Introduction from the Editors in Chief

In the five months that it has taken to construct the sixth edition of the Cambridge Journal of Political Affairs, both British and global politics has continued to develop rapidly, often in unexpected and alarming ways. In times such as this, the Journal's mission—to provide space for young people to advance new ideas and provoke meaningful discussions amongst wider student bodies—is more important than ever. Set up only three years ago, the Journal aims to be a small part of the project to dismantle the 'ivory tower' of academia through the ethics of transparency and inclusivity, cultivated through a student-led and blind peer review process.

Building on the work of previous issues and editorial teams, we are proud to present a varied collection of undergraduate articles on important and oft-pressing political topics. The number of submissions that the Journal received this issue was unprecedented, and we are humbled to be part of a publication with such great and international interest.

This process is only possible alongside the creative engagement of all authors involved, and we thank them for their collaborative work throughout this issue.

Of course, the Journal would also not come to fruition without the hard work of our Managing, Senior and Junior Editors, who we thank for their commitment and thoroughness over the last few months.

We would also like to extend our thanks to Sai Hou Chong, who has now been the Journal's Graphic Designer for three consecutive issues and continues to provide us with original and creative content.

During the production of this issue, we were pleased to again hold and publish interviews with academics as part of our endeavour to cultivate community and better dialogue between academics and students in universities. These are available on our website (https://www.cambridgepoliticalaffairs.co.uk/interviews). We thank Emma Sunesen, our Interviews and Academics Officer, for conducting these interviews.

This is the first year that the Journal has been physically published in addition to being digitally available, and we hope that access to publications will continue to widen as the Journal succeeds further in the issues to come.

In keeping with the Journal's established commitment to embrace a broad definition of 'politics' and to promote creative thinking amongst undergraduate authors, the articles in this issue address a vast range of topics.

We begin with Comparative Politics. Linn Leon Junge opens the issue with an analysis of a particularly topical issue: the European energy crisis. Junge begins by historicising France and Germany's respective energy systems, noting that the French model has proven much more suited to recent issues; he then contextualises the energy crisis with reference to the EU's long-term energy integration goals. In the next article, Ciara McGarry draws our attention to Ukraine and Belarus, an under-studied pairing for comparative studies of nationalism. With reference to both pre-Soviet and Soviet history, McGarry identifies a number of important factors - mythologisation, the dissemination of local-language texts, ethnic homogeneity - in explaining the relative weakness of Belarussian nationalism.

All three articles in International Relations take constructivist approaches to their chosen topics. In our first IR article, Ben Brent develops a distinction between tacit and deliberate absences in IR-related imagery. Analysing photographs, television advertisements, and maps, Brent points out that such absences reinforce information and power asymmetries between nations. Next, Carl Lawrence introduces reputation theory to the subject of international conflict, suggesting that the duration of conflicts is dependent on combatants' reputation for aggression. Closing the International Relations section is Chloe Lee's article on China's attempts to mobilise members of the Chinese diaspora in Britain as 'public diplomacy actors'. Primarily focusing on the use of social media, Lee evaluates the success of

such attempts, and ends by suggesting that sub-national (not national) institutions have proven most successful.

In Political History, Dominic McGinley provides a stimulating snapshot of mid-to-late twentieth century British politics through his analysis of immigration policy between the 1950s and 1970s. Invoking the parallel of Mons Sacer, he argues that the liberal immigration policies of the 1950s became increasingly untenable as right-wing elements of the Conservative Party developed more popular alternative narratives.

Both Political Philosophy articles grapple with tricky ethical issues. Marta Bax carefully explicates the idea of moral actualism and defends it from the criticism of Caspar Hare. Bax then questions how we might apply such insights to politics and policy making, particularly in regard to the climate crisis. Conor Walsh confronts a similarly contested topic, that of collective impact. In contrast to the general scholarly consensus, Walsh argues that collective harm must be attributed only to the collective, not to individuals; pursuing this line of argument across the issues of consumerism, voting, and climate change, he provokingly reframes everyday ethical dilemmas.

Political Sociology proved to be an especially popular field for this issue; of a number of high-quality submissions, we have selected four topical and methodologically-diverse articles. Kirill Bedenkov's article focuses on the role of the British media in creating a political identity for Leave voters. Taking an implicitly comparative approach, Bedenkov determines that pro-Leave media played a major role in the referendum's outcome and, more broadly, sheds light on the role of mediacracy and media democracy in the present moment. This is followed by a second article exploring Brexit: through surveys and a series of interviews, Harris Columba Sidefin assesses the impact of Brexit on attitudes towards violence in Northern Ireland. In doing so, he provides valuable insight into the identity-based nature of recent unrest, highlighting the need for better understanding of these identities in future negotiations over the Northern Ireland Protocol. In the third article, Erin Stoner turns to the topic of the alt-right in Europe and North America, and the myriad ways in which it attracts young people. Comparing existing anti-extremism strategies, Stoner calls for educational systems to actively combat radicalisation, particularly through what she calls 'weatherproof' strategies. Finally, Justin Weir analyses Mexico's political developments, characterising recent violence there as the result of 'double fragmentation' - that is, the simultaneous fragmentation of state and criminal power. Weir subsequently explores the impact of this 'double fragmentation' on Mexican democracy and stability, particularly under the leadership of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

We hope that you enjoy reading, and perhaps take some meaningful insights from, the sixth issue of the Cambridge Journal of Political Affairs.

