must be enacted by society so that North Africans can work to reduce social stigmatization within their own cultural context.

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117 Ibid.
Assessing the Relationship between the Conceptions of Gamal Abdel Nasser and Sayyed Qutb

Social Justice and the Political Community

Kareem Rosshandler

Introduction

Years before Kemal Ataturk abolished the Caliphate in 1924, the decline in Ottoman rule over the Arab world provided a space in which Arab nationalism and Islamism emerged as the two most potent ideologies competing for the destiny of the Arab people. Later, as European colonial and mandate projects came to an end, political organizations that espoused these ideologies mobilized for power. The developments in the relationship between the Free Officers and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in the mid-twentieth century spawned an ideological antagonism that would challenge society and politics across the region. These competing forces and the ideologies they espoused were represented in their fullest by Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918-70) and Muslim Brotherhood spiritual leader Sayyed Qutb (1906-66). On their different tracks, these prominent revolutionaries presented the Arab world with norms and values that hold competing sway to this day.

In great part due to political circumstances, Abdel Nasser and Qutb have become essentialist symbols: names that can evoke strong reactions but whose precise ideological conceptions are hardly understood. There has been a long-standing power struggle between what these two figures represent. This power struggle is most acute between state militaries and the Brotherhood. While the most severe example is the Syrian military bombardment of Hama during the Brotherhood’s uprising in 1982, the most recent eruption of this power struggle was the 2013 military coup of the elected president of Egypt, Mohammad Mursi, who belongs to the Muslim Brotherhood. The events of 2013 have been magnified by crackdowns on the Brotherhood across the Arab world with arrest campaigns in almost all states. This paper puts forth that in order for the Arab world to achieve long term stability there must be a scaling back of the monopolization of political truth by both Islamist and nationalist ideological movements. Concessions by these movements will allow for more pluralistic and representative forms of governance to

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emerge. In keeping faithful to this aim, the conceptions of these ideological representatives and an assessment of where they intersect and diverge have a renewed importance for laying the foundations of political and social conciliation across the Middle East.

It is important to focus on theory to get to the core of these ideologies rather than the political developments surrounding them. It is because of disproportionate attention to political developments, past but mostly present, that contemporary academia generally does not assess the norms and values of both Arab nationalism and Islamism with holistic care. This is a literary departure from the works produced by past scholars such as Georgious Antonious, Hazem Nuseibeh, and Hisham Sharabi. The neglect of theory in contemporary scholarship is in part due to the fact that Arab nationalism flourished under the umbrella of the global Non-Aligned Movement and is retroactively assumed to have been a one-time anti-imperialist function of the Cold War. This is also because since the mid-seventies the rapid developments in the receding prowess of Arab nationalism and the surging presence of political Islam in the Middle East has reoriented discussion on the relationship between these ideologies in geopolitical terms. In this contemporary discourse, both Arab nationalism and Islamism are prone to analyses that stop short of meaningful assessment. To say that Islamist ideology has the ultimate goal of establishing Islamic law in the Muslim world is too simple. What type of society — previous or unprecedented — is this proposed governing instrument trying to attain? To say that Arab nationalist ideology has the ultimate goal of uniting the Arab world into one political unit is also too simple. What fortifying purpose does this have vis-à-vis the region’s historic rivalries? This paper aims to address these questions and others by analyzing how two iconic representatives of each ideology conceptualized social justice and political community.

Starting in the mid-nineteenth century the above questions began to gain momentous traction in the Arab world, and owing to the availability of print press, now engaged a wide spectrum of society. During this period, called al-Nahda (the Renaissance), there was an intellectual flourishing and exchange of concepts relating to political community and social justice that borrowed from both nationalist and religious polemics. By the time of the First World War, the ideas popularized during al-Nahda took their shape as distinct ideologies. These formations happened at a historical juncture when the Ottoman Empire was collapsing, European powers were divvying up the Middle East, and Woodrow Wilson was preaching self-determination. In the 1940s, nationalist and Islamist ideologies formed into political organizations that shook the thrones of tutelage regimes as colonial mandates began to expire. In this post-independence vacuum, there was a great opportunity for these organizations to see their ideologies gain political legitimacy.

**Definition of Terms**

Philosophers Adam Swift and John Rawls provide the definitions of the operative terms used in this study. A ‘concept’ is the structure of a term, in this case social justice. A ‘conception’ is the particular specification of a term, in this case, the aspects of political independence and wealth distribution that are attached to social
justice.\(^2\) The same formula applies to political community. Social justice is defined as, ‘the ability people have to realize their potential in the society where they live.’\(^3\) The University of Aberdeen provides this paper with a definition of political community as ‘one whose members have a real stake in political institutions, and, for that reason, subject themselves to the decisions of those institutions.’\(^4\) Ideology is a systematic body of beliefs and conceptions. This paper keeps in mind anthropologist Clifford Geertz formulation of ideology as “a response to strain” and that, “It is a loss of orientation that most directly gives rise to ideological activity, an inability for lack of useable models, to comprehend the universe of civic rights and responsibilities in which one finds oneself located.”\(^5\) Cairo, the core metropolis of the Middle East, was indeed at a loss of orientation and thus the center of ideological activity. As the nucleus of intellectual exchange during al-Nahda, it became the city where the fruits of ideology were being realized on a popular level. Both Abdel Nasser and Qutb had a stake in Cairo’s affairs and, with its regional dominion, ambitions for the moral high ground of the Arab world. Historian Robert Stephens artistically locates the likes of Abdel Nasser and Qutb in this defining period of history:

To be born an Egyptian is to be the heir to sixty centuries of glory and of pain. To be a Muslim in the twentieth century is to be a member of the still living faith and of a society which is passing through a deep spiritual crisis. To consider oneself an Arab is to feel part of a world of civilization, like that of China or India, which is struggling to reassert its identity and restore a legendary unity and vigour. To grow up a man of spirit and ambition in an Afro-Asian country in the first half of this century was to suffer the humiliation of poverty, backwardness and political dependence and to experience an irresistible urge to try to overcome it.\(^6\)

In order to unpack Stephen’s passage we must define some of its key terms. The terms discussed here are simple adaptations borrowed from historians Hazem Nuseibeh (identities) and Hisham Sharabi (ideologies). Arabs are a people of Semitic origin from the Arabian Peninsula whose purest tongue comes from the region by the Gulf of Aden. Arabs comprise a nation that from the beginning shared a common language and culture, norms and ideas, and followed many different creeds and religions. They came to include communities of Christians, Jews, and polytheists and exchanged through vast trading routes, with Mecca as the hub of the peninsula’s commercial and religious activity. For nomadic Arabs, tribal alignments characterize loyalties, leadership, and conflict. For sedentary Arabs, rather than toward the community, basic loyalties are toward the family, the clan, the religious group or

\(^2\) Swift, Adam. Political philosophy: a beginners' guide for students and politicians., 11.
\(^4\) Stack, Trevor. "Competing or complementary notions of political community in contemporary west Mexico."
sects. The Arabs emerged in a single civilization with the establishment of the first North Arabian state, Nabatea, in the first century A.D. This epoch is referred to as *Jahiliya* (wildness or ignorance) and Arab nationalism focuses on the linguistic bond that largely shaped identity at this time in addition to the glories of the folklore and poetry it produced. For Arab nationalists this linguistic identity displaces, though does not disregard, the Islamic identity in favor of secular cultural values. (For Islamists *Jahiliya* has a pejorative connotation as practices condemnable in Islam were commonplace during this period). The fundamental aim of Arab nationalism is the unification of all Arabic-speaking lands from the Atlantic Ocean to the Persian Gulf.

Concluding the *Jahiliya* period in the early 7th century A.D., Islam arrived in Mecca in the line of Abrahamic faiths through the divine revelations professed by Prophet Muhammad ibn ‘Abdullāh (s) (c. 570-632). Arabs of all creeds and classes embraced the message of Islam at the peril of the hierarchal tribal system and the values according to which it was reinforced. At the time, Arabs were only masters of the Ḥejāz, Tihāmah, and Najd regions while Yemen to the south was under the tutelage of the Sassanids and Syria to the north was under the Byzantines. During the time of the Prophet and his companions Islam spread far beyond these regions, first uniting feuding Arab tribes and then conquering with its armies the regions of the Levant, Persia, and northeastern Africa, netting them into a consolidated polity. During the reign of the Abbassid Caliphate some two centuries later, the parallel expansion of Arabism receded and gave way to a multicultural social fabric that absorbed the knowledge and practices of other peoples, notably of the scientifically advanced Hellenic and Persian civilizations. It was at this stage that the bulk of the populations under the new Islamic empire became Muslims. Islamist ideology considers Islam — specifically its ascertained social code — as central to a Muslim, displacing any cultural, national, or otherwise identity. The fundamental aim of Islamism is the unification of Muslim-predominate lands under Islamic governance.

It is worth commenting on the historic relationship between Arab nationalism and Islam. While the Arab civilization materialized centuries before the arrival of Islam, the two are deeply intertwined to the point of inseparability. The irony of modern Arab nationalism as based on a secular linguistic identity is that in the places where it was most espoused, namely Egypt and the Levant, peoples there only adopted the Arabic language after the conquest of Islam. Under the third Caliph ‘Uṯmān ibn-‘Afān (r. 644-656), the Qur’an was compiled into a standard written document. This new linguistic corpus — neither poetry nor prose — was made available far beyond the Arabic-speaking Peninsula. In the drive for comprehending the Qur’an, therein spawned a spectacular revival of the language, namely the growth of Arabic literacy and the codification of Arabic grammar. In the following centuries,
the Arabic language reached its great geographic and cultural span — becoming a transcontinental *lingua franca* — primarily as a vehicle for Islam. Historian Phillip Hitti mentions that the victory of Arabic over the native languages of conquered peoples was the latest and slowest of the three series of Islamic conquest. The peoples had proved “more ready to give up their political and even religious loyalties than their linguistic one.”¹¹ In turn, the widespread adoption of the language reinforced the Islamic empire. A common language was necessary for carrying out imperial functions and creating a unified, Islamic polity. In order to sustain the vigor of this polity, spreading Arabic was also necessary for corroborating the original claim of the Qur’an as a linguistic miracle: its matchless content and composition in the dense and highly complex Arabic language. Overall, Islam checked, eclipsed, and expanded Arab civilization.

**Methodological Note**

This paper aims to assess the relationship between Gamal Abdel Nasser and Sayyed Qutb on their conceptions of social justice and political community through analysis of the pertinent English-translated works produced by these figures. The primary sources used for Qutb will be two books he authored, *Social Justice in Islam* and *Milestones*. The primary sources used for Abdel Nasser will be his ideological manifesto, *Egypt’s Liberation: Philosophy of the Revolution*, as well as transcripts of his speeches that outlined his goals when he first assumed power and those during the United Arab Republic period of 1958-1961. This paper will only include background information that provides useful pretext to the primary sources, though the general biographies of the leaders as well as the political atmosphere that propelled them to prominence warrant special attention.

The paper will be structured first with the topic (concept) of social justice, focusing on the subtopic (conception) of political independence, as freedom from alien rule is considered the prerequisite to establishing a just society; and wealth distribution, as the disparate levels of wealth characterizing societies posed as impediments to justice. The topic of political community will then be addressed, focusing on the subtopic of what defines a polity: the role of the people and the means of ruling, as the question of just governance is a contested one. As a note, there is overlap in the two topics throughout the paper — particularly in Abdel Nasser’s section — as his typical rhetoric statement will often string together various subjects. Qutb’s conceptions of social justice and political community will be analyzed first and Abdel Nasser’s second. The paper will then conclude with an assessment of the relationship between the two figures’ conceptions in terms of how they measure up to each other and relate to contemporary developments in the Middle East.

**Background of the Relationship**

It is worth precluding the two men’s conceptions with some anecdotes of their personal relations as well as those of their respective organizations. On July 23

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1952, a group of dissident military officers known as the Free Officers overthrew King Farouq of Egypt and the Sudan. This coup was welcomed by a wide spectrum of Egyptian politics, including the Muslim Brotherhood — an organization founded in 1928 with the avowed goal of establishing an Islamic state with Islamic law as its legal foundation — as well as the main nationalist parties. In 1953 the Free Officers declared Egypt a republic and on the same day the coup’s leader, Muhammad Naguib, its president. Under the direction of 36-year old Gamal Abdel Nasser, Naguib’s original comrades forced him to resign from presidency in November 1954, citing differences in revolutionary strategy. The new leader accused Naguib of “harbouring dictatorial ambitions,” banishing him to nearly two decades of house arrest. Abdel Nasser then became president, and owing to his pedigree, the first ‘truly Egyptian ruler’ of Egypt since the last native Pharaoh was defeated in 343 B.C. In the coming years, he would consolidate his power through a firm control over the Egyptian military and expressions of public opinion. Several groups supported the July 23 coup and the Brotherhood was invested in the revolution’s outcome. The Brotherhood was unique among Egypt’s constituents because its members played a supporting role in the Free Officers coup. By the end of World War II, there were an estimated two million members of the Brotherhood. Owing to their representation in all professions, many rank and file Brethren held positions in Egypt’s massive state bureaucracy.

The Brotherhood and the Free Officers shared common interests from the World War II years until Abdel Nasser’s consolidation of power. Egyptian involvement in Palestine represented a microcosm of the political alliances being forged back in Cairo. The Brotherhood wielded considerable respect from the Free Officers for their military efforts in Palestine as early as 1947, when their volunteers flocked to al ‘Arish to assist Palestinians against Zionist militias. A year later when war broke out between Arab states and the newly declared state of Israel, Brotherhood militias again distinguished themselves, this time as daring ground support for Egyptian soldiers besieged in the village of al Faluja near Gaza. The then Staff Major Gamal Abdel Nasser was among those Egyptian troops infamously equipped with defective weapons and encircled by Israeli forces in the Faluja pocket in August 1948. The trials facing the Arab armies in Palestine — whose collective defeat “unmasked the bankruptcy” of their leaders — left a strong impression on the Free Officers serving there, dually reinforcing their ideology and esteem for the allies who fought alongside them during this ordeal. The Muslim Brotherhood supported the Free Officers’ revolutionary activity in the belief that the abolition of the monarchy was the first step to establishing a society governed by Islamic values. After Egyptian involvement in the 1948 war ended, anti-monarchy cooperation

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14 Hamad, Mahmoud. *When the gavel speaks: judicial politics in modern Egypt.* , 8.
16 Sharabi, Hisham. *Nationalism and revolution in the Arab World (the Middle East and North Africa).* , 61.
efforts continued back in Cairo. In order to carry out the common goal of overthrowing the monarchy, the Free Officers and the Brotherhood exchanged ideas and expertise in the highest secrecy.

Historians have accounted that in the lead up and immediate aftermath of the revolution, Abdel Nasser used to visit Qutb’s residence regularly and the two would exchange ideas on how post-monarchy Egypt ought to look for hours on end. About a month after the coup, Qutb delivered a lecture on “Intellectual and Spiritual Liberation in Islam” at the Officers’ Club in Cairo, with Abdel Nasser in attendance. Around this time, Qutb was appointed cultural advisor to the Revolutionary Council — the Free Officers command committee — and was the only civilian to attend its meetings. Most likely, Abdel Nasser saw in Qutb an educated and influential religious counterpart who, along with other leading elements of the Brotherhood, could be co-opted into the new regime in an advisory capacity. The Brotherhood was renowned for its grassroots appeal and effective social welfare programs and Abdel Nasser stood to gain by learning of its internal operations and how to apply them on a state level. For this reason, once the Free Officers abolished political parties in 1953, the Muslim Brotherhood was allowed the unique — though short-lived — privilege of continuing its work as an ‘organization.’

This cooperation began to disintegrate as Islamists came to the realization that the Free Officers’ secular, nationalist agenda would be incompatible with the aspirations of the Muslim Brotherhood. It also became apparent that the new military regime had no intentions to return the state to civilian rule and hold free elections. Once the Free Officer’s Revolutionary Council ignored the Brotherhood’s demand that the state should ban alcohol as a first step to implementing Islamic law (Shari’a) the Brotherhood and the Free Officers became antagonistic forces. When Qutb realized that Abdel Nasser had taken advantage of the secrecy between the Free Officers and the Brotherhood, he promptly withdrew his support from the revolution. The story goes that Abdel Nasser then tried to persuade Qutb by offering him any position he wanted in Egypt except its kingship, supposedly saying: “We will give you whatever position you want in the government, whether it's the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Arts, etc.” Qutb refused every offer. Whether or not this offer was as generous as it is related to have been, it was clear that Qutb’s sense of betrayal marked a terminal departure from the agenda of Abdel Nasser and the new Egyptian republic.

A foiled assassination plot in 1954 during one of Abdel Nasser’s speeches sealed this antipathy. The Brotherhood, which disavowed the plot, was blamed and the regime used the incident to justify a crackdown on Brotherhood members for their opposition. Some 19,000 Brethren were sentenced for complicity in the plot and Qutb was imprisoned that year along with 4,000 others. He would spend the next ten years behind bars, then released for two years, until finally being hanged by the Abdel Nasser regime in 1966. During his first three years in prison, Qutb was

17 Hamid Algar, in forward to Qutb, Sayyid. Social justice in Islam., 5.
tortured and confined to harsh conditions. In later years he was allowed more
privileges, including the opportunity to write. It was in these years that he produced
his seminal works: a 30 volume commentary on the Qur'an called *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*
(*In the Shade of the Qur'an*), which scholar Ahmad Von Denffer mentions as one of
the three outstanding books on Qur'an interpretation in the twentieth century,\(^21\) and a
manifesto of political Islam called *Ma'alim fi-l-Tariq* (*Milestones*). From his
experience of confinement, *Milestones* shows a notable progression of
fundamentalist tendencies from Qutb’s earlier works, which had largely consisted of
literary critiques, poetry, and Islamic thought. Likewise, as Abdel Nasser continued
his campaign to suppress the Brotherhood — the bane of his domestic rule — his
secular and socialist tendencies fastened until the wholesale defeat of the Arab
armies against Israel in 1967 and his fatal heart attack in 1970.

