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Editorial Policy

OVERVIEW

The International Relations Journal at San Francisco State University strives to exhibit the diverse range of undergraduate and graduate research interests that flourish in our department.

Each semester, the Journal is offered as a course in which students participate as writers or editors in a peer review process, or as administrative staff members who assist authors and editors as well as guide the Journal through its production.

The goal of the course is to expose students to the peer review process, focusing on academic standards of argumentation and factual accuracy, citation formatting, and collaborative editing using Microsoft Word's "track changes" feature. More broadly, the Journal's executive editors aim to help students develop writing/editing skills applicable in other courses and promote a deeper understanding of the discipline of International Relations as a whole.

SUBMISSIONS & PROCESS

The Journal encourages all students pursuing a B.A. or M.A. in International Relations to submit completed works (incomplete papers and abstracts are not accepted) at the beginning of each semester. From these submissions, the Journal's executive editors assign students to positions on the writing and editorial boards as well as a number of administrative-level appointments.

The course curriculum includes a number of informational workshops and at least three rounds of structured editing and revision. All editing is anonymous and each submission is reviewed by three different editors.

The structured peer review is as follows: [1] a submission is first edited by an undergraduate or graduate "peer expert" who has conducted prior research on topics and/or regions relevant to the paper and can thus provide fact checking and citation suggestions; [2] second round editing focuses on clarity and academic tone by paring the manuscript with an editor

unfamiliar with the paper's subject; [3] finally, the paper is edited for proper citation formatting and technical aspects.

At the end of the semester, authors participating in this process are expected to submit a final manuscript for consideration by the Journal's executive editors and the faculty advisor.

PUBLICATION OF ARTICLES

Only submissions that have gone through the peer review process and meet the content and formatting requirements will be considered for publication. The Journal is published yearly.

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To celebrate the life-time accomplishments of
Prof. Kathleen McAfee
Whose passion for environmental sustainability and social justice
continues to inspire us

Author Biographies

SARAH AIMAN ABUSAIF

Sarah abusaif is a third-year student majoring in computer science at san francisco state university. Video games influenced what she wanted to major in college. While sarah was stuck and unsure of what she wanted to be, she played in a videogame as a young boy who fought the darkness to save his friends. The japanese video game kingdom hearts has not only Taught her the importance of friendship, but also the culture within japan. It soon made her wonder if any games were revolving around muslim characters, but alas, while she could find few muslim characters in games, she couldn't find many well-known muslim video games. Thus, it has become her goal to create a game that not only tells a story but teaches others about her culture. Besides learning how to program games, sarah is interested in how entertainment, in general, can affect people's understanding of a culture. She wants to show that video games and comics can be another source of education.

JONATHAN BLACK

Jonathan Black completed his final semester at San Francisco State University and earned his BA in International Relations in December 2022. Jonathan is passionate about International Relations and Political Science and his research interests include human rights, terrorism, political economy, and exploring the root causes of nationalist/populist movements around the globe. In his free time, Jonathan travels extensively with his husband, Patrick, and loves hiking and camping up and down the beautiful California coast. Jonathan has been a proud San Francisco resident for the last six years and looks forward to many more years exploring our beautiful city.

KELSEY BOATWRIGHT

Kelsey Boatwright is a senior International Relations student working towards obtaining her Bachelor of Arts from San Francisco State University. Her interest in environmental justice and human rights has also led her to minor in Global Peace, Human Rights and Justice Studies. Climate policy, sustainable agriculture, and gender rights are only a few of her areas of focus. She recently left San Francisco to pursue a policy career in Washington, D.C. and can often be found exploring with her film camera and her dog, Nacho.

EMMY CRUZ

Emmy Cruz is an SF International Relations Scholar and a San Francisco State University graduate student. Her current research focuses on international political economics, sustainable development, and security issues. Her passion for traveling and learning has helped guide her to the field, but a desire for economic reform motivates her today.

BRITTNEY ORTEGA

Brittney Ortega holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in International Business and Management with a minor in Political Science and Sociology from the University of Hawaii at Manoa. She is currently attending San Francisco State University in the International Relations department as a student in the Master's program and is working towards completing a certificate program in Migration and Refugee Studies. In addition to Ms. Ortega's educational background, she is also a military veteran and returned Peace Corps volunteer. Her academic interests and current research on migration issues, particularly in the Western Mediterranean route of sea migration, was born from her experience as a study abroad student in Spain and her travels along the same route between Morocco and Spain. Ms. Ortega's time in the Peace Corps also played a pivotal role in her research exploring the connection foreign aid has to economic growth, human and state development, and the functioning of bureaucratic institutions and organizations in the aid industry. Ms. Ortega currently resides in her home state of California but proudly calls the state of Hawaii her second home.

AHMAD FAISAL SAFI

Faisal Safi is a graduate student at SFSU, a Senior Office Assistant at the Business Office of Associated Students, and an International Relations Students Association event coordinator. He has worked in multicultural settings, held leadership positions, and volunteered for international organizations. He was born and raised in Afghanistan, and after high school, the Turkish government awarded him a merit-based scholarship for his BA. He subsequently studied in Lithuania as part of the Erasmus Exchange mobility program. Faisal is interested in researching topics related to the Middle East and South and Central Asia. He has published two articles about Turkey and Russia's soft power competition over the post-Soviet, central Asian Turkic states (newspaper) and Turkey's public diplomacy and rebranding policies (International conference). He is intrigued by the new emerging world order established in the East and is researching China's strategic approach to post-Taliban Afghanistan.

Representation of Muslims in Video Games and Comics

SARAH ABUSAIF

ABSTRACT

This article goes into an area that isn't explored much, not only within the field of International Relations but in the general world as well: video games and comics. There are many assumptions made through these types of media, and most fall under the negative spectrum. This paper shows that video games and comics have the potential to teach their audience more about the outside world than what they learn in a classroom. This paper will specifically look at video games and comics relating to Muslims, and how Muslim characters are perceived in the media. Muslims may have fallen under stereotypes in early visual entertainment media, however, as new games and comics are released, they try to stray away from these stereotypes and seek a more sensitive and nuanced representation of Muslims. While not many games have Muslim characters, there are still improvements overall. By analyzing some games and comics that include Muslim characters, I will display how Muslims are depicted in media from the view of players and readers.

INTRODUCTION

While many videogames are fiction, there are also ways where culture is expressed in the game, whether it is through the character's design or the game's setting. Some purposes of games are to share a specific culture with their audience. Video games aren't the only form of animated entertainment to give this message to others, but also comics. Through comics, stories are expressed through images and drawings. With comics, entertainment companies have been able to create hundreds of characters of different ethnicities, genders, and belief systems. While these entertainment platforms had previously followed stereotypes and created inaccurate Muslim characters, they have now improved in representing relatable Muslim characters. The younger generation learns more from what they see on visual entertainment platforms than from the news itself. While it is true that most non-Muslim adults get their information on Muslims through media and news, entertainment platforms such as video games and comics hold a larger audience including youth and can convey a more realistic representation of Muslims through story-telling.

In this paper, the literature review will discuss the effects of video games and comics and how they differ from other kinds of entertainment. The paper will go in-depth on how they educate children on diversity and the differences in the world. The paper will also talk about the stereotypes surrounding Muslims and why there doesn't seem to be a lot of entertainment media that revolve around Muslims. The case study will look at the video game *Assassin's Creed*, as well as looking at Muslim characters in Marvel comics, such as Ms. Marvel, to examine how these characters are represented and how the target audience views them. Overall, the purpose of the paper is to explore how Muslims are portrayed in entertainment media.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Comics and video games have played a big role in many people's lives since childhood. It may be much more fun to be able to see the characters instead of simply reading their descriptions in a book. It is more exciting and interactive to play as the protagonist instead of watching them in a show. However, most adults see their children reading a comic or playing on their consoles and assume it is harming them. One of the most well-known debates revolves around whether video games are dangerous for kids and if they should be banned. Unfortunately, adults don't see that video games are opportunities for an educational experience for their kids. The way kids learn through entertainment may be different than what they learn at school, but more specifically, they can learn more about the outside world.

It is understandable why those who don't find entertainment in these forms would consider them frivolous or dangerous. News media frequently reports that those who commit serious crimes have grown up playing violent video games and that there have been rumors of "childhood obesity, addiction, gender socialization, poor academic performance, and aggressive behavior" resulting from these games.¹ While there are not many negative responses to comics, it is still less appreciated since most believe that it would be more effective for the child to read a book instead.

In contrast, there are studies done by professional organizations that have concluded that violent video games are not related to players' aggressive behavior. Andrew K. Przybylski and Netta Weinstein conducted this study by asking around 1000 children ranging between 14 and 15 what their experiences with video games are.² The participants were then evaluated how what their behavior was like for the past month and if they showed any aggressive behavior. The results of this study show that it did not support their original hypothesis, which was that violent video games and violent behaviors were positively correlated.

If educators were to recognize that video games and comics present a new learning experience to children and that it gives them an opportunity to learn more about the diverse world we live in, then they wouldn't be as against them. "Children as young as three years old develop schemas and scripts for negotiating perceived racial differences," and additionally, "by the time children are five years old, they have already started to develop strong ideas about race and difference."³ This signifies the importance of video games and comics since it is through these forms that children are informed of the diversities before they even begin attending school. It is very helpful to improve a child's social intelligence and their ability to understand not only their own thoughts and feelings but others' as well, and this can be better accomplished when the child is interacting with this type of entertainment. Comics, for instance, have many different types of heroes, such as the son of DC's Batman, Damian Wayne, who is part Chinese and Arab, or the Marvel Filipina superhero Pearl Pangan. These characters introduce their young audience to a new culture as they see the struggles the characters face. They aren't only fighting the bad guy but also issues they encounter because of their identity.

Other forms of entertainment can also reach these goals of educating the youth and

1. Anna Everett and S. Craig Watkins, *The power of play: The portrayal and performance of race in video games* (MacArthur Foundation Digital Media and Learning Initiative, 2008), 141.

2. Andrew Przybylski and Netta Weinstein. "Violent video game engagement is not associated with adolescents' aggressive behaviour: evidence from a registered report." *Royal Society Open Science* 6, no. 2 (2019): 171474.

3. Anna Everett and S. Craig Watkins, *The power of play: The portrayal and performance of race in video games* (MacArthur Foundation Digital Media and Learning Initiative, 2008), 141.

influencing them. However, it may be more difficult to have equitable representation in other platforms when it comes to live-action shows and movies. The main reason for this is that it is much easier to creatively sketch a person that's a minority and create a story around them. However, the same is not applied to real life, since producers would have to find actors that fit into the character that they want to build. As such, it can be difficult to find the exact person that meets all their needs since there may not be a lot of diverse actors to choose from.

For example, Zaira Wasim, an Indian actress, made the “decision to quit Bollywood, saying the acting was taking her away from her faith,” where even though she had won several awards for her roles, she believed that acting had “lead [her] to a path of ignorance...and unconsciously transitioned out of ‘Imaan.’”⁴ In today's ummah, which is the community of Muslims, many criticize others who pursue some form of art, whether it be acting, creating music, or becoming an artist. This discourages others to follow through with what they want to be if it is within these types of fields. While other factors may play a role, such as Islamophobia, overall, it shows that it is more difficult to represent Muslims this way than through a comic or video game where one can create their own character.

A significant issue that often occurs with representation is that there tend to be a lot of stereotypes, including oversimplified ideas and assumptions about a certain group of people. Thus, this can lead to more discrimination when representing these minorities as “people are under pressure of a stereotype that they fear may be unfavorable for them.”⁵ As such, seeing these stereotypes in the media can hurt the minority since they can't escape the assumptions about their communities. Stereotypes still permeate comic books and video games. The writers, editors, and publishers are the ones that write scripts and have used the mission statement to create characters that readers can resonate with, and to do so, they know that there needs to be more diversity. If the writers create characters of a minority after educating themselves on the group's experiences, then readers can escape the “stereotype threat” and no longer need to “internalize and react to the negative stereotypes associated with that group,” and instead are motivated to “confront the labels [they]’ve been assigned.”⁶

Yet, other stereotypes may remain, as seen with Araña, a Marvel female superhero who is half Puerto Rican and half Mexican. Even though she is the main character of the story, “of the primary characters are men,” leaving Araña and her friend as the only main characters that are females.⁷ Additionally, Araña continues to get “idealized and objectified in the negative ways presented in the research on magazine advertising where women's bodies are on display and women are ‘ready for sex.’”⁸ While the men who fight are considered superheroes with the appropriate outfits for battle, the women continuously get drawn in more form fitting costumes. Even though Araña is a character to represent a minority, she is objectified due to her gender. There is also

4. Shilpa Jamkhandikar, “Indian Actress Draws Fire for Quitting over Islamic Faith,” Reuters (Thomson Reuters, July 1, 2019), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-actress/indian-actress-draws-fire-for-quitting-over-islamic-faith-idUSKCN1TW2MM>.

5. Ulrich W. Weger, Nic Hooper, Brian P. Meier, and Tim Hopthrow, *Mindful maths: Reducing the impact of stereotype threat through a mindfulness exercise* (Consciousness and cognition 21, no. 1, 2012), 471.

6. Sana Amanat: *The Importance of Diversity in the Comic Book Universe* | *Ted Talk*, 2014, https://www.ted.com/talks/sana_amanat_the_importance_of_diversity_in_the_comic_book_universe?language=en.

7. Karen McGrath, *Gender, Race, and Latina Identity: An examination of Marvel Comics' amazing fantasy and arana* (Atlantic Journal of Communication 15, no. 4, 2007), 271.

8. *Ibid.*, 272.

racial stereotyping in the comics that involve Araña. For instance, she “uses current slang, which is often associated with being streetwise and gang affiliated” and is “depicted as the more street like Latina who is brash and sassy,” thus supporting “the stereotypes of Latinos presented in television programming and film, where young men are depicted as hoodlums or gang members, and young women are often depicted as gang members.”⁹ While there are characteristics that Araña has that strive away from the Latina stereotypes, there still remain some assumptions about her personality due to her race.

There are also many stereotypes about Muslims. One of the major stereotypes regarding Muslims is that all Muslims are Arabs or Middle Eastern. It is common for people to conflate the Middle East and the Islamic World, when in fact, “fewer than 15 percent of Muslims worldwide are Arabs” and the “majority of Muslims live outside the Middle East.”¹⁰ However, in almost every form of media, if there were to be a Muslim character, it would be someone from the Middle East. It is forgotten by most people that Islam is a religion, not an ethnicity. Not every Muslim is Middle Eastern, and not every Middle Eastern is Muslim.

Another stereotype aimed towards Muslims is that they are violent and viewed as terrorists. Muslims in media are seen as some sort of threat, and moreover, video games tend to “exploit these stereotypes and cliches in a more apparent manner than other forms of media.”¹¹ In some games, the Middle East is used as a battlefield, where the player is in first-person shooter mode, trying to kill the other players that are in Islamic attire. This has two misconceptions, where one is assuming that Muslims are terrorists, and the second grouping Muslims and the Middle East. They try to make the Muslims seem like bad guys, and the player is the hero taking down all the terrorists. When it comes to more role-playing games, if it has a country based in the Middle East, it tends to portray it in a more “fantasy or quasi-historical manner, exploiting ‘Orientalist’ imagery.”¹² An example of this is from the game *Genshin Impact*, where within their seven regions, Sumeru (which is heavily based on the Middle East) is a country that prioritizes wisdom, and any character you meet from there is researching some specific topic. While this stereotype is more positive than being viewed as terrorists, it is still nonetheless an assumption made that doesn’t apply to all Muslims.

CASE STUDY

Assassin’s Creed is an action-adventure video game where the protagonist is an assassin fighting for free will and peace. This game franchise has been very successful, “selling over 155 million copies as of October 2020, becoming Ubisoft’s best-selling franchise and one of the highest-selling video game franchises of all time.”¹³ While these stealthy games take place in multiple parts of the world, the early main characters were all Muslim. Furthermore, the first game mode has its location set in the 12th century in the Middle East. The protagonist in the first game is in the Holy Land in 1911, which

9. Karen McGrath, *Gender, Race, and Latina Identity: An examination of Marvel Comics’ amazing fantasy and arana* (Atlantic Journal of Communication 15, no. 4, 2007), 278.

10. “Global Connections . Stereotypes,” PBS (Public Broadcasting Service, 2020), <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/globalconnections/mideast/questions/types/index.html>.

11. Vit Šisler, *Digital Arabs: Representation in video games* (European Journal of Cultural Studies 11, no. 2, 2008), 204.

12. Vit Šisler, *Digital Arabs: Representation in video games* (European Journal of Cultural Studies 11, no. 2, 2008), 214.

13. “Assassin’s Creed,” Wikipedia (Wikimedia Foundation, October 15, 2022), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assassin%27s_Creed#:~:text=It%20is%20commercially%2%20successful%2C%20selling.

is historical during the time of the Third Crusade. The game developers made an effort to create this fictional land but to have it be based on real-world historical events.

Through video games, a developer can add “symbolic representations of the cultures they are representing and thus present a cultural form through which we can communicate cultural knowledge.”¹⁴ However, lack of research on the culture can lead to cultural appropriation. This can be seen in the character design for the protagonist of the first *Assassin’s Creed* game, Altair Ibn-Alahad. Even if Altair fits the appearance of a Middle Eastern, his “behavior, body language, his accent and use of language focus his design in a Westernized manner.”¹⁵ This shows that not enough research was applied to the protagonist on how a Muslim character should behave, it instead adopted more of the Western characteristics, losing some of its historicized representation. However, a reason for why this may be is that the main character is actually Desmond Miles, an American man born in the 21st century who, through some advanced technology, goes back in time as his assassin ancestor. So, while Desmond might be a descendant of a Middle Easterner, it is not confirmed if he is mixed with other ethnicities. Additionally, he also grew up in America, so that would explain the more Western behavior.

There was an effort and a more historically accurate depiction of the architecture in the game. There is a lot of depth and detail put into the graphic design and “buildings with significant cultural and architectural heritage across locations visited by the player,” such as the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem City. It seems that the developing team prioritized getting the historical and architectural facts correct over the cultural ones.¹⁶ There’s also the fact that this is the most popular game that includes Muslims, and even though these characters are assassins, the story-writing portrays them as heroes instead of as terrorists. While playing the game, “Altair did not kill civilians” and that “killing civilians would result in a game over.”¹⁷ This was an important rule in the game since it showed that historically, these “assassins” didn’t plan on terrorizing innocent people, and only committed these kills against higher-status people since they wanted freedom. The developers were able to avoid this stereotype by “keeping a distance from and even explicitly opposing modern terroristic practices.”¹⁸ While they couldn’t include a more accurate character of a Muslim, they still made attempts to strive away from the main stereotypes that characterize Muslims. This 2007 video game, only six years after the 9/11 event that began the stereotype of Muslims being terrorists, fought these assumptions by using historical information and storytelling.

As more of the minority continue to take on more opportunities in the job industry, there have been more diverse creators and editors that make characters based on their own backgrounds. An example of this is the Pakistani comic book creator Sana Amanat, who co-created the Muslim Pakistani hero, Ms. Marvel (Kamala Khan). Kamala had to deal with similar struggles with her identity and fitting in as a Muslim teenager. Because of this, Kamala Khan has a much more realistic representation of a young Muslim female character. Kamala experiences similar issues a Muslim female

14. Majed S. Balela and Darren Mundy, *Analysing Cultural Heritage and its Representation in Video Games* (In DiGRA Conference, pp. 1-16. 2015), 2.

15. *Ibid.*, 10.

16. *Ibid.*, 9.

17. Mirt Komel, *Orientalism in Assassin’s Creed: Self-orientalizing the assassins from forerunners of modern terrorism into occidentalized heroes* (Teorija in praksa 51, no. 1, 2014), 87.

18. *Ibid.*, 88.

goes through living with immigrant parents in America. She goes through the struggle of strict parents yet struggles to decide if she wants “to be a part of white American culture.”¹⁹

Moreover, Kamala’s personality isn’t just about being a Muslim. Islam does affect most of her life, but that alone doesn’t make up Kamala Khan. Throughout Kamala’s story, she’s not only trying her best to be a superhero but also “balancing her religion within her community.”²⁰ Additionally, when her first comic came out, *Ms. Marvel #1*, it only showed her face from her nose up. This cover art had many take an interest in her and soon “expressed that Kamala represented more than just a Muslim girl from Jersey, but instead she was a hero that was relatable to everyone,” and that this “act not only humanized Muslims but super humanized them; making a Muslim teen a mainstream hero.”²¹ Marvel had created Ms. Marvel in a way to avoid creating a stereotypical Muslim.

The main reason why, in general, Marvel has been creating more diverse characters and adding them into the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) is that it was one of the main goals of the well-known Marvel writer, editor, publisher, and producer Stan Lee. He was one of the first creators in Marvel that made more diverse characters, including African American superheroes such as Black Panther and the Falcon, as well as Wyatt Wingfoot, a Native American character. When asked in an interview about the addition of culturally diverse characters, Stan Lee responded, “we’re trying to have as many different cultures and nationalities represented as possible, because it really is one world.”²² Stan Lee wanted to make the comic world similar to the world his readers live in. By making the heroes more realistic and complex, he showed that it is achievable for anyone to be their own hero. He’s what eventually led to Marvel’s mission statement of reaching “a vision as far-reaching as our stories.”

ANALYSIS

While the creators of *Assassin’s Creed* have attempted not to write Altair as the villain of the game, it is only those who play the game that will understand this. Those who don’t have much knowledge about video games will hear the words “assassin” and “Muslim” and may make assumptions about what the game is about. There are those who “performed numerous assassinations, which in today’s world might be termed as ‘acts of terrorism,’” and so they won’t know the details of what goes on in the game and believe that it is another game with a terrorist Muslim.²³ While those who play the game can see that Altair is considered a hero for his actions and knowing his purpose is to defend society, it can still be subjective due to his position. Typically, people wouldn’t associate heroes with assassins, and as a result, not everyone may see Altair as a good guy. However, the main motive of *Assassin’s Creed* is to teach the history of that period through fiction .

19. Nicholaus Pumphrey, *Avenger, Mutant, or Allah: A short evolution of the depiction of Muslims in Marvel comics* (The Muslim World 106, no. 4, 2016), 3.