Danielle Salt & Laura Burland-O'Sullivan
Editors-in-Chief

France and Germany in the Energy Crisis: Past, Present, and Future

Linn Leon Junge

This paper compares the past and current energy policies of France and Germany to examine which one is better equipped to weather the current energy crisis. I compare data concerning energy production and electricity production and analyse the public discourse and political attitudes in both countries. The result is that both countries have for historical reasons diverged significantly on energy policy, and this divergence is having a significant impact right now. Finally, I conclude that, despite the struggles of the country's nuclear reactors, France is overall better situated to navigate the situation without major difficulties than Germany. France has better chances of keeping electricity prices down for its citizens and ensuring a steady supply of energy, both electricity and heating. Additionally, even though renewable electricity production is higher in Germany, France's energy system is much more efficient in terms of combating global warming. I finish by arguing that the EU offers a framework for fixing many of the problems that are plaguing both countries' separate issues.

Unequal Past and Uncertain Future

'Can Europe Keep the Lights on?' read the headline of the Financial Times in November 2022 (Hook & Thomas 2022). Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, European leaders have been working tirelessly to construct a more independent energy system, as citizens and companies worry about paying ever-increasing energy bills. Energy policy has developed into a matter of national security, and much focus has been given to the topic in recent months. In the political as well as in the academic realm, this subject area has gained immeasurably in relevance.

While the EU has made efforts to integrate the energy systems of its member states, the current situation still rests on each country's independent decisions. The current energy system is the product of some specific development in Europe over the last two decades. Since the early 2000s, the energy sector has become increasingly a matter of the private sector, with governments taking a backseat. The climate crisis, meanwhile, and the recognition by Western governments of the need to act, has fundamentally changed the way these states look at energy. In addition, the shale revolution has increased global gas-production, especially in the United States.

Germany and France, the two largest economies in the EU, have varied drastically in their approaches to energy. After WWII, Germany and France built two completely different politico-economic models due to their history and their success in the war. This led to today's different energy models, and thus two ways of facing an exogenous crisis such as the one right now.

Not only do they offer different backgrounds, but any attempts to further integrate the energy systems in the EU will need the backing of, if not the initiation from, these two countries. Such an integration will likely be needed to make the continent as a whole more robust to such shocks.

Therefore, the current situation calls for a need to compare France and Germany's energy systems and policies, to analyse how both countries deal differently and have had varied success with the challenges presented by the current crisis. What, concretely, this article tries to explore is whether France's politico-economic system is better equipped to deal with an exogenous energy crisis than Germany's. Especially in the light of the current situation, which due to its recentness has not been academically explored, I aim to contribute to the understanding of the crisis, its roots, how it impacts governments, and ultimately why some governments are better suited to weather it than others.

This text argues that, while both countries lack diversification in their energy supply, France's current system is much more robust and climate friendly than Germany's. In addition, the EU offers the possibility of creating a unified European energy system that could alleviate the problems the individual countries face.

The topic will be analysed by means of three criteria. The dependency on other countries for the energy needs will be the first; the relationship between the receiving country and supplying country will factor into this as well. Secondly, I will analyse the supply situation of energy overall, including heating, consider whether both governments will be able to ensure a steady supply throughout the winter and beyond, and compare the level of electricity prices. Lastly, the CO_2 emissions connected to energy will serve as the data point to judge the climate performance of each country, focusing on global warming and the 1.5-degree goal.

The question will be answered in three parts. The first will analyse how we got to this situation by comparing the economic models as well as public discourse surrounding energy policy in both countries. In the second part, I will look at precisely these policies that are right now being implemented. In the third and final part, the European Union and its potential will be interrogated.

The topic will be analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. For the quantitative side, I will mainly look at statistics concerning energy usage, imports, the electricity and energy mix, and legislation.

The qualitative research makes it possible to analyse the difference in cultural and overall approach to energy, especially when looking at changes through time. I have decided not to draw data from one source, but from multiple. Using just one source limits the analysis and prevents the researcher from looking at the issue holistically. Additionally, it is here considered important to incorporate both quantitative and qualitative research, making it a necessity to draw from a plethora of available

sources, many of which were reports by governments, agencies, and companies. These reports offered a lot of value for the quantitative side, such as BP's (2021) report *Statistical Review of World Energy*, which served as the main source for energy consumption data. I chose this report because it compiles known data in one source, and after due diligence it is deemed accurate.

The book *Low-carbon Energy Security from a European Perspective* edited by Patrizia Lombardi and Max Gruenig (2016) provides a basis for a multitude of the aspects that are analysed in this paper.