While the ideas derived from these figures’ expressed conceptions of social
justice and political community live on today at comparable magnitudes, it is worth
noting that there is no parity of context when assessing the relationship between
Gamal Abdel Nasser and Sayyed Qutb. The two figures were at diametric ends of a
power spectrum: Abdel Nasser was a statesman leading roughly one-third of the
Arab population and a central figure of the global Non-Aligned movement whose
every move was under the spotlight of Afro-Asian Cold War activity; he had armies
to command and millions of mouths to feed. While Abdel Nasser’s captivating
speeches are a solid reference point for his ideas, his non-literary actions can
supplement an account of his ideas. On the other hand, Qutb was *persona non grata*
languishing in prison, detached from realities of the outside world that perhaps would
have put practical limitations on his highly theoretical idealism; he was an embittered
intellectual with little left to lose.\(^22\) Qutb’s ideas were expressed in the realm of
literature, with no significant non-literary actions perhaps other than his execution to
account for his ideas. In different ways, these respective contexts afforded both men
various luxuries of thought; the writings of both Abdel Nasser and Qutb bear the
mark of dreamers seeking to assert authentic and independent identities in the
modern world.

**Sayyed Qutb**

**I. Social Justice: Attitudes Towards Political Independence**

As a vocal figure among the Egyptian literary and political class at this time,
Sayyed Qutb gave his take on the socioeconomic issues concerning Egyptian society
through various publications. His main idea was that for these socioeconomic issues
to be solved and social justice to be restored, Egypt needed to return to the true spirit
and law of Islam. According to biographer John Calvert, having been raised in the
rural village of Musha in the Asyut region, Qutb sympathized with the peasant
farmhands who worked on his father’s land and was aware of wealth disparity from
an early age. This consciousness was coupled with Qutb’s scholarly comprehension


\(^{22}\) Ibrahim, Saad Eddin. *Egypt, Islam and democracy: twelve critical essays.,* 154.
of the Qur’an, which he is said to have memorized by the age of ten. His background thus gave him an insight into social justice deeply rooted in the history and teachings of Islam that he could communicate in contemporary revolutionary discourse. Calvert states,

Beneath the Qur’anic veneer of Qutb’s Islamist writings resides a structural resonance with modern-era ideological currents. That is to say, Qutb imbibed and repackaged in Islamic form the Jacobin characteristics of the European revolutionary tradition.

In the late 1940s, much of the revolutionary discourse of the effendiye indeed bore the characteristics of the Jacobin tradition as seen in the French Revolution, namely the mobilization towards the establishment of centralized Republic. However unlike many of his revolutionary contemporaries, Qutb neither reiterated the left’s call for the imposition of what was to the Arab world an alien, Marxist regime, nor was he satisfied with the Egyptian nationalists’ ambitions of self-rule while they still had no novel economic policies. In Qutb’s view, the success of either of these movements would yield an illusionary fulfillment of Egypt’s political independence. According to Calvert, Qutb understood that Islamism held a qualitative advantage over the Marxist and nationalist competitors, which unlike Islamism could not claim divine sanction.

Qutb’s conception of social justice was one in which Islam was applied to every sphere of life. Writing in 1948, Qutb defines Islam as “an-action-oriented force not only in the traditional areas of morals but also in the areas of collective ethics, domestic politics, and international relations.” Spiritual matters aside, Qutb found in Islam a practical answer for problems of social justice. His historical precedence of social justice is period between Muhammad’s emigration to Medina (A.D. 622) until the advent of the Ummayad Dynasty (A.D. 661). During this era, a political society was organized according to divine instruction. Qutb emphasizes the moral superiority present in that polity to those of contemporary civilizations such as the West which he claims permits “the American conscience to acquiesce in the systematic eradication of the Red Indian that is being organized in the sight and hearing of all states.” and “the South African government to introduce racial laws which discriminate against people of color….” Qutb thus sees social injustices such as racism as a product of the absence of Islam in social norms and values. Racism struck a chord with Qutb as he experienced it during his sojourn in the United States on an assignment for the Egyptian Ministry of Education in 1949. Given his dark complexion, Qutb was resigned to using public utilities designated for ‘colored’ people. This experience, among others, gave him a negative impression of the culture

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24 Calvert, John. Sayyid Qutb and the origins of radical Islamism, 16.
25 Ibid. 128
26 Ibid. 127.
28 On a scholarship to study the U.S. educational system, Qutb spent much of his four years at what is now University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, Colorado.
and values of Jim Crow America and strongly influenced his idea that the western ways were anathema to the needs of Egyptians. Qutb also expressed his fair share of criticism for contemporary Arab societies and their anti-egalitarian tendencies. In his writings, Sayyed Qutb most often uses the ambiguous pronouns ‘we’ and ‘our’ when discussing social issues. It can be ascertained from his writing that while Egypt is his primary reference point and the overall basis for his empirical observations, these pronouns relate to the broader Arab world. This region, as a contiguous linguistic unit from the geographic span of Morocco to Oman on a latitude and the Sudan to Iraq on a longitude, was collectively experiencing similar situations of social and political malaise. The Arab world, with its nucleus Arabia Deserta, is the birthplace of the first Muslim community and the abode of Islam’s holiest sites. As such, it has been the focus of Islamic revivalists. While Egypt is Qutb’s focal point, he does not see it as distinct from the region to which it belongs and considers its problems one with the problems of its neighbors. This perspective was not only informed by his inclination towards collective identity but also by his awareness that the political landscape as comprised of two dozen distinct states was only a phenomenon of the post-Ottoman twentieth century. In the opening of Social Justice in Islam, Qutb diagnoses the ‘social situation’ as it relates to the collective ‘our’:

We have only to look in order to see that our social situation is as bad as it can be; it is apparent that our social conditions have no possible relation to justice; and so we turn our eyes to Europe, America or Russia, and we expect to import from there solutions to our problems, just as from them we import goods for our industrial livelihood. With this difference – that in industrial importing we first examine the goods which are already on our markets, and we estimate our own ability to produce them. But when it is a matter of importing principles and customs and laws, we do no such thing; we continually cast aside all our own spiritual heritage, all our intellectual endowment... our own fundamental principles and doctrines, and we bring in those of democracy, or socialism, or capitalism, or communism. It is to these that we look for a solution of our social problems, although our circumstances, our history, and the very bases of our life-material... are quite out of keeping with the circumstances of people across the deserts and beyond the seas.

Qutb predicates his conception of social justice as being inherently nativist, based on the historical religious capital of the Islamic world. The native system identified by Qutb is Islamic law, which he credits as “the foundation of our first form of society.” Any other conception derived from foreign normative systems would be antithetical to this native system. The fact that Britain was, since its occupation of Egypt in 1882, associated with the importation of secular, nationalist

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29 Calvert, John. Sayyid Qutb and the origins of radical Islamism, 147-152.
30 Qutb mentions Indonesia and the Muslim communities of China and India, but these examples are marginal.
32 Qutb, Sayyid. Social justice in Islam, 34.
33 Ibid.
ideas served as tangible evidence of this antithesis.\(^{34}\) Moreover, from an Islamic perspective, not only are foreign legal systems “out of keeping” with the circumstances of Muslims but they are also conceived by man rather than by interpretation of divine mandate.\(^{35}\) Islamic law comprehensively legislates both the private and public matters of a Muslim’s life.\(^{36}\) The breadth and depth of Islamic law makes it difficult for a secular legal system that deals with the same matters not to run in its contradiction. Thus Qutb considers Islamic law alone as an applicable legal source and its enforcement the highest form of social justice. This approach renders his attitude towards political independence uncompromising.

### II. Social Justice: Wealth Distribution

“At the time of the Prophet’s call to Messengership, Arab society was devoid of proper distribution of wealth and devoid of justice. A small group monopolized all wealth and commerce, which increased through usury. The great majority of the people were poor and hungry. The wealthy were also regarded as noble and distinguished, and the common people were not only deprived of wealth but also of dignity and honor” – Sayyed Qutb, *Milestones*.\(^{37}\)

Equitable wealth distribution is perhaps the central pillar of Qutb’s conception of social justice. He is very critical of both communism and Western Democracy [i.e. capitalism], two systems he claims lack a spiritual basis and are “defeated on the plane of thought” and “unable to present any healthy values for the guidance of mankind,” respectively.\(^{38}\) Citing Prophet Muhammad’s saying that ‘all people are equal as the teeth of a comb,’ Qutb firmly believes in the need for wealth distribution based on Islam in order to achieve a human equality.\(^{39}\) His ideal society is one comprised of different economic classes but does not lend itself to either extremes of poverty or wealth. Such economic benevolence could only reach the masses through rulers who possessed an Islamic conscience and would thus strive to eliminate corruption and nepotism and enforce the payment of religiously mandated alms-giving. Qutb argues that only through a truly Islamic society guided by such rulers could these checks on immorality, working systemically rather than in isolation, effectively create an equitable and just economic situation. He credits the advent of Islam for having greatly ameliorated the wealth disparity characterizing

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\(^{34}\) Ibrahim, Saad Eddin. *Egypt, Islam and democracy: twelve critical essays.*., 9.

\(^{35}\) *Shari’a* is extensive and addresses all spheres of social interaction such as economic law, family law, criminal law, criminal procedure, theological procedure, dress code, and military jurisprudence, among others. These laws were codified according to the teachings of the Qur’an and the sayings of the Prophet Mohammad (*ahadith*) and, after Mohammad’s death in 632 AD, the interpretations of these sources by the Prophet’s companions and those of subsequent generations of legal scholars until classical *Shari’a* took its shape by the eleventh century.

\(^{36}\) For examples of laws derived from the Qur’an as well as the *ahadith*, see: “Reliance of the Traveller: The Classic Manual of Islamic Sacred Law” by Ahmad Ibn Lulu Ibn Al-Naqib, translated by Nuh Ha Mim Keller.


\(^{38}\) Ibid, 7.

pre-Islamic Arabia and necessitates the return to Islam in order to do the same today. He continues to say,

In our modern society we do not judge by what Allah has revealed; the basis of our economic life is usury; our laws permit rather than punish oppression; the zakat [mandatory alms-giving] is not obligatory and is not spent in requisite ways. We permit the extravagance and the luxury that Islam prohibits; we allow the starvation and destitution of which the Messenger once said: “Whenever people anywhere allow a man to go hungry, they are outside the protection of Allah, the Blessed and Exalted.”

Perhaps most scathing of Qutb’s critiques of wealth disparity is his perspective on luxury. On this topic, the Arab world is the main reference for his perspective. Qutb sees luxury as a crime that is “basically individual, but when the community acquiesces in it and does not check [it] then it is a crime that produces its own fruits,” and that over time passes a “limit of triviality and take[s] the form of license and depravity, both physical and mental.” However, Qutb is not an absolute reductionist when it comes to luxury. Qutb’s experience in the U.S. helped give him a cross-societal reference for economic relativity. He explains this relativity here (italics added):

We can find many illustrations of this in the conditions of our present age. For, when the American workingman, for example, has his house with hot running water, electricity and gas, his radio set and his private automobile, when he may, if he his able, make a weekly excursion with his family or visit a cinema; when these things are so, it is not a luxury that the White House should be the home of the President. But when millions of a nation cannot find a mouthful of pure water to drink, it is undeniably luxury that some few people should be able to drink Vichy and Evian, imported from overseas. And when there are millions who cannot afford the simplest dwelling… when there are those who cannot even find rags to cover their bodies, it is an impossible luxury that a mosque should cost a hundred thousand guineas or that the Ka’aba should be covered with a velvet covering, embroidered with gold. And it makes no difference that it is [Islam’s holiest site]… For people are more deserving of the money that is spent in this way.

Qutb is thus able to identify a gradient of reasonable material limits that a society can morally afford. The above example highlights Qutb’s ideal of a society that is comprised of different classes but does not lend itself to either extremes of poverty or wealth. It also highlights the limits of his cultural chauvinism, as he concedes that western societies are now more conducive to social justice than Islamic societies. This concession echoes the famous dictum penned by the widely travelled al-Nahda era Egyptian scholar Mohammad ‘Abdu, ‘I went to the west and saw Islam but no Muslims. Then I came back to the east and saw Muslims but no Islam.’ Unlike many of the other revolutionary voices at the time that claimed foreign domination was the root cause of social injustice, Qutb’s critical focus is his own society’s misconduct.

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40 Ibid.
41 Ibid, 160.
Qutb fosters an inseparable bond between Islam and social justice, which he claims is in discord because Muslims, mainly their leaders, are not properly practicing Islam.

**Political Community: The Role of the People and the Means of Ruling**

Qutb’s conception of political community is a state in which “human relationships are based on the foundation of relationship with God.”

For Qutb, this state ideally means a modern emulation of the Caliphate as established by the first four political heirs of Prophet Muhammad (al-Khulafāʾu r-Rāshidūn). Several milestones in Qutb’s career informed this conception of political community. He began writing for the Brotherhood’s journal, al-Da’wa (The Call) in 1951. In this year he also resigned from his post as Advisor to the Egyptian Ministry after a lengthy career in the civil service. Two years later, Qutb officially joined the Muslim Brotherhood — the modern Caliphate revival organization. In these formative years, Qutb articulated in al-Da’wa ideas for an Islamic alternative, granting God the highest authority in governance. Many of his nationalist contemporaries sought to establish political community through creating an independent nation-state, which was viable considering Egypt’s existence as a distinguished nation for over 4,000 years. However, Qutb believes that the idea of a nation-state as a community ‘based on secular rather than religious loyalties,’ is antithetical to the spirit of Islam, which mandates Islamic law as the only legitimate form of governance and discourages political division between members of the Muslim nation (the ‘umma).

In the chapter ‘Economic Theory in Islam’ in *Social Justice in Islam*, Qutb lays the groundwork for the sustenance of the political community. He states that Islam’s interests, where it concerns economics, are both the welfare of the individual and the ensuring of the welfare of society. In order to implement this ideal of a virtuous balance between the society and the individual, Qutb formulates a binary groundwork of Islamic economic theory. He asserts that society under the direction of an Islamic ruler must make use of two of Islam’s fundamental methods: legislation and exhortation. The former achieves and maintains a practical and healthy society while the latter aims at “raising men above pure necessity to achieve a more developed form of life.”

On the method of legislation, Qutb states that Islam has always imposed one claim on property: the payment of zakat. This payment, mentioned in more than 30 different verses in the Qur’an, mandates that any Muslim with the means must pay a tax on assets continuously owned over one lunar year.

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47 While the Qur’an does not have guidelines for all types of assets, it specifies that Muslims must pay 1/40 (2.5%) of their total capital assets earned that year. The Qur’an specifies eight categories of people who should receive the zakat (translated closely to ‘that which purifies’), foremost among them those living in absolute poverty (al-Fuqara) as well as those restrained because they cannot meet their most basic needs (al-Masakin). Today, most Muslim states regulate the collection of the Zakat through decentralized, voluntary committees but it is not legally obligatory save a handful of states.
For Qutb this is a basic, undisputable requisite for maintaining social welfare. Exhortation, Qutb argues, is the method by which Islam encourages Muslims to give more than what is just required to ensure the welfare of society. Here, Qutb promotes the practice of voluntary charity (*sadaqa*). This method, however, is not quantifiable and is confined to a spiritual rather than a legislative domain. Social welfare is thus not complete without a spiritual motive, which must be encouraged by the ruler. Qutb moreover argues that Islam has given to a ruler “the right of exacting in addition to the *zakat* as much as will prevent hardship and do away with penury and preserve the well-being of the Muslim community.” Thus Qutb places utmost importance on ruler enforcing a common code of morality rather than just law.

Despite the heavy-handed authority Qutb entrusts upon the ruler of his ideal political community, he ultimately places the political onus on the people rather than the government. It is the Muslim people, in Qutb’s view, who ought to demand from their rulers that they govern according to Islamic principles. This view is found in Qutb’s rather severe assertion that Islamic society today is not “Islamic in any sense of the word” because Muslims are willing to accept non-Islamic or secular rule. Here Qutb disregards individual piety, instead focusing purely on political manifestations of faith. Sociologist Saad Eddin Ibrahim elucidates this perspective by recounting Islamist belief that in addition to the minimum of a strict adherence to the five pillars of Islam, “to become a good Muslim a person must do more… [to see] to it that the will of God in creating mankind is truly fulfilled on the collective level as well… he must strive to build and maintain a righteous community of the faithful.” Qutb’s conception of political community is based on the idea that people are ultimately responsible for overturning an order that does not govern according to Islamic law. In contrast to the conservative values esteemed in Qutb’s conception of how political community ought to be governed, his proposed means of pursuing such a community (popular demand and action) is revolutionary.