20. Aayeshah Wajeehah. “Empowered and Strong: Muslim Female Community in Ms. Marvel.” In *Superhero Bodies*, Routledge, 2018: 61.

21. Nicholaus Pumphrey, *Avenger, Mutant, or Allah: A short evolution of the depiction of Muslims in Marvel comics* (The Muslim World 106, no. 4, 2016), 17.

22. Mariam Pera, “Newsmaker: Stan Lee,” *American Libraries Magazine*, November 12, 2018, <https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2014/05/19/an-interview-with-stan-lee/>.

23. Reza Sattarzadeh Nowbari, *Assassin’s Creed, Origins and Downfall of Islamic Terrorism* (International Proceedings of Economics 31 2012), 206.

Video games play a big part in “affect[ing] the psyche of the gamer so strongly that a part of his personality might be changed.”²⁴ This is why these games have a larger role than others may think since it shapes the person’s thoughts on whatever the topic is related to in the game. Not being able to kill civilians shows the player that the assassin wasn’t out for blood, nor did he want to hurt people for fun. Even though stereotypes may persist in different types of media, there’s more of a chance for there to be games and comics that consist of Muslim characters that can be heroes.

If research is lacking or if the group making the game or comic isn’t diverse, then when it comes to making minority characters, it can lead to discrimination instead of representation. There are cases where a minority character’s identity isn’t accurately expressed, and that’s because “it does not play a major role in the plot of these stories, and many of the primary characters/heroes in these stories do not fall into diverse categories.”²⁵ The characters that are meant to represent a minority don’t go through the challenges of that group, and if they do, it tends to be stereotypical because the stories are written mostly by “Caucasian, male, [and] heterosexual” authors.²⁶ As they continue to appeal to the readers, Marvel Comics becomes more of “a new turning point for a medium with a powerful hold on the American consciousness.”²⁷ Captain America, a muscular Caucasian man, was created to represent the American ideal during the wartime period of World War II. However, as the American Dream changed to equality for all Americans, the creators focused more on showing how everyone has the same opportunities to reach their goals.

Furthermore, Marvel had even created a female superhero with her alias American Dream, to show that a woman can have the strength to take Captain America’s place as a leader. The stories have shifted from Captain America being the symbol for Marvel to instead allowing the reader to decide which group of superheroes are important to them, and this includes Muslims as well. Ms. Marvel isn’t the only Muslim that well represents the Muslim community, and Marvel Entertainment isn’t the only company that creates Muslim heroes. DC Comics is also a well-known comic book company, with their most popular superheroes being Superman and Batman. DC also has its own Muslim superheroes, such as Simon Baz, who is a Green Lantern. However, the original and most popular Green Lantern is a Caucasian man with a Catholic father and a Jewish mother. Also, there are over 1000 Green Lanterns, and only one of them is a Lebanese Muslim man. The inspiration to create this character was from the “co-creator Geoff John’s own Lebanese background”, and in the story, “Baz is persecuted for his ethnicity in the aftermath of 9/11.”²⁸ This once again goes to show that having creators behind the scenes who have these diverse backgrounds improves the characteristics of these superheroes. The reader will feel appreciated and heard when reading about a hero going through similar experiences and hardships, letting them know that they are not alone.

24. Ibid.

25. Matthew Galliera, *What It Means to Be Super: Diversity and the Prevailing Discourses in Superhero Comic Books* (2020), 72.

26. Ibid.

27. Eliana Dockterman, “Marvel Brings Diversity to Comic Books,” *Time* (Time, August 27, 2015), <https://time.com/4012852/everyones-a-superhero-at-marvel/>.

28. Mvslim, “9 Comic Superheroes Who Are Very Muslim,” *MVSLIM*, October 31, 2017, <https://mvslim.com/9-comic-superheroes-who-are-very-muslim/>.

CONCLUSION

These case studies show that as diverse groups of creators enter these types of work, it creates a better representation for the diverse audience that plays these games or reads these comics. This research shows that there have been improvements throughout the years in creating Muslim characters that more accurately represent Muslim experiences, helping those who don't have much knowledge about Islam acquire a more positive impression. There is more that can be researched on this topic, such as looking into the diversity of these entertainment groups and trying to correlate these statistics to the popularity of these video games and comics. Also, being able to conduct a survey on how much people are influenced by video games and comics in terms of how they perceive Muslims would help show how much of an impact these types of media have on shifting perceptions about Muslims.

Media entertainment is very important in some respects because it can help change the public's view of Muslims into a more positive perspective. Not only that, but it supports Muslims to find and define themselves. Video games and comics have the ability to make other Muslims more confident in their religion and identity. Marvel series *X-Men Evolution* is about a group of mutant superheroes who not only have to fight villains but also have to try to be "normal" and "fit in" at school, relatable to those who felt left out for being different. The X-Men eventually expose themselves when protecting their school from an attack, and they realize that it is not a problem to be different. From that point on, these superheroes fought against villains and for equality and peace between humans and mutants. The series revolves around the theme that people should embrace who they are because, at the end of the day, all people share common qualities that make them human. People who are currently struggling in finding themselves can benefit from this message and grow through video games and comics.

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The Dangers of Gender Bias: An Examination of Women in Terrorism

JONATHAN BLACK

ABSTRACT

Gender theory is relatively new to international relations, however, is of paramount importance. This paper looks at women's involvement in terrorism and calls attention to the dangers faced when gender biases are ignored. Historically, and in many cases culturally, women are looked upon as motherly, nurturing, loving caregivers, incapable of violent behavior. Not only does this logic deny women proper agency, but it also creates a dangerous security situation in which women are able to carry out attacks undetected. I argue that women should be granted proper agency and in doing so, held responsible for their own actions. I use the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) as my case study as it provides an excellent example of a terrorist group that has a very high percentage of women in its ranks—including some in the most senior positions. These women join voluntarily, they have their own personal motivations for their membership, and they are very often the ones carrying out suicide attacks on behalf of the group. Through an examination of this group, I will dispel the myth surrounding gender biases against women in the arena of global terrorism.

INTRODUCTION

Women and gender have long been overlooked in matters of international relations. It was not until recently that scholars began to examine global issues through a gendered lens and identify the uneven struggles faced by women in concerns like wars, healthcare, and representation on the world stage, among many others. Another problem that arises under patriarchal leadership is a lack of awareness of the capabilities of women. This is particularly a problem when we look at the issue of terrorism.

Women have been involved in terrorism for hundreds of years, yet their participation is often ignored or minimized. This stems directly from the way society frames gender. Women are thought of as gentle, nurturing, and peaceful. Anything that runs contrary to this structured group of acceptable feminine qualities is misunderstood at best and blatantly ignored at worst. Even in parts of the world where no such cultural norms exist, women are still less likely to be seen as suspicious due to our long-held notions of women being incapable of causing harm.

Until proper agency is granted to women, and we learn to abandon the strict walls built around gender roles we risk lives being lost at the hands of women terrorists who evade detection or attention due to our own failures. Recognizing that women have personal and political motivations, just like men, and will take extraordinary measures to achieve them, will allow the world to better deter acts of terrorism and protect the innocent people caught in the crosshairs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining Terrorism

What is terrorism? For any scholar researching terrorism, defining the issue is a critical task to undertake before moving forward as there are a multitude of ways in which governments, organizations, scholars, and analysts define the word. Dr. Margaret Gonzalez-Perez argues that “various nation-states employ a variety of definitions, but because each nation fears being hoisted on its own petard, none will accept a definition that might include its own actions.”¹ It is not simply the nation-states of the world that differ in how they define the issue, with Gonzalez-Perez noting that even within various governmental organizations in the United States including the State Department, CIA, FBI, and the Terrorist Research and Analytical Center, the exact definition of terrorism varies.² Even more, while conducting a study, Alex Schmid and A.J. Jongman were given 109 different definitions for terrorism after surveying a group of scholars and practitioners in the field.³

Considering the challenge of evaluating a subject that has many definitions, in some cases distinguishing between domestic and international terrorism, this essay operates under the definition presented by the FBI as noted in a 1983 report by the Department of Justice: “The unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a Government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.”⁴

HISTORY OF WOMEN IN TERRORISM

Acts of terrorism can be seen throughout history, but the issue has taken center stage in the years since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. With the renewed focus and research on the subject comes a deeper look at the role of women in terrorist organizations and activities around the world. When one hears the word ‘terrorist’ they may conjure an image in their mind that varies considerably depending on where they are from. For most, however, the image is likely to be that of a man. Women are often overlooked even though they have consistently played roles in terrorism dating back to the late 1800s when Vera Zasulich attempted to assassinate the Governor General of St. Petersburg.⁵ Media outlets and policymakers alike seem to react differently to women’s involvement in terrorism, “making it look as if it is a recent phenomenon when history actually shows that women involvement had been from inception.”⁶

In discussing the history of women in terrorism, Bloom notes that “female terrorists came from all parts of the globe and from all walks of life; Italy’s Red Brigades, Germany’s Baader-Meinhof group, the Black Panthers, the Weathermen, and the Japanese Red Army.”⁷ Further, Agara mentions the active participation of women

1. Margaret Gonzalez-Perez, “Women Terrorists,” *Women’s Rights Law Reporter* 31, no. Issues 2 and 3 (Winter/Spring 2010): 286-298.

2. Ibid.

3. Laura Sjoberg and Caron Gentry, *Women, Gender, and Terrorism* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011).

4. Corporate Author US Dept of Justice Address Washington, “FBI Analysis of Terrorist Incidents in the United States, 1983,” *FBI Analysis of Terrorist Incidents in the United States, 1983* | Office of Justice Programs, accessed April 18, 2022, <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/fbi-analysis-terrorist-incidents-united-states-1983>.

5. Alisa O’Connor, 2007, “Picked Last Women and Terrorism.” *JFQ: Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 44 (Winter): 95–100.

6. Tunde Agara, “Gendering Terrorism: Women, Gender, Terrorism and Suicide Bombers.” *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 1, 5, no. 6 (June 2015): p. 115.

7. Mia Bloom, “Bombshells: Women and Terror.” *Gender Issues* 28, no. 1-2 (2011): 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12147-011-9098-z>.

in groups including the Chechen Resistance Movement, Hamas, Zapatistas, the Taliban, and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia.⁸ Women have been active in nearly every terrorist group in existence and should therefore have their participation in such groups analyzed equally along with their male counterparts.

Research is showing that increasing numbers of women are joining terrorist groups and taking active roles.⁹ Scholars are focusing more of their research on the women in these groups which will be beneficial for both counterterrorism policies and dispelling the myth that women in terrorism are a rare occurrence.

WHY WOMEN JOIN TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS

Scholars who study women's involvement in terrorism all seem intent on isolating and pinpointing the answer to why women join terrorist organizations and/or become suicide bombers. Women join for many of the same reasons that men do, including ideological or political commitment, religious views, and social ties.¹⁰ There are also circumstances that drive a woman to want to engage in terrorism including avenging the loss of a husband or other loved one, access to resources, safety from rape or other physical harm, coercion, and in some cases, making amends for what is culturally considered a moral blemish resulting from sexual activity outside of marriage.¹¹

Although it is understandable that scholars would want to know why women engage in terrorist activities, questioning their mere presence and participation, in many cases, deprive the women of their agency and further gender stereotypes.¹² In her study, Jessica Auchter argues that "the idea that terrorism can be naturally linked with men, that it is just another example of the patriarchal structure of violence which victimizes women, leaves out part of the story, or perhaps gets the story altogether wrong."¹³ This correctly calls out the recklessness and absurdity of linking terrorism to only, or even mostly, men.

WOMEN'S ROLES IN TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS

Women's participation in terrorist activities include involvement at all levels. Most often, women held roles that were largely supportive in nature, keeping with their traditional gender roles.¹⁴ These roles included bearing children that would represent the next generation of their cause, maintaining the home and other domestic affairs, and caring for and comforting the male fighters. Additionally, women often served as couriers as they were easily able to conceal messages in their clothing, groceries, or baby

8. Tunde Agara, "Gendering Terrorism: Women, Gender, Terrorism and Suicide Bombers." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 1, 5, no. 6 (June 2015): p. 115-25.

9. Anat Berko and Edna Erez, "Gender, Palestinian Women, and Terrorism: Women's Liberation or Oppression?" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no. 6 (2007): 493-519. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100701329550>.

10. Jamille Bigio and Rachel Vogelstein. "Women and Terrorism: Hidden Threats, Forgotten Partners." Council on Foreign Relations, 2019. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep21428>.

11. Mia Bloom, "Bombshells: Women and Terror." *Gender Issues* 28, no. 1-2 (2011): 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12147-011-9098-z>; Gabrielle Centeno, "The Female Jihadi: Women in Terrorism Today". ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2018.; Edna Erez and Kathy Laster, "Palestinian Women in Terrorism: A Double-Edged Sword?," *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 64, no. 5 (2019): pp. 443-469, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624x19862429>.

12. Laura Sjoberg and Caron Gentry, *Women, Gender, and Terrorism* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011).

13. Jessica Auchter, "Gendering Terror." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 14, no. 1 (2012): p.125, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2011.619780>.

14. Rebecca S Cruise, "Enough with the Stereotypes: Representations of Women in Terrorist Organizations*." *Social Science Quarterly* 97, no. 1 (2016): 33-43. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12250>.

carriages.¹⁵ However, there has been a marked increase in women taking on more of the violent roles in terrorist organizations, including those of suicide bombers.

According to Bloom, the first “official” female suicide bomber was Sana’a Mehaydali of the Syrian Socialist National Party who “blew herself up near an Israeli convoy in Lebanon in 1985.”¹⁶ Furthermore, Bloom says that “between 1985 and 2010, female bombers committed over 257 suicide attacks (representing about a quarter of the total) on behalf of many different terrorist organizations. The percentage of women since 2002 in some countries exceeds as much as fifty percent of the operatives.”¹⁷ Women are increasingly being used in combative roles as they are more easily able to penetrate targeted areas and bypass security measures at border crossings and other checkpoints.¹⁸

Women also hold leadership roles in many organizations, especially in recruitment. ISIS has focused its efforts on using women to recruit even more women using the internet and social media. According to Huey, L., et al., “Recruiters provide emotional, informational, and logistical support to women who are interested in or preparing to migrate to ISIS-held territory.”¹⁹ Many of these women will go on to join the ranks of ISIS fulfilling duties ranging from wife and mother to violent armed fighter. While most groups still relegate women to stereotypical gender-conforming roles, other organizations such as the German Baader-Meinhof and the Japanese Red Army were founded by and led by women.²⁰ Even more, women assumed leadership roles in the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia, among many others.²¹

WHY WOMEN ARE LEFT OUT OF THE CONVERSATION

The media and the greater population alike continue to be shocked, surprised, or confused when reports surface about a woman’s involvement in a terrorist act. Heinous crimes committed at the hands of women seem to defy logic. It doesn’t defy logic, though. It defies our rigid assumptions about gender roles and expectations. This is the assumption that scholars Laura Sjoberg and Caron Gentry confront in much of their research: that “women are rarely, if ever, involved in terrorism.”²² They correctly argue that “this primary assumption leads to the problematic notion that when women are politically violent, they are not, somehow, fully responsible for it.”²³ While there is no doubt that plenty of research points to women being coerced into acts of terrorism, there is another side to that coin.²⁴

15. Ibid.

16. Bloom, “Bombshells,” 33.

17. Bloom, “Bombshells,” 2.

18. Ibid.

19. Laura Huey, Rachel Inch, and Hillary Peladeau, “@ Me If You Need Shoutout’: Exploring Women’s Roles in Islamic State Twitter Networks.” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 42, no. 5 (2017): p. 454, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610x.2017.1393897>.

20. Sofia Patel and Jacqueline Westermann, “Women and Islamic-State Terrorism: An Assessment of How Gender Perspectives Are Integrated in Countering Violent Extremism Policy and Practices.” *Security Challenges* 14, no. 2 (2018): 53–83. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26558022>.

21. Ibid.

22. Caron E. Gentry and Laura Sjoberg, *Beyond Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Thinking about Women’s Violence in Global Politics* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 2015), p. 23.

23. Ibid., 23.

24. Agara, “Gendering Terrorism: Women, Gender, Terrorism and Suicide Bombers”; Bloom, “Bombshells”; Centeno, “The Female Jihadi”; Ness, “In the Name of the Cause”.

Women are disproportionately impacted by war, and this often causes us to want to ignore the fact that women are also contributing to the fighting. “While some argue that they are participating in increasing numbers, there is also evidence that this is not so much a trend as an unseen long-term reality.”²⁵ More importantly, Agara notes that “female terrorists and suicide bombers abuse societal sensibilities and interrupts stereotypical perceptions of women as pure, innocent and nonviolent.”²⁶ When women commit these violent acts, the media has a knee-jerk reaction to deny women their agency and place blame on a husband, boyfriend, or other man who must certainly have been responsible for the actions of the woman.²⁷ None of this should be implied as negating the horrible acts committed by male terrorists, but to simply acknowledge that assuming a man is behind every act of violence denies the fact that women are equally capable of making decisions based on their own sincerely held beliefs. If governments, policymakers, and counterterrorism experts want to be successful in their deterrence efforts, they must suspend the gender biases that cloud their judgment and realize that terrorism is not just a man’s domain.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Acts of terrorism have directly or indirectly affected nearly every person on earth. That is, in our globalized world, if one has not been a victim of terrorism themselves, they certainly have knowledge of terrorist activities that have occurred in their own countries and abroad or live in a part of the world where terrorist activity is frequent. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, which killed 2,996 people, ushered in an era of increased awareness surrounding these atrocities not only in the United States, but on a global scale. To be sure, terrorist activity around the world certainly preceded the attacks of 9/11 by many decades, but media attention became much more focused on the broader issue of terrorism after these attacks. Notable in many cases of terrorist activity, including the 9/11 attacks, is the dearth of women involvement. Normative ideals surrounding gender roles have lulled much of the world into a false sense of security and an almost instinctual rejection of the notion of female terrorists.

However, as Gentry & Sjoberg note, “Whether they are organizing attacks, leading insurgent groups, perpetrating martyrdom, engaging in sexual violence, committing war crimes, hijacking airplanes, or abusing prisoners, women can be found among the ranks of insurgent, rebel, terrorist and illicit economic groups across the world.”²⁸ When women are involved in terrorist activities, and certainly when they are the ones strapping on the suicide vests or pulling the triggers, it draws a deeper shock value and level of surprise than would be present for the same act of violence done by a man. The media, and ultimately the public, struggle with the idea of women—thought to be protective, motherly, docile beings—committing horrific acts of terrorism. They question the motivations behind such crimes and wonder how a woman could be capable of such atrocities.

This essay highlights the claims put forth by scholars Sjoberg & Gentry and Auchter that women’s motivations for committing acts of terrorism are not mutually exclusive from those of men, and that by denying women’s agency and perceiving them

25. Gentry and Sjoberg, “Beyond Mothers, Monsters, Whores,” 1.

26. Agara, “Gendering Terrorism: Women, Gender, Terrorism and Suicide Bombers,” 118.

27. *Ibid.*, 118.

28. Gentry and Sjoberg, “Beyond Mothers, Monsters, Whores,” 2.

solely as victims, global security is placed further at risk.²⁹ The Kurdistan Workers' Party show that while there are, of course, women who are coerced or forced into a terrorist organization or into committing violence, there are many women who join with conscious volition and whose reasons and justifications for involvement in most instances simply do not differ significantly from the motivations of male terrorist combatants. Ideological views, opportunity, and liberty are not sought by men alone, and this case study will show how the women of the PKK are equally prepared to take up arms in a fight for their beliefs and their lives.

Defining terrorism, as previously discussed in the literature review, presents a challenge for researchers simply due to the vast number of definitions used for the term. There are a few specifics, however, that seem to have gained concurrence in most of the definitions. Terrorism has both domestic and international components, is used as a weapon directed at civilians, and is intended to cause fear and impose psychological harm on innocent people all to enact some sort of political goal or policy change.³⁰ The FBI's definitions of terrorism as noted by the Department of Justice, does not specifically differentiate between domestic and international terrorism, and is a solid definition that fairly encompasses all aspects this paper intends to address: "The unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives."³¹ It should also be noted that it is understood that gender is a social construct, while respecting that all men or all women do not share the same feelings, experiences, or expectations. Nor will this paper claim that there are only two biological sexes from which we can draw conclusions about participation in terrorism. It is, in fact, the social constructs of gender and the subsequent expectations for males to be "masculine" or to do things that are "masculine," and for females to be "feminine" or to do things that are "feminine" that this paper questions.

To support my argument, I will examine the case of a terrorist organization, the Kurdistan Worker's Party, where women were specifically involved in the commission of violent acts against others that resulted in injury or death. I will establish their reasons and motivations for joining the organization, and why they chose to become active, rather than passive participants. I am approaching the case study in this way to distinguish between "supportive" and "combatant" positions within an organization to create a level basis of comparison against that of male combatant terrorists. Exploring this case will help to dispel any preconceived notions regarding women's involvement in terrorism by granting them proper agency, and therefore responsibility for the acts they commit. The case study will look at the history, influence, and power of women in the Kurdistan Workers' Party. Holding women's liberation as a core pillar of its foundation, this group is well-suited for examination in this paper.

29. Sjoberg and Gentry, "Women, Gender, and Terrorism"; Auchter, "Gendering Terror".

30. Sjoberg and Gentry, "Women, Gender, and Terrorism"; Lavina, "Women in Terrorism".

31. Corporate Author US Dept of Justice Address Washington, "FBI Analysis of Terrorist Incidents in the United States," 3.