Cotella, Crivello, and Karatayev's (2016) chapter in Lombardi's and Gruenig's book deals with the development of European energy over the decades since WWII. Multiple parts of this article are grounded on and expanded upon this chapter, especially those regarding historical analysis, the section on Europe, as well as when the dangers of a dependence on other nations for energy imports are mentioned. It also provides a methodological framework that uses an analysis of the past to inform decisions about the future. This article expands on the scope of Cotella, Crivello, and Karatayev's chapter, which is limited to chronological review.

Petit (2013) compares nuclear energy policy between Germany and France, and provides valuable insight on the need for comprehensive analysis to compare and assess the situation of the two countries. I expand this argument beyond the realm of nuclear energy.

Aykut overall provides a rich literature on the topic. In his 2019 paper *Reassembling Energy Policy*, he analyses the topic from a historical perspective. This also helped to frame my methodological approach. Aykut and Evrard (2017) trace the emergence of the notion of 'energetic transition' in the two countries. They emphasize how the two models led to a transformation of the energetic system.

Gawel et al. (2014) explain the complicated route that led to transition in Germany. For the French side, Guillaumat-Tailliet (1987) explains the decision to choose nuclear power in France. What this paper adds to this already existing literature is a combination of qualitative and quantitative research.

I believe that there is a research gap when it comes to the crossroads of energy policy, geopolitical decision-making, and security policy, and aim to demonstrate the link between all of these fields.

I. Tracing the Historical Narrative
A. Public Discourse

Germany's current energy situation finds its roots, like many aspects of contemporary German politics, in its defeat during World War II and the resulting attitudes and policies.

When the Federal Republic of Germany was founded in 1949, it was clear that one of its overarching goals was to avoid war in Central Europe. The country's post-war discourse was dominated by rebuilding and restoring Germany and its image, whilst also asking for forgiveness.

Famously, this was one of the key ideas behind the founding of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951. The concept was simple: increase economic ties so that going to war would be unprofitable for everyone so that war would be avoided. Robert Schuman, the architect of this project, declared that the 'merging of

our interests in coal and steel production … will make it plain that any war between France and Germany becomes not only unthinkable but materially impossible' (1950).

During the early years of the German Republic, conservative chancellor Konrad Adenauer worked towards the integration of Germany into the Western Alliance. With the election of social-democrat Willy Brandt in 1969, the focus shifted to the east. Brandt's *Ostpolitik* tried to achieve reconciliation with the eastern European countries that Germany had attacked, most notably the Soviet Union (Lippert 2010). In 1973, after a deal had been struck, the Soviet Union began to export billions of cubic meters of gas annually to West-Germany, the same year that an oil embargo hit the West, including Germany (Lippert 2010). Importing cheap gas not only guaranteed energy supply, but was also part of Brandt's détente (Högselius 2013). Meanwhile, this led to a dependence on Soviet gas that rose to close to fifty percent before its collapse, and subsequently Germany neglected the cultivation of other sources of gas, nor did Germany reduce its usage of gas in the first place.

One factor was the growing environmentalist movement of the 1980s, which primarily had nuclear energy in its sights and grew especially relevant after the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. Grassroots activists campaigned to warn of the dangers that nuclear energy and its waste posed. From this movement sprang the Green party, now the third-largest force in the German parliament. A focus on nuclear meant that fossil fuels were comparatively neglected by environmentalists. By the 2011 Fukushima accident, this had profound impacts. One, that German society and politics were ready to exit nuclear energy, and two, that, even though renewables had been massively extended, the country and its economy were still heavily dependent on fossil fuels, especially gas (International Energy Agency 2013). This was exacerbated by the fact that for the past decades, there was a consensus to not touch the Russian gas imports, even after the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014. The Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) had shown a dangerous closeness to Russia, demonstrated by the fact that Gerhard Schröder (SPD) went to work for Russian gas giant Gazprom after his retirement. This reluctance was only forcefully broken by the Russian invasion of Ukraine on the 24th of February, 2022.

France, meanwhile, is impacted by a different kind of history. Rather than asking for forgiveness after WWII, it sought to re-establish dominance as one of the world's great powers. Unlike Germany, France aimed for maximum sovereignty, which translated into energy independence, a priority it had even before WWII.

Concern about sovereignty was reflected in the arrival of the state in the management of energy, dominated up until the 1940s by entrepreneurs (Planète Énergies 2015). One of the first energy laws in France was passed in 1928. This law gives a monopoly to the State to decide on the quantity of oil imported, the refineries that process it, and last but not least, to set oil prices by decree (1928). Thus, at the end of the war, the nationalisation of companies appeared as 'a means of liberation' which should make it possible to 'develop the production of our country' (Béchard 1946). Following that path, the National Council of Resistance decided

upon the nationalisation of companies dealing with electrical energy, which created the company Électricité de France (EDF) in a rare political consensus. EDF became the engine of French industrial development (Planète Énergies 2015). The large vote in favour of nationalisation was due to a widespread post-war consideration that energy is a public good and that, as such, its management cannot remain in the hands of private companies (Assemblée nationale 1946; *Loi n° 46-628 du 8 avril 1946*). This idea led to a centralized and sovereigntist system where electricity production is a matter managed by the French state (Guillaumat-Tailliet 1987), demonstrated by the fact that EDF is 84% owned by the government (EDF 2022).