**Gamal Abdel Nasser**

**I. Social Justice: Attitudes Towards Political Independence**

The first son of a postal worker, Gamal Abdel Nasser was born in the coastal city of Alexandria and moved to various parts of Egypt when his father would relocate for work. Having seen firsthand the class differences throughout Egypt, Abdel Nasser became preoccupied with how to establish social justice and maximize human potential. In his formative years as a student he found inspiration from a range of thinkers from Voltaire to Tawfiq al-Hakim. When he moved to Cairo in the mid-thirties, he channeled his energies into political activism and partook in demonstrations, mainly directed at Britain’s occupation of Egypt. At the age of seventeen, a policeman’s bullet grazed his head at one of these demonstrations. The fact that Egyptian apparatuses were violently suppressing their own compatriots’

48 Ibid, 128.
49 Ibid, 262.
popular dissent at the behest of the British government gave Abdel Nasser’s attitudes towards political independence a particular urgency. In the expressive rhetoric of an activist turned statesman, Abdel Nasser claims, “Our battles were for social justice, equality and equal opportunity. We were fighting on two fronts, on one against foreign aggression and on the other against internal exploitation.” As we shall explore, Abdel Nasser in many ways harnesses rather than dismantles the matrix of domestic-foreign interaction that characterized the decolonization period of the twentieth century.

Abdel Nasser recalls in his manifesto, *Egypt’s Liberation: Philosophy of the Revolution*, which he began writing when he was under siege in Faluja:

> When the struggle was over in Palestine and the siege lifted, and I had returned to Egypt, the Arab circle in my eyes had become a single entity... I have followed developments in the Arab countries, and I find they match, point for point... It is a single region. The same circumstances, the same factors, even the same forces, united against all of it... And it was clear that the foremost of these forces was imperialism.

Like Qutb, Abdel Nasser also internationalizes Egypt’s problems. In most of his writing the ‘we’ that Abdel Nasser refers to is unequivocally the Arab people. Certain that “what was happening in Palestine could happen to any one of the Arab states so long as it remained subject to the factors and forces that governed it at the time.”

Abdel Nasser sees the need for collective Arab political independence only achievable through a singular conscience, Arabism (‘urubah). This singular Arab conscience had always existed in the region, according to Abdel Nasser, but had been suppressed by imperialism’s efforts of “dividing the children of one nation.”

Harkening back to the Palestine microcosm, he attributes the failure of Arab forces in 1948 — particularly in regards to the lack of coordination between the armies — to the colonial designs that divided the Arab world into distinct political entities. He thus viewed the political independence of any Arab state as pegged to that of all Arab states.

In addition to the constructivist bond of Arabism, there is also an element of economic practicality in unifying the Arab world. In his writing, Abdel Nasser polemizes individual state sovereignty, arguing that under this political framework the Arab people will be unable to prosper in modern times. The basis of this argument is an observable economic paradox in the region. Arab states were fashioned in boundaries that divided resource wealth, which is found in the oil producing Gulf Arab states, from human capital, which is found in the developed and

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53 Ibid, 98.
54 Ibid, 98.
55 Ibid, 97.
populous cities of Egypt and the Levant. The unequal wealth distribution that thus arises between states would be conducive to inter-Arab enmity and invariably cause some states to instead favor relations with the west. This situation posed a real obstacle to Abdel Nasser’s vision of political independence. One of the ways in which he tackled this obstacle was by appealing to the Arab masses through radio programs such as ‘Voice of the Arabs’ (sawt al ‘arab). In these broadcasts, Abdel Nasser would emphasize the character of Arab regimes as either ‘revolutionary’ or ‘reactionary.’ The staunchly anti-imperialist ‘revolutionary’ camp was comprised of the newly created republics, namely Algeria, Egypt, and Iraq (after 1958). These states insisted on remaining non-aligned during the cold war (but in fact tilted towards the U.S.S.R.). The ‘reactionary’ camp was comprised of the conservative monarchies, namely Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the Yemen. These states leaned towards the U.S. and Britain.

Abdel Nasser’s broadcasts had an Arab nationalist appeal that often inspired the masses living under ‘reactionary’ regimes. The Arab people were emboldened in their attitudes towards independence by the fact that the leader of the largest Arab state legitimized this consciousness on a powerful platform, prompting even the most conservative of regimes to raise their standards of accountability towards their populace and curtail their relations with the west. On several occasions this appeal translated into popular demonstrations that deterred monarchies from signing on to pro-western regional programs such as the Baghdad Pact. Abdel Nasser’s success in rallying a sense of Arabism among the Arab masses came at the expense of cooperative diplomacy with the conservative regimes of the region, which were feeling the seismic trembles of his pan-Arab and socialist ambitions threaten their authority and oil resources. Self-interest and inter-Arab apprehension, not to mention Abdel Nasser’s sour relations with these governments, proved the main obstacles to uniting the Arab world in collective political independence from foreign influence.

II. Social Justice: Wealth Distribution

“We shall establish social justice, exterminate feudalism, build up our country, establish industries and double the national revenue in ten years”- Gamal Abdel Nasser, February 20, 1961.

The years in which Arab Socialism was carried out (1961-1970) were most telling of Abdel Nasser’s attitudes towards wealth distribution. According to Abdel Nasser, advocating the revolution means “the eradication of Imperialism and its stooges... monopoly, domination of capital, exploitation and feudalism.” 57 Overcoming these obstacles is ultimately how Arab nationalism was to be achieved. As early as 1952, these policies were foreshadowed in the form of Abdel Nasser’s outlined six-point program published in the “Rose al-Yūsuf” magazine to remove European influence and dismantle feudalism, two oppressive phenomena that Abdel Nasser tied together. 58 Feudalism, which he considered to be of the gravest assaults on dignity, was a fact of life unrelated to modern imperialism and had existed in one

57 Nasser, Gamal Abdel. Speeches delivered by President Gamal Abdel Nasser, 23.
form or another in Egypt and some other parts of the Arab world (particularly Lebanon) for centuries. Prior to 1952, less than six percent of Egypt's population owned more than 65% of the land in Egypt, and less than 0.5% of Egyptians owned more than one-third of all fertile land. Landlords would charge exorbitant rental rates to peasants that averaged at 75% of the income generated by the rented land. Here, Abdel Nasser believes that without the removal of British influence, which supported Egypt's landed aristocracy, this unbalanced status quo would be unchangeable. So unlike some of his contemporary nationalists, Abdel Nasser advocates revolution against an entire system that would allow for individuals to enjoy greater civic participation in the economy, rather than just a transfer of power from Europeans to Arabs.

The Arab Socialist revolution aimed to realize the full productive potential of the working and peasant classes by lifting them from positions of capital servitude. Speaking the socialist language fashionable at that time Abdel Nasser writes, “By division, classes, and differences among classes, capital ensures its domination and we get a dictatorship by capital. These capitalists will never let the people exercise their freedom and rights.” In practical terms, nothing indicates that Abdel Nasser wanted to completely get rid of the class system, although perhaps the capital class — which Abdel Nasser typifies as the major landholders, monopolists, currency speculators, and those acting on behalf of foreign business interests. Abdel Nasser champions Arab Socialism as the restorer of dignity (karāmah) to the common Arab. To this effect, dignity was to be achieved in the classical socialist aim of transferring the means of production from the capitalists to the producers.

Likely owing to his background in community organizing, Abdel Nasser had strong faith in civil society and bolstered institutions such as labor unions, student unions, and consumer and housing co-operatives. These institutions were built in preparation for the massive agricultural and industrial projects that would boom in the coming years. The stated goal of these projects, formalized under a planned economy, was to increase production and establish equality in distribution. Abdel Nasser claims, “We cannot bring about equality in distribution unless there is actual increase in production” which in turn cannot increase unless the fruit of production is then reinvested in building more “factories, farms, and dams.” This cyclical process of achieving equitable wealth distribution marginalized the landed aristocracy in order to ensure that profits were achieved through production rather than class exploitation, particularly of landlords against their peasant tenet population.

The most intense wealth distribution programs involved the transfer of power and assets in the early sixties. At this point, Abdel Nasser aims to establish social justice by fully usurping the role of the capitalist class. According to Sharabi, genuine application of Arab Socialism began when Egypt promulgated the

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60 Nasser, Gamal Abdel. *Speeches delivered by President Gamal Abdel Nasser*, 52.


63 Ibid. 54.
"nationalization decrees" of July 1961. All banks, insurance companies, industries, transportation lines, and hotels were brought under state control. Perhaps most reformative of these measures was the reduction of private land holdings to 100 acres. This dual strategy of increasing production and nationalizing economic enterprises — which Abdel Nasser hoped to see other Arab states emulate in order to establish a common foundation for a single unit — was what would lead to what he calls, “social democracy.” As we shall see, this idea plays heavily into Abdel Nasser’s conception of political community.

**Political Community: The Role of the People and the Means of Ruling**

“I have already told you on a previous occasion that if we wish to establish democracy in our land, we should start by achieving social democracy and thus ensure that political democracy is not exploited by a few people to control us and our sons.” — Gamal Abdel Nasser, February 22, 1961.

There is an interesting relationship between Abdel Nasser’s conceptions of social justice as it pertains to attitudes of independence and political community. Both opposed to and inspired by Europe, Abdel Nasser hitches Arab nationalism with some major European ideas. After the failure of The United Arab Republic, the union between Egypt and Syria (1958-1961), Abdel Nasser decided ‘Arab Socialism’ was a prerequisite to achieving Arab nationalism. Despite the Soviet Union’s position as a bulwark against Old Europe, Abdel Nasser did not gravitate to its more absolute brand of socialism (in line with Sukarno of Indonesia and Tito of Yugoslavia). Sharabi writes that Arab Socialism instead “seemed to owe more to Proudhon than Marx, to British socialism than to Communism.” In this way, it appears that Abdel Nasser sought to formulate political community on the bases of economic systems similar to those fashioned by his imperialist rivals. Recognizing the viability of moderate British-style socialism, Abdel Nasser sought to move Egypt and the Arab world into the same politically progressive direction of post-war Europe. Unlike Qutb, he did not see foreign systems as antithetical to the Arab people’s heritage.

There is also a strong link between Abdel Nasser’s conceptions of social justice and political community. Abdel Nasser views the necessity of establishing social prerequisites to political democracy such as wealth distribution, industrial growth, civic engagement, and a strong national identity before creating a republic in the most meaningful sense. How far Abdel Nasser was willing to go in terms of incorporating democratic measures into the republic such as free speech, due processes for grievances against the government, and executive level elections is debatable. Notwithstanding, the fact that Abdel Nasser was a key figure responsible

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64 Sharabi, Hisham. *Nationalism and revolution in the Arab World (the Middle East and North Africa)*, 68.
66 Ibid, 50.
67 Sharabi, Hisham. *Nationalism and revolution in the Arab World (the Middle East and North Africa)*, 68.
for transforming Egypt into a republic — the first of its kind in Egypt’s millennial history of dynastic rule — showed an earnest effort to change the political status of Arabs from subjects to citizens with a meaningful stake in civil affairs.

Some observers have likened Abdel Nasser to Ataturk as a man who believed in political democracy but was ultimately unwilling to relinquish his power over the public. This is a common dilemma of revolutionary regimes: justified on the basis of continual social change they never accept a time sufficiently ripe for ceding political control, lest their detractors compromise the revolution while it is still being carried out. As noted on the setback to Arab unity due to the failure of the U.A.R., the fact that political developments in the Pan-Arab theatre were lagging meant that Abdel Nasser instead focused on economic developments. Sharabi states of this time, “Unity among the various Arab states was now seen as insufficient or even impossible unless preceded by the socialist revolution. Thus the fundamental tenet of Arab nationalism — the unification of all Arab states… lost its primacy and became conditional upon the success of the ‘socialist’ revolution in each Arab state.” The socialist revolutions of Algeria and to some extent Iraq in the sixties saw limited success but ultimately did not yield the Pan-Arab union comprising the political community that Abdel Nasser envisioned. The military-run welfare state, without a democratic foundation, is the main legacy Gamal Abdel Nasser.

Assessing the Relationship: Commonalities and Differences

While ideologies are distinct what they aim to deliver is often similar. In this case, what Arab nationalism and Islamism both envisioned in an ideal society measure up to be quite common in terms of political independence and social justice. This is most notable in their ideas of territorial unity as an instrument of independence and wealth distribution. Arabs of the mid-twentieth century desired to be politically and economically united with fellow Arabs across the region but dispute arose over which banner would shade this unity, Arabism or Islam. Abdel Nasser and Qutb personified this dispute through their uncompromising means for attaining this unity. We shall first examine their attitudes towards the ‘other’ and then their attitudes towards their own society. Lastly, we shall discuss the need to scale back on the monopolization of political truth in order to better reconcile these two potent ideologies. Regarding this last item it is worth noting that since the time of Abdel Nasser and Qutb, the most manifest expressions of both Islamism and Arab nationalism have degenerated into sectarianism and state despotism, respectively. The initiative of scaling back the monopolization of political truth cannot thus realistically be extended to all agents of these ideologies. Rather, it is the still thriving rational agents who seek a legitimate, popular stake in social affairs to which this initiative speaks. At this juncture where political movements in the Arab world overindulge in identity politics, a moderate path of cooperation must be carved out by still functioning civil societies.

69 Sharabi, Hisham. Nationalism and revolution in the Arab World (the Middle East and North Africa), 72.
Recalling Rawl’s definition of social justice as ‘the ability people have to realize their potential in the society where they live,’ both Abdel Nasser and Qutb viewed Europe’s modernization as a reference point for what contemporary society can produce once human potential is realized. Sharabi writes the reason behind this general attitude is that Europe represented “the power and the glory which Islam had once possessed. The object of modernization was not simply to rebuild society; it was essentially to redress the course of history.”

For Arab nationalists and Islamists alike, where the Arab world could once again stand in terms of political, cultural, and scientific achievement was to be found in the elements that propelled Islam from the Ḥejāz all the way to Córdoba. This was the ‘golden age’ of Islam to which Sharabi alludes, beginning in the 7th century and definitively ending with the expulsion of the last Muslim rulers from Spain in 1492. Civilizations tend to oscillate between positions of winners or losers relative to their rivals. There is a humbling discrepancy between the height of the ‘golden age’ when Baghdad was the center of cultural and scientific activity while much of Europe was in its dark ages and the current era in which these situations have reversed. Attempts to understand and redress the root causes of this reversal of fortune are the driving force behind Islamist and nationalist ambitions alike. As a whole, Islamists have focused more on understanding while Arab nationalists have focused more on redressing. These attempts became imminent after Napoleon’s inroads into Egypt starting in 1778 – whose military and scientific superiority awed the Arabs – and again after the conquest of Palestine by the Zionist project in 1948.

When it came to how the two figures viewed these developments relative to their own society, both of these thinkers attributed these breaches of sovereignty to dormant Arab potential. The difference lay in the cause of dormancy. Qutb saw dormancy as a result of the Arabs’ increasing neglect of Islamic values. Abdel Nasser saw it as a result of the Arabs’ social divisions that were more attributable to foreign agendas. Abdel Nasser and Qutb had visions that were primarily motivated by a desire to restore dignity, a universal abstraction with a nuanced meaning in the Arab, originally Bedouin, culture. A life of dignity (karāmah) is intrinsic to social justice. Once the driving force of Islamic armies in the 7th century, it had been tarnished over centuries of economic exploitation and political subservience to foreign rule. This was the common denominator both thinkers agreed upon: Dignity for the common man ultimately could not exist in situations of foreign rule and economic exploitation. While Qutb took this maxim to its absolute bounds by repelling all that was foreign, Abdel Nasser adapted this maxim according to the ideal direction of the postcolonial order in which a people could viably assert their independence while still embracing foreign-inspired social systems. Thus Abdel Nasser is comfortable with adopting a non-nativist approach to society while Qutb is not.

This difference in approach was most manifest in how their conceptions were packaged. In the polemics of ideology, the power of persuasion rests heavily on language. However, it is important to look beyond what one could call the ‘cosmetic’ differences of terminology and symbolism employed by the two figures – to sift through their language in order identify their actual aims. In these two ideologies,

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70 Ibid, 20.
language not only aims to appeal different sectors of society but also different sources of pride and indigence within the same person. Respectively, Abdel Nasser and Qutb each held the identities of Islam and Arabism in high esteem despite them not being their primary ideological vehicles. This was because like the masses they were addressing, they embraced and prided themselves on both legacies – an identity created out of two inextricable civilizations.

Here, a closer look at the language of these ideologies as they pertain to economics provides an illuminating example of such ‘cosmetic differences.’ As the prime concern of any society, economics are the central focus of ideologues. On Abdel Nasser’s economic program, Sharabi writes, “The emphasis on social justice and economic reform – which the ‘revolution’ sought to realize through ‘socialism’ – was basically moral in character. In some ways ‘revolution’ and ‘socialism’ really symbolized traditional Islamic social justice.”

Ibrahim, through his extensive interviews with Islamists in Egypt during the nineties, develops Sharabi’s idea and adapts it to the contemporary relationship between Islamist and Arab nationalist economic conceptions.

What the militants are calling for in the socioeconomic organization of Muslim society may come very close to a variety of moderate socialism (similar, say, to that of the British Labor Party or even to that of Nasser’s socialism), but any suggestion to that effect invariably produced an outraged response. Islam is not to be likened to any man-made doctrine or philosophy. It would be more acceptable to them if we were to say that British socialism resembled Islam.