CASE STUDY: WOMEN OF THE PKK

The Kurdistan Workers' Party, or the Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan, the PKK was founded in 1978 by Abdullah Ocalan "in response to oppressive measures imposed by the Turkish state aimed at accelerating the cultural assimilation of the Kurds in Turkey."³² The PKK is designated as a terrorist organization by the United States, the European Union, the United Kingdom, NATO, and others. This distinction is not shared by all and there is ongoing debate as to whether the group should be labeled as such or not. The United Nations and countries including China, Russia, and Switzerland have not followed suit in designating the PKK as a terrorist group.³³ Despite the disagreements, the PKK makes an excellent case study due to the high percentage of women that make up its ranks, the pro-women ideology of the group, and the violent acts committed by women in the group. Furthermore, as noted by Haner et al., "it is important to investigate the role of women in the PKK in order to better understand how women fit into nontraditional military-like organizations that cause serious problems for traditional states and societies."³⁴

Since 1978 the PKK has fought for an independent Kurdistan, and more recently for Kurdish autonomy within Turkey.³⁵ Its founder, Abdullah Ocalan, held Marxist-Leninist political views, and recruits were trained in the teachings of Mao and other revolutionaries.³⁶ Central to Ocalan's ideology was women's liberation, partially because of what he learned from Marx and Mao, but also through his experiences growing up in a patriarchal society that subjugated, and often abused women.³⁷ When Ocalan was a teenager, his beloved sister was sold into a forced marriage. This experience became an influential factor in his developing ideology.³⁸ In his book, 'Liberating Life: Women's Revolution' Ocalan says, "The extent to which society can be thoroughly transformed is determined by the extent of the transformation attained by women."³⁹ Haner et al. explain that "Apo (Ocalan) integrated these ideas from Marx and Mao and challenged the existing social hierarchies that restricted women's freedom by applying gender-inclusive policies to end discrimination against the women—such as assigning women into positions of authority and leadership, establishing women's own military units, assigning men into auxiliary roles while women were recruited into positions that were traditionally assumed by males, prohibiting domestic and sexual violence, and banning forced marriage."⁴⁰ Further, Haner et al. note that "the group's message of gender equality, justice, and egalitarianism resonated among thousands of men and women who were frustrated with the status quo of the tribal authorities and patriarchal hegemony in Kurdish society."⁴¹

32. Murat Haner, Francis T. Cullen, and Michael L. Benson, "Women and the PKK: Ideology, Gender, and Terrorism." *International Criminal Justice Review* 30, no. 3 (2019): 282. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1057567719826632>.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Ibid.*, 282.

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.*

37. Aliza Marcus, *Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence*. New York: NYU Press, 2007.

38. *Ibid.*

39. Abdullah Ocalan, *Liberating life: Women's revolution*. Cologne, Germany: International Initiative Edition and Mesopotamian Publishers, Neuss, 2013: p. 57.

40. Murat Haner, Francis T. Cullen, and Michael L. Benson, "Women and the PKK: Ideology, Gender, and Terrorism." *International Criminal Justice Review* 30, no. 3 (2019): 286. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1057567719826632>.

41. *Ibid.*, 282.

The precise number of women in the PKK is unknown, however, estimates place the figure to be around 40-50% of the total cadre of ~5000.⁴² As noted above, women are effectively treated the same as their male counterparts. They are allocated positions of authority and leadership and take an active role in the group's operations, including activity labeled as terrorism. While this drastic change in cultural gender norms certainly required some acclimation by the men in the group, Haner et al. assert that "The high importance given by the PKK leadership to fostering gender equality and the greater socialization and interaction between men and women eventually changed the beliefs (stereotypes) of PKK men about women's ability to participate in nontraditional roles and increased their willingness to accept female militants as their equals in carrying out tasks and duties and filling positions of responsibility and authority. Respect for women increased as they became more active in important missions such as raids, attacks, and ambushes."⁴³

The attacks perpetrated by the women and men of the PKK have led to the deaths of an estimated 30,000-40,000 people since 1984.⁴⁴ Even more, since July 15, 2015, International Crisis Group claims that the PKK is responsible for the deaths of 593 civilian non-combatants, 1,322 Turkish state security forces, and 226 other individuals whose affiliation is unknown. Methods of attack used by the group include urban snipers, car bombs, bombing of public areas, IEDs, rocket-propelled grenades, and others.⁴⁵ While numerous civilians have been killed in PKK attacks, Haner et al. note that "the primary targets of the PKK have been the police, gendarmerie, military, and village guards (teachers have been occasionally targeted, as well). With a few exceptions, the group has continued to follow a policy of limited war-targeting only members of Turkish security forces as a means of retaliation."⁴⁶ Suicide bombings are also a method of attack used by the PKK. In fact, the first such bombing used by the group was on June 29, 1996, when Zeynep Kinaci blew herself up, along with ten Turkish soldiers who were singing the national anthem, with a bomb she had strapped to herself.⁴⁷ In a letter left behind, Kinaci says of her plans:

I see myself as a candidate for a voluntary death. I willingly concede that to give our lives is, from the standpoint of your unending and tireless work for our liberation, not enough. I hope to be able to contribute much more than my life ... I want to be part of the total expression of the liberation struggle of our people. By exploding a bomb against my body, I want to protest against the policies of imperialism which enslave women and express my rage and become a symbol of resistance of Kurdish women.⁴⁸

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid., 287.

44. Berkay Mandiraci, "Turkey's PKK Conflict: The Death Toll." Crisis Group, July 26, 2016. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/turkey/turkey-s-pkk-conflict-death-toll>.

45. "Turkey's PKK Conflict: A Visual Explainer," Crisis Group, March 21, 2022, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/content/turkeys-pkk-conflict-visual-explainer>.

46. Murat Haner, Francis T. Cullen, and Michael L. Benson, "Women and the PKK: Ideology, Gender, and Terrorism." *International Criminal Justice Review* 30, no. 3 (2019): 282. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1057567719826632>.

47. Ali Kemal Ozcan, "The Nature and Resource Field of the Kurdish Resistance in Turkey: A Dormant Resource." *Middle Eastern studies* 41, no. 3 (2005): 391-406. DOI: 10.1080/00263200500106024.

48. Murat Haner, Francis T. Cullen, and Michael L. Benson, "Women and the PKK: Ideology, Gender, and Terrorism." *International Criminal Justice Review* 30, no. 3 (2019): 282. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1057567719826632>.

Kinaci's letter underscored the true dedication of the women in the PKK whose ideals and actions came together, upending the prior assumptions of gender roles and further blurring the lines of gender constructs. Zeynep Kinaci's act was an encouragement to other women, not just in the PKK, but other Kurdish women who were now further motivated by what they saw as martyrdom for their cause and thus inspired to join. Haner et al. argue that because Kurdish women suffer as a minority in Turkey as well as women in a culturally patriarchal society, "they have historically experienced dual oppression."⁴⁹ The PKK, however, has made strides in changing the face of Kurdish society by offering women limited emancipation, educational opportunities, and a way of life that would be otherwise unattainable. In fact, the PKK implemented laws that banned polygamy and domestic violence and denied public services to men who violated these laws.⁵⁰ According to a former PKK member interviewed in Haner's study, "women's equality is an integral part of the overall ideology of equality that pervades the social structure of the PKK."⁵¹

The desire to join the PKK isn't solely about gender equality. Kurdish women and men have a strong sense of nationalism- pride in their people, culture, and identity. This culture has been under attack not just in Turkey, but in all areas where the Kurds have lived for centuries. Furthermore, Haner et al. say that "like their Kurdish brothers, Kurdish women may have multiple motives for joining the PKK, such as grief over the death of a loved one or pursuit of vengeance against the security forces or some other contributing factor."⁵² But mostly, Haner et al. argue, "women in the PKK have been willing to die...for their commitment to an ideological cause- for the freedom and gender equality that they swore to protect and defend."⁵³

CONCLUSION

Acts of terrorism claim the lives of tens of thousands of people each year and women's involvement in terrorism is neither new nor likely to subside. Scholars studying the issue have instead noted an increase in the participation of women in terrorist groups, including violent attacks like suicide bombings.⁵⁴ When women and men alike are held to the constraints of perceived gender roles, a disservice is done to both them and the people who can be affected by this flawed, unrealistic view. The women of the PKK are a prime example of how gender must not be ignored in the face of terrorism. Women's motivations for their involvement in terrorism do not differ drastically from those of men. While women's liberation is a noble cause, the lengths people will go to in accomplishing their objectives against an uncooperative government can have dire consequences for innocent people. The case of the PKK is simply one in a world that has many terrorist groups, and even individuals, who are willing to kill to further their interests- and many of these groups have loyal women participants in their ranks. When we acknowledge the fact that perceived gender roles are not a good guide for future behavior and we grant women proper agency, we can move forward with our eyes open towards a more peaceful future.

49. Ibid., 288.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid., 296.

52. Ibid., 289.

53. Ibid., 292.

54. Bloom, "Bombsbells."

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Patriarchy and War Coverage: A Critical Analysis of Gender Bias in Photojournalists' Documentation of Conflict and Crisis

KELSEY BOATWRIGHT

ABSTRACT

Photography is often the “hook” that seeks to attract individuals to the witness and interpret critical current events that may otherwise be impossible to see. Photography, or visual media, allows one to capture a moment in time and save it for the rest of the world to see. This research analyzes visual media within the field of journalism, given its prominent role in the communication and portrayal of conflicts and crises. Much research has analyzed the content and subject matter of documentation, but there is an analysis gap in the influence of the communicator behind the lens. This essay explores gendered influences on photojournalism in international conflict and crises. While journalism has historically aspired to objectivity, there are questions about the impact of social structures. Through a collection of published photographic work, the aim of this article is to introduce the reader to the lack of diversity in gender representation in photojournalism, and its relevance to storytelling in the documentation of media. Further research is needed to determine the potential effects of gender on subject matter selection within visual-storytelling and its effects on societal perceptions.

INTRODUCTION

Since its inception, photojournalism has carried a larger gender bias among those whose job it is to capture international events and bring back visual documentation to their home countries, or sell to others, for publication and distribution. The gender gap in many professional roles has been on the decline, yet photojournalism is one profession that continues to be dominated by men.¹ Global findings show that women constitute just one third of full-time journalists of the 522 media companies examined in a recent study.² Since women comprise just one third of all journalists, if there is not equitable representation of professionals behind the camera, and now virtual newsrooms, it affects the representation of what comes to be the visual subject matter that citizens see as coverage of specific conflicts and crises.

Navigating the research towards specific issues within the field of media, and

1. Blau, F. D., & Kahn, L. M. The Gender Wage Gap: Extent, Trends, and Explanations. *Journal of Economic Literature*, (2017) 55(3), 789-865.

2. “Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media.” International Women’s Media Foundation (2011).

analyzing how gender bias in a patriarchal society affects media depictions of conflicts and crises around the globe, are the objectives of this analysis. In this article, various perspectives are analyzed that provide insight to the debate over objectivity within journalism under a critical feminist analysis. Several have concluded that continuous gender bias prevails in the postmodern era.³ This analysis seeks to use previous examinations and identify parallels that have argued that true objectivity is essentially unattainable. Ultimately, this research analyzes the established current biases to discover how patriarchy affects the documentation processes of photojournalism.

Sarah Pink, in her Oxford University press publication *Framed by Gender: How Gender Inequality Persists in the Modern World*, raises the question of “who” should be responsible for representation in visual documentation.⁴ *The Global Report* publication displays that in reference to photojournalism, these decisions are presently predominately made by men.⁵ The social constructions of gender have effects on what one deems as important or relevant in daily life and the material informed by the photography covering an event. As subjectivity is inescapable and dominating systems of oppression (as bell hooks coined ‘patriarchy’ to be) have greater impact to the production of knowledge, this essay analyzes how patriarchy affects photojournalists of all genders and constructs the visual media that plays critical political and social roles within society.⁶

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the 2020 data collected by *Women Photograph*, six out of eight major media publications reported less than 25% of their bylines to have been published by females.⁷ At the median rate in which their findings show that women and nonbinary photographers have been published on front page newspapers since 2017, it will be 2035 before true congruence is met between cisgender male photographers and all other genders. The average increase is a reportedly grim 1.7% a year.⁸ Such research indicates that there continues to be gender bias in journalism. While it is no secret that the majority of news photographs seen in publications, both across the web and in print, continue to be photographed by men, what’s often overlooked is how this affects the way that crises and conflicts are depicted and shared with the rest of society that continues to be patriarchally structured. Is objectivity plausible when the foundation and construction of the field is in itself biased? This literature review presents various studies that have analyzed continuous gender bias in journalism, specific challenges that female photojournalists face, and the debates over ‘objectivity’ within journalism to understand if, or how, gender affects photojournalists’ work.

3. Cecilia L. Ridgeway, *Framed by Gender: How Gender Inequality Persists in the Modern World*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2011; Marisol Da Silva, “Valuing Subjectivity in Documentary Photography and the Media.” *Communication, Creativity and Global Citizenship: refereed proceedings of the Australian and New Zealand Communication Association Conference*, 2009; Billy Sarwono, “Gender Bias in a Patriarchal Society: A Media Analysis on Virginity and Reproductive Health.” *Wacana* Vol. 14:1(2012):37-60.

4. Sarah Pink, *Doing Visual Ethnography*, 2nd ed. London: Sage Publications, 2007.

5. “Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media.” (2011). International Women’s Media Foundation.

6. hooks, bell. (2004). “Understanding Patriarchy.” *Louisville Anarchist Federation Federation*; Cecilia L. Ridgeway, . (2011). *Framed by Gender: How Gender Inequality Persists in the Modern World*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press; Fitts, M. *Theorizing Transformative Revolutionary Action: The Contribution of bell hooks to Emancipatory Knowledge Production*. *The CLR James Journal*, 17(1), (2011) 112–132; Jack Lule, “News as myth; Daily news and eternal stories”, in: Eric W. Rothenbuhler and Mihai Coman (eds), *Media anthropology*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 2005) 101-110.

7. “Women Photograph Data,” *Women Photograph*. (2020-2022). Accessed February 28, 2022.

8. “Women Photograph Data.” *Women Photograph*. Accessed February 28, 2022.

"GIRL PROBLEMS"

In concern to the lack of research historically conducted on the specific challenges for female photojournalists, or "visual story-tellers," Adrian Hadland and Camilla Barnett provide a detailed analysis of what female professionals face in the field of journalism in comparison to their male counterparts.⁹ Their reported data represents discrepancies between the challenges that men and women photojournalists face, and starkly charts the realities for women in a male-dominated profession.

The results of one of these studies displays that women participants tended to shoot less of all genres of news, including entertainment (25% of males, 18% of females), the environment (30% of males, 19% of females) and nature (26% male, 17% female).⁹ Additionally, it was discovered that females were less often paid or compensated for the authorized use of their work (17% of females, 22% of males).¹⁰ Thus, "the data supports the view that the news industry, and photojournalism specifically, is structured in a way that makes it extremely difficult for women to thrive."¹¹ While pointing out specific challenges for women within the profession, these numbers simultaneously provide evidence of patriarchy within visual-storytelling and call attention to the topics that men are more likely to cover.

It is important to call attention to the fact that gender inequity is not confined to professions within media-related roles. Tony Tam, in their publication to the *American Journal of Sociology*, concludes that gender inequality across the labor market must be analyzed under the breadth of a multitude of influences.¹² Traditionally, two large questions have dominated the framework for research in this area through the last decades of the 20th century. This includes the question of why occupational gender segregation exists and what factors lead to a lower pay rate for female majority occupations. Their study further addresses the question of how occupational gender segregation draws on the concern of gender bias across occupations. The explanation presented by Tam is that gender discrepancies amongst photojournalists are the result of lower paying wages and lower-valued work for women.¹³

Publications used in Tam's research displayed women's earnings continue to be less than males in nearly all of the topmost common occupations for women, and for all of the top occupations for men in reported full-time earnings.¹⁴ This conclusion shows a larger gap when race is also analyzed, with wage gaps widening more profoundly between Caucasian males (who dominate a majority of the demographic for men) and Hispanic and Black women.¹⁵ It is evident that the experiences between male and female visual story-tellers continue to differ widely in various ways, though Tam's research struggles with a lack of insight towards how substantial this gender gap's effects in media representation truly is.

SUBJECTIVELY OBJECTIVE

9. Hadland & Campbell. "The Future of Professional Photojournalism." *Journalism Practice*, 10 (7) (2016): 820–832.

10. Ibid

11. Ibid

12. Tony Tam, "Sex Segregation and Occupational Gender Inequality in the United States: Devaluation or Specialized Training?" *American Journal of Sociology*, 102:6 (1997), 1652-1653.

13. Ibid

14. Tam, "Sex Segregation and Occupational Gender" *American Journal of Sociology*, 102:6 (1997), 1652-1653.

15. "Institute for Women's Policy Research: Informing Policy, Inspiring Change, Improving Lives." (2022). *Gender Wage Gaps Remain Wide in Year Two of the Pandemic*. Institute for Women's Policy Research, February 22, 2022.

While consistently disputed in the postmodern day, the field of journalism has long-time ascribed to one of its most-important ethics of “objectivity” to serve as the premise of objective reporting.¹⁶ In *The Burden of Visual Truth: The Role of Photojournalism in Mediating Reality*, author Julianne Newton gives an exploration into how photojournalism constructs the basis of reality for viewers through its continuous ‘truth-seeking’ approach of historical depiction.¹⁷ The historical transition of the move towards ‘objectivity’ developed in the mid-20th-century and was prompted by the profession of reporting, by the use of visual media, to become a form of human behavior. Notably referred to as a ‘walking paradox’ by Kaarle Nordenstreng, the so-called truth-seeking dogma for journalists is to both document ‘accuracy’ in the world while simultaneously setting aside one’s sense of personal morality.¹⁸ Journalists prevail to document their reality with a sense of ethical responsibility that does not compromise the journalist’s integrity or the moment’s historical accuracy.¹⁹ A greater parody lies in the idea that the photographer’s constructed sense of empathy with a subject is, in and of itself, what leads them to decide what is appropriate subject matter to be photographed. Ultimately, it is their biases that lead to what the photographer deems “news worthy.”²⁰

Thus, the question of ‘Is there a difference in ethics among genders, even within similar cultures?’ will assist us in understanding the lack of representation in the media. Nico Carpentier explains how various structures of identity influence the work of journalists, adding that these structural components are often related to “-hegemonic ambitions, as they are considered to be so crucial to the journalist’s identity that it is difficult to see beyond their taken-for-grantedness.”²¹ Gender, as a societal construction, then becomes one of the structures that create one’s identity, and the identity of any given journalist, even if the said journalist identifies as “gender-queer, “non-binary,” or any other preferred identification. Journalists and media organizations are not exempt from societal influences, and through their work, are influenced by the societal structures they wish to impact within any given sphere of time.

“BLAME THE PATRIARCHY”

Newton makes a connection regarding the power of photojournalists to influence public opinion on truth. Newton states, “These various, evolving bases of culture further confuse identification of the truth because it can be difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish a truth from those who disseminate it and those who ally with it.”²² Newton’s analysis correctly acknowledges the lack of attention towards professionals who have attempted to cover subjective work that is not generally chosen as front-page newsworthy, she advocates that, “almost drowned within media criticism have

16. Judith Lichtenberg, Defense of Objectivity Revisited. In: Curran, J. and Gurevich, M., Eds., *Mass Media and Society*, 3rd Edition. Oxford University Press, London, (2000), 238-254.

17. Julianne Hickerson Newton, *The Burden of Visual Truth: The Role of Photojournalism in Mediating Reality*. (Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc., 2012), 1-97.

18. Kaarle Nordenstreng, ‘The Journalist: A Walking Paradox’ in P. Lee (ed.), *The Democratization of Communication*. (Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1995), 114-129.

19. Ibid

20. John Berger, “The Ambiguity of The Photograph.” Blackwell Publishing Ltd, United Kingdom, 2002), 50.

21. Nico Carpentier, “Journalism, Media and Democracy.” *Reclaiming the media: Communication rights and democratic media roles* 3 (2007): 151-152.

22. Julianne H. Newton, *The Burden of Visual Truth: The Role of Photojournalism in Mediating Reality*. Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc., 2012, 1-97.

been the voices of those professionals whose appreciation of the subjective nature of observation and reportage has led to [a] more sensitive and sophisticated practice of visual journalism."²³ Through this acknowledgement of a more 'sensitive and sophisticated' practice of photojournalism, the author could still provide more insight into how this fits into a society constructed from patriarchy and colonialism, and why these dominating systems of oppression would not allow for such a practice to become hegemonic by nature.

From my perspective, Newton's analysis of the role of photojournalism can be linked to the continuous gender crisis among the professionals who dominate the field, as that important attribute both greatly affects how 'reality' is depicted and, arguably, constructed. Additionally, it is important to not only look at what is shown in visual media, but also what is omitted. Newton uses visual perception theories to explain behaviors of photojournalists within human activity, and adds that critical theory, constructionism, and symbolic interactionism among others to provide potential 'useful' theories of analysis.

RESEARCH DESIGN: MEASUREMENTS

In this analysis, several individual case studies analyzed the subject matter of images across three 'hot' conflicts: The War in Iraq, The Syrian Civil War, and the Russia-Ukraine War. Using 59 images from a variety of sources, including *The New York Times*, *CNN*, *Fox News*, *NBC*, independent websites, *Associated Press* and stock Getty Images, with half featuring female photographers and/or non-binary genders. Further, the photographs were then categorized according to their subject matter. The content includes explosions and bombs, fatality and injury, children and family, soldiers and combat, home and community, and peace and humanitarian action. All empirical images collected span from years 2001-2022. When possible, photos were taken from popular articles or photographs that appeared on multiple media sites. Getty Images database is included as it serves as a large source for an array of media companies and can show the "most popular" licensed photographs by subject.

A variety of media companies and organizations were chosen to ensure that the data represents the differences and preferences of the general public. In addition, a variety of conflicts and crises were chosen across different time frames to ensure that any particular bias towards an event, or subject, is not the only form of reflection within the data. The intentions of this research are not to show any bias within one alleged type of media, but rather to present gender influences that come to create viewers' perceptions of conflicts and crises in more general terms, which then perpetuate through society.