France also tried to re-establish its influence by fighting wars to maintain control over colonies. Despite that France lost most of this control in the 1950s and '60s, through still-existing cultural ties it maintained easy access to uranium. Niger, for example, possesses the eighth largest known reserves of uranium in the world (Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) 2022). France used this to build a massive number of nuclear reactors to produce energy. After WWII, Pierre Mendès France, Minister of State, believed that France must have atomic weapons, like all the other member countries of the UN Security Council. In 1956, he secretly launched a research program to manufacture atomic bombs as a deterrent (Planète Énergies 2015). Wider use ensued, and EDF built its first nuclear power plant in 1963 in Chinon. Unlike France, for the reasons discussed, Germany did not develop nuclear weapons after the war (Petit 2013). The build-up of nuclear power was intended to make up for a lack of natural resources and make France energy-independent (Guillaumat-Tailliet 1987). Nuclear power, initially considered a national defence issue, has now become the main energy source of the French energy mix.

Thus, unlike Germany whose main 'zones of interest' is Eastern and Southeastern Europe, France has been more oriented towards the Mediterranean area, rich in oil and uranium that is not tied to Russia. While in Germany, the SPD and Christian Democratic Union of Germany/Christian Social Union in Bavaria (CDU/CSU) were historically very friendly with Russia, in France, Sarkozy, and Hollande devoted their attention to Africa.

B. Diverging Economic Models

Germany's economic model inherently follows the articulation of pacifism. This approach was first applied in Western Europe, but over time has been used as a strategy with other countries, too, such as Russia. To understand why and under which circumstances Germany decided to buy masses of Russian gas, the country's economic model must first be examined.

Germany was one of the first countries to take part in the Industrial Revolution. Their quick adoption of the industrial economy can potentially be explained by the large coal reserves that Germany sits on: numbered at around 3.3% of the known reserves in the world (BP 2021). Empirical research links proximity to coal fields to above-average economic growth during the period of the Industrial Revolution (Fernihough and O'Rourke 2020). Since then, the country has, to a large extent, been dependent upon coal as its main source of energy.

However, it lacks other sources of energy, except for uranium, which was extracted in East Germany before this was shut down after the reunification (NEA and IAEA 2020).

Natural gas, meanwhile, is important for the country for two main reasons. Since the 1960s, most German homes have installed gas-powered heating. Nowadays, 49.4% of homes there are heated with gas, which sits in contrast to France's emphasis on electrical heating (Loesche 2017). Secondly, Germany's economy is made up of large parts of medium-sized manufacturing companies, many of which produce in an energy-intensive fashion, often using gas. Many of these companies produce for the export market, which the German economy is reliant on. Since the mid-2010s, almost half of the German economy has been made up of exports (World Bank 2021).

Overall, German gas consumption is significantly higher than France's. The share of gas in the nation's energy mix is around a quarter, while in France this number is around fifteen percent (Goess 2022). Since the 1970s, Germany has covered most of its gas needs through imports from the USSR, and later Russia. This gas was not only cheap, but also fulfilled the promise of closer economic ties to avoid war.

In the last decade, German reliance on gas, and more specifically on Russian gas, has only grown. After the Fukushima accident in 2011, the conservative-leaning government decided to exit nuclear energy, with the plan being to close the last reactor by the end of 2022. In the 1990s and 2000s, during the peak of nuclear energy consumption in Germany, nuclear power accounted for roughly a quarter of energy production (BP 2021). In addition, after massive pressure to phase out coal, the German government—still under a conservative-leaning leadership—decided in 2020 to end coal-based energy production by 2038. Meanwhile, 2011 marked the first year Russian gas was supplied to Germany with the undersea-pipeline Nord Stream, and quickly after plans were made to build an expansion pipeline, Nord Stream 2, to supply more gas from Russia to Germany.

WWII and the German occupation profoundly diminished the production capabilities of coal production in France. In a country to be rebuilt and whose infrastructure was still largely dependent on coal, the French state embarked on a major modernisation of coal-mining installations (Planète Énergies 2015). However, the post-war coal revival was short-lived. The share of coal in France's energy mix fell by nearly fifty percent with the rise of cheap oil. Additionally, the country agreed on major gas purchases from the Netherlands, Norway, the USSR, and Algeria (Planète Énergies 2015).