Ibrahim goes on to say about the terminology used by Islamists:

The militants often use phrases such as “the poor” (al-fuqara’), “the wretched” (al-masakin), and “the weak on earth” (al-mustada’afin fi-l-ard) to mean what secular leftists call “the working class,” “the exploited,” or “the proletariat.” The militants, however, have an instant adverse reaction to the latter terms because of their association with imported secular ideologies. By the same token, the militants use terms such as “the corrupt on earth” (al-mufsidun fi-l-ard) and “the unjust” (al-zalama) to mean what secularists call “exploiters” or “oppressors.”

The different terms, each belonging to their respective polemics, all strike at the same concern for wealth disparity. However as Ibrahim mentions, any comparison of the two ideologies is likely to produce an outraged response, particularly from Islamists. As Qutb understood that Islamism held a ‘divine’ qualitative advantage over any other secular ideology, Islamists continue to hold this advantage as an inviolable fact regardless of how similar the spirit of the foreign ideology. This is why literalist Islamists have categorically rejected Arab socialists despite the latter’s aim to achieve a welfare state that materially resembles one where standards of Islamic justice are upheld. The qualitative advantage aside, there is also a more political obstacle to reconciling the two ideologies. The swift dismantlement

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71 Ibid, 68.
73 Ibid.
of the thirteen hundred year old institution of the caliphate, and with it Islam’s political legitimacy, left Islamists disenfranchised and without a common authority. Adding to this disarray is the fact that in most Arab states, whether officially secular or religious, unsanctioned religious expression is almost always suppressed. The result is that operating on the defensive, Islamists spend much of their energies on condemnation, increasingly through violent means, rather than being able to pursue nonviolent Islamic solutions for social advancement. Thus mainstream (and traditionally secular) Arab socialists have rejected Islamists because of their characteristically absolute and retrograde adoption of Islamic values that, in the ultimate pursuit of reestablishing the institution of the caliphate, cannot be incorporated into the political framework of a modern state anyway.

The backdrop of this impasse are Arab societies whose popular spectrum contain a considerable sector that desires to see state legislation reflect Islamic values in more than just a symbolic capacity. However this demand has been met with little practical attempt by Islamists to formulate a feasible political program for modern day Islamic governance. By and large, Islamists have no working bases for a state other than the 7th century Rāshidūn Caliphate. Of the isolated exemptions to this rule is the development of Islamic jurisprudence in the legal institutes of the Indian subcontinent, a development outside of the Arab world. Professor Majid Khadduri explained this dilemma as, “the new law has not been able to command the respect of the public nor has the old law met the necessity of modern life.” This situation is no small part due to the fact that influential Islamic scholars in the region have increasingly lost their intellectual sovereignty as their positions are tied to the patronage of rulers who often harness clerical influence for political ends. The fact that the Islamic world’s historic seat of learning, al-Azhar, is at the center of a tenuous political situation in Cairo further sets back the development of Islamic intellectual discourse. Lastly, the obsession over Sunnī-Shī‘ah grievances reignited after the 2003 Iraq war has been most deleterious to any discussion of how the Arab world can move forward in the 21st century without perpetual sectarian strife. Long forsaken is the respect for pluralism enshrined in the Constitution of Medina.

On the other hand, the framework of pluralistic discourse as applied to the Arab world has generally tried to ignore the religious social component all together. Most Arab states have left no room for Islam in governance and those that have instituted Islam using an oppressively monolithic interpretation of religion and power. This is heedless and counterproductive. Perhaps the most universal precedence for social justice in the Arab world, after the rule of King Solomon, is the conduct of Islam’s leaders in its earliest generations – whose well-documented examples are revered by Muslims, minorities, and seculars alike. These figures are still sentient in the Arab memory because they laid the political foundations of modern Arab society. Of the most notable examples is the renowned jurist and second caliph of the Muslim community ʿUmar ibn Al-Khattāb (r. 634-644). The caliph used to control vast expanses of territory and revenues but went lengths to refrain from indulging in the public treasury – rather living in what can described as

‘noble poverty’ at the service of his constituency. As well as these personal denials, ‘Umar is known for having insisted on government transparency, meritocracy, and people’s access to the ruler. As an Islamic ruler he was a champion of minority protection, highlighted by his rule over the religiously diverse Jerusalem.

Over the centuries, any semblance of meritocracy in leadership has been replaced by entitlement and cronyism in the Arab world. Such pervasive corruption has been the main cause of the situation that the assassinated intellectual Samir Kassir dubbed ‘Arab Malaise.’ Barnaby Rogerson, a renowned biographer of early Islamic figures wrote, “You have only to look around the world of contemporary Islam to see how exceptional ‘Umar was. Half of Islam is ruled by hereditary monarchies, while the other half, the revolutionary Socialist republics of thirty years ago (such as Libya, Egypt, and Syria) are turning themselves into family-dominated regimes.”76 There is no longer even an ideological basis for such rule. The example of ‘Umar as an upright ruler can be appreciated and indeed emulated without necessitating a total adoption his belief system. But often the awareness of the Arab world’s relative digression produces a disassociation from exemplary religious leaders such as ‘Umar. Indeed, the memory of the Ottoman Empire – the fourth and final caliphate – stagnating from the 17th century until its collapse has undoubtedly contributed to this religious disassociation. Instead, people have looked for answers from strongmen by the sole virtue of their brute might regardless of what they actually deliver. This sells a rich legacy of exemplary, effective leaders for short-term delusions of power and progress. It is clear now more than ever, as both ideologies veer to their fringes, that there must be space made for these different views to coexist in the Arab world. If the likes of Abdel Nasser and Qutb were capable of scaling back on their monopolizations of political truth in order to bridge their views for the common good, the Arab world would be able to move forward in the twenty-first century.

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The Impact of Syrian Refugees on Socio-ecological Resilience and Community Tensions in the Northern Badia of Jordan

Jesse Schaffer

Figure 1: UNHCR Map of Jordan

Introduction

Background

Since the revolution and civil war began in Syria nearly three years ago, there has been a large influx of Syrian refugees into the northern Badia region of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Currently, the United Nations High Commissioner

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for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that close to 600,000 Syrians have fled to Jordan, which is roughly 10% of Jordan’s entire population.\(^2\) Figure is a UNHCR map of Jordan displaying the presence of Syrian refugees in Jordan.\(^3\) In recent months, the number of refugees has increased drastically, especially in the northern Badia region of the Mafraq Governorate, where thousands enter on a daily basis. According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Mafraq Governorate has the lowest levels of human development of all the governorates in the Kingdom and has the highest rates of poverty, illiteracy, and food insecurity in the Kingdom.\(^4\) Jordan is also the fourth most water-scarce country on earth and was already struggling with an aging infrastructure in the north before the arrival of refugees.\(^5\) Furthermore, Jordan is bearing an inordinate share of the burden in supporting Syrian refugees – roughly 12,720% of their fair share according to Oxfam.\(^6\) At the same time, ordinary Jordanians are still suffering in local host communities. The impoverished Jordanian population in this struggling region is now in competition with the Syrian refugees for limited resources. The rapidly growing population has raised the price of food, commodities, housing, and many other basic human needs.

**Structure and Research Question**

The research can be divided into two major parts. First, the paper studies the impact of the influx of Syrian refugees on Jordanian host communities in the Northern Badia region by examining community livelihoods and environmental resources, as well as tensions between these Jordanians and Syrians. Second, the paper proposes practical solutions by contributing to and expanding the body of literature on the intersection of sustainable development and conflict resolution.

The hypothesis of this study is that the influx of a large, new population into the Northern Badia region will degrade the overall environmental and socioeconomic situation of local communities, thereby increasing tensions between Jordanian host communities and Syrian refugees. Because the resources of this area are already strained, this will likely reduce the ability of Jordanians to provide for their own families as they compete for these resources with the refugees. The research confirmed the hypothesis as the situation for Jordanians in the Mafraq Governorate continues to deteriorate. Based on this information, I recommend a focus on resilient economic development in tandem with conflict resolution to help diffuse the situation.

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\(^2\) Ali Bibi (representative from the UNHCR) in discussion with the author, April 2013.


Both qualitative and quantitative data was used to examine the research question. 42 families were surveyed in the Northern Badia region, specifically in the Mafraq Governorate, with the main demographic being poor, rural families. My field research was replicated with a larger sample size and those results were utilized for this study. Figure 2 is a UNHCR map of the Mafraq Governorate where the research was conducted, highlighting the distribution of Syrian refugees by village.7

I utilized a questionnaire drafted by the National Center for Research and Development, as it is thorough and provides both quantitative and qualitative information about families’ socioeconomic situation. Experts in the field were interviewed in Jordan, including those from the UNHCR, the World Food Programme (WFP), and the Human Relief Fund (HRF). In addition, these first hand experiences were corroborated using primary and secondary sources.

**Research Contribution and Importance**

This research is essential because it studies the challenges facing Jordanian families in the periphery of Jordan, bringing to light the struggle for sustainable livelihoods in an area largely neglected by the GoJ. This research can function as a case study for host communities supporting refugees and is useful because it explicitly identifies the needs of these communities and the conflicts that may arise and presents feasible solutions. This issue is important to a variety of different groups including the GoJ, NGOs, international aid organizations, and development researchers, all of who benefit from this information. Finally, this research provides a new perspective and approach to addressing the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan to help mobilize aid to these struggling communities.

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Literature Review

Previous literature allows us to contextualize the current situation, explain the relationship between environmental degradation and conflict, and look at theoretical frameworks for sustainable development and conflict resolution. While the Syrian civil war is unique in some ways, the resulting refugee crisis follows some patterns of previous geopolitical events. These previous situations can serve as case studies to help contextualize and explain the current geopolitical problems facing Jordan.

Case Studies on Socioeconomic and Environmental Impacts of Refugees

In *Refugees in Western Tanzania: The Distribution of Burdens and Benefits Among Local Hosts*, Beth Elise Whitaker highlights the complex positive and negative impacts of hosting refugee populations.\(^8\) According to the UNHCR, a host community:

Refers to the country of asylum and the local, regional and national governmental, social and economic structures within which refugees live. Urban refugees live within host communities with or without legal status and recognition by the host community. In the context of refugee camps, the host community may encompass the camp, or may simply neighbour the camp but have interaction with, or otherwise be impacted by, the refugees residing in the camp.\(^9\)

In the case of Tanzania, host communities were inundated with more than 1 million refugees from Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) between 1993 and 1998. Whitaker determines that the impacts were not felt uniformly throughout host communities and that oftentimes the wealthy became richer while the poor became poorer because of their lack of resources to begin with. She notes: “poor Tanzanians, on the other hand, were not able to benefit in the same ways and became worse off during the refugee presence.”\(^10\) The poor suffered from high rates of inflation which reduced their accessibility to basic supplies such as salt, sugar, and energy. These impacts are incredibly similar to those felt by Jordanian communities, as will be demonstrated later in this paper.

In addition to monetary impacts, the refugee influx severely affected the livelihoods of local communities. Livelihoods can be defined as “the means used to

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10 Whitaker, "Refugees in Western Tanzania: The Distribution of Burdens and Benefits Among Local Hosts," 347.
It is important to explicitly define this term, as it will be used throughout this paper as both a benchmark of host community deterioration as well as in sustainable development solutions. In some cases, the influx of refugees improved livelihoods because it forced an increase in production of certain goods and with it, increased income. For example, because of the increased population, there is greater demand for vegetable production increasing the income of local farmers. While the refugee influx improves the livelihoods of some, the opposite is true for the vast majority of people.

The refugee influx also leads to a substantial decline in wages for day laborers for two main reasons. First, there is a large increase in the supply of laborers from the refugee population. Second, because refugees receive food and non-food assistance, they undercut local wages. Reduced wages combined with skyrocketing prices for everyday goods profoundly hurt local livelihoods. In addition, the situation is further exacerbated by the increased cost of housing in host communities as evidenced by Figure 4. This situation is echoed currently in the Northern Badia region of Jordan in which Syrians are able to undercut the wages of local Jordanians, causing local unemployment rates to rise.

As well as the socioeconomic impacts of refugee influxes, the massive increase in population can also lead to environmental degradation and conflict between host communities and refugees. Simply put, “population increase, especially when it occurs so rapidly, places additional stresses on local resources.” The introduction of a new, large population inevitably leads to a strain on the existing resources.

UNHCR’s 1996 Environmental Guidelines highlights six major categories of environmental impacts from refugee influxes and provides a framework for the relationship between environmental and social issues. The categories include:

- Natural resource degradation;
- Irreversible impacts on natural resources;
- Impacts on health;
- Impacts on social conditions;
- Social impacts on local populations;
- And economic impacts

The influx of refugees leads to crosscutting social, economic, health, environmental, and even cultural impacts. This framework helps to contextualize the problems that are clearly visible in northern Jordan.

12 Whitaker, "Refugees in Western Tanzania: The Distribution of Burdens and Benefits Among Local Hosts," 347.
13 Whitaker, "Refugees in Western Tanzania: The Distribution of Burdens and Benefits Among Local Hosts," 348.
15 Ibid., 332.
In the 2005 study *Environmental Conflict Between Refugee and Host Communities*, Dr. Adrian Martin builds on the “UNHCR Environmental Guidelines” and explores how “issues of resource scarcity interplay with social processes, stimulating well-known triggers of violence.”\(^\text{16}\) According to his research, existing social tensions are exacerbated by increasingly deteriorating environmental conditions: “environmental scarcity acts as an indirect cause of conflict by amplifying/triggering traditional causes of conflict such as ethnic difference.”\(^\text{17}\) The previous case studies help to demonstrate the linkages between population influxes, environmental degradation and resulting conflict during a refugee crisis.

**Frameworks for Sustainable Development and Conflict Resolution**

The final section of this literature review is meant to provide a theoretical framework for sustainable development and conflict resolution in order to discern a feasible solution to the seemingly protracted crisis in northern Jordan. The *Jordan Human Development Report of 2011* mentioned earlier provides a base for this section of the literature review because it approaches development from the perspective of supporting livelihoods and human capacity. Sustainable development as a concept was first defined in the Brundlandt Report in 1987 as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”\(^\text{18}\) Sustainable development seeks to promote healthy social, economic, and ecological systems that meet these needs within the finite limitations of the environment.

The framework of socio-ecological resilience and sustainable development was specifically chosen because the reality of refugee crises is that they are constantly in a state of flux. The situation on the ground is constantly changing and requires development that can “absorb disturbances” while retaining its “basic structure and function.” Attempting to maintain the status quo in a situation that is so volatile seems unrealistic and incredibly demanding. Instead, finding a solution that can respond and adapt to the systemic shocks of a refugee crisis is much more feasible and functional.

The framework of sustainable development and resilience must be coupled with conflict resolution in order to build a holistic solution to the crisis. A recent and strong framework for conflict resolution comes from the Governance and Social Development Research Centre (GSDRC). Their report brings together both good practices as well as program examples to provide constructive strategies towards conflict resolution between refugees and host communities. The three main strategies include Integrated Development Programs, Conflict Resolution Programs, and Environmental Management Programs.\(^\text{19}\) “Integrated Development Programs” focus on balancing assistance to both refugee and host communities to improve

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 330.
\(^{17}\) Ibid., 332.
\(^{19}\) Oliver Walton, *Good Practice in Preventing Conflict Between Refugees and Host Communities* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, 2012).
relations between the two communities. “Conflict Resolution Programs” specifically encourage workshops, direct discussions, and consistent meetings between the two groups, and often involve training. Finally, “Environmental Management Programs” center on improving the management of environmental resources to help facilitate co-operation between communities and thus reduce conflict. The research will integrate these three strategies in formulating a sustainable solution to the crisis.

Finally, the Host Community Support Platform (HCSP), developed in partnership by GoJ and UN, is a coordination mechanism established in September 2013 to unite resources, organizations, and governments to meet the needs of Jordanian host communities. Until this organization was established, there was no organized or unified approach to supporting host communities. The organization and its website (which is functional and publicly accessible in Jordan and abroad) are an incredibly useful resource which provides up-to-date assessments of the situation on the ground, both in Syria and Jordan, as well as providing a space to synthesize, compile, and cooperate with regards to the impact of Syrian refugees. I utilized the organization in a variety of ways, from contributing to the background information, to news and informational updates, to looking at practical solutions to the problems these communities face.

**Methodology**

The methodology of this research – which includes both qualitative and quantitative research from a number of different locations and contexts in Jordan – consists of three main parts. First, I conducted fieldwork in the Northern Badia and interviews with professionals in urban centers such as Amman and Mafraq from March through April 2013. Second, I analyzed relevant data from both my own fieldwork and that of other researchers in Jordan. This was coupled with the utilization of The George Washington University’s resources from December to March 2014. Third, I compared and contrasted the narratives of both local Jordanian host communities and NGOs in Amman. The combination of perspectives was meant to provide a more holistic approach to my research.

**Field Research and Surveys**

I surveyed 42 heads of households across the Northern Badia region in the small towns and villages around Mafraq. These surveys and interviews were mainly focused on food security (it is a major indicator of human development) so the results were extrapolated upon. All towns were within 20 miles of the Syrian border and were thus inundated with Syrian refugees. These communities are located in the periphery of Jordan, neglected and far from Amman. According to the article, “Jordan Food Security Survey in the Poverty Pockets,” nearly half of all poverty pockets were located in this region. These communities are made up of working class individuals and families, without the disposable incomes of those in Amman.

To directly investigate the impact of the influx of Syrian refugees on these communities, families were surveyed in a number of different towns and villages.