DEFINITIONS

The term photojournalism refers to the practice of documentation through photographs, with a genre of images published or in other forms distributed with accompanying text.²⁴ Any reference to a "photograph" in this research should be considered within the scope of photojournalism. In addition, the term "visual media" is used at times to describe works of photojournalism and is used interchangeably. The purpose of this research is to analyze the potential correlation of patriarchy and journalists' creation of visual media. It is important to separate the term gender from the term sex, as the definition of gender in this research will be considered as socio-

23. Newton, *The Burden of Visual Truth*, 2012.

24. Newton, *The Burden of Visual Truth*, (2012) 7.

cultural, and refers to various responsibilities, roles, behavioral patterns, which may notably alter among different periods and cultures.²⁵ While this is not the preference of all, for the purpose of this paper any reference to the term female should be considered as the gender of “woman” and reference to the term male as the gender of “man.” Lastly, patriarchy, as described by Gerda Lerner means “the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general.”²⁶

CASE STUDY: THE WAR IN IRAQ

A CNN headline from 2003 read, “BAGHDAD, Iraq (CNN) -- The first wave of the Pentagon’s “shock and awe” bombing campaign hit the Iraqi capital Friday and the northern Iraq cities of Mosul and Kirkuk” next to a photograph of bombs lit in the Iraqi night sky.²⁷ It is difficult to imagine the initial 2003 United States invasion of Iraq beyond the photographs that depict the “shock and awe” firework show of missiles that the United States dropped in Iraq in the initial days of the war. The article’s ‘first wave’ references the 1,500 plus bombs and missiles dropped over Iraq within the first 24 hours of invasion.²⁸ Countless photographs ‘awed’ viewers as orange filled smoke billowed in the Iraqi night sky. The photos offer the eruption of war as nothing short of an effervescent glow and manage to provide an illumination over the enormity of the structural catastrophe of the initial invasion that spurred the seven plus year war.

The photographs and videos highlight the immense structural damage in Baghdad, but negate to bring to light the faces behind the scenes. It fails to show the vibration of the ground shattering, children woken up to the shrill and deep sounds of bombs and missiles, or the families that rushed to their basements for cover. Scenes that are unsurprisingly, simply difficult for photojournalists to capture for various logistical reasons, leaving those moments only a reality for those who experience them. While it may have brought shock, the photography by itself dehumanizes the first day of the War in Iraq, a war that would go on to kill over 4,000 American soldiers (in addition to the number of post-war suicides), and over 90,000 Iraqis, with its faceless clouds of smoke and fire.²⁹

As the war in Iraq continued, the proceeding milestones and claimed victories made front-page headlines. Countless photographs, similar to those which displayed the immediate explosions, circulated news outlets with different angles from the scene when U.S. Marines pulled down the statue of Saddam Hussein in the center of Baghdad in April, 2003 (Figure 03). In the pursuit of journalistic objectivity, it would seem probable that the fall of a thirty-year rule marked by the fall of a grand statue, would be “picture worthy.” Again, the popular photo marks a seemingly important event and depicts a sense of “destruction” and “defeat,” and offers some sense of antithetical conquest with the connection between U.S. soldiers and vast Iraqi civilians attending the removal of the statue of Hussein. The concept of *objectivity* from Random House Webster definition is the condition of “being not influenced by personal feelings or prejudice.” Julianne Newton states that while “-we can never hope to step completely

25. Sarwono, “Gender Bias in a Patriarchal Society: A Media Analysis on Virginity and Reproductive Health.” 2012.

26. Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*. United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 1986. 239.

27. Cable News Network, A day of sirens, bombs, smoke and fires, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/03/21/sprj.irq.aday/>, 2003. [Retrieved May 9, 2022].

28. Cable News Network, A day of sirens, 2003.

29. C.Tapp, F.M. Burkle, K. Wilson, “Iraq War Mortality Estimates: A Systematic Review.” *Conflict and Health* 2, 2008, 1.

out of any ideological or cultural boxes within which our minds have matured, there is value in the effort to do so.”³⁰ In moments such as the fall of a grand statue of a thirty-year dictator, the question of how one might detach from the waves of emotion and excitement that surrounds them must be asked. How do moments in time entrenched with emotions and feelings capture that moment, without the documenter themselves embodying such?

With references to previous similar studies, Marisol Da Silva claims in her case study of contemporary works on nuclear devastation that subjectivity and objectivity within visual media that such a pursuit of objectivity is improbable.³¹ Thus, providing insight for how subjectivity holds the potential to affect ‘documentary’ photography and how said work is positioned within the greater context of a global media culture. McLeods claims, however, that in the aftermath of 9/11, the general U.S. media inadequately depicted international security issues, as they ultimately failed to investigate the administration’s allegations of weapons of mass destruction program and al-Qaeda’s connections to the Iraqi government.³² This lack of thorough investigation, and acceptance and submission to reporting the claims of the administration, is argued to be “dysfunctional to conflict dynamics, leading to tragic consequences.” There are many political connotations and reasons for why many media companies did not perform certain investigations in the time leading into the Iraq War that go outside the scope of photography. What is critical is the point of a systemic lack of a gendered perspective to capture images that could have caused Americans to view their nation’s actions under a more critical lens.

PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN BY WOMEN

Of importance to note, a CNN visual media slideshow titled ‘100 moments from the Iraq War,’ had a gravely disproportionate number of photographs taken by men compared to that of women. Of the 100 photographs featured, which includes photographs sourced from Getty Images and other sources beyond CNN staff photographers, fewer than a dozen of the photographs displayed were taken by a woman.³³ The findings here coincide with the findings of this research, as it was extremely difficult to find photographs taken by women of the War in Iraq. For this article only one was represented that truly captures the perspective a woman can add towards the impacts of the consequences of conflicts.

For gender inequalities to persist, Ridgeway claims that there must be on-going social processes that reinforce the guidelines and conditions for inequalities in face of the constant legal, economic, and political efforts to dismantle said inequalities.³⁴ Ridgeway provides evidence to conclude the way people perceive the world ultimately explains the ways in which gender hierarchies recreate themselves.³⁵ In the images collected on the War in Iraq, the most photographed category for both men and women were “Soldiers/Combat,” as 14 images contain U.S. soldiers. Men were more likely to capture “Fatality/Injury” with 2 images taken by men, and 1 by a woman. Men were also more likely to capture “Peace/Humanitarian Action,” with 2 images

30. Newton, *The Burden of Visual Truth*, (2012) 7.

31. Da Silva, “Valuing Subjectivity in Documentary Photography and the Media,” 2009.

32. Douglas McLeod, “The Legacy of 9/11.” *Business Insurance* 40, no. 37 (2006): 1–.

33. Cable News Network. (2013, March 15). 100 moments from the Iraq War. CNN. Retrieved April 26, 2022.

34. Ridgeway, *Framed by Gender*, 2011.

35. *Ibid*

taken by men, and 0 by women. On the contrary, women were less likely to capture images with “Explosions/Bombs” (0 images) and more likely to capture both “Family/Children” (2 images taken by women, 1 by a man). Women were also more likely to capture “Home/Community” (2 images for women, and 0 by men). The War in Iraq is peculiar in comparison to the two other conflicts that will be studied, as the internet did not serve as the same source of media attraction as it has in the more present years. Print newspapers were still very common and may have had a greater impact on the type of photographs collected for publication and distribution. “Most popular” images currently in Getty Images, and photos that showed up multiple times in various slideshows that depict the “War in Iraq” today feature male photojournalists’ work, whereas photographs taken by women are featured in smaller blogs and less-trafficked articles.

CASE STUDY: SYRIAN CIVIL WAR

The following excerpt was taken from an article published September, 2016 on the AFP Correspondent Blog:

The men who today document the images of war-torn Syria for AFP came from all walks of pre-war life. Delil Souleiman was interested in art and sculpture, Abd Doumany was studying dentistry, Sameer al-Doumy was dreaming of being a doctor. Today, with their colleagues, they produce stunning, heartbreaking photographs of the destruction wreaked upon their home -- images of bloodied children, of piles of rubble that were once homes, of suffering and pain. These images have shown the outside world what war looks like, they have won them awards and recognition. But these aren't the images they treasure.³⁶

The website states that the purpose of the AFP blog is to take “readers behind the scenes at the global news agency Agence France-Presse.”³⁷ The photographs shown of Syria arguably hold true to this mission statement, and as described, the photographs show many up close and intimate looks into the lives of Syrian civilians. This lies in stark contrast to the visual media coverage of the War in Iraq across nearly every platform. In the collection process of the photographs of Syria, there continued to be a vastly larger number of photographs that depicted children, refugees, and communities in Syria compared to Iraq, even while the photographers are men.

Another large difference highlighted by the blog, is the number of local photographers that have covered the conflict that were native to Syria. The difference in locality and personal affiliation to the crisis may influence the decisions made by the photographers in their choice of subject-matter. Gair describes an “insider” to be a researcher centrally located in the group being researched, and an “outsider” to be outside of this group, based on common life experiences or status of the given group.³⁸ Gair explains that within the field of research generally, the practice of a researcher with insider perspectives has become more desirable in certain situations.³⁹

36. A. Doumany. Syria Shimmers of Hope. AFP Correspondent: 2016, September 30. Retrieved May 19, 2022, from <https://correspondent.afp.com/syria-shimmers-hope>.

37. AFP Correspondent. About. (2022, April 20). Retrieved May 19, 2022 from <https://correspondent.afp.com/about>.

38. S. Gair, Feeling Their Stories: Contemplating Empathy, Insider/Outsider Positionings, and Enriching Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 22(1) (2012), 134–143.

39. S. Gair, Feeling Their Stories: Contemplating Empathy, 134–143.

While the shift to insider research has become increasingly popular, there continues to be a large logistical factor for the local coverage of Syria. It became apparent that it was simply too dangerous to send in journalists to Syria as the number of journalists kidnapped and killed in the first years was utterly unprecedented. As a result, most documentation has been through the eyes of Syrian men. Publications continue to rely on local novice photographers on the ground, and 90 percent of them have been killed or have since managed to flee the country.⁴⁰ In a CNN slideshow titled "Syrian Civil War in 2014," 49 out of 85 photos used were taken by local male Syrian AFP photographers. Needless to say, the women, when their photography is available, present vastly different from the imagery than male photographers (Figure 25).⁴¹

The photographs taken in Syria have some overall differences from those in Iraq. There are many factors that must be given consideration in concern to the media coverage in Syria. First, the photographs were predominantly from local photojournalists. Pink states it necessary for an ethnographer to consider both local photographic norms and personal connotations, "and both economic and exchange values that photographs might have in any given research context."⁴² Given the fact that a large number of local journalists have been used, religious and cultural considerations should be noted, as the Syrian population is majority Muslim and some followers consider all photography to be haram (restricted by Islamic law). Taking explicit or vulgar photographs is generally prohibited in Islam. The war has also included a rise in radical Islamist organizations such as ISIS and other al-Qaeda affiliated groups, which may pose further dangers for women to engage in photography.

THE WAR IN UKRAINE

To diversify the research and expand outside of conflicts in the Middle East, Russia's invasion of Ukraine was chosen to include coverage of a European conflict. Since the start of the war, the media coverage has undergone an array of criticism for various reasons. "Many Western journalists, public figures, and news consumers are failing to apply their skepticism evenly," Ishmael N. Daro wrote for *The Nation*, regarding Ukraine coverage "remarkably free of controversy regarding potentially millions of refugees fleeing to safety in other countries, the right of civilians to engage in armed resistance, or the ethics of economic and cultural boycotts against states violating human rights."⁴³ After the analysis of two Middle East conflicts, we will take a look to see whether there is gender bias in coverage of a European conflict.

Throughout the conducted research, one woman's photographs continued to appear in every conflict, even on the border of Syria, this is longtime photojournalist Lynsey Addario. In an interview with the *New York Times*, Addario spoke of her experience as a woman photographer, and perhaps serendipitously began right before the War in Iraq:

Q: What about being a woman photographer? Is there any difference from 2000

40. H. Dlewati. "Fewer journalist deaths in Syria – because there aren't many left." Syria Deeply, 2016, September 21. Retrieved May 21, 2022 from <https://deeply.thenewhumanitarian.org/syria/community/2016/08/31/fewer-journalist-deaths-in-syria-because-there-arent-many-left>.

41. Carole Alfarah. Photograph, [Five-year-old Aya (right, in a wheelchair) was hit by a mortar while she was heading home from school] UNOCHA via Al Jazeera, 2013, December. Retrieved from, <https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/2021/syria-10-years-by-syrian-photographers/index.html>.

42. Pink, *Doing Visual Ethnography*, 44.

43. Ishmael N. Daro, "Media Malpractice and Information War in Ukraine." *The Nation*, March 2, 2022. <https://www.thenation.com/article/world/information-war-media-ukraine/>.

to today?

A: Unfortunately I don't think there is a huge difference. There are not many more women working on the front line now than there were when I first started. I always assumed that would have changed, but I don't really see that."

Q: There's a half of the world that men can't really photograph in some countries.

A: Exactly. And if they can photograph them, then the access is going to be very uncomfortable and a lot more restricted.

Q: Plus they can't talk about being a mother, which you can.

A: Right, and they love that.⁴⁴

If anyone knows what the "frontline" of war photography has looked like for the past twenty plus years, it is Addario. The second question of the interview alludes to a very pertinent observation, many parts of the world remain a mystic because male journalists lack access. Given Western bias toward journalism and free speech, it is possible many people may not wish their stories be published, especially through a colonial minded lens. Arguably, given the current situation, it is not even possible.

In the Ukraine case study photographs, it can be seen there remains a male domination of photojournalists within the European coverage. In total, 5 men photographed "soldiers/combat" compared to 1 woman; 1 man photographed "explosions/bombs" compared to 0 women; 4 men photographed "fatality/injury" compared to 1 woman; 1 man photographed "family/children" compared to 3 women; 3 men photographed "home/community" and 0 women; 0 men photographed "peace/humanitarian action" and 1 woman based off the Getty images popularity and relevance criteria. Men were less likely to photograph family and children compared to in Syria, but about the same as in Iraq, and were less likely to photograph explosions and bombs in both Syria and Ukraine than in Iraq. Therefore, the research does not show a strong difference between Eastern and Western coverages, but a stronger difference between insider versus outsider coverage and between more recent and older conflicts.

CONCLUSION

Past research has characterized the effects of gender bias in media and its consequences. To build upon the continuous research that has found differences between the portrayal of men and women within the media, Armstrong found that male photojournalists were more advantageous than females in newspaper stories.⁴⁵ The study was able to isolate the layers of influence within gender representations in newspapers and found that the gender of the storyteller impacted representations of gender within the stories. Additionally, the research sought to expand upon past research on gender bias across occupations, gender bias in the media, the power of visual media on society,

44. J. Estrin. Lynsey Addario: An unexpected retrospective. *The New York Times*, 2018. Retrieved May 21, 2022, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/23/lens/lynsey-addario-an-unexpected-retrospective.html>.

45. Cory L. Armstrong, "The Influence of Reporter Gender on Source Selection in Newspaper Stories." *Journalism & mass communication quarterly* 81, no. 1 (2004): 139-154.

and analyze whether the gender of photojournalists may influence representations of conflict and crisis.

Initially, the parameters of this research expected there to be an equal number of photographs to use for comparison. Upon the collection process, an equal number of photographs could not be found for the three case studies. Without such, it is difficult to draw dependable conclusions. Nonetheless, there continues to be a large discrepancy between the quantity of women and men photojournalists in the field, and the findings are even more narrow if race is considered. However, the findings for this analysis have been able to highlight the relevance of gender as a means of representation in media. Understanding the different types of emotions or portrayals of strength and power within the images allow viewers to examine subtleties of patriarchy.

Overall, it is critical to understand the influence of the gender of the photojournalist and how their work is represented in media. It is essential to diversify and be aware that this patriarchal profession does affect a wider audience on how current events are perceived. If the perspectives of those providing the media images are not diversified, then there is a danger that the full story will not be told. This article prioritized conflict and crises as its primary focus of examination. However, overall, the field of visual media lacks multi-gender representation. Only through an increase in characterization of women and non-binary story-tellers in photojournalism, may a more diverse and accurate array of perspectives be shown of this diverse world.

APPENDIX LIST OF IMAGES

List of photographs used to collect information. Usage of images is strictly limited to educational classroom purposes; therefore images have been removed for publication purposes.

War In Iraq

Figure 01. Mike Moore, *Smoke and flames rise. From article Iraq, the war that won't go away, March 2003, CNN via Getty Images. Article published 2015, May 25.* Retrieved May 13, 2022, from <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/05/24/opinions/zelizer-iraq-wont-go-away/index.html>

Figure 02. Hicks, Tyler. (2003, March). *The Air Show.* The New York Times. Retrieved April 22, 2022, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/16/weekinreview/16jburns.html>

Figure 03. Tomasevic, Goran. (2003, April 09). *Timeline of major events in the Iraq War.* [U.S. troops pull down a statue of Saddam Hussein in central Baghdad] Reuters via The New York Times. Retrieved May 13, 2022, from https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/08/31/world/middleeast/20100831-Iraq-Timeline.html?ref=middleeast##time111_3262

Figure 04. Turnley, David. (2003). *Sights & Sounds/Uncertain freedom.* CNN. "Special Report: War in Iraq." Retrieved April 13, 2022, from <https://edition.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2003/iraq/interactive/hard.times/index.html>

Figure 05. Feferberg, Eric. (2003, March 20). [U.S. Marines in northern Kuwait gear up after receiving orders to cross the Iraqi border] AFP/Getty Images via CNN. Retrieved April 14, 2022

Figure 06. Hondros, Chris. (2003). *U.S. Military Searches Al Kut For Weapons.* Getty Images. April 16, 2003. Retrieved April 14, 2022.

Figure 07. Gilbertson, Ashley. (2004). [Members of the First Marine Division take up positions to begin the battle]. The New York Times. Retrieved April 26, 2022, from https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/08/31/world/middleeast/20100831-Iraq-Timeline.html?ref##time111_3271

Figure 08. Alleruzzo, Maya. (2007 February). [American troops walking in Baghdad]. Associated Press. Retrieved April 26, 2022, from The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/16/weekinreview/16jburns.html>

Figure 09. Addario, Lynsey. (2004). [Relatives of Salman Nama Naser, 63, mourning his death at their home in Sadr City, Iraq, in 2004]. The New York Times. Retrieved April 26, 2022 from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/23/lens/lynsey-addario-an-unexpected-retrospective.html>

Figure 10. Fremson, Ruth. (2003). *An Iraqi woman grieves.* The New York Times. Retrieved, from <http://www.pwponline.org/blog/tag/ruth-fremson/>

Figure 11. Cole, Carolyn. (2003, April 10). *Tragic Homecoming.* The Los Angeles Times. Retrieved May 05, 2022 from NBC, <https://www.nbcnews.com/slideshow/news/iconic-images-from-the-war-in-iraq-38887505>

Figure 12. Silico, Tami. (2004, April 09) *Coming Home.* Zuma Press. Retrieved May 05, 2022 from NBC, <https://www.nbcnews.com/slideshow/news/iconic-images-from-the-war-in-iraq-38887505>

Figure 13. Addario, Lynsey. (2005, May 05). *War In Iraq 2003-2004.* Image ID: 20030522_Iraq_047. Baghdad, Iraq. Getty Images.

Figure 14. Hondros, Chris. (2008, May 05). *US Troops Treat Iraqi Man Shot As He Fled From a Patrol.* Baghdad, Iraq. Getty Images.

Figure 15. Mills, Jon. (2003, March 21). The Associated Press. Retrieved May 5, 2022, from Fox News, <https://www.foxnews.com/world/key-findings-of-uks-inquiry-into-iraq-war>

Figure 16. Nickelsberg, Robert. (2003, April 8). *U.S. Marines Close In On Baghdad.* Image ID: 2087958RN001_compound. Getty Images.

Figure 17. Peterson, Scott. (2004). "100 moments from the Iraq War" photo slideshow, CNN via Getty Images, November 23, 2004. Retrieved April 14, 2022 from <https://edition.cnn.com/2013/03/15/world/gallery/iraq-war/index.html>

Figure 18. Sagolj, Damir. (2003, March 29). *A U.S. marine doctor holds an Iraqi girl in central Iraq.* Reuters image X90027. Retrieved May 05, 2022 from NBC, <https://www.nbcnews.com/slideshow/news/iconic-images-from-the-war-in-iraq-38887505>

Figure 19. Tama, Mario. (2003, March 27). *Oil Fires Burn In Iraq.* Rumayla, Iraq. Image ID: 1880668MT003_oilfire, Getty Images.

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Syrian Civil War

Figure 20. Eassa, Abdulmonam. (2018, March 24). [A Syrian woman and child walk down a destroyed street in Arbin, on the outskirts of capital Damascus, Syria.] Agence France-Presse via Getty Images.