However, France has experienced a series of damaging oil embargoes linked to its oil dependence on foreign countries: that which followed the Suez Canal conflict in 1956, another following the independence of Algeria in 1962—which holds a large oil reserve in the Sahara (Planète Énergies 2015), and the 1973 Oil Crisis. These events demonstrate how dependent Western nations were on oil imports from the Middle East, at a time when France was importing significantly more of its energy requirements than even Germany (de Carmoy 1979). These hard blows gradually pushed it towards nuclear energy, to the point where the country
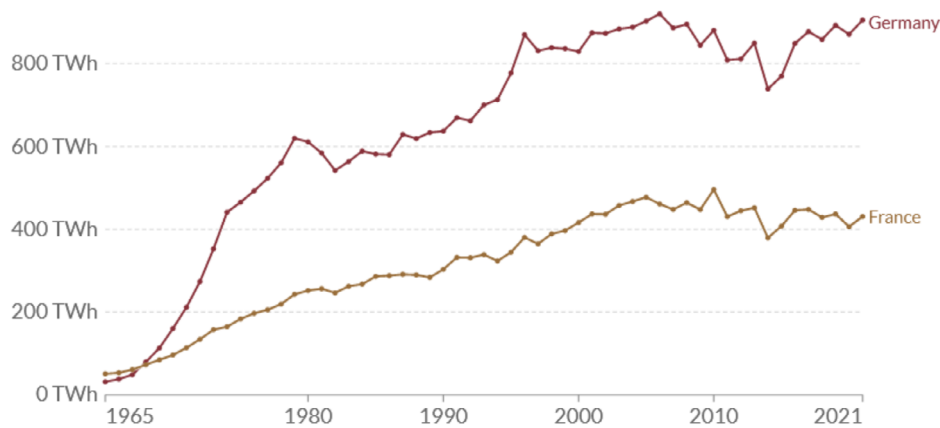
Figure 1 | Annual gas consumption by Germany and France, in absolute terms. Data from BP (2021).

experienced a great public debate aimed at deciding the future of the nuclear sector during the 1960s.

The country completed its nuclear sector by creating its own nuclear safety agencies, the Nuclear Safety Authority (ASN) and the Institute for Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety (IRSN) (Planète Énergies 2015). In what became known as the 'Messemer Plan' (Institut national de l'audiovisuel (INA) 2022), the mass expansion of nuclear energy was adopted after the 1973 Oil Crisis as a way to solve the energy crisis. This first major civilian nuclear plan was initiated by Pierre Messmer, the prime minister under Pompidou. The idea was to ensure the autonomy of French energy by covering all of the country's energy needs (Guillaumat-Tailliet 1987). Since then, the nuclear industry has been the main source of production of electricity. This implementation of nuclear power in France has no equivalent abroad (Guillaumat-Tailliet 1987). Emmanuel Macron unveiled his nuclear recovery plan on the 10th of February, 2022 in Belfort, which sought to build six new reactors, a plan reminiscent of that of Messmer more than forty years earlier. With this new plan, the president is aiming for the use of gas, oil, and coal in France to be phased-out completely by 2050 (INA 2022).

While in Germany, industry is the biggest user of electricity due to the strong and energy-demanding manufacturing sector, in France the residential sector is the biggest user, representing almost thirty-four percent (Petit 2013). Domestic electricity consumption in France is increased by the fact that many homes rely on electricity for heating.

To sum up, Germany is heavily reliant on natural gas, and, more specifically, Russian natural gas. Its economic model and geographical disposition are partly at fault, yet this is exacerbated by the country's history, which drew it to Russia. The refusal by many politicians to recognise this danger and at least partly diversify Germany's energy imports have led the country to its currently precarious position. France sources its energy differently due to a different historical starting point and is therefore not as vulnerable as Germany. In addition, both countries reacted fundamentally differently to the 1973 Oil Crisis, and their paths have diverged significantly since. It is worth noting that in both countries,

there is a certain political continuity between the left and the right.

II. Navigating the Crisis
A. Policies on Gas and Electricity

Natural gas accounts for almost twenty-six percent of Germany's electricity mix in 2021, while in France that number is about 16.5%. Per my calculations, Germany as a whole has annually consumed one hundred ninety-six percent more gas than France, taken over a ten-year average (**Figure 1**). Even when the difference in population is accounted for, this number remains high.

The fact that natural gas exports from Russia have significantly decreased with the onset of the war in Ukraine, therefore, ostensibly has a stronger impact on Germany than on France. This is also reflected in the policies enacted by the governments.

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine and rising energy prices, Germany passed three aid packages with a combined value of ninety-five billion euros, the last of which comprised sixty-five billion euros, passed at the start of September (Bundesregierung 2022). Additionally, the governing coalition, comprising the Social Democrats, the Greens and the Liberal Party, have penciled in two hundred billion euros for a so-called 'protective shield' (*Gesetz zur Änderung des Stabilisierungsfondsgesetzes zur Reaktivierung und Neuausrichtung des Wirtschaftsstabilisierungsfonds*), which cushions 'the effects of the tighter energy situation … reduces economic damage. Key elements of the protective shield are an electricity and gas price brake' (Drucksache 20/3937).

Starting in March, but retroactively including January, this program will cap gas prices at eighty percent of a households or business' consumption. The last twenty percent price will be determined by the market price, to retain incentives for individuals to save on their gas usage (Drucksache 20/3937; *Gesetz zur Änderung des Stabilisierungsfondsgesetzes zur Reaktivierung und Neuausrichtung des Wirtschaftsstabilisierungsfonds*).