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These included Mansoorah, Ghour, Hoasha, Sweilmeh, Um Essrab, Mghayyer Serhen, and ElZubidia. Figure 3 specifically highlights the region of Mafrak. The goal was to sample a variety of different villages to get a better understanding of the whole area and to see whether the impact of Syrian refugees was universal throughout the region. Because I was not familiar with the area, Jehad Al-Tabini, the brother of my program director, acted as a guide. He directed me to a variety of different villages and homes to interact directly with the local community. As a native of Mansooa who had lived his entire life in and around the Governorate of Mafrak, he had connections to individuals in all the different villages, local government administration, and NGOs. He helped me choose the sample of participants by choosing which locations to visit.

A key part of this research project was the food security survey, drafted by researchers from the National Center for Research and Development. Quantitative food security results would help to serve as an indicator of both impact and development for Jordanian host communities. The survey was a basis upon which to do more extensive field research. The heads of households in this region were surveyed using these questions. Questions covered the different aspects of food security – from the diet itself to accessibility and availability – as well as monthly income distribution and other questions regarding livelihood. Availability in this context meant asking whether there was, at all times, sufficient amounts of food from a range of sources, such as local farms or grocery stores. In total the survey consisted of 24 questions with four sections: types of food eaten, sources of food, food sufficiency, and household details. In addition to the surveys, a number of interviews were conducted with local community members including a farmer, three local heads of households, the local administrator for agriculture, and employees at a charity organization that

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registers refugees in the city of Mafraq. Unlike those in Mafraq, these representatives were not suffering from the crisis but were mainly in management positions trying to solve the problems on the ground. These sources were more academic and demonstrated a different perspective from those in the field. I compared and contrasted these resources with the perspectives of those living in the Jordanian host communities.

The surveys that I conducted in the field were used as a test before the project was expanded and replicated by the National Center for Research and Development with another 207 respondents. The results (both in charts and quantitative data) from this larger sample size were used throughout the paper to increase the credibility of my overall findings. In order to measure food security quantitatively, the survey used a rating system similar to the Arab Family Food Security Scale developed by Ghattas et al. (2013).22 If respondents answered affirmatively to fewer than three of the seven food security questions, they were considered food secure. If they answered affirmatively to at least three but less than six, they were considered moderately food insecure. Those respondents who answered affirmatively to six or more questions were considered severely food insecure.

Because the information in the surveys was sensitive, it was imperative to protect the identity and integrity of the participants. Surveys were conducted with this concern in mind. At all times I was joined by Jehad who made it clear to respondents that their names and identities would be kept anonymous. In addition, because he knew or was acquainted with most of the respondents, the survey originated from a place of community support rather than outsider objectification of the local community. We made it clear from the beginning that the goal of the research was to help the local community, not to exploit the information.

**Findings and Results**

Throughout the course of the field research and review of literature, the influx of Syrian refugees left a noticeable trend on Jordanian host communities in the Northern Badia. Across all interviews, articles, surveys, and official reports, the influx of Syrian refugees was negatively impacting Jordanian host communities in the north, both environmentally and socioeconomically. In interviews with Jordanians in the villages of Mansoora, Housha, Zubidia, Al Hamra and more, respondents consistently complained of the challenges they have faced on a day-to-day basis as a result of the Syrian refugees.

Similarly, in interviews with academics and professionals in Amman, it was clear that the situation was rapidly disintegrating into an unsustainable situation to the detriment of the Jordanians. The surveys showed similar patterns specifically in regard to reduced food security, availability, and accessibility. A variety of news sources provided corroborating evidence that consistently demonstrated the negative impact on Jordanian host communities. While the situation in the Mafraq Governorate is rapidly deteriorating overall,

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these findings will reveal the specific impact of the influx of refugees on socio-ecological resources, the resulting conflict, and feasible strategies towards sustainable development.

**Deteriorating Livelihoods and the Rising Cost of Living**

During the field research phase of the project, a number of interviews were conducted with local heads of households sampling their opinions about the influx of Syrian refugees into their communities. The first was held with three men in their mid-twenties and early thirties from the village of Housha, one of the poorer villages in the Kingdom. The three men had a variety of grievances about the influx of refugees. The men explained that because of the massive increase in population, there has also been an increase in demand for goods, causing prices for most foods and goods to increase greatly. They described most of these trends using anecdotal evidence. For example, when describing the increasingly competitive job market and rising unemployment, one shared:

> A Jordanian does a job for 30JD whereas a Syrian, who has all other expenses covered by international NGOs, like the UNHCR, will do the same job for 10JD. The employer would prefer to pay the Syrian 10 rather than paying the Jordanian 30. Thus, the Jordanian loses the job to the Syrian or has to accept lower wages.²³

Another mentioned that while many Jordanians were renting out rooms in their homes to Syrians, or even leaving their homes entirely to host refugees, rental and housing prices were skyrocketing. **Figure 4** shows the percentage increase in rent rates and the severity of the housing crisis.²⁴ These local testimonies reflect the themes outlined in the case studies of the literature review. Thus, the influx of refugees directly reduced the livelihoods of host communities, raised commodity prices, and increased antagonistic feelings of locals towards the refugee populations.

According to an article entitled *Jordanians Driven Further into Poverty* published by IRIN, a UN news publication, the situation in these small communities is dire. The article discusses how rising fuel and food prices has negatively impacted struggling Jordanians. One woman they spoke to in late February of this year could no longer afford to heat her home. Because of excess demand from the influx of Syrian refugees, the food distributions she used to receive have reduced greatly: "There is no bread, no flour, no sugar in the house anymore."²⁵ Food prices continue to increase from both an increase in demand and the disruption of local supply and export chains from the crisis in Syria. For

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²³ Interviewee 1, Interviewee 2, and Interviewee 3 in discussion with the author, April 2013.
example, the prices of important staple foods like chicken and eggs have risen by 25% since November. The situation has directly reduced peoples’ food security: “people just eat less and less... but given their poor diet [to begin with], it means people are eating chicken or meat once every two months instead of once every month.”26 The influx of refugees has also put a large strain on host families, and on most public services, including everything from education to health and water. In addition to intensified food insecurity, there is also a substantial intensification in competition for jobs: “We are struggling to find work in farms nowadays... so many people fled here. It is easier for an employer to hire an entire [Syrian] family because it costs them less money.”27 Overall, the refugees are straining the resources of the local communities and are pushing their Jordanian hosts further into deeper poverty. The challenges they and their families faced as a direct (or perceived) result of the Syrian refugees included rising prices on food and basic commodities, increasing rental and housing prices, and rising unemployment.

Jordanians face similar problems with regard to accessibility, as the rising prices are not affordable for these impoverished citizens. According to the Department of Statistics, Jordan has seen a 26% average increase in agricultural producers' prices from February 2012 to February 2013.28 This

27 Ibid.
28 “26% the Average Increase in Agricultural Producers' Prices for February 2013 Compared with February 2012,” Hashemite Kingdom of
number is merely an average for the Kingdom, with the situation being more severe in the north. The sudden increase in prices and the resulting inaccessibility demonstrates the vulnerability of these populations. The refugee influx is a systemic shock that has left many people without feasible livelihoods. It demonstrates the vulnerability of the Jordanian host communities and how the situation is now unsustainable for average Jordanians.

In another interview I conducted with a local Jordanian farmer located only a few kilometers from the Syrian border, he reaffirmed the previous sentiments and provided similar anecdotal evidence. As a farmer, he has seen the direct impact of rising food prices and increased demand. He said, "for example... before the influx of refugees, the price of tomatoes was 10% of what it costs today."29 The increased demand had actually been beneficial for him as he made more profit on the same levels of production. This echoes what Whitaker says, that while many in host communities suffer, select individuals like large farmers may benefit from this increased demand.

This farmer understood how hard it was for people in his community who are struggling with these unbearable prices. He mentioned that many people simply could no longer afford to purchase his vegetables. Because of rising prices, the farmer noticed that many families can no longer purchase his produce and are unable to access the necessary foods because of their limited incomes. He ended the conversation by saying "there is currently no solution to the problem, I see no help from the government, and soon the situation will be a large disaster."30

**Survey Results**

The results of the survey support the idea that the refugee influx has negatively impacted the state of host communities, including food security. Of the random sampling of Jordanians in the Mafraq Governorate, approximately 83.7% of respondents reported incomes below the 411JD (USD 580) Mafraq governorates’ poverty line. Of those surveyed, 43% were classified as food insecure, either moderately or severely, as Figure 5 demonstrates.

*Figure 5: Food Security Status of Households*

![Food Security Status of Households](image)

*Jordan Department of Statistics (Amman: n.p., 2013).*

29 Interviewee 4 (farmer) in discussion with the author, April 2013.

30 Ibid.
Half of the households surveyed experienced not having enough food for their families or the money to buy more. In addition, 52% felt that their family did not eat enough of certain foods while 41% worried that their food would not last through the month. Roughly one third of respondents reported that adults in the household had cut their meal frequency or size within the past year. Lastly, almost a quarter of respondents did not eat during the day or went to bed hungry during the past year. See Figure 6 for more information. These problematically high figures show strong characteristics of food insecurity. Over the past 12 months, many respondents were forced to change their food consumption habits or they directly experienced the vulnerability of limited financial resources.

The impacts of the Syrian refugees were felt in every aspect of life. Every person knew someone who was renting out a home or room to Syrians, had waited in long lines for food, was spending more each month for the same commodities, or being paid less for the same job. This new challenging situation was visible in each conversation and everyone was affected. My guide Jehad described the situation best: “The city of Mafraq had roughly 60,000 people. Today there are more than 80,000 Syrian refugees living here. You can’t help notice them here when they double your population, when they increase the traffic, when they change the local culture.”

The impacts were clearly visible in the lives of most Jordanians in the local community. Jehad’s description can be seen across the Mafraq governorates. In Figure 7, Syrians make up an increasingly large proportion of the local population.

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Figure 6: Food Security Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Issue</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not enough to eat</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family does not eat enough of some foods</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerned would run out of food</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food bought did not last</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut size of meal</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skipped a meal</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not eat all day or went to bed hungry</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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31 Jehad Al-Tabini (guide) in discussion with the author, April 2013.
In interviews conducted with members of the NGO community in Amman, the same anecdotes and stories were repeated. In an interview with Ali Bibi, a representative from the UNHCR, he spoke to the situation of the Jordanian communities. In his words, the Syrians are a large “burden” on already struggling communities. Bibi mentioned many of the previous grievances of Jordanians, including rising prices of food and commodities as well as increased unemployment. According to Bibi’s resources at the UNHCR, the unemployment rate in the Mafraq Governorate jumped from roughly 14% to 37% since the arrival of the Syrian refugees because the Syrians continue to undercut the job market. For example, he said: “A Syrian might be paid half the wage of a Jordanian but they pay no taxes, can be paid by day illegally, and get international support for their basic needs.” In the end, the Jordanian hosts receive no support and tensions between Syrians and Jordanians intensify.

Bibi explained how the refugee influx was exacerbating existing social issues in fields of education and health care. For example, roughly 40,000 Syrian students are in Jordan but are outside of the Syrian refugee camps. These students have become an immense burden on the local education system where there is not enough space or teachers for the students in the already over-crowded classrooms.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOVERNORATE</th>
<th>MUNICIPALITIES</th>
<th>POPULATION</th>
<th>SYRIANS</th>
<th>% of POP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greater Ma’afraq</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Manshiah</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehup</td>
<td>22,000</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balama</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zaatari &amp; Manshiat Sulta</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Hussein Bin Abdallah</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosa</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseliah</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sirhan</td>
<td>22,000</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaldia</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salilah &amp; Nayfeh*</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umm Al Jimma*</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabha &amp; Defyaneh*</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umm Al Quattain &amp; Mkaifteh*</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deir El Kahef*</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bani Hashem</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Safawi</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruwaisheh*</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Poverty pockets

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33 Bibi, in discussion with the author.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
In terms of the health care system, there is currently a 98% occupancy rate in all hospitals in the north, with 78% of those occupants being Syrian. There is a shortage on medicine, hospital beds, and a decrease in the quality of care for patients. While the Jordanians pay taxes for these government services, the Syrians pay nothing but still receive the benefits. Roughly $400,000,000 has been spent in government subsidies for Syrians while Jordanians continue to suffer as hosts. Bibi’s testimony only reconfirmed the hypothesis about the impact of the influx of Syrian refugees.

The communities surveyed in the Northern Badia were already struggling before the arrival of the Syrian refugees. Many of the villages and towns in the area were seen as poverty pockets of the Kingdom, with substantial portions of the population living beneath the poverty line, significant rates of unemployment, and considerable evidence of food insecurity. Thus, some of the data received from surveys reflects the status quo of life and livelihoods in this region of Jordan. However, based on the consistent interviews and surveys with Jordanian host communities, the testimonies of experts, the policy reports of international third parties, and current news articles, the influx of Syrian refugees has exacerbated this situation for the Jordanian communities.

**Environmental Degradation and Scarce Water Resources**

As with the negative social and livelihood impacts on local host communities caused by the influx of refugees, the increase in environmental degradation is also alarming. In the interview conducted with men in Housha, one of their gravest concerns was that of environmental resources, especially water. They argued that because Jordan is already a water-poor country and water resources are scarce in the Mafraq region, the increase in water consumption by refugees around the Mafraq governorate and in Zaatari Camp would only exacerbate the problem. Priority on water consumption is being given to the refugees within and outside of the camp, which hurts local Jordanians. This is largely a result of the fact that UNHCR’s target population is mainly refugees as opposed to the host communities around them. Ali Bibi of the UNHCR further stated that the influx has left these Jordanian communities over-capacity for electricity and energy consumption and is consuming water at a rate that is unsustainable. Dr. Saad Al-Oun of Al-Bayt University felt similarly that, “The pumping rate is greater than complicity...refugees just added to the demand... tap water only came to houses once, twice a week. The Amman-Zarqa basin is over utilized.” The level of demand is too high, and the water resources cannot keep up.

These personal interviews hint at the immense environmental crisis facing the Mafraq Governorate, especially with regard to water. According to a report published by the HCSOP on November 26, 2013, since the influx of Syrian refugees, “the gap between available water and demand has widened significantly. 81% of

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36 Ibid.
37 Interviewee 1, Interviewee 2, and Interviewee 3 in discussion with the author.
38 Bibi, in discussion with the author.
39 S. Al-Oun in personal communication with the author, April 2013.
households in rural areas report running out of water once or twice a month."  
There is a substantially higher demand for water than exists in the country, as even before the crisis Jordan was one of the most water-scarce countries in the world. Much of Jordan’s water infrastructure in the north is at full capacity and is incredibly old and in urgent need of repair, with huge proportions of water being wasted from leaks and inefficient transportation: “The majority of renewable surface water and groundwater has been exhausted, and the remaining usable resources for [the] future are gradually diminishing.”  
In addition, the majority of assessments, reports, and response plans listed the water crisis as one of the greatest concerns making the situation unsustainable moving forward. The water crisis is spiraling out of control while the influx of refugees continues to increase.

In addition to the overconsumption and inefficient use of water resources, the massive population influx has also placed a large demand on sewage systems and waste facilities. According to the UNDP’s Municipal Needs Assessment Report, Solid Waste Management (SWM) has been identified as the largest challenge facing municipalities in the Ma’arfa Governorate. 74% of Jordanians interviewed reported the sheer quantity of solid waste was increasingly problematic and that SWM had become gradually poorer since the beginning of the crisis.  
As with the water infrastructure, much of the sewage systems, especially septic tanks, are “inadequately constructed and regularly leak and overflow, increasing the risk of wastewater seepages or infiltration from septic tanks to underground water basins.”  
The lack of proper waste management practice could pollute the major remaining aquifer – and main source of water for the northern governorates. This is an especially large concern for the Za’atari Refugee Camp which is unfortunately built on top of the aquifer. The refugee camp was originally built for a capacity of roughly 10,000 refugees but today hosts roughly 120,000 people, making its population the size of the 5th largest city in Jordan. Thus, the combination of aging waste management infrastructure and the extreme overuse of the current resources could lead to serious environmental consequences.

According to the Needs Assessment Review of the Impact of the Syrian Crisis on Jordan, published by the Host Community Support Platform in November of 2013, the environmental future of the northern Badia region looks bleak. Their estimates state that because of the massive rise in demand, combined with regional disorganization caused by the crisis, “overgrazing and land degradation of fragile Badia rangelands is likely to increase.”  
In addition, irrigation to meet increased agricultural demands will cause additional depletion of aquifers and compound the existing environmental problems of the area. At this stage in the crisis, the long-term impacts are not yet clear, but according to the Needs Assessment Review the informal expansion of communities in the northern governorates is “promoting unsustainable

41 Ibid.
43 Ibid., 32.
sprawl.” The environmental situation is spiraling out of control and a sustainable solution is necessary.

**Increased Tensions**

According to personal interviews, current media, and official government reports, the diminishing social and environmental situation is leading to increased conflict between the two communities. In a poll that was conducted by Mercy Corps in September 2012 in Mafraq, “80% of Jordanian residents now feel that the Syrians should be housed in refugee camps, segregated from the community.” A little over a year into the Syrian crisis, an overwhelming majority of Jordanians voiced their frustration against the refugees. Since then, the crisis has intensified and the refugee population has swelled. The competition and demand for resources is drastically mounting tensions and the situation has only worsened over the past month. These tensions are incredibly serious and have already resulted in protests. According to an article from the Jordan Times on April 20th 2013, Jordanian residents of Mafraq held a rally outside of Zaatari, protesting the increasingly large number of Syrian refugees entering Jordan. The residents chanted, “Go back to Syria” in frustration with the ongoing social and economic problems caused by the massive influx of refugees.