Figure 21. Abazeed, Mohamad. (2017, August 29). "Syrian refugees carry belongings as they return to Syria after crossing the Jordanian border near the town of Nasib, in the southern province of Daraa, on August 29, 2017." Agence France-Presse via Getty Images. <http://www.gettyimages.com/detail/840626054>

Figure 22. Mohamed, Hasan. (2018, January 22). [A Syrian boy holds an oxygen mask over the face of an infant at a make-shift hospital following a reported gas attack on the rebel-held besieged town of Douma in the eastern Ghouta region on the outskirts of the capital Damascus] Agence France-Presse via Getty Images. <http://www.gettyimages.com/detail/908733668>

Figure 23. Sarouq, Mustafa al. (2016, August 18). *Little Boy in Aleppo a Vivid Reminder of War's Horror*. Article written by Narayan, C. CNN. Retrieved May 19, 2022, from <https://www.cnn.com/2016/08/17/world/syria-little-boy-airstrike-victim/index.html>

Figure 24. Faysal, Mahmud. (2016, October 04). [Smoke rises after a warcraft belonging to the Russian Army bombed a residential area in the Darat Izza neighborhood of Aleppo, Syria on October 4, 2016.] Anadolu Agency via Getty Images, <http://www.gettyimages.com/detail/612442044>

Figure 25. Alfarah, Carole. (2013, December). [Five-year-old Aya (right, in a wheelchair) was hit by a mortar while she was heading home from school] UNOCHA via Al Jazeera. Retrieved from, <https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/2021/syria-10-years-by-syrian-photographers/index.html>

Figure 26. Addario, Lynsey. (2013). [Iman Zenglo, 30, sitting with her children in their squatters' tent outside the Kilis camp on the Turkish side of the border with Syria in 2013.] The New York Times. Retrieved from, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/23/lens/lynsey-addario-an-unexpected-retrospective.html>

Figure 27. Tung, Nicole. (2012). [Fighters with the Free Syrian Army take cover from mortar shells in a hallway] August 8, 2012. Retrieved from, <http://www.nicoletung.com/syria-battle-for-aleppo>

Figure 28. Al-Halbi, Ameer. (2016, September 11). [Syrian men carrying babies make their way through the rubble of destroyed buildings following an airstrike in Aleppo.] Agence France-Presse via <https://www.cnn.com/2021/03/15/middleeast/syria-anniversary-damon-analysis-intl/index.html>

Figure 29. Almasri, Karam. (2014, December 17). [A Syrian rebel fighter keeps an eye on government troops in Aleppo, Syria.] NurPhoto ZUMA Wire via CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2014/02/10/middleeast/gallery/syria-unrest-2014/index.html>

Figure 30. Alkharboutli, Anas. (2020). [A Syrian man mourns.] Retrieved from, <https://poyasia.org/competitions/poyasia2021/awards/spot-news/anas-alkharboutli/>

Figure 31. Balilty, Oded. (22 June 2014). [Israeli soldiers load shells in their tank," near the Israeli village of Alonei Habashan, in the area of Tel Hazeka, close to the Quneitra border crossing in the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights.] Associated Press Via FOX News, Retrieved from <https://www.foxnews.com/world/syria-4-killed-9-wounded-in-israeli-airstrikes>

Figure 32. Beshara, Loui. (2013, March 25). [Syrian protesters chant slogans in support of al-Assad during a rally in Damascus on March 25] Agence France-Presse/Getty Images via CNN, retrieved from, <https://www.cnn.com/2013/02/23/middleeast/gallery/syrian-civil-war/index.html>

Figure 33. Dilkoff, Dimitar. (2013, April 16). [Syrian rebel fighters at Aleppo's Umayyad mosque on April 16] Agence France-Presse via Getty Images. Retrieved from, <https://rendezvous.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/04/24/could-syrias-civil-war-create-european-and-a-merican-jihadis/?searchResultPosition=15>

Figure 34. Hussein, Bilal. (2013, December 21). [Lebanese Red Cross workers carry the coffin of British doctor Abbas Khan] Associated Press via FOX News, retrieved from <https://www.foxnews.com/world/syria-assad-regime-torture-crucifixion-rape-eye-gouging>

Figure 35. Khabieh, Bassam. (2017, June 20). [Girls break their fast amid damaged buildings during a Ramadan iftar organized by an NGO] Al Jazeera, retrieved from, <https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/2021/syria-10-years-by-syrian-photographers/index.html>

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Figure 36. Manzano, Javier. (2010, October 18). [Two Syrian rebels take up sniper positions in the heavily-contested neighborhood of Karm al-Jabal in central Aleppo] Agence France-Presse, Retrieved from, <https://www.afp.com/en/agency/awards/javier-manzano-freelance-photographer-afp-wins-2013-pulitzer-prize-feature-photography>

Figure 37. Mamet, Badra. (2014, September 20). [Medics at a field hospital in Douma, Syria, attend to a man who was injured.] Reuters/Landov via CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2014/02/10/middleeast/gallery/syria-unrest-2014/index.html>

Figure 38. Ourfalian, George. (2017, November 11). [A member of the Syrian pro-regime forces fires a machine gun...] Agence France-Presse via Getty Images, retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2015/05/22/world/gallery/syria-civil-war-pictures/index.html>

Figure 39. Salman, Muzaffar. (2013). "A boy walked in the rubble.." Retrieved from, <https://rendezvous.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/05/29/does-spains-history-provide-a-lesson-in-syrias-civil-war/?searchResultPosition=14>

Figure 40. Ward, Catherine. N.d. *Photographs of Aleppo*. Images courtesy of the photographer. Retrieved from, <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-the-syrian-conflict-through-the-lenses-of-7-photographers>

War in Ukraine

Figure 41. Sanchez, Diego Ibarra. (2022). [The family of Yuri Huk, 41, including his daughter, Darynka, 8, his niece and other relatives, during his funeral outside Saints Peter and Paul Garrison Church in Lviv on May 16.] The New York Times. Retrieved from, <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/22/world/russia-ukraine-war>

Figure 42. Ermochenko, Alexander. (2022). [Women pushing mostly empty shopping carts near a damaged block of apartments in Mariupol on March 17]. Reuters via The New York Times. Retrieved from, <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/30/world/ukraine-russia-war-news>

Figure 43. Chingis Kondarov. "A convoy of pro-Russian troops moves along a road in Mariupol, Ukraine, on Thursday, April 21." 2022. Reuters via Fox News. <https://www.foxnews.com/world/russia-claims-liberation-ukraine-mariupol>

Figure 44. Senna, Fadel. (2022, March). [Fire and smoke illuminating the night sky east of the city of Kharkiv, Ukraine.] Agence France-Presse – Getty Images via The New York Times.

Figure 45. Burton, Andrew. "Pro-Russian rebels allegedly move tanks and heavy weaponry away from the front line of fighting on February 26, 2015 in Chervonoe, Ukraine." Getty Images.

Figure 46. Efrem Lukatsky. "Members of Ukraine's Territorial Defense Forces, volunteer military units of the Armed Forces, train in a city park in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Saturday." 2022. Associated Press via Fox News. <https://www.foxnews.com/world/ukraine-military-turns-volunteers-away-as-140k-ukrainians-come-home-to-fight-russia>

Figure 47. Dilkoff, Dimitar. (2022). [A man walks in front of a destroyed building after a Russian missile attack in the town of Vasylkiv, near Kyiv, on February 27, 2022.]. Agence France-Presse via Getty Images.

Figure 48. Schwan, Wolfgang. (2022). [A wounded woman is seen as airstrike damages an apartment complex outside of Kharkiv, Ukraine on February 24, 2022.] Anadolu Agency via Getty Images. Retrieved from, <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/us-eu-refuse-russia-ban-swift-ukraine-official-says-blood-innocents-on-their-hands>

Figure 49. Maloletka, Evgeniy. (2022). [An injured pregnant woman is carried from the maternity hospital damaged by Russian shelling in Mariupol, Ukraine, on March 9.] The Associated Press. Retrieved from, <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2022/03/16/1086982186/russias-strike-on-ukraine-maternity-hospital-is-part-of-a-terrible-wartime-tragedy>

Figure 50. Note. Addario, Lynsey. "Ukrainian fighters training in Kyiv on Wednesday." N.d. The New York Times. Retrieved from, <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/09/world/ukraine-russia-war>

Figure 51. Addario, Lynsey. (2022). [Ukrainian children holding toy guns made from sticks and pretending to operate a checkpoint on May 12 in a village in the Donetsk region.] The New York Times. Retrieved from, <https://www.nytimes.com/article/russia-invades-ukraine-photos.html?action=click&module=RelatedLinks&pgtype=Article>

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Figure 52. Marienko Andrew. (2022, February 27). [Ukrainian soldiers inspect a damaged military vehicle after fighting in Kharkiv, Ukraine.] Fox news via Associated Press. Retrieved from, <https://www.foxnews.com/live-news/russia-continues-ukraine-invasion-live-updates>

Figure 53. Bensemra, Zohra. (2022, April 26). [A young woman and her godfather stand at her fathers funeral service]. Getty Images via CNN. Retrieved from, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/18/europe/ukraine-crisis-whats-next-intl-cmd/index.html>

Figure 54. Bobok, Sergey. (2022). [A Russian Armored personnel carrier (APC) burns next to an unidentified soldier's body during a fight with the Ukrainian armed forces in Kharkiv] AFP via Getty Images. Retrieved from, <https://www.foxnews.com/world/zelenskyy-un-red-cross-russia-mountains-corpses>

Figure 55. Gallup, Sean. (2022, March 4). [Women and children from war-torn Ukraine, including a mother carrying an infant, arrive in Poland at the Medyka border crossing on March 04, 2022.] Getty Images.

Figure 56. Gouliamaki, Lousi. (2022) [A child with her dog waits after her transportation in an IOM tent after crossing the Ukrainian-Polish border in Medyka, southeastern Poland, on March 9, 2022.] AFP via Getty Images.

Figure 57. Morenatti, Emilio. (2022, February 26). [Ukrainian soldiers take positions outside a military facility as two cars burn, in a street in Kyiv, Ukraine.] AP Photo via Fox News. Retrieved from, <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/ukraine-invasion-russia-increasingly-frustrated-lack-of-momentum-us-defense-official>

Figure 58. Vlasova, Anastasia. (2022, April 20). [Residents of Mykolaiv, Ukraine, receive bottled water from a truck since there's been no running water for over a week.] Getty Images, retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/sections/pictureshow/2022/04/18/1093329553/photos-russian-air-strikes-hit-targets-in-lviv-kharkiv-and-across-ukraine>

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Mitigation and Adaptation in Oceania: Tuvalu and Papua New Guinea

EMMY CRUZ

ABSTRACT:

This article highlights an emerging issue in migration studies: displacement as an effect of climate change. Despite potential global implications, climate change remains a peripheral issue in migration policy for states. Over time, the effects of climate change will exponentially increase the displacement of impacted communities without proactive policy action. The study examines the two cases from the Oceania region as a case study to explore the factors influencing state policies on migration mitigation and adaptation. In the Oceania region, there are low-lying coastal communities in the Pacific that are especially vulnerable to rising sea levels which cause drainage, erosion, and land loss. This research argues that climate change, national values, and socio-economic factors play an important role in shaping policy responses to migration. The paper concludes that policymakers must recognize the potential impact of climate change on migration patterns to create effective policy adaptations in response.

INTRODUCTION

Within the field of international relations, migration studies focus on the relocation of individuals inside the state. It is predominantly accredited to being a multinational issue, yet it also examines internally displaced persons within a state. This is why the study of migration is valuable to both domestic and geopolitics. It incorporates aspects from other fields, such as foreign affairs, human rights studies, economics, sociology, anthropology, and development, to discern and explain states' current and emerging relocation threats. The theme of this essay will center on an emerging puzzle in international migration studies: climate change's effect on displacement.

Climate change as an issue of international migration remains peripheral regarding states' reactions to it producing international protections for displaced individuals. As the environment changes, ecosystems that previously supported human life cannot sustain growth or their current populations. Potentially leading to increased levels of displacement if no action is taken to address this change. This research paper uses the Oceania region as a case study of how states' climate change reactions affect migration. Asking, **"What factors explain migration mitigation/adaptation policies in the Oceania region?"** The UN reports that the low-lying coastal communities in the Pacific are vulnerable to rising sea levels that can lead to drainage, erosion,

and land loss.¹ For communities that rely on their access to the coast for survival, it exacerbates economic and other incentives to adapt or migrate. I argue that climate change, national values, and socio-economic factors explain the Oceania region's rising mitigation/adaptation policies. States need to be aware of the potential ramifications of climate change on migration patterns to prepare effective policy adoption in response.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The origins of migration studies are deeply rooted in the history of humanity as an inherently adaptable species.² Today migration studies are also adapting to cover new issues affecting the movement of people. One of the most significant aspects of international relations is the premise that topics such as migration are intersectional with other global concerns. Thus, migrant studies span across various other sub-fields in international relations. Migrants move for a variety of factors, such as sociological, economic, socio-economic, and reactionary reasons.³ To set the context for the climate change-induced migration theoretical approach within the field, reviewing the scholarly discourse on general environmental migration is prudent because it falls under this framework. Currently, the literature is limited and categorized under environmental migration due to the limitations of the refugee definition. For example, scholar Guy Abel argues that evidence of climate change inducing forced migration is lacking in mainland regions such as Syria and Europe.⁴

Environmental migrants share many similarities with “climate refugees.” They are people who were forced or motivated to relocate due to gradual or sudden environmental disaster(s).⁵ This is an example of a reactive migration. Scholar Deniz Sert describes reactive migration as a reactionary movement from externalities: “humanitarian crises, armed conflicts, and environmental catastrophes.” Within the categories Sert defines, environmental migrants are considered involuntary migrants instead of voluntary migrants who move for push-pull factors.⁶ In addition, Scandinavian scholars Michel Beine and Christopher Parsons argue that their research helps prove that environmental disasters increase internal displacement rather than international migration.

For environmental migrants, the literature indicates that the most common outcome of environmental disasters is primarily internal displacement followed by migration or immobility.⁷ In accordance with the 1951 Refugee Convention, individuals affected by the effects of climate change are not protected with refugee status under international law.⁸ The UN states that climate change indicates the gradual shifting of weather and

1. “What Is Climate Change?” United Nations. Accessed March 13, 2022. <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/what-is-climate-change>.

2. Khalid Koser. *International Migration: A Very Short Introduction* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press. (2016).

3. Deniz Sert “Explaining Why People Move: Intra and Interdisciplinary Debates about the Causes of International Migration.” In D. Sert, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*. Oxford University Press. (2010).

4. Guy J. Abel, Michael Brottrager, Jesus Crespo Cuaresma, and Raya Muttarak. “Climate, conflict and forced migration.” *Global Environmental Change*, 54, 239–249. (2019).

5. Elena McLean, & Muhammet Bas. “Natural Disasters and Cross-Border Implications.” *Oxford University Press*. 2020.

6. Everett S Lee. “A Theory of Migration.” *Demography*, 3 (1), 47–57. 1966.

7. Michael Berlemann, & Max F. Steinhardt. “Climate Change, Natural Disasters, and Migration - A Survey of the Empirical Evidence.” *CESifo Economic Studies*, 63(4), 353–385. (2017); Cattaneo, Cristina, Michel Beine, Christiane J Fröhlich, Dominic Kniveton, Inmaculada Martínez-Zarzoso, Marina Mastroiello, Katrin Millock, Etienne Piguet, and Benjamin Schraven “Human Migration in the Era of Climate Change.” *Review of Environmental Economics and Policy*, 13 (2), 189-206. 2019.

8. UN General Assembly, “Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.” United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 189, p. 137. July 28 1951 Accessed March 12, 2022.

temperature patterns, often predominantly driven by human intervention and the fossil fuel industry.⁹ Climate change as a driver of displacement is a growing concern as the global community realizes the legitimacy and urgency of the situation, with no global governance structure in place to address the issue. It creates barriers for individuals who are facing displacement as a result of climate change. The term “climate refugees” is not endorsed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Instead, they are referred to as internally displaced persons (IDPs). As a result of either armed conflict, disasters, violence, or human violations, IDPs are involuntarily relocated and abandon their homes yet have not immigrated across the border.¹⁰ In 1999, UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative on Internally Displaced Persons, Francis M. Deng, introduced Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which provided 30 principles to “address the specific needs of internally displaced persons worldwide.”¹¹ These 30 principles serve as an IDP guide for states, agencies, and the UN. As demonstrated, there is a controversial debate on properly addressing those affected by environmental disasters.

The UN prefers to refrain from labeling migrants as either “climate refugees” or “environmental refugees” because those groups are not considered protected refugees under the 1951 Refugee Convention. However, scholars will use that term to promote discourse and signify the severity of the issue. This research is meant to continue the climate change-induced migration literature discourse focusing on mitigation and adaptation policies. International and scholarly debate on climate change-induced migration avoids alternating the established refugee status. Therefore, there needs to be more international consensus on addressing the issue. As the literature indicates, in addition to these barriers, most individuals who migrate because of climate change are internally displaced. Thus, this is why it is imperative to redirect the literature to approach this discussion from a theoretical lens that centers the discourse of internally driven mitigation and adaptation alongside garnering international support and governance on climate change.

RESEARCH DESIGN

To answer the question of what factors explain migration mitigation/adaptation policies in the Oceania region, this paper is a comparative case study on two states’ migration mitigation/adaptation policies. The selected states are Tuvalu and Papua New Guinea because they are both located in Oceania, have internally displaced persons, and have migration mitigation/adaptation policies. I will examine Tuvalu’s Te Kakeega III strategy and Papua New Guinea’s National Climate Compatible Development Management Policy. Using a combination of empirical and qualitative data to compare the cases. For example: referencing local accounts regarding climate change and domestic rising sea level data.

CASES

Tuvalu

The tiny Pacific state of Tuvalu, located in Oceania, is at the forefront of this conversation. The international community is looking towards states like Tuvalu as

9. “What Is Climate Change?”. United Nations. Accessed March 13, 2022.

10. Emergency Handbook.” UNHCR. The UN Refugee Agency. Accessed March 12, 2022.

11. Francis Deng. “Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.” *The International Migration Review*, 33(2), 484–493. 1999.

representatives of the “climate refugee” discourse.¹² Although, at times, it means more influential states are leading the conversation rather than the affected states.¹³ As a small state, Tuvalu only has a population of 11,792 as of 2020, which emphasizes why it is paramount that Tuvalu reported in 2015 that it had 5,400 internally displaced persons, which would have been approximately 49% of the population in 2015. Fortunately, the latest data showed that Tuvalu’s number of IDPs decreased to 400 in 2020.¹⁴

Climate Impact

In 2012, the Te Kaniva Tuvalu Climate Change Policy document reported Tuvalu experiencing unprecedented levels of rising sea levels, rising atmospheric and ocean temperatures, coastal erosion, drought, storm surges, and biodiversity loss in the last sixty years.¹⁵ Due to these conditions, Tuvalu is shrinking and forcing populations living on the outer edges to move internally toward the city of Funafuti, which is already at full capacity.¹⁶ The 2017 census reported that Funafuti was home to 6,320 residents, which was 60% of the state’s population in one area.

National Priorities

Tuvalu’s perspective is that emigration or integration into another state is not an option. It is a case of sovereignty and self-determination for their state rather than absorbing into another because their population’s identity is closely tied to the land and their culture.¹⁷ It is also reinforced in the Te Kakeega III (2016):

The identity of the people of Tuvalu is defined by their deep connection to ancestral lands and the surrounding sea. Climate-induced migration remains a last resort, especially for older generations who wish to remain in Tuvalu. Younger generations, on the other hand, may see migration as the only choice to safeguard their future.

This rhetoric indicates that Tuvalu’s primary concern is its state sovereignty which is becoming increasingly threatened due to climate change.¹⁸

Socio-Economic Pressures

Although as discussed, there is an upcoming issue with coastal erosion, which is “shrinking” the country of Tuvalu. What does this mean for their immigration policy, and are they concerned with the fact that there’s an increase in emigration from

12. Carol Farbotko, and Heather Lazrus. “The First Climate Refugees? Contesting Global Narratives of Climate Change in Tuvalu.” *Global Environmental Change* 22 (2): 382–90. 2012.

13. Sonali Narang. “Imaginative Geographies of Climate Change Induced Displacements and Migrations: A Case Study of Tuvalu.” *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences* 7 (2). 2015

14. “Tuvalu - Internally displaced persons - IDPs.” (n.d.). Humanitarian Data Exchange. Retrieved May 11, 2022.

15. “TE KANIVA: Tuvalu Climate Change Policy.” Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade, Tourism, Environment, and Labour. 2012.

16. Robert Oakes, Andrea Milan, Jillian Campbell, Koko Warner, and Markus Schindler “CLIMATE CHANGE AND MIGRATION IN THE PACIFIC: Links, attitudes, and future scenarios in Nauru, Tuvalu, and Kiribati.” United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security. 2017.

17. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade, Tourism, Environment and Labour*. (2012).

18. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade, Tourism, Environment and Labour*. (2012). (pg. 63).

Tuvalu? Tuvalu is in a situation where limited land and internally displaced peoples have created a high-density population. From Tuvalu's perspective, it is an opportunity for their residents to emigrate to other states for education, employment, and to send back remittances.¹⁹ Remittances, in this case, is when goods or money garnered from migrants' earnings abroad are sent back to help support their households and family. Reportedly remittances accounted for 40% of household income in 2015. These figures indicate that remittances are a significant stimulating factor in their economy. This does inflate their gross national income per capita (GNI per capita) purchasing power parity (PPP) to \$6,430 in 2020.²⁰

Policy Action

In response, Tuvalu has been continuously working on establishing a comprehensive course of action needed to mitigate further displacement and emigration, and address other consequences of climate change in Tuvalu. This plan has been through eight iterations thus far. The most recent adaptations are the Te Kakeega II (2005-2015), Te Kaniva (2012-2021), and the National Strategic Action Plan for Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management (2012-2016). Rt. Hon Bikenibeu Paeniu, the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Industries of Tuvalu, promoted the importance of developing sustainably to ensure future generations' success.²¹

The most recent version, Te Kakeega III - National Strategy for Sustainable Development (2016 - 2020), is a cumulation of the deliberations and dialogue that occurred at the National Summit on Sustainable Development (NSSD) in November 2015 held in the capital city of Funafuti, Tuvalu. It was a collaborative effort between stakeholders from the community and private and public sectors of Tuvalu's population. Te Kakeega III is meant to be a continuation of Te Kakeega II and Te Kaniva but applied through the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals framework. TKIII's plan is divided into twelve sections: climate change, good governance, economy, health & social development, island development, trade/employment/private sector development, education & human resources, natural resources, infrastructure, environment, migration & urbanization, and ocean & seas.

For example, Te Kakeega III (TKIII) provides an additional feature that expands upon Tuvalu's 2015 National Labor Migration Policy (NLMP). It will expand the policy to increase employment opportunities for high-skilled workers "through private, bilateral, and multilateral means" (Te Kakeega III). This means emigrants from Tuvalu will potentially have greater access to well-paid jobs through programs coordinated by the government. In their 2015 NLMP, Tuvalu prioritized maintaining an educated and trained workforce to supply their migration trends and support the consistent flow of remittances back to Tuvalu.

The potential consequences of Te Kakeega III stem from the broadness of the policy plan in general. As Hon. Maatia Toafa, the Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Finance and Economic Development in Tuvalu, mentions, "TKIII was subsequently subjected to a broad government policy and project review." The disadvantage of a loosely and frequently revised policy is that there isn't a lot of time to see how the

19. Tuvalu. "Te kakeega III: National strategy for sustainable development, 2016-2020." Funafuti, Tuvalu: Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning, and Industries." n.d. 2016.

20. World Bank, World Development Indicators. GDP per capita, PPP (current international \$). 2020.

21. Tuvalu. "Te kakeega II: National strategy for sustainable development, 2005-2015." Funafuti, Tuvalu: Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning, and Industries. 2005.

implemented policies are developed, implemented, and prioritized. Te Kakeega III (2016) acknowledges these concerns in the introduction:

Projecting specific development plans over even five years is problematic. Focus can easily shift away from specific policies, projects, or tangible development initiatives.²²

These initiatives and programs outlined in the TKIII are implemented through various actors, such as public agencies, NGOs, and the private sector, at their own discretion. With the aim of creating a dedicated unit to oversee the general planning and implementation of TKIII, the TKIII Monitoring and Evaluation Unit was established to enforce reporting obligations of all the TKIII actors.