Meanwhile, the government is building floating liquified natural gas (LNG) terminals to import gas via means other than pipelines. Gas shipments from the United States and Middle Eastern countries are supposed to replace those from Russia. On the 29th of November, 2022, Qatar announced it had struck a deal
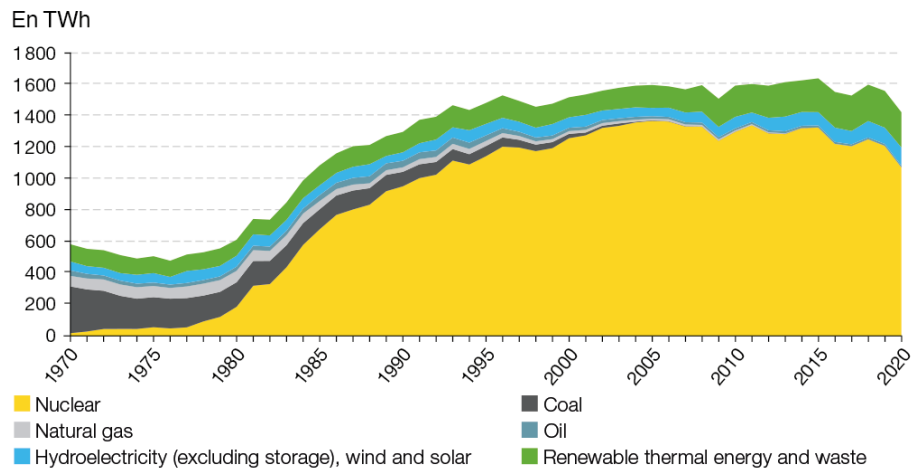
TOTAL : 1 423 TWh (in 2020)

En TWh

Figure 2 | Primary energy production by energy in France. From Ministère de la Transition Écologique (2021).

with Germany for shipments of LNG starting in 2026 (ZEIT ONLINE 2022).

The first of four terminals is set to go into operation in mid-December (Petermann 2022). This is, of course, only a step to lessen the dependency on Russian gas, not on gas itself. Although some argue that this is the perfect timing to invest massively in renewables and shift away from fossil fuels, this is not reflected in the current policies (Deutsche Presse-Agentur (dpa) 2022). Ottmar Edenhofer, Director of the Potsdam-Institute for Climate Impact Research, argued for a new energy policy, 'and in the face of Russian aggression, one that combines energy security and climate security' (dpa 2022). The fact that the state's priority right now is to ensure a steady gas supply is demonstrated by the eight-billion-euro bailout of the German gas company Uniper, which has since been nationalised (Henning & Sorge 2022).

So far, the government's efforts to procure gas from new sources on the one hand, and encourage citizens to save on the other, seem to be working. In early November 2022, Germany's gas storage inventory was one-hundred-percent filled, getting there earlier than targeted and also earlier than the average (Gas Infrastructure Europe (GIE) 2022).

The nature of the crisis is different in France. Indeed, as already mentioned, France is not and has never been dependent on Russian gas for two reasons. First, France consumes gas to a lesser extent than Germany. Secondly, France has diversified its sources of supply: Norway remains France's main supplier of natural gas (thirty-six percent), ahead of Russia (seventeen percent), Algeria and the Netherlands (both at eight percent) (Ministère de la Transition Écologique 2021).

Thus, the current problem in France concerns nuclear power. Following the implementation of the program to expand nuclear energy production, French primary energy production rose from nine percent nuclear power in 1973 to seventy-five percent nuclear power in 2020 (**Figure 2**). However, in 2019, one can observe a decline in the nuclear power generation (–11.3%). This decrease can be explained by unavailability within the fleet, the pandemic having led to delays

in scheduled maintenance (Ministère de la Transition Écologique 2021).

Nuclear production thus fell to a level that had not been observed since the end of the 1990s. Twenty-three out of fifty-six nuclear power plants were shut down. For EDF and the entire nuclear industry, 2022 looks like an '*annus horribilis*' (Stiel 2022). The government has thought of several alternatives to continue producing electricity during the winter. To compensate for the shutdown of nuclear power plants, France is turning to coal. Much more coal is likely to be burned this winter than the previous ones (Tixier 2022). For example, the Moselle power plant, one of the last to run on coal in France, was initially scheduled to close in March 2022, but reopened in November 2022 to make up for the drop in energy production (Franceinfo & Agence France-Presse (AFP) 2022). Other energies are also being considered by the government, such as gas. The reserves are now at ninety-nine percent of their capacity. The situation is also improving for hydroelectric dams (Tixier 2022). Finally, the first offshore wind farm, in Saint-Nazaire, was inaugurated on the 22nd of November, 2022. With eighty wind turbines, it is expected to produce the annual electricity consumption equivalent of 700,000 people (M.L. & AFP, 2022). If these alternatives represent an increasingly large share of electricity production, they may fail to compensate for the decrease in nuclear power supply. France must also import energy from abroad and especially from European neighbours such as Germany or Belgium (Tixier 2022).