In October 2012, Mercy Corps published their analysis of host community-refugee tensions in the Mafraq Governorate. Their assessment of the sources of tension mirrors those in previous findings and results: competition for jobs, housing costs, unequal aid between communities, and declining environmental resources. Syrian women reported being harassed on the street for no reason, with incredibly harsh words from local Jordanians, saying: “What are you doing here? Lots of people don’t like you because you made life more expensive. You destroyed our life when you came here. We’ve given you our houses, and now the prices have increased and we can’t live anymore.” Many Jordanians feel trapped by the influx of refugees and often attribute their struggles directly to the Syrians living around them. Other Jordanians felt strongly that the distribution of aid was unfair. Furthermore – in their opinion – the only solution was to separate these two communities and remove the Syrians from their lives: “When we put them in proper camps, away from the city, that keeps them away from our problems and us away from their problems.” While this is not a realistic solution, many Jordanians like the idea of removing the Syrians from their communities.

In conversation with the men in Housha, there was a feeling of desperation that their government and the international community had abandoned Jordanians. They felt frustrated that all the aid was going to Syrians while Jordanians were struggling severely as well. The assessment by Mercy Corps was particularly

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accurate for these men: “Young Jordanian men are quick to blame Syrian refugees for the increased hardships they and their families now face.” The men explained that Jordanians were opening their homes to Syrians but were getting no support.

The feelings of resentment are found in both communities. In Mercy Corps’ report on inter-community tensions, both sides feel exploited by one another. Because the majority of Syrian refugees are unable to find employment in Jordan, they must find coping strategies to generate income such as selling food or household goods received from aid organizations. This strategy often has:

The unintended consequence of further provoking Jordanian resentment. The sight of Syrian refugees selling food received from aid organizations, and household goods — such as small refrigerators and pots and pans—has generated the impression that many Syrians in Mafraq are doing quite well — much better, in fact, than the majority of local residents. In reality the refugees are struggling considerably, but these coping strategies often unintentionally anger Jordanians, further increasing tensions. At the same time, many Syrians feel exploited by Jordanians for high rental prices:

In each of these cases there is a sense that each community is exploiting the other. The reality instead is that both are merely trying to weather the crisis and maintain their livelihoods.

Their exact feelings were reiterated in the Needs Assessment Review of the Impact of The Syrian Crisis on Jordan: “Citizens in host communities have felt left-out and neglected, and expect a more prominent response to their own needs from state institutions and local authorities.” The report is explicit in stating that the resulting tensions between the two groups are directly tied to costs of the refugee influx: “Tensions between host communities and Syrian refugees are palpable in the northern governorates, where socioeconomic problems created by the Syrian refugee influx are the most acute, exacerbating already existing feelings of marginalization and vulnerabilities among Jordanians.” The crosscutting issues of environmental degradation and its economic impacts are being translated directly into tensions in the local host communities. For example, when Yarmouk Water Company engineers came to install new wells near refugee residences, Jordanians showed resistance because they perceived it as though their precious water aquifers were being “given

50 Ibid., 5.
51 Ibid., 4.
52 Ibid., 4.
54 Ibid., 9.
This sentiment seemed to be repeated in personal conversations as well in news articles, reports, and a variety of other sources. The intense sensitivity of both populations with regard to environmental and other resources is palpable and must be understood to prevent the escalation of tensions.

**Recommendations**

Recently, a number of new strategies, reports, and organizations have been created to proactively combat these issues. I will include these resources with the frameworks of conflict resolution and resilient sustainable development to suggest holistic solutions to these issues. For example, the HCSP has created a strong framework to meet the needs of local host communities as a cooperative coordinating mechanism of a variety of local, national, and international organizations. It has created five taskforces to deal with the multifaceted issues facing these communities: “Municipal Services, Livelihoods and Employment, Water and Sanitation, Health, and Education.” In addition, the HCSP has also compiled and published a number of reports on the situation, including the *Needs Assessment Review of the Implications of the Syrian Crisis on Jordan*, as well as the more forward-looking *National Resilience Plan*.

The *National Resilience Plan* lays out a strategy moving forward for 2014 through 2016. The plan is incredibly broad and identifies a variety of different sectors that necessitate specific improvements. In the context of this paper, the most important are that of Livelihoods and WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene). While the report spends considerable time on the issue of livelihood and infrastructure development, there is little on the issue of conflict resolution. The report suggests investing in the creation of jobs and the revival of local economies “through support to existing and new micro and small enterprises for poor and vulnerable households” and to “restore and preserve pastoral livelihoods, rangeland and natural resources.”

This is strategically important because it seeks to rectify the economic situation while improving the natural environment as well. As it weds improvements in human development to improvements in the ecological system, this is a resilient approach. It must be coupled with meaningful and concrete improvements to the WASH infrastructure to reduce the impending environmental impacts and escalating water crisis. One strategy would be to create employment programs specifically in the WASH infrastructure sector to reduce unemployment while improving the environmental resilience of the region. The mutual development of livelihoods and infrastructure could greatly improve the situation of Jordanian communities in crisis.

The *Needs Assessment Review* provides a more in-depth analysis on many of the issues outlined in the *National Resilience Plan*. One of their most important

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55 “Mapping of Host Community-Refugee Tensions in Mafraq and Ramtha, Jordan,” *MercyCorps*, 12.
contributions is on local economic development (LED), or programs that seek to maximize economic activities and develop existing and new value chains. 58 LED programs should focus on value chains that expand local production of goods and services with growing potential in domestic and foreign markets. These sorts of program are highly localized and are directed by community leaders and local authorities that can most effectively determine local needs and specifically support vulnerable households and those below the poverty line. 59 Development programs that are community-centric and focus on local needs will be most effective in creating resilient socioeconomic solutions for host communities.

Finally, in addition to sustainable economic development, a holistic solution requires substantive investment in conflict resolution programs to build off of the LEDs. Mercy Corps’ dual reports entitled Mapping of Host Community-Refugee Tensions in Mafraq and Ramtha and Analysis of Host Community-Refugee Tensions in Mafraq, Jordan lay out both the barriers to and specific strategies for conflict resolution. Many of these strategies build off of the broad strategies suggested by the GSCRC in the Literature Review. Mercy Corps’ strategies include reducing the aid gap in tandem with mitigating conflict caused by the competition for resources. 60 The aid gap is a term I use to describe the unequal distribution of aid whereby the international community provides benefits for Syrian refugees while largely neglecting Jordanian host communities. LED programs can improve the livelihoods and overall socioeconomic status of host communities, thereby reducing the perceived and real economic inequality between the two communities. Reducing the aid gap through LED programs, such as supporting sustainable livelihoods, can also help to reduce the competition for resources and reduce tensions. Targeted sustainable economic development can help to reduce these local tensions.

Based on the reports and reflections of the HCSP, Mercy Corps, the GSDRC, and the framework of sustainable development and resilience, I make the following recommendations for implementation that realize the mutual goals of these different perspectives. Jordanian host communities are being driven deeper into poverty with many already below the poverty line, so the first step must be to reduce the aid gap and meet the basic needs of Jordanian households. This can be accomplished through the investment in LEDs that target local infrastructure. Investing in sustainable, resilient livelihoods through LEDs can help to reduce competition between Jordanian and Syrian communities and mitigate conflict. In addition, building the capacity of local governmental organizations (to implement new programs, conflict resolution and otherwise) should be done in tandem with economic development. Improving the functionality and capacity of local governance will improve their ability to meet the needs of the community and implement these strategies. The mutually improved socioeconomic status of both communities will help to greatly increase social cohesion and reduce tensions in the short and long term. Resilient local economic development that respects local environmental resources can help both communities weather this crisis.

59 Ibid., 40.
60 “Analysis of Host Community-Refugee Tensions in Mafraq, Jordan,” Mercy Corps, 8.
Conclusion

The research question was: will the large influx of Syrian refugees into the Northern Badia negatively impact Jordanian host communities socioeconomically and environmentally, resulting in intensified conflict between the two groups? The research findings show this to be occurring. First, the Mafraq Governorate has both the highest rate of poverty of all the governorates and the lowest level of human development in the Kingdom. The local population was in fact already struggling economically with strained environmental resources before the arrival of the refugees. The influx of this large, impoverished population to the same area directly increased demand on most commodities, housing and rentals, basic needs, food, employment, and the environment. The limited production or availability of these resources combined with the exponential population growth has heightened tensions in the area significantly.

The motive for this research came from my dismay at the lack of support for Jordanian communities hosting refugees. There has been widespread aid to Syrian refugees in Jordan and abroad but little to the impoverished Jordanians bearing such a heavy burden. This unfortunate trend was largely consistent for more than the two and half years since the conflict began. In a report published by the UNDP for implementation in September 2013, the organization stated that, “the needs of Jordanian communities that are host to a large Syrian refugee population and the impact of the Syrian refugee influx on them are not sufficiently evidenced. This is hampering governmental and partners’ efforts to devise and prioritize adequate response interventions.”61 This lack of research and knowledge necessitates finding sustainable solutions for both communities living side by side.

It is clear that the current reality is unsustainable and continues to deteriorate, yet the tensions between Jordanian host communities and Syrian refugees have not exploded into widespread violence or geopolitical destabilization. However, in the periphery of Jordan where there is decentralized government control, the possibility of such a destabilizing reality is not farfetched. Thus, it is important to understand the relationship between socio-ecological degradation and the resulting conflict. Supporting sustainable, resilient local economic development that reduces the aid gap between host communities and refugees can help to alleviate such conflict amidst impending disaster. In addition, increasing local government capacity to help implement these strategies can lead to a holistic, long term, and sustainable solution to these pressing problems. Lastly, long-term social cohesion between these communities requires a strong Syrian community as well. Building a strong Syrian community out of this refugee crisis allows for a more realistic partnership with the surrounding Jordanian community and will help build capacity for the Syrian people when the conflict ends.

Building Conceptual Bridges Over Troubled Waters:
Analysis and Affect Surrounding the Jordan River

Marielle Velander

Introduction
Not all waters are equal; some are more political than others. – Tony Allan

The natural environment is widely interpreted as an indisputable reality of our human existence. However, culture and language construct norms and practices that emerge through political and social discourse to constantly shape and reshape our very notion of environment. These contrasting conceptualizations of environment easily lead to inaction on environmental issues, as what may seem to be a universally understood topic is actually contextualized in local values and perceptions. This paper will examine the context-dependency of discourse surrounding the Lower Jordan River. To displace the concept of a universally homogenous understanding of “environment,” it will also examine how different discourses surrounding natural resource management are enacted through top-down and bottom-up approaches.

Analysis as Opposed to Affect
The underlying argument of this study is framed through two conflicting classifications of discourse, which will be referred to as analytical and affective. Analytical discourses are those that rely on quantitative metrics, and that involve economic, scientific, and technological modeling of problems. Geopolitics and political realism also fall under this category as narratives that emphasize clear-cut strategy and short-term solutions. Affective discourses, on the other hand, are those emotionally driven arguments supported by qualitative data, such as historical and religious narratives and identity politics. Although these classifications of discourse seem disparate from each other, this study argues that they are inextricably linked and frequently overlap. Actors on all levels of trans-border collaboration in trans-boundary river basins could benefit from being more in-tune to each other’s contrasting perceptions to find inclusive and sustainable solutions for regions that face an extreme and urgent water scarcity.

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Discourse is a shared conceptualization of an issue that involves selectively processing certain pieces of information to construct a worldview that is shaped by language and, in turn, shapes the language used to discuss the issue. The discourses enacted in politics are particularly powerful, in the way that the audience can embody the destructive elements of these discourses. French philosopher Michel Foucault explained this as biopower, which he defines as “an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations.” I will explore the importance of language and discourse in determining local political perceptions of the Jordan River Basin, an area that involves a multitude of discourses that intersect religious, political, ethnic, and historical lines.

The concept of indexicality is an important element of discourse, in that it constructs the frames that shape our understanding of a particular discourse. Linguistic forms with indexical properties direct an addressee to look, listen, or take an object in-hand based on the contrived contiguity between the linguistic form and the object of discussion, rather than any description of their referents. This makes the communicative event highly context-dependent and requires those involving the frame in their communicative event to understand embedded precepts. I will also identify the actors that construct and challenge the notion of environmentalism in the Jordan River Valley (JRV), specifically regarding protection of water sources.

**Discursive Importance of the Jordan River Valley**

The degradation of the natural environment, especially in reference to water, is a particularly potent matter in the vicinity of the Jordan River. An impressive tributary 60 years ago, today it is reduced to a stream. This river, although smaller than some other rivers in the region such as the Tigres-Euphrates and the Nile, winds its way through some of the most religiously sacred and ethnically divided territories in the world. The Jordan River System originates in the Golan Heights—a disputed mountain range on the borders of Israel, Lebanon, and Syria, from the Hasbani, Dan, and Banias Rivers—and the section known as the Upper Jordan River then flows into the Sea of Galilee. The section called the Lower Jordan River (LJR) flows from the Sea of Galilee down to the Dead Sea. The Yarmouk River bordering Jordan and

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2 Dryzek 2013:10
7 The Sea of Galilee also goes by the Christian name of Lake of Gennesaret, the historically Muslim name of Lake Tiberias, and its Hebrew name of Lake Kinneret (de Chatel). I will refer to the body of water as the Sea of Galilee for the purpose of political neutrality.
Syria is the main tributary to the LJR, as well as various perennial rivers that flow through Jordan and the West Bank. The LJR will be the main focus of this study since it is most pertinent to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The river’s functions as border, main regional freshwater resource, and source of cultural and religious tourism prompts collaboration but also raises tensions between the countries that depend on its watershed.

The underlying difference between Jordanian, Palestinian, and Israeli framing of the environment emerges through a comparison of the perception of water scarcity as a problem in these territories. Water scarcity has become a dire environmental issue in the region as the Jordan River is diverted and polluted, water tables are over-pumped resulting in reduced and contaminated water aquifers, and the Dead Sea recedes, revealing fatal sinkholes along major highways and tourist resorts.8 Thanks to innovative technological developments supported by foreign and private investment into national research and development initiatives, Israel’s politicians have been able to lessen the impact of water scarcity on their people.9 Among these initiatives are the costly water desalination plants along the Mediterranean coastline that provide the population of Israel with inordinate amounts of water in comparison to its neighbors.10

In Jordan and the Palestinian territory of the West Bank, water scarcity is much more palpable, as the political regime has not had the same capacity to offset the direct effect of water shortages. Jordan is one of the four driest countries in the world; with rapidly increasing water consumption needs, its population has been forced to use any household methods available to conserve water.11 Despite the fact that water scarcity is much more tangible to Jordanians than Israelis, the Jordanian people appear to still frame water scarcity as a political management process and something for which they need government support to solve.

In the Palestinian territories, the reality of water scarcity is negotiated in an entirely different light, in which discourses of analysis and affect overlap in the context of what is largely viewed as occupation and manipulation of their land by Israeli authorities.12 For the Palestinian people, water is tangibly experienced as a political weapon that is deeply embedded in conflict and can only be solved by revolting against the Israeli authority. Thus structures of water management are not perceived as being politically neutral, but rather the environment becomes a participant in political conflict, even to the extent that it is interpreted as a prisoner of war.13 In all three cases, the government is seen as having the primary responsibility in resolving natural resource scarcity. This study questions why the analytical

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9 Zeitoun, *Power and water in the Middle East*, 20.
13 Nadeer al-Khateeb, Director of Friends of the Earth Middle East in Bethlehem, has stated that “the environment has been a hostage to the conflict” in the region in a press release issued by Friends of the Earth Middle East in 2009 (Albakkar 2012: 20).
discourses surrounding the environment often override affective discourses in top-down approaches, while affective discourses are more common in bottom-up initiatives utilizing civil society engagement and grassroots advocacy. How can these drastically different conversations surrounding the same topic be reconciled and recognized for their tacit relationship?

**Methodology**

This research involved in-depth interviews with key informants, participant observations in the homes of local families, and a multidisciplinary literature review. I conducted nine interviews with ten individuals, which were on average 45 minutes and held either in person or via Skype. The analytical discourses were explored further through interviews with Khaled Irani, the former Minister for Environment in Jordan, Professor Amer Salman and Emad Karablieh, two reputable water economists teaching at the University of Jordan, and Dr. Ofira Ayalon, Director of the Natural Resource and Environmental Research Center (NRERC) at the University of Haifa.

Affective discourses are enacted by environmental organizations in the region to stimulate community engagement in natural resource management. Friends of the Earth Middle East (FoEME) is a distinct environmental non-governmental organization (NGO) in the region that employs environmentalists from Israel, the Palestinian territory of the West Bank, and Jordan to develop a regional agenda to tackle local environmental issues. They each approach their objectives by appealing to domestic audiences through offices in Amman, Tel Aviv, and Bethlehem by combining bottom-up and top-down approaches. To find out whether FoEME challenges or reinforces analytical and affective discourses, I interviewed Abdel Rahman Sultan, the Deputy Director of the FoEME office in Amman, and Elizabeth Ya’ari, Israeli coordinator for the Jordan River Rehabilitation Project at the FoEME office in Tel Aviv. I also attended a talk with the Palestinian Director of FoEME.