In comparison to former editions of Tuvalu's plan, TKIII covers more content than previously addressed. This could be attributed to the evolving style of Tuvalu's strategy, which does allow for constant re-evaluation and introduction of newly emerging issues. On the other hand, it is evident that Tuvalu has limited resources, and an over complicated policy might overwhelm a small state like Tuvalu if not managed correctly, especially if it continues to expand.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Located in the region of Oceania, the Independent State of Papua New Guinea encompasses the Eastern portion of New Guinea island, which reportedly has a landmass of 462,840 km² and is the second largest island on the globe. It currently is a unitary parliamentary constitutional monarchy with national sovereignty after a period as a commonwealth nation. The island is home to a wide variety of species that are unique and vital to their ecosystem.²³ Due to its rich environment and location, it is a vital part of the region, which is why it is one of the climate change policy dialogue cases.

Regarding migration studies, this case focuses primarily on the internally displaced person(s). The UN migration agency, International Organization for Migration (IOM), released a report on internal displacement in Papua New Guinea. Between 2005-2016 the IOM disclosed that the number of IDPs reached 75,449 in the state due to natural and manufactured disasters.²⁴ It also indicates that this vulnerable population is affected by a lack of accommodations, nutrition/food, access to water, and sanitation products as IDPs. The latest updates from the IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) estimate that as of 2018, the number of internally displaced people decreased to 59,629.²⁵ Between the state of Papua New Guinea and international organizations, such as the UN and IOM, there is an urgency to assist with IDPs.

Climate Impact

How is Papua New Guinea at risk for climate change-induced disasters? The state has identified the following climate-related threats as their most pressing issues: coastal

22. Tuvalu. "Te kateega III." 2016, 16.

23. Displacement Tracking Matrix & International Organization for Migration. (n.d.). Papua New Guinea | Displacement. DTM. Retrieved May 10, 2022.

24. International Organization for Migration. Papua New Guinea Drought, Resilience Building and Documentation of IDPs. 2016.

25. Displacement Tracking Matrix & International Organization for Migration. (n.d.). Papua New Guinea | Displacement. DTM. Retrieved May 10, 2022.

flooding/rising sea levels, disease (malaria), irregular rain patterns, sea temperature/acidification, and landslides. It also reports that the weather phenomenon known as El Niño (dry + warm weather patterns) and La Niña (wet + cold weather patterns) are contributing factors to climate-related issues. These two patterns are a part of the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) that travels throughout the intertropical zone.²⁶ Since 1993 the state has documented sea levels rising 7 mm per year, and through rising sea levels once acidity is a symptom that exacerbates issues for the population.²⁷

National Priorities

As part of Papua New Guinea's commitment to addressing climate change, they are leaders in multilateral measures. For example, they pitched REDD+, which is the idea of decreasing carbon emissions since 2005.²⁸ Internally the state has also committed to reducing its own greenhouse emissions in its 2010 Climate-Compatible Development Strategy. In addition, to understand Papua New Guinea's national values, it is important to recognize its indigenous roots and culture. Pacific Trade Invest reports that approximately 40% of the population lives a rural, sustainable way of life without ties to the global/national economy.²⁹

Socio-Economic Pressures

Looking at Papua New Guinea's socio-economic pressures in today's current conditions, it is evident that the challenges presented by COVID-19 have impacted its economy, although it was able to see 1% growth in 2021. Their gross national income per capita (GNI per capita) purchasing power parity PPP in 2020 was reported by the World Bank to be \$4,286.6, which helps compare living standards internationally, which ranks Papua New Guinea at 149 out of 188 countries. In combination with a sluggish economy and climate disasters, this has stimulated other socio-economic problems for at-risk communities, such as a lack of water/sanitation/hygiene facilities, food security, resilience/management training, and IDP(s) documentation.³⁰

Policy Action

Papua New Guinea's National Climate Compatible Development Management Policy (NCCDMP) is another example of proactive state-led legislation to promote resilience from the effects of climate change. Compared to Tuvalu's Te Kakeega III policy, this policy outlines the state's intention to adapt its national strategy cognizant of climate change. The NCCDMP was published in August 2014 by Papua New Guinea's Office of Climate Change and Development agency.³¹ The themes of the NCCDMP are enabling environmental policies, increasing reporting/information sharing, adoption policies, mitigation policies, establishing partnerships, and financing.

In order to implement these objectives, two main institutions are in place: the Climate Change Institution Authority and the National Climate Fund. In this case, the adaptive strategies/policy's theme is particularly conscious of migration. Through adaptive governance, the NCCDMP aims to coordinate with sectors (water, transport,

26. Michelle L'Heureux. "What is the El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO) in a nutshell?" Climate.Gov. 2021.

27. "National Climate Compatible Development Management Policy." Office of Climate Change & Development. 2014.

28. "National Climate Compatible Development Management Policy." Office of Climate Change & Development. 2014.

29. Country Profile - PNG. (n.d.). Pacific Trade Invest. Retrieved May 10, 2022.

30. World Bank Group. "Papua New Guinea Economic Update: PNG Economy Navigating a Fragile Recovery." *World Bank*. (2022, April 3). Retrieved May 10, 2022; International Organization for Migration. *Papua New Guinea* (2016)

31. National Climate Compatible Development Management Policy." Office of Climate Change & Development. 2014.

agriculture, and infrastructure) and migration to include all relevant stakeholders toward building environmentally friendly plans. Following the NCCDMP, legislation enacted the Climate Change (Management) Act in 2015, supporting Papua New Guinea's adaptation and mitigation policy set out in the NCCDMP.

CONCLUSION

In the case of Tuvalu, from my perspective, they have a really solid framework and policies set in place to address their concern about climate change. As a state, it is their most significant threat to survival and impacts nearly every aspect of their community, including immigration. Tuvalu acknowledges that its population is at risk due to a gradual reduction of land and resources. Providing their citizens a higher standard of living by offering and facilitating education and employment immigration programs is ultimately in their best interest.

Papua New Guinea was an interesting case to examine. Initially, I thought the state was in better conditions than Tuvalu due primarily to its landmass size and economic state. In contrast, it proved that they are in similar situations and hold similar priorities in response to climate change-induced displacement. Papua New Guinea is very vocal about working on the international component to address climate change, and from their perspective, that goal will lead to universal change. Although the state is not facing immediate severe consequences like Tuvalu, it does have an obligation to protect the livelihoods of its indigenous/holistic communities that rely primarily on the ecosystem through the National Climate Compatible Development Management Policy. Contrary to Tuvalu, the NCCDMP was not strictly inspired by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals; it did include rhetoric that promoted sustainable development and coordination with UN agencies such as the IOM.

During the peer presentations that examined different regional responses to climate change-induced displacement, it reinforced why mitigation and adaptation policies are vital. If I could expand this research, I would think that a comparison between proactive and unresponsive governments would laminate disparities between the two response styles. This research also presented an opportunity to explore the relationship between national security and climate change. I observed that connection in Tuvalu's case and could see that as another point of discourse emerging from this paper.

Due to environmental pressures, states in Oceania are motivated to create proactive mitigation/adaptation policies. These policies are differentiated by the states' national values, socio-economic factors, and climate change severity. Most individuals who migrate because of climate change are internally displaced, which is why it is imperative to redirect the literature to produce a theoretical approach that centers on internally driven mitigation and adaptation policies alongside garnering international support and governance on climate change. This global issue poses a risk for all states as climate-induced migration increases. States that do not recognize the severity of the situation will be unprepared to confront its consequences. It is especially crucial for small and marginalized communities that are at an increased risk of experiencing the impact and displacement of climate change.

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Ambiguous Search and Rescue Zones Across the Strait of Gibraltar and the Canary Islands

BRITTNEY ORTEGA

ABSTRACT

Literature on the Mediterranean crisis of migration between Europe and the Global South is primarily focused on the Eastern and Central Mediterranean routes, and the academic discussion of search and rescue (SAR) operations is reflective of this. The purpose of this paper is to explore the causes of ambiguity in search and rescue zones and regions that are shared and overlap in the Western route of migration between Morocco and Spain in the Strait of Gibraltar and the Canary Islands. Evidence was compiled separately to examine SAR operations from both states with statistics on land and sea arrivals of migrants and the governing authorities responsible for conducting SAR. *Alarm Phone*, a network of activists and civil society actors in Europe and Northern Africa that assist with SOS calls for migrants in sea distress, was used as a case study to highlight the cooperation of SAR operations between both states to explore ambiguity. A world with land and sea borders is unlikely to change. However, state cooperation of sea migration and proactive search and rescue activities focused on saving and aiding those in distress at sea, illegal travel or otherwise.

INTRODUCTION

Maritime borders have a tremendous effect on migration patterns and the free movement of people. The international laws and treaty agreements between states all have diverging interests in controlling and securitizing their land borders, and maritime borders are no different. However, the contention of sea migration resides in maintaining a balance between border securitization and providing means of safe and authorized travel from one place to another. Search and rescue (SAR) responsibilities of migrants stranded at sea find themselves lost in the ambiguity of this balance and the relationship of two countries. SAR zones in the Mediterranean are an example of this, where migration routes to European Union (EU) member states are accessed through the western, central, and eastern location of the Mediterranean of people migrating from the global south. Under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), article 98 states that a “coastal State shall promote the establishment, operation and maintenance of an adequate and effective search and rescue service regarding safety on and over the sea...”¹ Adequate and effective SAR services are subjective in application based on the understood responsibilities of actors rendering the services, whether they be state officials or other kinds of ship vessels.

1. Wikipedia Contributors, “United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea,” Wikipedia (Wikimedia Foundation, September 10, 2019), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Convention_on_the_Law_of_the_Sea. [Accessed 16 May 2022].

This paper is organized into three parts to argue the following premise: ambiguous SAR zones across the Strait of Gibraltar, a 36-mile (58 km) long and 8-mile (13 km) width stretch of water between the southern point of Spain and the northwest point of Africa where it meets the country of Morocco, has led to delimitations of maritime borders disputes that conflict with SAR responsibilities between the two states.² As a result, the humanitarian response of migrants needing rescue at sea has made the perilous journey more dangerous to travel on unauthorized vessels and placed migrants at greater risk. The literature review in Part I of this paper will show a wide range of analysis on issues concerning SAR operations interjecting with themes such as sea border externalizations and securitization, inexplicit laws that govern SAR zones of states and vessel responsibilities, and migration control. Part II will examine the SAR case study of Spain and Morocco by taking a closer look at the operations of SAR agencies for each state. Lastly, part III will analyze the cooperation, or lack thereof, between them through SAR disputes, the 1992 Readmission Agreement, the externalization of SAR responsibilities, and the resulting maritime ambiguity it causes on the migration journey.

PART I

Literature Review

Maritime laws and SAR zones are problematic and contentious areas of cooperation where international obligations between the EU, Mediterranean states, and third countries migrants embark (the act of boarding a ship or other floating device) intersect with border securitization and maritime safety. Literature on the migrant crisis in the Mediterranean mainly assesses three areas in SAR efforts: border externalization, SAR responsibility and international law. In the case of international and maritime law, factors of cooperation and conflict arise alongside three legal agreements that govern maritime laws and responsibilities of vessel ships: the UNCLOS, the 1979 International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, and the Safety of life at Sea (SOLAS) Convention of 1974. Problems arise in overlapping SAR zones when states neglect SAR responsibilities. The 2009 dispute between Malta (a small island in the central Mediterranean) and Italy, is an example of this.³ The *Pinar* Turkish vessel rescued 153 migrants at sea in overlapping SAR zones of Italian island Lampedusa and Malta.⁴ In this case, both countries denied zone responsibility and refused entry into their ports, so although *Pinar* abided by maritime laws, cooperation between the states regarding safe disembarkation (the act of getting off a ship or floating device) of the migrants, according to SAR zones, resulted in maritime ambiguity. This reveals ongoing challenges of SAR zone responsibilities of states and the precarious positions vessel ships, their crew, and migrant passengers find themselves in. SAR regions can either be a cooperative or conflicting factor among the parties involved, regardless of established or vague maritime laws and agreements between states.

In a short report by Kira Williams (2022), she analyzes SAR operations being used as “instruments of externalization” by the EU in the Central Mediterranean where states intentionally prevent asylum seekers and migrants from reaching their borders.

2. “Strait of Gibraltar | Channel,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Strait-of-Gibraltar>. [Accessed 16 May 2022].

3. Seline Trevisanut, “Search and Rescue Operations in the Mediterranean: Factor of Cooperation or Conflict?,” *The International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law* 25, no. 4 (2010): 523. <https://doi.org/10.1163/157180810x526754>.

4. *Ibid.*, 523.

Based on the following maritime interdiction operation (MIOs) from 2013 to 2017 carried out by operation Hermes, Aeneas and Triton, there were “4,034 interdiction incidents of 648,455 illegalized migrants on 5,369 boats over 1,620 days of operations.”

⁵ The linear regression models in her study revealed SAR operations being conducted in geographic regions outside of EU sea zones. This kept interdictions in SAR zones outside of EU responsibility and placed them on non-EU states whose SAR zones were closer to the migrant’s initial location of embarkation. This is a convenient way for EU states to avoid the legal responsibilities and place them on other states. The subject of disembarkation is another contentious matter of SAR operations. Once migrants are rescued at sea, confrontation over who should accept them becomes a debate between EU member states. The back and forth between states makes SAR operations for rescue workers and other ships and vessels carrying stranded migrants difficult. In some cases, vessels carrying migrants were not granted port entry for disembarkation.

Carerra and Cortinovis (2021), discuss the disengagement of SAR activities of the EU and member states in the Central Mediterranean by equipping third countries (a non-EU member country or territory that is part of the EU’s right to free movement⁶) with resources to carry out their own MIOs. The authors focus on EU agencies cooperation with Libyan authorities to train their Coast Guard on interceptions at sea by pulling them back to Libya,⁷ which violates Article 33 of the 1951 Refugee Convention of non-refoulement that says no state shall expel or return a refugee to a country or territory where their life or freedom is at threat.⁸ Carerra and Cortinovis provide a detailed account of international and regional human rights violations that occur when vessels are prohibited port access for refugee disembarkation and ‘pushbacks’ are carried out by either third countries (as outsourcing of SAR services⁹), EU states or other EU agencies.¹⁰

A study by Kira Williams and Alison Mountz (2018), examines the correlation between migrant deaths and border externalization by applying a “mixed methodology” of descriptive and time-series descriptive statistics on the number of boat losses in the Mediterranean from 2006 to 2015 with MIOs and their budget for operations. Their findings do not statistically link increased deaths at sea with higher levels of border enforcement operations, as most literature on externalization does, through assertion from case study and legal frameworks of analysis.¹¹ Williams and Mountz don’t necessarily refute literature of correlation between increased migrant deaths to

5. Kira Williams, “Search and Rescue as an Instrument of Externalisation: A Report from the Central Mediterranean Sea, 2013 to 2017” (Submission to Academia Letters, 2022). 2.

6. “Third Country,” ec.europa.eu, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/pages/glossary/third-country_en. [Accessed 16 May 2022].

7. Sergio Carrera and Roberto Cortinovis, “Search and Rescue, Disembarkation, and Relocation Arrangements in the Mediterranean Justicing Maritime Border Surveillance Operations,” in *Fundamental Rights Challenges in Border Controls and Expulsion of Irregular Immigrants in the European Union*, ed. Sergio Carrera and Marco Stefan (London ; New York Routledge, Taylor Et Francis Group, 2020), 2.

8. “The Refugee Convention,” 1951, <https://www.unhcr.org/4ca34be29.pdf>. [Accessed 16 May 2022].

9. Marco Fantinato, “EU Regional Disembarkation Arrangements in the Mediterranean: Between the Outsourcing of Search and Rescue Services and the Externalisation of Sea Border Management,” *The Italian Yearbook of International Law Online* 28, no. 1 (October 18, 2019): 64, https://doi.org/10.1163/22116133_02801006.

10. Sergio Carrera and Roberto Cortinovis, “Search and Rescue, Disembarkation, and Relocation Arrangements in the Mediterranean Justicing Maritime Border Surveillance Operations,” in *Fundamental Rights Challenges in Border Controls and Expulsion of Irregular Immigrants in the European Union*, ed. Sergio Carrera and Marco Stefan (London ; New York Routledge, Taylor Et Francis Group, 2020), 148.

11. Kira Williams and Alison Mountz, “Between Enforcement and Precarity: Externalization and Migrant Deaths at Sea,” *International Migration* 56, no. 5 (April 2018): 85, <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12439>.

border enforcement entirely, but rather propose other areas of study on the subject matter based on their many inconclusive findings of being unable to establish empirical causality. The frank disclosure on the limitations of their study is detailed and provides a pathway for others to attempt a more statistical testing on migration patterns in the Mediterranean with border externalization, in the hopes of avoiding similar study shortcomings.

Mueller and Slominski's (2021) article provides more insight into the increased numbers of migration coming out of the Central Mediterranean in the case of Libya, just as Carerra and Cortinovis do, and the inferences made in Williams linear regression study to others focused on the Libyan SAR zone; however, Muller and Slominski propose that political EU actors intentionally orchestrate strategies of border management to "escape legal constraints" of maritime laws by shifting the responsibility to third countries identified as a failed state.¹² By examining the 2012 Hirsi ruling, which "made it difficult for the EU to continue its long-standing practice of extraterritorial push-back operation,"¹³ EU agencies and states carried out MIOs based on the legal assumption that push-back operations in extraterritorial sea zones that were outside the peripheral confines of EU SAR zones and maritime laws. Interceptions and pushbacks were justified based on ambiguous provisions in international law, the Schengen Borders Code,¹⁴ and bilateral agreements with third countries; however, the European Court of Human rights (ECHR) ruled in the Hirsi case that EU member states have to abide by ECHR laws in extraterritorial sea borders of MIOs.¹⁵ To evade legalities, the EU decreased SAR operations and increased cooperation with third countries.

The dissertation of Indenkleeff (2019), aims to answer one question: "how has securitization affected the European Union's research and rescue activities during the Mediterranean migration crisis?"¹⁶ Indenkleeff examines the discourses analysis of what, who, and how based on the Copenhagen¹⁷ and Paris¹⁸ school of securitization theory. Through what involves EU states that have been able to identify the Mediterranean Sea as a crisis to justify policy measures that would allow them to legally control migration and external sea and land borders.¹⁹ The who involves the parties responsible for carrying out border control and identifies who is considered the security threat, such as smuggling networks.²⁰ Although the word threat is not used to reference migrants, it is often implied in media discourse, which Indenkleeff illuminates throughout her dissertation. The how is the securitization of border control being conducted through SAR operations, which came secondary to "anti-smuggling objectives".²¹ In the

12. Patrick Müller and Peter Slominski, "Breaking the Legal Link but Not the Law? The Externalization of EU Migration Control through Orchestration in the Central Mediterranean," *Journal of European Public Policy* 28, no. 6 (April 24, 2020): 802, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2020.1751243>.

13. *Ibid.*, 802.

14. Regulation on integrated border management that sets rules on border control of persons crossing EU external borders and on the temporary reintroduction of border control at internal borders.

15. *Ibid.*, 808.

16. Saray Indenkleeff, "Securitisation at the Mediterranean Frontier through Search and Rescue at Sea" (PDF, 2019): 10, https://theses.ubn.ru.nl/bitstream/handle/123456789/8482/Indenkleeff%2C_Saray_1.pdf?sequence=1.

17. Focuses on non-military aspects of security.

18. Focuses on how different disciplinary fields study the label of security and the boundaries of security practices.

19. *Ibid.*, 63.

20. *Ibid.*, 64.

21. *Ibid.*, 65.

discourse of externalizing borders, the EU has legitimized the extension of their border controls by exercising SAR activities outside of their SAR zone. The precariousness of this extension has only increased the grueling journeys of refugee and asylum seekers. Before Brexit,²² the UK's decision to refrain from SAR activities in the Mediterranean, termed the 'let them drown' policy, was another example of the growing contention between EU states over the shared and equitable responsibilities of SAR activities.²³

This literature review has explored a wide range of controversial themes interconnected with SAR responsibilities in the Mediterranean. The short stretch of water between Spain and Morocco (Western route) is not the most traveled route across the Mediterranean Sea when compared to the number of migrants crossing through the Central and Eastern routes, as noted in the literature review. However, SAR operations conducted between the two countries warrant an equal amount of analysis as other routes traveled. The next section of the paper will assess SAR activities and different types of maritime securitization enforced by Spain and Morocco separately.

PART II

Case Study: Spain

The land border route of Ceuta and Melilla (also referred to as Spanish enclaves) are the most traveled routes by migrants. In both enclaves, border securitization consists of six-meter double metal fences with barbed wire running along the top and is commonly referred to as the "Fortress Europe."²⁴ These fences are guarded by Moroccan security forces and the Guardia Civil, the oldest law enforcement agency in Spain.²⁵ Police have been known to use excessive force to apprehend refugees and migrants from climbing fences. For example, the Human Rights Watch (2014), detailed one encounter between immigrants and the Spanish Guardia Civil: "After the migrants drowned trying to reach Ceuta on February 6, 2014, and initial denials, Minister Fernández confirmed that Spanish Guardia Civil agents had fired rubber bullets and tear gas into the water."²⁶ The Spanish government has since banned the use of rubber bullets to ward off migrants. Increased border enforcement has not deterred migration and although SAR activities should be focused on aiding people who are in distress at sea, keeping migrants at bay has been the primary objective.

The SASEMAR, also known as the *Salvamento Marítimo*, is a civil Spanish agency responsible for SAR operations, maritime traffic control, and maritime environmental protection.²⁷ SASEMAR is not a law enforcement or military affiliated agency; however, over the past 20 years they have been forced to take on a more securitized approach to SAR despite interagency opposition between the SASEMAR labor

22. The withdrawal of the UK from the EU.

23. Karolina Follis, "Chapter 4: Ethnography up the Stream the UK 'Let Them Drown' Policy and the Politics of Bordering Europe," in *Externalizing Migration Management* (London: Routledge, 2016), 308.