To compensate for this drop in electricity production, the French government has implemented 'an energy sobriety plan' to encourage citizens to consume less. Regarding heating, it encourages its citizens to limit heating to nineteen degrees in flats and offices on a voluntary basis. In housing, residents are encouraged to buy programmable thermostats, with assistance of up to sixty-five euros. Building heating dates may be shortened by fifteen days, depending on the weather. Measures are also planned in other areas such as transport or leisure and culture. The objective is to reduce French energy consumption by ten percent in two years (Gouvernement de la République française
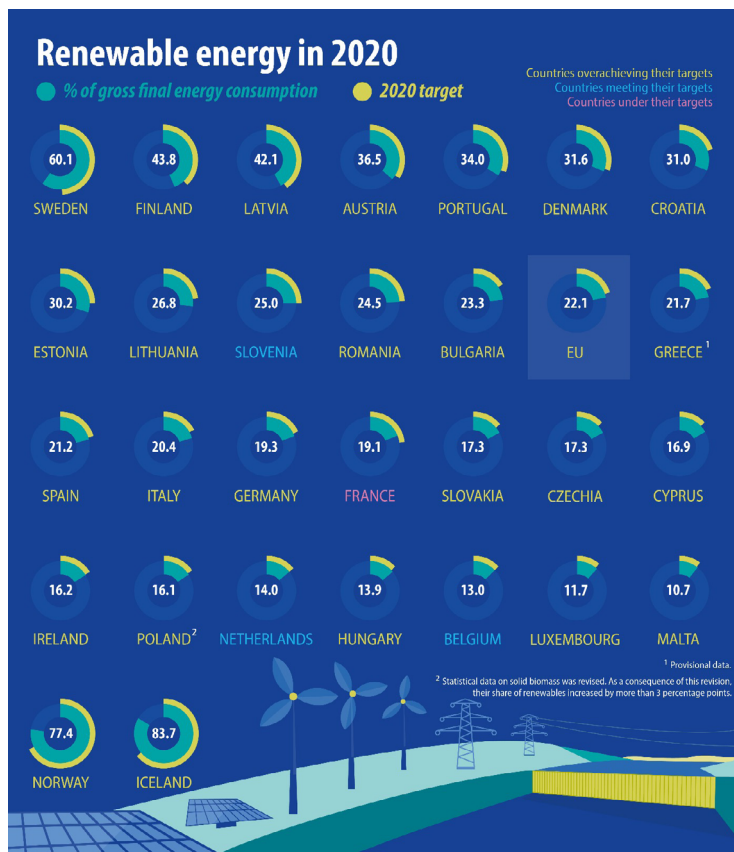
Figure 3 | Renewable energy in 2020 in the European Union. From Eurostat (2022).

2022).

The second objective of the government is to limit the rise in electricity and gas prices. A 'tariff shield' had already been put in place before the crisis, and this has been extended until 2023 to offset the increase expected in energy prices for households (Direction de l'information légale et administrative 2022). The increase in gas and electricity prices will be limited to fifteen percent. While the limit is higher than that of 2022, which was four percent, it concerns 'all households, condominiums, social housing, small businesses and the smallest municipalities'. According to the French government, this measure implies an average increase in bills of around twenty-five euros per month for households using gas for heating. The increase would be around two hundred euros per month without a tariff shield. For households that use electrical heating, the increase is expected to be limited to twenty euros per month, instead of one hundred and eighty euros per month without a tariff shield. In addition, up to two hundred euros in aid is also provided for French households heating with oil or wood (Direction de l'information légale et administrative 2022). A price shield has also been provided for businesses to cover part of their bill. This level of support for the public is made possible by the predominant role of the French state in the nation's energy sector.

B. Policies on Green Energy

At the end of the 1970s, France was betting on research of renewable energies. They had already made enormous progress in solar energy, the chemistry of solar ovens and photovoltaics, to the point where the nation acquired a certain lead over their European neighbours. Yet good returns were still pending. France finally abandoned research on renewable energies, which turned out to be expensive and unprofitable, in favour of nuclear energy, which was much cheaper (Planète Énergies 2015). This decision led to a deep delay *vis-à-vis* its European neighbours, especially Germany.

Indeed, the comfort provided by nuclear power and the comparatively large share of hydraulic power discouraged the development of renewable energy sources (Semperes 2021). However, France's share of renewable energy has grown significantly since 2005 with the development of biofuels, solid biomass, heat pumps, wind power and photovoltaic solar energy (Ministère de la Transition Écologique 2021). Renewable energy represents about 23.4% of the electricity production mix and twenty-one percent of the energy mix in 2021. This figure has been largely influenced by European directive 2009/29/EC on renewable energy, also called RED. It established a European target of twenty percent renewables in the total energy production (*Directive 2009/29/EC*). France was under its own target of twenty-three percent with around twenty percent in 2021 (Ministère de la Transition Écologique 2021). Germany had a target of eighteen percent, and even though the share of renewable energies in its electricity mix is higher with more than forty percent (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Klimaschutz 2022), these account for only about nineteen percent of the energy mix (Eurostat 2023; **Figure 3**).