Additionally, I conducted short-term ethnographic fieldwork in the summer of 2013 with local families in Israel, Jordan and the West Bank. These families chose to remain anonymous but provided valuable perspectives on environmental issues as local residents in the JRV not directly involved in environmental advocacy work. In terms of the literature analysis, certified advanced or native speakers of Hebrew and Arabic translated policy information issued by the Ministries for Environment in Jordan, Israel, and of the Palestinian National Authority in order to substantiate claims that are made regarding political discourse on environmental issues. A multidisciplinary literature review was also completed, using books and journal articles by experts on the region of the Jordan River Valley or on the topic of environmentalism, discourse, and water security.

The greatest weakness of the study was also one of its greatest strengths—by having a limited number of interviews, all the informants had extensive knowledge of the subject matter and they had time to discuss it in depth. However, considering

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14 Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinian National Authority have different titles for the Ministries that deal with their domestic environmental issues. I collectively call them Ministries for Environment, but will elaborate on the Ministry titles later in the study.
the smaller scope of interviews and minimal time for ethnographic fieldwork, the ideas presented in this paper require more research to be validated. The region is highly complex, and in such a culturally diverse and politically tenuous environment, it remains a challenge for any researcher to remain impartial in their inquiry. Future research in this area would benefit from a wider sample of the multitude of perspectives in the region regarding water allocation.

Background
The Evolution of the Modern Environmental Narrative

The protection of our natural resources has generated social, political, and academic interest for centuries, but the conversation surrounding our environment has changed over time in marked ways. An analysis of the contemporary environmental politics in the JRV requires an understanding of the origins of the environmentalist discourse on an international scale, as well as the evolution of environmental policy frameworks. The environmentalist social movement differs between nations and regions, as “environmentalists have to organize their activities according to the political context in which they operate.” The American brand of environmentalism, chartered under Theodore Roosevelt’s presidency at the turn of the century, has spread globally under a semblance of universal sentiment while taking on localized forms. Environmentalism gained greater momentum as a social movement in the 1960s with the release of Rachel Carson’s environmentalist manifesto “The Silent Spring.” The movement finally blossomed in the 1970s, with passage of several environmental policies, as governments recognized sustainable natural resource management as a matter of national interest. The focus on legislation spread to Europe, where the formation of “green parties” has had a profound impact on the political scene. However, in transferring the operation from bottom-up mass-participatory schemes to top-down legislation, the movement lost its momentum. Despite environmentalism being a more interconnected movement today than at its naissance, climate talks in the past two decades have stalled and international agreements on combating climate change and reducing carbon emissions have either been rescinded or fallen apart, contrasting the policy victories of the early 1970s. Furthermore, public opinion polls show that environmental issues are not considered a political priority by a majority of the public in the United States. Many of the informants for this study lamented the under-prioritization of environmental issues in the JRV as well.

The rapid expansion of environmentalism has resulted in the popularization of environmental advocacy and transformed it into a thriving international public relations business, in which environmental NGOs have developed a specific

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17 Nordhaus, Break through.
18 Milton, Environmentalism and Cultural Theory, 73.
19 Nordhaus, Break through.
discourse to galvanize people into actively caring for and protecting their environment. As environmentalism evolved as a movement, its followers were increasingly divided into two parties: the conservationists and the preservationists. While the conservationists sought to protect natural resources for human consumption, the preservationists sought to protect natural resources from human consumption. In the Middle East, this distinction would become relevant as marginalized indigenous populations conceptualized environmentalism as a subtle method of structural domination and neocolonialism to implement frameworks for natural resource management developed in the global North. The elite of the global South would utilize the discourse of preservation rather than conservation, which actively displaced grassroots environmental movements, thereby silencing the already powerless citizenry.

Analytical and affective approaches have long battled for authority over environmental issues. The economically motivated emphasis on cash crops in colonial structures of the 19th and 20th centuries disrupted local irrigation systems that provided local subsistence for centuries. The rise of neoliberalism—an economic theory that gained popularity in the 1980s by claiming faith in the market to adjust itself—was swiftly applied to natural resource management, making the environment an irreconcilable element of analytical discourse. Environmental advocates, especially those from the global South, criticized land and water acquisition by large private companies that was legitimized by this new theory. The process of reducing natural elements to global commodities and integrating them into the global marketplace led to wider power imbalances both in and between nations.

Using the terms in this study, affective discourses were used in post-colonial settings to counter more internationally recognized analytical discourses. Gradually the international discourse on the environment, previously dominated by engineers, ecologists, and scientists, experienced a surge in social sciences scholarship. In the field of anthropology, the scholarship of Mary Douglas, Harold C. Conklin, and Roy Rappaport had already formed the groundwork for the subfield of environmental anthropology through the second half of the 20th century. Conklin introduced the concept of “ethnoecology,” which “describes people’s conceptual models of their environment.” Indigenous “ethnoecologies” are often perceived of as a threat to more globalized ethnoecologies that have been given greater authority in the international sphere. As a result, Foucault’s concept of biopower comes into play—the international discourse, as the authoritative voice, gains precedent over the more localized discourse of the community. Foucault also introduced another important concept: governmentality, which refers to the shaping of minds of a population through a multiplicity of institutions that, regardless of their claim to transparency, function to enforce state control. Governmentality highlights

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22 Ibid.
how top-down analytical arguments interface with bottom-up affective narratives in a number of different contexts.\textsuperscript{25}

**Shifting Narratives in the Jordan River Valley**

Past and current processes in the region surrounding themes of occupation and migration have impacted the interpretation of environmentalist discourse in Jordan, Israel, and the West Bank. Simultaneously, the conceptual shift in environmentalist discourse in the JRV sets the framework for constructing future approaches to sustainable development in the region. This shift perpetuates the concepts emerging from shifting social identities and cultural roles in the region. Israel and Jordan in particular are linguistically compelling contexts for a cross-cultural comparison of the effect linguistic processes have on the conceptualization of space, due to the distinct juxtaposition of religions and languages. The ethnic demographics in the region have been profoundly impacted by historical migration movements, which have expanded the cultural diversity on the banks of the Jordan River and thus shifted the culturally negotiated norms and values that structure local frames around that environment.\textsuperscript{26} Such a shift occurred in the early and mid-twentieth century, when a rush of immigrants from Central and Eastern European countries rapidly populated the current state of Israel.\textsuperscript{27} The birth of a powerful nationalist thread of Judaism called Zionism made claims for a physical Jewish State, which was granted urgency by the Balfour Declaration and the Holocaust.\textsuperscript{28} The sudden influx of diverse European cultures and traditions were unified under the idea to make Hebrew, a language principally used in sacred Jewish texts, the national language. The creation of Modern Hebrew thus departed from biblical Hebrew, especially in spoken discourse and media channels.

Begun in the nineteenth century by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, the Zionist linguistic mission was perceived as essential to the survival of the new Jewish state.\textsuperscript{29} Arabic was also made the national language, as a political formality to account for

\textsuperscript{25} Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge.*

\textsuperscript{26} Frames are in essence a set of structured expectations for production and reception of a particular discourse. Erving Goffman, who set the conceptual foundation for frame analysis, defined “frame” as a set of “definitions of a situation [that] are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events.” In that sense frames label “schemata of interpretation” that allow individuals or groups "to locate, perceive, identify, and label" events and occurrences that render meaning, organize experiences, and guide actions in that performative context (Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1974).)

\textsuperscript{27} The many Mizrahi Jews who had resided in Muslim-majority countries for centuries already populated Israel. The Mizrahi Jews, soon made up the other half of the Jewish population of Israel, as those already resident in the British mandate of Palestine were accompanied by their cohorts from other Middle Eastern countries. (Samir Nicolas Saliba, *The Jordan River dispute* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968): 24.)

\textsuperscript{28} The Balfour Declaration was the seminal document in which the British Government promised the worldwide Diaspora of Jews a national home in the British-administered mandate of Palestine, a territory that fell under British care after Ottoman rule in the region crumbled (De Chatel, *Water Sheikhs & Dam Builders*, 114).

the predominantly Arabic-speaking indigenous population of the area designated for the Jews. In the same strain as the revival of Hebrew, Zionists were committed in reviving the natural environment of their “holy land,” and the concept of “green Zionism” led to extensive human and financial investment in “making the desert bloom.” Jews looked to find the most innovative ways to deal with the challenging climactic conditions of an eastern Mediterranean country in order to have the so-called “promised land” fit its description in the Jewish holy book, the Torah. Sustainable natural resource management, equivocated using a resuscitated sacred language, became a way of developing political and religious legitimacy for land-ownership.

In Jordan there is a similar linguistic complexity. The tribal structures in the region that had thrived during the decentralized rule of the Ottoman Empire were ruptured in the twentieth century, first by the flow of refugees from the Palestinian territories, and later from wars in Iraq and Syria. Spoken Arabic had long before departed from the Arabic of the Quran, the holy book of Islam and the basis of the Arabic language. Many Jordan River Valley communities had practiced the sustainable irrigation methods and water management strategies espoused by the Quran for centuries. Bedouin communities were known for taking added measures to preserve the environment on which their nomadic livelihood depended. As globalized industrialism, rapid urbanization, and Western-framed concepts of modernity rendered nomadic peoples sedentary, traditional forms of resource management were discouraged or made inaccessible in the newly built environments. As locals were increasingly separated from the natural environment—exacerbated by the lack of public open spaces in urban environments—the norms and values increasingly differed in public versus private contexts. Thus, international discourse of environmentalism and its role in the conceptualization of modernity led to analytical discourses taking precedence in the public policy sphere and affective discourses taking precedence in the private household-centered, community-level sphere.

In each region of the Arabic-speaking world, different dialects have distinct grammatical and semantic structures than those found in the Quran. Jordanian national identity became linguistically threatened when the perceived local dialect was distorted by the sudden influx of refugees, especially of the Palestinian refugees that soon came to comprise more than 50% of the Jordanian population. At the same time, the Palestinian “crisis” became an object of pan-Arabist discourse, uniting the various Arabic dialects around a common theme of supporting the Palestinians against the Israelis. Egyptian President Nasser introduced the precepts of “Modern Standard Arabic” which came to be the regionally used language of

30 De Chatel, Water Sheikhs & Dam Builders, 114.
31 De Chatel, Water Sheikhs & Dam Builders, 114.
33 De Chatel, Water Sheikhs & Dam Builders, 168.
34 Abdel Rahman Sultan (Director of the Sharhabil Bin Hassneh) in discussion with the author, July 14, 2013.
35 Owens, The Linguistic History of Arabic.
36 De Chatel, Water Sheikhs & Dam Builders, 168.
politics and media, further distancing the analytical discourse of political structures from the affective discourse on the proverbial “Arab Street.” Thus, migration, urbanization, and political platforms for regional dominance widened the gap between analytical and affective discourses.

The Unsustainable Agreements of the Jordan River Valley

The modern discourses surrounding the Jordan River were not only shaped by domestic and regional actors, but also by foreign actors involved in the making of the regional historical narratives and infrastructure plans. The allocation of water resources in the JRV were predicated on the misjudgment of British, French, and American leaders who took part in drawing the borders of Israel, Jordan, and other nations at the end of World War I. Western environmentalists were involved in drawing these borders, and produced 11 plans for water use in the JRV between 1939 and 1955.38

The British imperialist presence had led to a narrative that blamed environmental degradation on the locals and authenticated the idea that Western plans to develop the Levant’s natural resources would be a modernizing force in the region.39 This narrative chose to stress either the lack of resources or the economic potential of these resources. American conservationist W. C. Lowdermilk opted for the latter when he drew up a definitive plan on the development of the Jordan River in 1944. Lowdermilk suggested that a Jordan River Valley Authority, resembling municipal agencies for conservation in the United States, be set up to administer natural resource allocation in the JRV. However, in his plan he grossly overestimated — as did advocates of Zionism — the amount of water available in the region, disregarding the British Colonial Survey of 1938 that warned the region lacked sufficient water to support large-scale agricultural development.40

In 1948 the new state of Israel had been born — and pitched into war with its neighbors. Approximately a decade after the Lowdermilk Plan had been presented, another American, Ambassador Eric Johnston, traveled to the region to devise a water allocation scheme for the severely maltreated JRV that would be the last attempt at a water agreement in the region for the next few decades. This time the scheme incorporated separate water allocation quotas for Israel, Jordan, and Syria, based on their amount of arable land. However, the Johnston Plan was never ratified, in part since neither Jordan nor Syria recognized Israel at the time, and the precious water resources of the JRV remained unregulated.41

Other American experts traveled to the region over the next few decades to facilitate an arrangement between the riparians of the Jordan River, but substantive talks did not commence until the 1980s, when relations between Israel and Jordan began to thaw.42 However, these meetings were already unsuccessful in establishing

37 Owens, The Linguistic History of Arabic.
39 Davis and Burke 2011
41 Shamir 1998
42 Saliba, The Jordan River dispute.
Jordan asserted that they were a riparian to the entire river and should be allocated water from the Yarmouk River and Sea of Galilee. Israel on the other hand only considered Jordan a riparian to the Lower Jordan River, which would result in a smaller amount of water allocated to Jordanians from the Jordan River Watershed.\textsuperscript{43}

The Peace Process began in earnest with the Madrid Peace Conference of 1991, which laid the foundations for The Oslo Accord I of 1993, the first substantive agreement signed by Israelis and Palestinians.\textsuperscript{44} The Oslo Accord I was followed a year later by the Peace Treaty, which covered a wide range of transborder issues between Jordan and Israel. Both documents outlined concerns and measures regarding the allocation of natural resources in the JRV, with the latter urging the creation of a “Joint Water Committee” to administer water distribution in the region. It is important to note that “water-related issues” and “environment” were separate annexes in the Peace Treaty, and this would later be reflected in the creation of government ministries in the region that address water issues and environmental issues separately.\textsuperscript{45}

The expectant peace agreements of the 1990s proved paltry as political leadership changed in the region. No changes have been made to allocation figures recently, although FoEME and other actors suggest new methods of allocation for the region. The lack of resolution to the stagnant conflict between Palestinians and Israelis has stymied progress on environmental issues. Each solution has been thwarted by fears over the other party’s ulterior motives, and in the domestic sphere, environmental activists in government positions feel that other items on the agenda displace environmental issues.\textsuperscript{46}

**The Top-Down Approach**

“Politicians are the same all over: they promise to build a bridge even where there is no river.” - Nikita Kruschev\textsuperscript{47}

**Struggle for Balance**

The state that gains hegemonic power over the allocation of resources determines the power dynamic in the discourse on water.\textsuperscript{48} However, obtaining that power over resources requires swift action and the structural capacity to extract those resources. Water was central to the Zionist project, not for its economic significance—which was negligible due to state subsidies on agriculture — but rather its geopolitical importance. Therefore between 1950 and 1970, Israel invested up to 5\% of their gross capital formation to building water infrastructures, and quickly developed a small number of centralized water institutions that functioned under

\textsuperscript{43} Shamir 1998  
\textsuperscript{44} Shamir 1998  
\textsuperscript{45} The Peace Treaty 1994  
\textsuperscript{46} K. Irani in discussion with the author, July 15, 2013.  
\textsuperscript{48} Lowi 1993
order of the state. Combined with the militarization of Israeli society, water went from being affectively argued using Zionist ideas to being negotiated through analytical hard-power capabilities.

For the Palestinians within Palestinian territory, the oppression they faced was soon made visible as Israel extracted more natural resources. Palestinians resorted to the few wells and extraction materials to which they had access, and thus were unable to keep up with their high population growth. Recently, the Israeli authorities have been building a separation barrier between the West Bank and Israel that appears to infringe on the internationally recognized separation line. As a result, a disproportionate amount of natural resources are allocated to Israel, a process which has not only been labeled as a “land grab”, but also a “water grab.” Up to 50 wells utilized by the Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank have been put out of service by the wall. As a result, Palestinians have come to perceive the environment as something that is negotiated, exploited, and manipulated in the political space, in the tradition of affective discourse. Therefore, they believe it should be reclaimed through political settlements and guerrilla tactics, rather than engineered solutions and community initiatives.

Hegemonic regimes can have a substantial impact on attachment to the natural environment. Analytical discourses circulating ideas of oppression and occupation emerge as a result of top-down manipulation of power structures. The process of biopower is enacted through effective use of governmentality. Israel appears to have exercised governmentality in regards to water issues through its centralized state apparatus dealing with public water infrastructure, a biopower that has led to perceptions which not only victimize, but at times even criminalize the Palestinians of the West Bank. The criminal perception of the Palestinians creates a discourse that victimizes Israel. Palestinians, however, do not have the organized state apparatus needed to challenge the Israeli discourse.

The potency of Israel’s discourse is evident, not only in its success in exploiting the water resources it supposedly shares, but also in evading the allegation that the region lacks sufficient freshwater. British geographer Tony Allan radically asserts that the Middle East ran out of water in the 1970s. He argues that this fact has been concealed through the phenomenon of “virtual water” to dissuade regional unrest. Virtual water is the water embedded in food imports and other methods of obtaining resources not directly available to a nation. Israel has been very effective in utilizing virtual water, popularizing wastewater recycling, and investing in costly desalination technology to obfuscate the reality of regional water scarcity for their

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51 Zeitoun, *Power and water in the Middle East*, 95.
53 The Jordan River’s water flow today mainly consists of raw sewage, wastewater, and rainwater. The over pumped water tables of the Jordan River Basin have also showed signs of pollution. Allan’s claim is built on these facts. The claim that the transition occurred in the 1970s refers to the industrialization of the region at the time. (Allan, *The Middle East Water Question: Hydropolitics and the global economy*, 108.)
Jordan has also sought virtual water through imports, but the reality of water scarcity becomes more threatening as refugees burden an already overwhelming trade deficit.