24. Xavier Ferrer-Gallardo and Abel Albet-Mas, "EU-Limbo-scapes: Ceuta and the Proliferation of Migrant Detention Spaces across the European Union," *European Urban and Regional Studies* 23, no. 3 (November 11, 2013): 528, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0969776413508766>.

25. "Plantilla Home Principal," www.guardiacivil.es, <https://www.guardiacivil.es/es/institucional/Conocenos/index.html>. [Accessed 16 May 2022].

26. "Spain/Morocco: Protect Migrants, Asylum Seekers," Human Rights Watch, March 24, 2014, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/03/24/spain/morocco-protect-migrants-asylum-seekers#>.

27. "Maritime Safety and Rescue Society," Wikipedia, January 10, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maritime_Safety_and_Rescue_Society. [Accessed 16 May 2022].

union, the EU, and Spanish government.²⁸ Agency resources such as equipment, SAR processes and procedures, have either changed, been dismantled, or remained inoperable. For instance, communication protocols that report on the number of migrant rescues on social media platforms like Twitter, is an important network utilized by outside groups and people who aid and report on the maritime migration. SASEMAR has changed its communication protocols and stopped publishing information across social networks presumably as a strategy to project an image of maritime migration as tempered and controlled, while they continue to outsource SAR operations to third countries behind the scenes of social media. This has ‘disappeared’ the migrant from media discourse, which not only ignores the plights of maritime rescue workers who are enduring more work hours with less resources but makes it more difficult to track the number of migrant deaths and rescues at sea.²⁹ Spain does not have an official database to track missing persons and deceased migrants. The SASEMAR twitter page was one of the few reliable sources of information, but the change in communication protocols has shifted to picture and informational fluff pieces like sunsets, maritime safety tips and holiday greetings instead of the work of SASEMAR crew members conducting SAR activities. The gap in data collection of migrant rescues and disappearances has also left families and people searching for missing loved ones with a lack of closure in mourning and/or reunification with survivors.³⁰

The militarization push of SAR operations by the Spanish government to dismantle the SASEMAR and give more authority and resources to the Guardia Civil, which falls under the Ministries of Interior and Defense, is aimed at controlling irregular migration across the Strait of Gibraltar and less focused on maritime rescue of migrants. By giving more resources to the Guardia Civil in the Ministries of Interior and Defense, SAR operations become a military response instead of a rescue response. Nevertheless, strategies of deterrence have not prevailed, and people continue to attempt migration by sea. According to the United Nation Operation Data Portal, sea arrivals in Spain far exceed the number of land arrivals of migrants.³¹ In 2018, the number of illegal migrants doubled, even with increased border restrictions during the worldwide Coronavirus pandemic, migration steadily increased from 2020 to 2021. Land arrivals during that time decreased by 315 and increased in sea arrivals by 653, which indicates sea travel as the preferred route of migration based on the data presented in Figure 1.³²

28. Luna Vives, “Death at Sea: Dismantling the Spanish Search and Rescue System,” *Geopolitics*, October 12, 2021, 2 & 19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2021.1973438>.

29. Gabriela Sánchez, “Los Rescates de Migrantes Desaparecen de Las Redes Sociales de Salvamento Marítimo Por ‘Un Cambio En El Protocolo de Comunicación,’” *ElDiario.es*, January 3, 2019, https://www.eldiario.es/desalambre/migrantes-desaparecen-salvamento-maritimo-comunicacion_1_1765606.htm.

30. *Ibid.*

31. “Mediterranean Situation: Spain,” *data2.unhcr.org*, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5226>. [Accessed 16 May 2022]

32. *Ibid.*

Figure 1

Figure 1

Previous years	Sea arrivals*	Land arrivals	Dead and missing**
2021	41,979	1,218	1,581
2020	40,326	1,535	788
2019	26,168	6,345	684
2018	58,569	6,814	811
2017	22,103	6,246	202
2016	8,162	6,443	77
2015	5,312	11,624	59

* Including the sea arrivals to Canary Islands. Data are as of 31 December 2021.

** Including the incidents occurred along the Canary Islands route.

Sea and land arrivals to Spain from 2015 to 2023³³

Current sea arrivals are projected to surpass the previous year. As of May 2022, there have been 9,244 sea arrivals.³⁴ Migration activity has not subsided, and SAR operations are still being carried out by SASEMAR. This month, 57 migrants were rescued from a sinking inflatable boat in route to the Canary Islands,³⁵ and in April, 3 vessels carrying around 106 people were rescued off the same coast.³⁶ Despite SASEMAR’s lack of resources, overworked and underpaid staff, and less operational independence, they remain active in carrying out SAR activities; however, the agency’s destabilization will have a profound impact on SAR activities for the Western route, and human lives will be the cost.

Figure 2



Sea and land arrivals to Spain in 2022.³⁷

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. Barry Hatton, “Spain Rescues Migrants at Sea but More Are Reported Missing,” *Star Tribune*, May 10, 2022, <https://www.startribune.com/spain-rescues-migrants-at-sea-but-more-are-reported-missing/600171950/>.

36. Borja Suarez, “More than 26 Migrants Missing after Dinghy Capsizes off Spain’s Canary Islands,” *Reuters*, April 26, 2022, sec. Europe, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/more-than-26-migrants-missing-after-dinghy-capsizes-off-spains-canary-islands-2022-04-26/>.

37. “Mediterranean Situation: Spain,” [data2.unhcr.org](https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5226), <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5226>. [Accessed 16 May 2022]

Morocco

The Moroccan Navy is part of the Moroccan Armed Forces, and its primary role is to protect sovereign land and maritime territory along its coastline and exclusive economic zone³⁸ (EEZ).³⁹ However, in conjunction with their naval operations, they are also responsible for SAR activities in the SRR and shared zones with Spain. Morocco has 6 Maritime Rescue Coordination Centers⁴⁰ (MRCC) to Spain's 24 MRCCs⁴¹, which shows that Morocco is under-resourced in responding to a large influx of migrants without the cooperation and collaboration of another country. Spain has been taking steps to increase the number of SAR operations conducted by the Moroccan Navy, while decreasing their own through the dismantling of SASEMAR. Shifting from a more cooperative relationship of SAR to a transfer of responsibilities has resulted in grave consequences for people needing rescue. This will be discussed in greater detail in the next section of this paper. To hurry the transition along, the EU and Spanish government gave Morocco close €175 million to develop their maritime SAR system, during which the SRR became a hard line that neither SASEMAR nor other vessels were permitted to cross in response to SAR distress calls.⁴² They also received additional funds from Spain's annual budget to purchase police vehicles, pay for salaries, and training related to migration control.⁴³

Recent reports of Moroccan SAR activities suggest that Spain and the EU's fiscal investment in outsourcing migration control to Morocco has been effective. In June of 2021, the Coast Guard of Morocco Navy assisted over 244 irregular migrations crossing the North Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea over a 48-hour period, while conducting maritime operations according to an article in the Morocco World News.⁴⁴ It also stated that Moroccan security services "dismantled over 5,000 trafficking networks and rescued over 80,500 migrants at sea" over a 4-year period.⁴⁵ Accounts made by Vivas (2021), reveal the contrary:

SASEMAR boats rarely intervene in the Moroccan SRR anymore. However, according to participants, Morocco's increased SAR capacity and responsibility did not necessarily translate into actual rescues: 'Spain wants Morocco to handle interventions in its SAR zone, but sometimes [the Royal Navy] goes to a rescue, sometimes it doesn't. We know ... of a patera that got lost in Alboran on August 14 and they told us Morocco took care of it, but we never heard about it and the families are still looking for the thirty-seven people who were onboard...'⁴⁶

38. "Royal Moroccan Navy," *Wikipedia*, May 3, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Moroccan_Navy. [Accessed 16 May 2022].

39. An exclusive economic zone (EEZ), as prescribed by the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, is an area of the sea in which a sovereign state has special rights regarding the exploration and use of marine resources. *Wikipedia*. 2019.

40. "Morocco," Search and Rescue Contacts, <https://sarcontacts.info/countries/morocco/>. [Accessed 16 May 2022].

41. "Spain," Search and Rescue Contacts, <https://sarcontacts.info/countries/spain/>. [Accessed 16 May 2022].

42. Luna Vives, "Death at Sea: Dismantling the Spanish Search and Rescue System," *Geopolitics*, October 12, 2021, 18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2021.1973438>.

43. *Ibid.*, 18.

44. Safaa Kasraoui, "Morocco's Royal Navy Assists 244 Irregular Migrants in Mediterranean," <https://www.morocccoworldnews.com/> (Morocco World News, July 4, 2021), <https://www.morocccoworldnews.com/2021/07/343228/morocco-s-royal-navy-assists-244-irregular-migrants-in-mediterranean>.

45. *Ibid.*

46. Luna Vives, "Death at Sea: Dismantling the Spanish Search and Rescue System," *Geopolitics*, October 12, 2021, 19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2021.1973438>.

Similar accusations of Morocco's lack of SAR activities have been made by outside organizations and the Spanish government. For example, in May 2021, Spain saw a surge of illegal migration from Morocco when Brahim Ghali, a known chief of a rebel group from the Western Sahara who has a history of engaging in armed conflict with Moroccan forces, was allowed into Madrid for medical treatment.⁴⁷ As stated in a motion filed by the European Parliament for Morocco's violation of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child of 1989 and 9 others, more than 9,000 illegal migrants crossed Spanish borders by sea and land.⁴⁸ The case study of Spain and Morocco has given a brief overview of SAR activities carried out by the two countries, while examining intra-agency changes and the transfer of SRR responsibilities. The final section of this paper will delve deeper into SAR ambiguity.

PART III

Analysis of SAR Zones

There was a significant decline in sea arrivals to Spanish territories in 2018 and 2019 from 58,669 to 26,168 arrivals.⁴⁹ The EU attributes this to close cooperation between Spain and Morocco over 10 years.⁵⁰ However, Lloyd-Damnjanovic (2020) proposes alternative explanations to sea arrival declines, where policies that restrict SAR activities of NGOs is one factor. A decline in sea arrivals does not translate to a decline in death rates. For example, "even as overall crossings have declined, the death rate has been going up: in 2019, one in 21 people who attempted the crossing died, slightly more than double the rate of 2016."⁵¹ Maritime SAR activities carried out by SASEMAR have been decreasing resources and redirecting responsibilities to Morocco. The change of internal protocols by the SASEMAR has resulted in preventable deaths at sea and delayed SAR responses. Resources such as SAR aircrafts, vessels, advanced surveillance systems, and the 24 MRCCs overseen by the SASEMAR, far exceeds the infrastructure and capabilities of the Moroccan Navy.⁵² Instead of Spain assisting Morocco in their search and rescue region (SRR)⁵³ and overlapping SAR zones, they have opted to limit their SAR operations and externalize maritime responsibilities to Morocco. The results of this have been problematic to say the least.

In 2014, the *Alarm Phone* organization was established "by activist networks and civil society actors in Europe and Northern Africa" for migrants traveling across the

47. "Spain Returns People Who Swam from Morocco, Adds Troops to Border," *www.aljazeera.com*, May 17, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/17/scores-of-migrants-and-refugees-swim-to-spains-ceuta-enclave>. [Accessed 16 May 2022]

48. Jordi CAÑAS, "MOTION for a RESOLUTION the Breach of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child and the Use of Minors by the Moroccan Authorities in the Migratory Crisis in Ceuta | B9-0362/2021 | European Parliament," *www.europarl.europa.eu*, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-9-2021-0362_EN.html. [Accessed 16 May 2022]

49. "Mediterranean Situation: Spain," *data2.unhcr.org*, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5226>. [Accessed 16 May 2022].

50. "Morocco," EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa - European Commission, n.d., https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/region/north-africa/morocco_en. [Accessed 16 May 2022]

51. Isabella Lloyd-Damnjanovic, "Criminalization of Search-And-Rescue Operations in the Mediterranean Has Been Accompanied by Rising Migrant Death Rate," *migrationpolicy.org*, October 7, 2020, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/criminalization-rescue-operations-mediterranean-rising-deaths>. [Accessed 16 May 2022]

52. Luna Vives, "Death at Sea: Dismantling the Spanish Search and Rescue System," 18; "Spain," Search and Rescue Contacts, <https://sarcontacts.info/countries/spain/>.

53. An area where the state is responsible for providing SAR services.

Mediterranean to make SOS⁵⁴ calls for sea distress.⁵⁵ The *Alarm Phone* does not aid in rescue operations. When phone calls are received the situations are documented and given to the appropriate coast guard SRR. On February 6, 2022, *Alarm Phone* received a distress call “about a rubber boat carrying 54 people (20 women, 33 men, 1 minor)” that was partially deflated due to extreme weather conditions.⁵⁶ The boat was also carrying a deceased person. Based on the map below the position of the distressed boat can be seen south of the Canary Islands and east of the Moroccan border.

Figure 3:



Position at 23:30 CET 7 February 2022. Photo: Alarm Phone

Satellite image of GPS location showing the location of stranded migrants in a rubber boat on February 6, 2022.⁵⁷

The following map shows the overlapping SAR zone of Spain and Morocco in orange, where the distressed boat was found. Overlapping zones are not the same as shared zones, where two states have legally agreed to share in the responsibility of SAR activities. Overlapping zones do not have this agreement, which further complicates SAR operations and rests on the interpretation of maritime laws by the states. *Alarm Phone* alerted both the Moroccan Navy and the Spanish authorities of the distress call, and although a cargo ship was close enough to carry out rescue operation, they were instructed to standby and monitor the situation until the Moroccan Navy arrived.⁵⁸ The Spanish authorities chose not to respond and were insistent on outsourcing the rescue operation to Morocco in this case. *Alarm Phone* diligently monitored the situation between all parties involved and received differing accounts on the report of casualties and time of rescue. The MRCC-Rabat reported the rescue of 53 people with no casualties at 0845 the following Monday morning, which included 20 women and one minor; however, survivors told a different account:

54. “Definition of SOS,” www.merriam-webster.com, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/SOS>. [Accessed 16 May 2022].

55. “About,” *Alarm Phone*, accessed May 15, 2022, <https://alarmphone.org/en/about/>. [Accessed 16 May 2022].

56. “Migrants’ Lives Don’t Matter in the Atlantic - Another Case of Fatal Non-Assistance?,” *Alarm Phone*, February 9, 2022, https://alarmphone.org/en/2022/02/09/migrants-lives-dont-matter-in-the-atlantic-another-case-of-fatal-non-assistance/?post_type_release_type=post. [Accessed 16 May 2022].

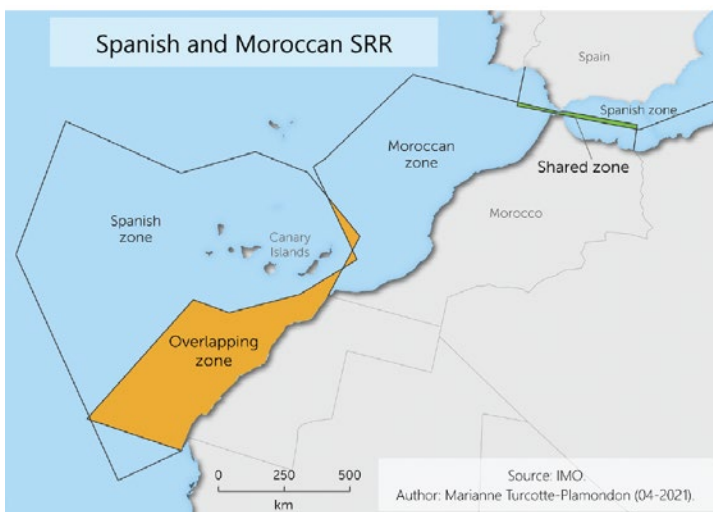
57. *Ibid.*

58. *Ibid.*

According to them, they were only rescued at 11pm on Monday night and had to spend another night and day on board of the Moroccan SAR vessel, arriving in Dakhla on Tuesday evening, February 8th. During that time, no medical or other assistance was provided to the survivors, they were only given some water. And – most importantly – the survivors have now repeatedly confirmed that four people died before the Moroccan vessel ever arrived, one woman and three men.⁵⁹

This is just one of many examples of SAR ambiguity between the two governments that *Alarm Phone* has reported on. Since the slow dismantling of the SASEMAR, from 2018 to 2019, operational decisions regarding SAR were made by a military Single Operative Command.⁶⁰ Vivas (2021) discusses another SAR distress situation in the Strait of Gibraltar where the Single Operative Command sent a rescue crew to a shared SAR zone to monitor a distressed boat until the Moroccan Navy arrived and where only permitted to intervene if the boat capsized (20). Once migrants have been intercepted and/or rescued they are often expelled back to Morocco by Spanish authorities.

Figure 4



Overlapping SAR zones are seen in orange and shared SAR zones are seen in green on the map. (SAR zones are also referred to as ‘search and rescue regions’ (SRR))⁶¹

The Readmission Agreement of 1992 is another calamity. The purpose of this agreement was to slow migration and indirectly scale back operations of migration management and border control by shifting the level of responsibility back to the requested state to receive illegal migrants back. The readmission agreement intersects with laws aimed at maritime borders between Spain and Morocco. For example, the 2014 regulation of the European Parliament and of the council, establishes the rules

59. “Migrants’ Lives Don’t Matter in the Atlantic - Another Case of Fatal Non-Assistance?,” *Alarm Phone*, February 9, 2022, https://alarmphone.org/en/2022/02/09/migrants-lives-dont-matter-in-the-atlantic-another-case-of-fatal-non-assistance/?post_type_release_type=post. [Accessed 16 May 2022].

60. Luna Vivas, “Death at Sea: Dismantling the Spanish Search and Rescue System,” *Geopolitics*, October 12, 2021, 8, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2021.1973438>.

61. *Ibid.*

for surveilling of sea borders to be a shared, fair, and cooperative effort among all EU member states.⁶² It further states that arrangements with third country nationals, like the readmission agreement between Morocco and Spain, does not absolve member EU states of their obligations under international law and they are legally obligated to assist persons found in distress at sea by carrying out SAR operations. Nevertheless, the primary objective is to keep illegal migrants out of Spain and to quickly expel them back to the third country of Morocco as outlined in the Readmission Agreement. The 100 Moroccans who swam into the Spanish territory of Ceuta in April of 2021 were expelled in less than 48 hours is evidence of the agreement.⁶³

The purpose of the paper was to discuss how ambiguous SAR zones across the Strait of Gibraltar has led to delimitations of maritime borders disputes that conflict with SAR responsibilities between Spain and Morocco, which place migrants in a precarious position between the two countries. SRR ambiguity between these two states show no signs of change anytime soon. The good work of organizations like *Alarm Phone* and SAR crew members who continue to raise awareness about the lack of cooperation and coordination of rescues is vital to the cause of a world without borders, where crossing the Mediterranean would not be a crisis and a choice between life and death.

62. "EUR-Lex - 32014R0656 - EN - EUR-Lex," Europa.eu, 2014, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32014R0656>. [Accessed 16 May 2022].

63. "Spain Returns People Who Swam from Morocco, Adds Troops to Border," www.aljazeera.com, May 17, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/17/scores-of-migrants-and-refugees-swim-to-spains-ceuta-enclave>. [Accessed 16 May 2022].

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Assessing Post-Taliban Sino-Afghan Strategic Partnership

AHMAD FAISAL SAFI

ABSTRACT:

This paper assesses the strategic partnership between China and Afghanistan in the aftermath of the Taliban's takeover of the country in 2021. Sino-Afghan relations have developed in a unique direction over the past two decades. Despite having different interests and political philosophies about regional issues and economic and military imperatives in the past, post-Taliban Afghanistan is seeking a close alliance with China. Conversely, China is attempting to fill the power vacuum the US withdrawal has made in the region. The strength of the relationship between China and Afghanistan has been significantly impacted by Beijing's worries about the security risks emanating from Afghanistan. Overall, this paper provides insights into the current state of the Sino-Afghan relationship, the potential for future cooperation and collaboration between the two countries, and the emerging risks and opportunities.

INTRODUCTION:

This policy brief analyzes the strategic partnership and possible future scenarios between 2022-2027 within the framework of cooperation and concerns between China and Post-Taliban Afghanistan. This paper will also offer a plausible analysis of the primary debate of whether or not China will attempt to fill the gap that the US withdrawal in the region has caused. Does Post-Taliban Afghanistan present more opportunities or threats for China? In other words, will Chinese trade and developmental aid for Afghanistan be used to foster and facilitate Chinese projects such as Belt and Road Initiative or to fund extremist organizations such as the Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), or the Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA)? Since the US withdrew from Afghanistan in 2021 after 20 years of presence in the country, this situation has gained significance as the Chinese interests in Afghanistan have grown significantly. This policy paper discusses the main determinants of trade agreements and China's enduring security concerns in Afghanistan, relying on various perspectives and approaches in existing academic literature. This topic is relevant as, before 2001, China observed principles of neutrality and non-interference regarding Afghanistan. Today's "China is an economic giant and a nuclear power with global ambitions."¹ Despite the fears "China's had in the past that having close ties with Taliban might trigger the USA and could increase risk of competition and conflict,"² the current Chinese leadership has sought to forge strategic

1. Dara Conduit & Shahram Akbarzadeh (2019) Great Power-Middle Power Dynamics: The Case of China and Iran, *Journal of Contemporary China*, 985

2. Ibid

alliances while also searching for a new destination for its commercial markets. With Taliban control over Afghanistan, this concept has sparked both interest and concern amongst Chinese officials. Focusing on this region serves various purposes, including addressing the potential security threat posed by the Uygur separatists in Afghanistan as well as rising trade agreements that offer an opportunity for China to gain access and influence into regions such as Central and South Asia, the Middle East, and East Asia.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

1. Policy issue and its significance

Relations between China and Afghanistan can be traced back to the second-century BCE Silk Road, which granted China access to Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East. Both countries share a 67 km border in the Northeast of Afghanistan. Some scholars argue that “China as a land border has always been a player in Kabul. But what to make of its presence, to a large extent, lies in the eye of the beholder.”³ During the Cold War, officials from both governments visited, and in 1960, Afghanistan and China signed the Treaty of Friendship & Mutual Non-Aggression. This treaty remained in place during most of the Cold War era; later, with the invasion of the US into Afghanistan, the situation began to change. After 9/11, China declared “unconditional support for the US in fighting terrorism and voted in favor of the US in resolution 1368 and resolution 1373, which provided the legal basis for the US army to invade Afghanistan.”⁴ The presence of the US in Afghanistan presented a severe dilemma for Chinese strategic interests in the region. However, they also benefited from the security that “the presence of US soldiers was offering them.”⁵ Therefore, the net effect was that the growth and spread of most of the terrorist groups that were a threat to Chinese interests were targeted and curtailed.