**What is in a Name? – Strategic Ministry Titles**

Water is a vital resource for a number of different sectors, thus complicating its management when a government wishes to delegate responsibilities to separate agencies. In the JRV, each state contains a multiplicity of public institutions involved with water management, but they do not necessarily see their responsibilities aligning. These diplomatic institutions speak to both international and local communities. As such, they have to adjust their discourse to suit their respective audiences, but do not always adjust their discourse to communicate with other institutions. The ministries possess the authority to translate international discourse on natural resource management and environmentalism into a discourse that is understood through localized frames of water use and political culture.

In 1988 the Environmental Protective Service in Israel was formally established as a governmental ministry and renamed the Ministry for Environmental Protection. In the current mission published on the official website of the ministry, they do not mention water explicitly, but rather imply it in the term for “ecosystem” or “ecological system.” The lack of any direct reference to water supports the argument that water is not seen as a major component of the responsibilities to be carried out by the Ministry for Environment. On the other hand, the Ministry for Energy and Infrastructure was renamed in 2012 as the Ministry for Energy and Water Infrastructure, suggesting the increasing pressure of the water situation. By designating water as an aspect of energy and infrastructure in the realm of the engineering field, rather than as a part of the natural environment, the resource can be shaped and possibly even manipulated as a political tool rather than being treated as a natural resource that requires measures of “safeguarding” and “conserving.”

The Jordanian governmental ministries have a similar division of responsibilities. The Jordanian Ministry for Environment, established over 10 years ago, grew out of a burgeoning conservation movement in the country driven by Khaled Irani and the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN). At first their activities were purely technical and related to biodiversity, but eventually the social aspect was incorporated and the government recognized the potential of eco-tourism to generate revenue as well as provide job opportunities for local communities. The Ministry for Environment does not directly address water in their mission, vision, goals, or values. However, the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, which was created in 1992 — the same year the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) was held, had existed over a decade longer than the Ministry for Environment. Just as in Israel, we see water divorced from the concept of environment in political discourse; but in the case of Israel, environmental issues were given precedent over water. In the case of Jordan water was of explicit importance from the start, while a Minister with an environmental that did not appear

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55 Ibid., 94.
56 Irani in discussion with the author.
until much later. Khaled Irani, former Minister for Environment, claims that this is necessary since in the Middle East issues are more micro-managed than, for example, in the United States. As such, ministers with specific titles are needed to bring neglected issues to the foreground.

The lack of collaboration between ministries is frustrating for environmental organizations. Abdel Rahman Sultan, Deputy Director at the Jordanian FoEME office in Amman, disparaged the lack of “willingness of decision-makers to solve environmental problems.” Sultan attributed this to the lack of government coherency on an environmental agenda, with too many ministries sharing responsibility for environmental processes. Instead, he suggests a more inclusive “Ministry of Sustainable Development” or “Ministry of Future Generation,” pointing to the discourse and terminologies he wants to see the government employ. The suggestion of changing the title of the ministry to shift priorities of state power structures highlights the importance of labels in setting the frame for the authorization of solutions to environmental problems. Israel’s efficacy and skill in extracting and manipulating environmental resources to become an internationally recognized ecologically forward-thinking nation has aroused the chagrin of its neighbors, who suffer from institutional limitations caused by a number of economic, cultural, and political hurdles. However, this particular analytical discourse of environmentalism has supported the framing of environmentalism as a symbol of modernity, which may undermine more cost-effective and traditional grassroots approaches to natural resource management.

It is not surprising that the Palestinian National Authority inaugurated its own Ministry of Environmental Affairs (MEnA) to take part in the environmentalist discourse. All of the content on MEnA’s website is in English, suggesting that this discourse is purely meant to defend Palestinian interests on the international stage. Curiously, the Ministry of Environmental Affairs was established in 1996 — the same year that Israel established the Ministry of National Infrastructure in Israel. This study suggests that “national infrastructure” was an analytical response to the more affective “environmental affairs” — the tangible versus the negotiable.

**The Bottom-Up Approach**

“A stranger on the riverbank, like the river … water binds me to your name.” — Mahmoud Darwish

**Civil Society Engagement in the Jordan River Valley**

Interviews with representatives of FoEME gave evidence to the affective discourses present at the community and grassroots level. FoEME’s unique organizational structure breaks conventional communicative barriers between these populations through the regionally shared issue of natural resource scarcity. However,

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57 Sultan in discussion with the author.
58 Ibid.
this does not necessarily mean that the organization breaks the conceptual barriers surrounding the environment in the region. Both Elizabeth Ya’ari at the Israeli office and Abdel Rahman Sultan at the Jordanian office said that water should be prioritized. However Ya’ari perceived water as already being placed as a priority on the Israeli political agenda, while Sultan interpreted the Jordanian government as possessing greater interest in developing eco-parks and areas of conservation to encourage ecotourism.

Ya’ari recognized the impact environmentalist discourse can have on identity and stated that FoEME’s goal at their community-level initiatives is to transform the current national and religious identities into identities of residence and territorial belonging.61 This attempted shift in discourse therefore moves away from the analytical discourse of the nation-state and towards a more emotionally driven affective discourse of shared humanity. Sultan pointed toward this by suggesting that water and clean air are basic human needs that transcend ideological barriers and run opposite the direction of government discourse. This supports the argument that analytical discourses of power determine the conceptualization of environmentalism in the public sphere, while affective discourses of emotion dominate in the private sphere.

A River of Many Faiths

FoEME launched a faith-based initiative in 2013 to support their Jordan River Rehabilitation Project. The initiative involves the creation of materials, including texts, anecdotes, and sermons, that emphasize the importance of the Jordan River to Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. These materials are to be used freely by faith-based communities to stress the ideological reasons for rehabilitating and defending the Jordan River.62 This initiative compellingly juxtaposes analytical discourses with the more affective discourse of faith-based approaches to environmentalism. It also introduces the idea that a faith-based approach could reinforce scientific discourses surrounding water.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr draws from mystical Sufi tradition of Islam to call for increased attention to the natural world by Muslims, as well as followers of other faiths. Nasr argues that the root of the environmental problem is that we have become disconnected from the divinity in nature. This disconnection is manifested both physically through the built environment “as artificial, excluding nature, perpetuating a feeling of deprivation,” and spiritually by perceiving the environment as facts rather than symbols — or in other words, not recognizing the sacredness of nature.63 Munjed Murad, a doctoral student of Nasr, describes it as a “regression” in spiritual connection, in which we perceive nature as diabolic today rather than symbolic as our ancestors did.64 The perception of nature as something to be loved and cared for is “the very antithesis of the prevalent attitude of modern man as the

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61 E. Ya’ari in discussion with the author, Jul. 8, 2013.
62 Ibid.
64 Munjed Murad (a doctoral student of Nasr) in discussion with the author, Sept. 12, 2013.
conqueror and enemy of nature.” Nasr blames this on the process of secularization and Western techniques of domination over nature obfuscating the metaphysics of the East. He would argue that the legacy of Western imperialism has infiltrated the mentality of the Middle Eastern population, as they have consumed narratives emphasizing Western superiority, giving precedence to analytical discourses over affective discourses. However, Eastern and Western paradigms are just as interrelated as analytical and affective discourses. While faith-based approaches have value, we need to recognize these interconnected cultural blocs.

Leading Jewish eco-theologian Rabbi Lawrence Troster has led scholarly debate on environmental ethics in Judaism from what he sees as simplistic and apologetic modeling to more radical thinking. The apologetic model, which asserts that all the solutions to our contemporary problems are in our traditions and thus resembles the model suggested by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, is simplistic according to Rabbi Troster. He firmly believes that “no religion is green because this is an unprecedented challenge to humanity that did not exist in previous times.” Vogel interprets Jewish environmentalism as being modeled in two distinct ways: biocentric and anthropocentric. The biocentric view appeals for moderated natural resource management because of the value in nature, as Nasr would call for, while the anthropocentric model asserts that natural resources should be managed in the way that is most beneficial to human progeny. Vogel deduces that Judaism is more anthropocentric than biocentric in its approach, but echoes Rabbi Troster’s claim that no religion is green. Murad attributed the lack of engagement in environmental advocacy among the public in the JRV as a “misplacing of priorities.” Just as Khaled Irani expressed disappointment over the low-priority status of environmental issues in public policy, the religious scholars above would agree that the importance of environmental issues is underestimated in religion as well. Faith-based initiatives for resource management, as propagated by organizations such as FoEME, attempt to remedy the problem of neglecting environmental issues both in religious faith and in public policy.

The Public and the Private in the Urban Middle East

The relationship between public and private spaces in the Middle East has acted to either construct a bond or create detachment between identity and nature in the region. Jordan has experienced rapid urbanization, to the extent that the culture of village life has been transplanted to recent metropolises like Amman. This is paired with a cultural heritage in which parks are private, exclusive spaces accessible only to those who could afford it. The lack of public parks in the country’s cities —

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66 Murad in discussion with the author.
67 Rabbi Lawrence Troster (leading Jewish eco-theologian) in discussion with the author, Sept. 25, 2013.
69 Murad in discussion with the author.
which have mushroomed and merged with surrounding refugee camps — has led to the detachment of individuals from their natural environment. “The new generation is interested in the environment. But their problem is they never had a chance to see the environment,” explained Sultan.  

There have been attempts to green the urbanscapes of Jordan. For example, many trees have been planted, albeit squarely in the middle of the sidewalk, which dissuades rather than encourages pedestrian walking. Thus, the cities of Jordan effectively push their residents out of public space and into private space, setting conceptual boundaries between the spaces. The private space of Jordanians’ homes is often immaculately clean despite abject water scarcity, but in the public sphere waste is casually thrown away along the sides of roads and buckets of precious water are used to scrub the dirty streets. In the spirit of Nasr’s argument, the modern obstruction to environmentalism in Muslim societies stems from a detachment from the sacred and pure in nature.

The West Bank has grown increasingly conservative in its isolation under the reigns of Israeli administration. Residents are pushed into their private space by a number of factors, including internal religious ideology, critical authorities, and the fact that there are very few public spaces in which to interact with others. Just as in Jordan, urban centers have mushroomed without incorporating plans for public parks. The lack of public spaces could also be a mechanism of state control. There is no major park in Hebron, but beyond the limits of the Hebron municipality lies a public space with fountains and grass — a synthetic natural environment that seems like an oasis in the warm desert night, contrasting with the dust and monotony of Hebron’s city streets. My hosts reported that their municipality did not allow for verdant spaces within the city of Hebron, so they had to build these areas outside of the city. It was clear that only a certain socioeconomic class of Hebron had access to this park.

The increasing distance from nature is exacerbated by the necessity for owning a car in Jordan and Palestine. There are no bicycle paths in the cities, and even when going to the countryside, there is little access to the forests or deserts of Jordan except by specialized vehicle or on horseback or camel. On a picnic with a Jordanian family, they told me we were going to the forests of Ajloun. In reality the picnic was by the heavily littered roadside as trucks sped by, and we could only see a glimpse of the forests from across a hill. On the other hand, in Israel, there has been massive investment in bike lanes and bike share programs similar to those that exist in many European and American cities, and both Tel Aviv and Jerusalem have many long walking streets. In contrast, Amman has only one walking street, completed in 2010. The disparities in levels of destitution reflect different levels of access to foreign investment, as well as the fact that refugee situations and weak institutions hamper development.

In contrast, the Israeli Kibbutz movement that grew out of Zionism exemplifies an emphasis on the collective and the public. The Green Zionist movement and the establishment and popularization of the “kibbutz” concept have largely shaped Israel’s environmental advocacy movements. 

71 Sultan in discussion with the author.
72 A kibbutz is a closely-knit, egalitarian community, based on common ownership of the means of production and consumption centered on the nurturing of Jewish values (Fidler 1999).
explains that the kibbutz emerged as the Zionist response to anti-Semitic themes that claimed the Jews were “disconnected from the land.” Zionists asserted that participating in these agricultural collectives would result in a spiritual rejuvenation of the people. This discourse of affect supported the material development that would empower Israel’s analytical discourses. The close connection between productivity of the land and the strengthening of religious faith became central to Kibbutz Lotan, for example. Israel was seen as the property of all Jewish people — they needed to care for and share their common heritage. In the spirit of the Eastern European environs from which many Jewish immigrants came to Israel, a Kibbutz functioned as a commune where even children were raised collectively. Although the Kibbutz movement tapered off in the 70s and 80s, it fomented a close connection to the natural environment, leading to initiatives for incorporating public parks in the urban design plans of Israel’s innovative cities. These trends suggest that European cultural associations with the natural environment were transplanted to the Middle East. This would not be surprising, since European culture is still very much alive for many Israelis, who keep singing German lullabies or speaking in Russian. After all, centuries of living as a diaspora throughout the European continent meant that Jewish religious tradition would likely blend with European cultural values.

An interview with a Palestinian woman living in Hebron, one of the largest cities in the West Bank, contextualized her discussion of the priorities for environmental issues in the region. According to her, Palestinians’ priorities are established on the basis that West Bank lacks sovereign and human rights at the hand of the Israeli occupation. The stifling political structure she lived in made her express her concern for water shortages through a discourse of emotion that focused on the frustrations of not being able to carry out simple household tasks of cooking and cleaning. The source for the problem was the State of Israel “stealing the water” and the solution was religious submission and the involvement of international bodies in their local plight.73

Based on interviews with locals and participant-observation among families in the region, I have drawn the conclusion that Israel sees environment as something that exists indoors and outdoors, and therefore does not hesitate to keep both clean. However, Jordanians and Palestinians view environment as separate from their household lives. While the interior of their homes and offices stay spotless, waste problems in the public space can be traced back to the fact that the residents of the JRV are too far removed from their natural environment to visualize the impact it has on the interior of their homes. To offset this problem, relevant municipal authorities could support the creation of more parks and accessible public spaces in the center of cities in the JRV and designate more space for national protected areas.

Conclusion

The fundamental argument of my thesis revolves around the idea that our perception and understanding of a particular problem determines how we react to that problem and thereby engage in the process of finding a solution. Certain culturally mandated perceptions could result in greater engagement with problem-solving

73 Anonymous, interview by author, June 29, 2013.
mechanisms, while others could obstruct the solution. Environmental issues are not necessarily based in the outdoor wilderness of the natural world, but also relate to the concern we have for our indoor environments and urbanscapes. Western thinking has potentially infiltrated Israeli discourse about the environment. After centuries spent in Europe and North America, the Ashkenazi Jews have now transferred their Western ideas to Israel. It would perhaps be interesting explore whether the Mizrahi Jews, who mostly resided in the Middle East and North Africa, have a different approach to environment, or if they have already been socialized into the European Ashkenazi way of thinking.

In general, Israel has gained a reputation for environmental engagement unrivaled in the region. This thesis posits that Israel achieved that because they saw environmental issues as reaching into the interior of their homes, where recycling and water conservation actually takes place. In Jordan and the West Bank, on the other hand, a lack of verdant recreational spaces and increased urbanization has increased the distance between the inhabitants and nature. As a part of this process, urban Jordanians now see these problems as something outside their homes — a problem to occupy farmers and fishermen in the sparse and desolate rural areas rather than the growing middle-class in overcrowded and polluted cities such as Amman, Irbid, and Hebron.

Framing environmentalism in the internationally recognized vernacular of politics and economics undermines localized approaches to natural resources, which define progress by different measures. From the top-down perspective, the analytical discourses aimed at international audiences seek to take part in a framework of "modernity" to improve the image of the state in the international community and therefore impact its diplomatic bargaining power. In regards to bottom-up initiatives, organizations frame their arguments around ideas of identity, employing affective discourses to incite grassroots involvement in environmentalist campaigns. In a manifestation of Foucault's "biopower" of discourse, discourses of analysis and affect overlap in a framework constructed by the limitations imposed on a community through oppressive political regimes. This research reveals that each country of the JRV is distinctly different in their top-down approaches to environmentalism. However, they can generate a joint regional identity by creating more cohesive bottom-up responses to environmental issues. The frames of the two different strains of discourse point towards the intended audience of these initiatives, simultaneously drawing from the past and a future threatened by institutional and environmental.

In a markedly polarized region where tensions run high, political and economic discourses that express concerns over power balances and material self-interest also need to account for more emotionally charged narratives of religion, nationalism, and history. In the JRV where resource depletion overlaps with ethnic conflict, the framing of environmental issues becomes highly politicized and evokes powerful emotional responses, creating a highly localized conversation on

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74 Abdel Rahman Sultan, Director of the Sharhabil Bin Hassneh Eco-Park in northern Jordan, explained that he became involved in environmental work due to his disappointment in the lack of open public spaces, such as parks, in his hometown of Amman (Sultan in discussion with the author, July 6, 2013).
environmentalism. The dwindling natural resources — especially the increasing lack of water — in the JRV requires an investigation into how environmental issues are being approached today in Jordan, Israel, and the West Bank in order to ensure more constructive regional agreements in the future.

While affective and analytical discourses have generally been seen as distinct and intentionally separated, they reinforce each other when used in symbiosis to create a powerful discourse. This conversation establishes dominance over the issue and allows the state to pursue its national interests in the issue with international support and local engagement. Furthermore, the state should not ignore the impact that faith and other cultural mediums of communication have on the public’s perception of a local problem. By framing the environmentalist argument through partnership between the public sector and civil society institutions, these seemingly disparate discourses will be joined in a way that could produce a powerful call to action for the people of the JRV to deal with the region’s most pressing environmental problems.
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