From 2001 until 2021, Beijing tried to keep a distance from any military involvement; not only did they hesitate to send troops to join The International Security Assistance Force, but they also avoided participating in the Northern Distribution Network, a supply line for the ISAF in Afghanistan.⁶ China attempted to facilitate reconciliation between the Islamic Republic and the Taliban, but to no avail.⁷ Later, China shifted its focus to more trade agreements, such as those for the Aynak copper and Hajigak iron mines. Ultimately, security concerns resulted in most of these projects failing. Former Afghan presidents tried to pressure Pakistan because they supported the Taliban via China. However, “China delegated its policy with Rawalpindi to ensure that the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) remains secure.”⁸ With the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, China shifted its centuries-old policy towards Afghanistan from one that was marked by indifference to one that features active engagement.⁹ Currently, China is forging a new strategy for

3. Paliwal Avinash. 2022. “Book review: Stanly Johny and Ananth Krishnan, *Comrades and the Mullahs: China, Afghanistan and the New Asian Geopolitics*.” *China Report* 58, no. 4: 452

4. LI LI. 2022. “China’s Afghanistan Policy in a Post-US Era.” *East Asian Policy (EAP)* vol. 14, no. 86.

5. Paliwal Avinash. 2022. “Book review: Stanly Johny and Ananth Krishnan, *Comrades and the Mullahs: China, Afghanistan and the New Asian Geopolitics*.” *China Report* 58, no. 4: 453.

6. LI, LI. 2022. “China’s Afghanistan Policy in a Post-US Era.” *East Asian Policy (EAP)* vol. 14, no. 86.

7. Paliwal Avinash. 2022. “Book review: Stanly Johny and Ananth Krishnan, *Comrades and the Mullahs: China, Afghanistan and the New Asian Geopolitics*.” *China Report* 58, no. 4: 452

8. *Ibid*, 453

9. Ghulam Ali. 2020. “China–Pakistan cooperation on Afghanistan: assessing key interests and implementing strategies.” *The Pacific Review* 35, no. 3: 509.

post-Taliban Afghanistan. As a land neighbor, China's policy towards Afghanistan could have bilateral, regional, and even global significance. China is the only great power that has never invaded Afghanistan and could be better positioned to provide the Afghan people with better opportunities.¹⁰ For instance, Chinese industrial and infrastructure-building capabilities could help Afghanistan to build a better future. Alternatively, China could facilitate the BRI project by connecting Kabul to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor; in so doing, China would have access to most of Central Asia, Iran, Turkey, and the Caspian Sea for trade and energy purposes.¹¹ Extending the CPEC to Afghanistan, a highway from Kabul to Islamabad, would offer China access to what it truly prizes—a treasure trove of minerals worth trillions of US dollars, including gold, copper, and uranium.

2. *Current Status*

Following the Taliban takeover, many experts expected China to quickly jump into this power vacuum and try to recognize and legitimize the Taliban's government during the early months. Even the Taliban themselves expected China to initiate investments and facilitate further negotiations.¹² China avoided any immediate action and took a more conditioned approach, instead presenting four conditions for the Taliban to further progress in relations. The outline of Chinese officials' conditions was to take a strict stance against Uyghur militants, form an inclusive government, moderate their domestic policies, and create distance from the United States.¹³ Some of the elements of these conditions, such as strict action towards Uyghurs, made the ethnic minority “Uyghurs in Afghanistan who fled during the Cultural Revolution led by Mao Zedong worry about their status.”¹⁴ Although the Taliban stated their support for Uyghur Muslims previously, the conditions that China has proposed for further negotiations might change their opinion; the Taliban has a huge budget deficit, and pleasing China in exchange for their help is a very enticing option.

3. *Main Variables*

a) *Security Concerns*

China is concerned about the activity and presence of three non-state actors in Afghanistan that can threaten Chinese security and interests in the region.¹⁵ These groups are the Al-Qaeda-linked East Turkestan Islamic Movement or ETIM (now called the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP). ETIM fights for the freedom of the Xinjiang province of China), the Baluchistan Liberation Army or BLA (which opposes the presence of China in the Baluchistan region), and the Tehrik-I-Taliban Pakistan (known as TTP, claims opposition to the Pakistan government by military resistance). China is worried that the Taliban takeover might encourage groups such as the TIP,

10. LI LI. 2022. “China's Afghanistan Policy in a Post-US Era.” *East Asian Policy (EAP)* vol. 14, no. 87.

11. Ghulam, Ali. 2020. “China–Pakistan cooperation on Afghanistan: assessing key interests and implementing strategies.” *The Pacific Review* 35, no. 3: 518.

12. Atal Ahmadzai, and Derek Grossman. 2022. “China-Taliban Relations Post-U.S. Withdrawal Plagued by Mistrust.” *Foreign Policy*, January 27, 2022. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/01/27/china-taliban-relations-cooperation-afghanistan-withdrawal/>.

13. Hu Xijun, 2021. “What does China expect from the new Afghan government?” *Global Times*, August 23, 2021. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202108/1232229.shtml>.

14. Muiy Xiao, 2021. “Afghan Uyghurs Fear Taliban Will Deport Them to China.” *The New York Times*, November 9, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/23/world/asia/afghanistan-uyghurs-china-taliban.html>.

15. Claude Rakisits, 2022. “Afghanistan: China's Challenging Relationship with the Taliban.” *Defense Journal* 25, no. 3: 47.

which functions as an armed Uyghur group in Afghanistan that launches terror attacks from across the border (although they have not been active recently). While the TIP has limited resources in Afghanistan, Beijing is concerned that increasing international focus on “the appalling situation of human rights in Xinjiang may give the TIP a new lease.”¹⁶ The Taliban’s foreign minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, gave a public statement at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) conference in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, in July 2022, pledging that the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan will not allow any of its members or groups, such as Al-Qaida to pose a threat to the security of other states from its soil.¹⁷ However, Beijing remains skeptical, and the death of Al-Qaida leader Ayman Al-Zawahiri (a refugee in Kabul) might not aid further progress. In addition to this, during 1996-2000, during their last regime, the Taliban allowed Uyghur fighters to operate in Afghanistan. It has also been reported that “TIP militants participated in the capture of Kabul in August 2021, which may indicate ideological affinity among Taliban and the Uyghur militants.”¹⁸

Nevertheless, Tehrik-I-Taliban Pakistan also helped capture Kabul and has maintained a close relationship with the Taliban since the beginning of the Taliban’s resurgence in 2005. What worries China about the TTP is that while the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) has a smaller number of militants, “the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan has around 6000-6500 members and poses serious threats to Chinese interests in the region.”¹⁹ The TTP benefited the most from the Taliban takeover in 2021. With the Taliban’s desire to establish close ties with China, they must turn against the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and evict them from Afghanistan. Since the takeover, the number of attacks by TTP has increased, primarily orchestrated from Afghanistan. They “claimed responsibility for 87 attacks that have killed almost 158 people.”²⁰ This is unwelcome news for China, as these attacks have also targeted Chinese citizens and threatened China-Pakistan economic corridor (CPEC) infrastructure projects. Although “Pakistan’s military promised to assemble an army of 12 thousand soldiers assigned to the protection of Chinese workers within the framework of a \$46-billion infrastructure program.”²¹ TTP attacks can be a frustrating element. CPEC is the jewel in China’s multi-trillion-dollar BRI crown. The Balochistan Liberation Army is another armed group that targets Chinese citizens and aims to destroy Chinese-built infrastructure in the important region of the Southwestern province of Baluchistan. Gwadar Port, the multi-billion-dollar deep-sea facility made by China as part of CPEC, is located in Baluchistan. Several BLA attacks have targeted the Gwadar port. Thus, the TTP and the BLA have common goals and similar methodologies. China and Pakistan have repeatedly demanded that the Taliban hunt down these terror groups. These groups are not only a growing threat to China’s multi-billion-dollar infrastructure projects and trade investments but can also affect further cooperation and usage of trade networks such as the Gwadar port.

16. Ibid, 47

17. Ibid, 47

18. Ibid, 48

19. Ibid, 48

20. Ibid, 48

21. Wall street journal: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/pakistan-to-create-security-force-to-protect-chinese-workers-1429701872>

b) China's strategic economic and geopolitical interests

The Taliban, given the circumstances of its current situation, is eager to make further progress in its relationship with China, particularly in trade and investments, to fulfill its budget deficit and to circumvent Western sanctions.²² However, some scholars argue that Beijing is not interested in blindly financing the “Islamist insurgents-turned-administrators;”²³ This has turned the tables in regime relations with China after the Taliban takeover. Suppose terror-related issues are not resolved, and the Taliban continues to support these groups covertly and hesitates to make any moves against them. In that case, Beijing will continue to take more prudent actions. Neither China nor Pakistan has officially recognized the Taliban regime, although China has allowed the Taliban to re-open their embassy in Beijing. China at the SCO meeting in July of this year, China also announced a 98% tariff-free policy on imported goods from Afghanistan to China.²⁴ This means that despite all the concerns, China is still keen to lie an eye on unexploited Afghan mineral reserves estimated to be worth \$1-3 trillion — and to use this geostrategic location to connect to Central and South Asian markets. As an example of this in practice, during the Shanghai as mentioned above, Cooperation Organization meeting, Beijing announced its financial support for constructing a transnational railway across Afghanistan to connect Uzbekistan to Pakistani seaports. This project can be a foothold and facilitator for the BRI project.

Nonetheless, the instability stemming from post-Taliban Afghanistan may affect the further developments of BRI, such as the China-Central Asia-West Asia Corridor and CPEC, as “two out of six corridors being developed in the BRI are in close proximity to Afghanistan.”²⁵ The Sino-Afghan border is almost inaccessible due to its rugged geographic terrain, but China possesses two alternative routes via central Asia or Pakistan to connect with Afghanistan. Therefore, the importance of Pakistan and its respective geopolitical interests cannot be ignored by Chinese authorities.

In recent years, Pakistan has established good working relations with China and has begun distancing itself from the US.²⁶ Pakistan offers various advantages when compared to other Central Asian countries. For instance: infrastructure in Pakistan is reasonable and could potentially help China connect with Afghanistan by land and other states through seaports such as Gwadar Port. China and Pakistan have successfully conducted the trials for China-Gwadar and Gwadar-Afghanistan routes.²⁷ Despite all the progress, the lack of trust between Chinese officials and the Taliban makes this relationship inherently hostile. The Taliban sees China as an alternative to escape Western sanctions and fulfill their budget deficit, so having close ties with China is more likely an expedient necessity or opportunity for them. Conversely, China has broader goals; they seek to make a global trade network in the East. As most of the states in question are in proximity to Afghanistan, China, therefore, seeks to include the Taliban in its agenda by building a transnational railway across Afghanistan

22. Ibid, 48

23. Paliwal Avinash, 2022. “Book review: Stanly Johny and Ananth Krishnan, Comrades and the Mullahs: China, Afghanistan and the New Asian Geopolitics.” *China Report* 58, no. 4: 454.

24. Claude Rakisits, 2022. “Afghanistan: China’s Challenging Relationship with the Taliban.” *Defense Journal* 25, no. 3: 48.

25. Ghulam Ali, 2020. “China–Pakistan cooperation on Afghanistan: assessing key interests and implementing strategies.” *The Pacific Review* 35, no. 3: 511.

26. Times: <https://time.com/6182411/us-pakistan-china-imran-khan/>

27. Ghulam Ali, 2020. “China–Pakistan cooperation on Afghanistan: assessing key interests and implementing strategies.” *The Pacific Review* 35, no. 3: 517

or reducing tariff fees; however, to what extent Beijing can trust post-Taliban Afghanistan remains unanswered.

c) *“Reconcile the differences and consolidate their ties.”*

Ehsan Rajaye, a renowned author that focuses on the current situation and expectations on post-Taliban Sino-Afghan relations, has drawn focus on the political and economic imperatives and argues that measures are being undertaken to “reconcile the differences and consolidate” ties between the two states.²⁸ In his article, he emphasizes that Beijing aims to make Kabul their natural partner and argues that peace and stability in Afghanistan are essential for China’s rise and for fulfilling the “Chinese Dream.”²⁹ China has never been involved militarily during the 20 years of the war on terror; instead, they began playing a constructive role between the Afghan government and the Taliban and participated in multilateral efforts to offer support financially and politically.³⁰ The head of the Taliban delegation, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, included China among the countries where he expressed his regard and gratitude for their support.³¹ Although peace negotiations between the former Afghan government and the Taliban did not resolve, China continued its efforts toward peaceful cooperation and focused on four stages for a consolidated approach. These elements of their approach included contributing to security and stability in Afghan geography, developing the Afghan economy, political reconciliation, and allowing Afghans to choose their regime model.³²

Furthermore, China is in a geostrategic position to encourage consolidation with the Taliban by offering extensive regional trade and economic development benefits. Nevertheless, China has constraints on consolidating its relationship with Afghanistan under the Taliban regime. Therefore, Chinese economic development and resource extraction strategy cannot halt the security concerns that are emerging from within Afghanistan. Although China’s role in Afghanistan is growing extensively, its success relies upon broader elements such as placating Pakistan and other regional groups that have an influence over the Taliban.³³ Taliban-Pakistani relations have long been rooted in close ties, and Pakistan has supported the Taliban in fulfilling their geopolitical interests. As the reconciliation of differences and consolidation of post-Taliban Sino-Afghan relations may prove optimistic, authors such as Ali Ghulami and Ehsan Rajaye mainly emphasize the “Chinese Dream” and how the Taliban can become included in post-Taliban Sino-Afghan cooperation.

28. Ehsan Rajaye, 2019. “CHINA - AFGHANISTAN RELATIONS IN THE POST TALIBAN PERIOD.” *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies* 23, no. 3: 133.

29. Mokhtar Ahmad Ahmadzai, and Hashmatullah Khan. 2021. “China’s Involvement in Afghanistan Since 2014: Opportunities and Challenges.” *FWU Journal of Social Sciences* 15, no. 4: 5.

30. Ehsan Rajaye, 2019. “CHINA - AFGHANISTAN RELATIONS IN THE POST TALIBAN PERIOD.” *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies* 23, no. 3: 134.

31. Ghulam Ali, 2020. “China–Pakistan cooperation on Afghanistan: assessing key interests and implementing strategies.” *The Pacific Review* 35, no. 3: 519.

32. Ehsan Rajaye, 2019. “CHINA - AFGHANISTAN RELATIONS IN THE POST TALIBAN PERIOD.” *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies* 23, no. 3: 134.

33. *Ibid*, 134

CASE STUDIES: ALTERNATIVE SCENARIOS (2022-2027)*First scenario:*

Can Chinese investments revive an Afghan economy deeply impaired by war and sanctions? How would this contribute to China's goals? China has been seeking to strengthen its relations with Afghanistan in the wake of the Taliban's takeover in 2021. According to a report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, China views Afghanistan as a strategic partner for its Belt and Road Initiative and has engaged in talks with the Taliban to ensure the safety of its investments in the country. Additionally, China has offered to provide humanitarian aid to Afghanistan and has pledged to support the country's reconstruction efforts.³⁴ China has offered up a pool of investments, including 6370 tons of shelter and agricultural equipment, to give to Afghanistan's national disaster management fund. Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin remarked that China would provide 50 million RMB yuan worth of emergency humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan, including tents, sleep blankets, camp beds, and other supplies urgently needed in quake-hit areas in emergency humanitarian assistance for the disastrous flooding and earthquake at the beginning of 2022.³⁵ Most of this aid was delivered by the Chinese Red Cross. Both the Chinese government and the Taliban government are discussing the possibility of extending the CPEC in Pakistan and potentially building a highway from Kabul to Islamabad. These attempts indicate the fact that China has the capability in the form of aid and economic resources to play a major role in post-Taliban Afghanistan, especially in reconstruction and economic development.³⁶

China has also officially included Afghanistan in its Belt and Road Initiative as of December 2020. Afghanistan's metals and minerals are transported directly to China via land through its \$60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the most important economic corridor of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China has made considerable investments in the region, and the instability emanating from Afghanistan affects Chinese geopolitical and economic interests. The Chinese leadership has concluded that its increased role in Afghanistan can buttress its image as a rising power due to its multiple efforts in maintaining regional peace and stability.³⁷ Now, with the withdrawal of the US army and the decline in direct US influence, post-Taliban Afghanistan can be steered in favor of Chinese geopolitical and economic interests.

Second scenario

Following the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, China has been working to establish stable relations with the new government, in part to secure its economic investments in the country. However, the potential for terrorist activity in Afghanistan could threaten China's interests in the region. According to a Council on Foreign Relations report, "If terrorism is seen to pose too great a risk to China's interests in Afghanistan, Beijing could reassess its investments and pull back from economic development in

34. SIPRI. "China and Afghanistan: The Challenge and Opportunity of Cooperation in a New Era." Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, November 2022

35. Chinese Foreign Ministry: https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2535_665405/202206/t20220625_10710078.h tml

36. SIPRI. "China and Afghanistan: The Challenge and Opportunity of Cooperation in a New Era." Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, November 2022

37. Ghulam Ali, 2020. "China-Pakistan cooperation on Afghanistan: assessing key interests and implementing strategies." *The Pacific Review* 35, no. 3: 512.

the region.”³⁸ As such, China’s ability to continue its economic development efforts in Afghanistan may be contingent on its security situation.

Furthermore, despite maintaining close ties with the Taliban and even making further process in negotiations, China’s influence in Afghanistan is limited compared to other actors, such as US and Russia, that have had a historical military presence in Afghanistan.³⁹ In return for its involvement, China seeks security guarantees from the Taliban, and they have repeatedly pressed the new regime to tackle terrorism emanating from its soil. The main concern and the focus of Chinese interest lie on the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM/TIP), a militant group seeking to liberate the Xinjiang region, which Beijing sees as a threat. This group is believed to be operating in Afghanistan, and an image that recently surfaced showed the group’s leader Abdul Haq al-Turkistani celebrating Eid in the north of the country in May 2020 — thus confirming their activity within the region.⁴⁰ The death of Al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, a leader of Al-Qaida who was killed in Kabul, indicates the Taliban’s continuation of their ties with terrorist networks; this may impair further progress in the post-Taliban Sino-Afghan strategic partnership.

In contrast to the TIP’s secrecy, the Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA) openly announced their role in and responsibility for attacks on the Chinese embassy in Islamabad and Chinese-funded Confucius Institute teachers on the University of Karachi campus.⁴¹ Most of these activities will likely be engineered from within Afghan territory. With all this in mind, the second scenario’s guiding question is: is China ready to offer the Taliban a package of trade and infrastructure projects while potentially putting its own security at risk?

The TIP sees Afghanistan as its new nest to grow and recruit, and its presence in Afghanistan cannot be hidden from cameras. Given the broader context, Abdul Haq al-Turkistani enjoying his Eid in Northern Afghanistan clearly threatens Chinese interests in the region. With the Taliban ruling over Afghanistan, the country has become a more hostile environment. States and non-state actors trying to benefit from this environment create an obstacle for China in further advancing its goals and interests.

Most likely outcome:

After the analysis above of threats and opportunities, I conclude that the first scenario is most likely to occur. Currently, I believe the ball is very much in the Taliban’s court. Despite the inherent uncertainties about the future of this relationship, China will continue to develop close ties with post-Taliban Afghanistan. Thus, how the Taliban will take a counterbalancing stance in the Sino-Afghan is very important for a mutually beneficial advancement. China and Afghanistan’s relations have been complicated by the Taliban’s takeover of the country in 2021. However, the Taliban has expressed a desire to maintain good relations with China and has sought to reassure Beijing that it will not support terrorism or allow Afghanistan to be used as a base for terrorist

38. Council on Foreign Relations. “What China Wants in Afghanistan.” September 2021. <https://www.cfr.org/background/what-china-wants-afghanistan>.

39. Ehsan Rajaye, 2019. “CHINA - AFGHANISTAN RELATIONS IN THE POST TALIBAN PERIOD.” *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies* 23, no. 3: 135.

40. Bill Roggio, 2022. “Turkistan Islamic Party leader celebrates Eid in Afghanistan.” *FDD’s Long War Journal*, June 16, 2022. <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2022/06/turkistan-islamic-party-leader-celebrates-eid-in-afghanistan.php>.

41. Soufan center, IntelBrief. 2022. “IntelBrief: Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) Presents Unique Threat to Pakistan.” *The Soufan Center*, May 6, 2022. <https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-2022-may-6/>.

activities. In addition, the Taliban has indicated that it is willing to work with China on its Belt and Road Initiative and has praised China's economic development efforts in the region. According to a Stockholm International Peace Research Institute report, "The Taliban can stabilize relations with China by ensuring the safety of Chinese investments in the country and by demonstrating a commitment to economic development and stability."⁴² This means that while the Taliban are still being held accountable to adhere to their promises to the US yet, at the same time, they must try to satisfy China by eradicating non-state actors that are a threat to Chinese interests from its soil.

China has taken note of the presence and hegemony of the US within the regions in decline and wants to use this opportunity to achieve its "Chinese Dream." It is clear that China does not want to rush in influencing the internal situation of post-Taliban Afghanistan. Instead, by offering limited aid coupled with trade agreements and the extension of CPEC to Afghanistan, China hopes to gain a presence in the region and use this foothold to ensure its geopolitical interests (such as the furtherance of the ongoing BRI project). The size of China's military and its massive economic power indicates that it cannot be easily threatened by non-actor terror networks such as the TIP, the BLA, or the TTP. The primary concern China seems to have is the spillover of violence from post-Taliban-Afghanistan into its territories. However, this will not stop China from pursuing its geopolitical and economic goals. China will continue to act more prudently to push projects such as BRI or CPEC despite threats posed by the BLA or TIP.

42. SIPRI. "China and Afghanistan: The Challenge and Opportunity of Cooperation in a New Era." Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, November 2022

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