In 2000, the *Renewable Energy Act* was passed by the

German parliament, which has been updated multiple times since. Its goals were, among others, 'to enable sustainable development of energy supply, in particular in the interest of climate and environmental protection' (*Erneuerbare-Energien-Gesetz*). Essentially, this wrote into law that renewable energy is to be preferred and will be politically as well as financially supported by the government.

Renewables have been massively invested in since then. While they compromised just 20.4% of the electricity mix in 2011, as mentioned they made up 41.4% a decade later. In that year, 2021, a total of 13.3 billion euros were invested into renewable energy (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Klimaschutz 2022).

In the long term, investment into more efficient or renewable sources in heating is needed. As discussed, while the share of renewables is high in the electricity mix, it drops to below twenty percent for overall energy consumption. In France, such a steep drop is not present. This is due to the already mentioned problem that Germany heats primarily with gas, and also with oil (Loesche 2022). Heating accounts for roughly twenty percent of all energy consumption; increasing the share of renewable energy in household heating (currently only fifteen percent) is therefore a priority in public discourse. Because Germany heats so much with fossil fuels, while France primarily heats with electricity (powered by nuclear and renewables), the overall energy share of renewables in both countries is ultimately similar.

When evaluating the green energy potential of Germany and France, the question of whether nuclear can be categorized as a renewable or green method of electricity production inevitably arises. Strictly speaking, it cannot be described as renewable since uranium is a finite resource. When it comes to if it is green, one cannot overlook that, excluding construction, nuclear energy emits practically no CO_2. This is in line with the observation that CO_2 emissions related to energy are significantly higher in Germany than in France. Therefore, while the renewable sector is larger in Germany, and notwithstanding the debate about nuclear energy, France's end result *vis-à-vis* climate crisis mitigation is more positive than Germany's.

III. The Potential of the EU: A Solution?
A. The Current Common Energy Policy
In an age of transnational borders, France and Germany are in two related yet different struggles concerning their energy system. Many of the problems at hand can be resolved or at least improved through the European framework. How cooperation and solidarity can be of great help is demonstrated by the cooperation between France and Germany. As mentioned, France has been having trouble operating its nuclear plants, and is receiving energy imports from Germany, at least in part in return for gas. One of the three nuclear reactors that will remain operating in Germany until April 2023 has at least partially been kept online in case France continues to require assistance throughout the winter, according to the government (Záboji 2022).

The EU has a framework for the common energy policy dates, officially ratified in the Lisbon Treaty (Lavrina 2016). Its goals are a diversification of sources

of energy, solidarity between member states, a fully integrated market, and reducing dependency on imports, among others (European Parliament 2022). The EU as '*sui generis*' represents a unique opportunity to overcome the problems and create cross-border solutions for a sustainable, safe energy supply.

The European Green Deal, adopted in 2021, fundamentally revised the energy framework with the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by fifty-five percent by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. For the issue at hand, the package's value lies in investment in renewable energies, which can replace imports from non-EU members. In fact, 'reducing external energy dependency' is one of the stated goals of the Green Deal (European Commission 2021).

What is therefore apparent, taking these two pillars of EU energy policy into account, is that the EU has been aware of the fragility of its energy system, especially concerning the dependency on imports, from before the current crisis. While it did not take an expert to recognise these shortcomings before the war, this means that many of the goals that the EU is already working towards stay the same. Even for emergency situations, much of the framework is already in place, such as *Regulation (EU) 2019/941*, requiring 'the EU Member States to cooperate with each other to ensure that, in an electricity crisis, electricity goes where it is most needed' (European Parliament 2022). Political will in a non-emergency situation is needed to fully unlock the potential of the common energy policy, which can in turn prevent future emergencies.

Since the beginning of the war, the EU has kept trying to address the energy crisis. The European Commission adopted regulated tariffs to help the most vulnerable and strengthened incentives to reduce consumption to avoid power cuts during the winter. The European Commission also tried to diversify their supply, signing multiple agreements with Egypt, Israel, and Azerbaijan to do so. They also want to strengthen the solidarity amongst members, for instance through buying energy together (European Commission 2022). However, all of their work is conditional to the will of each country.

Contrastingly, member states have been acting unilaterally in their crisis management over the past months. Germany especially caught a lot of criticism when it implemented the protective shield for not looking for a European solution.

The typical problem is the slow-moving bureaucratic gears of Brussels, which some argue 'churn' too slowly to be effective in the situation that the bloc finds itself in (Taylor 2022). It is questionable whether the EU can prove these critics wrong, or whether national leaders right now are even interested in working on a European solution in the first place. Yet, I argue that many of the EU's objectives and measures are in the medium- and long-term suited to make the entire European energy market safer, more reliable and more sustainable.

B. A Turning Point?
The liberalisation of the European energy market and the privatisations occurring as a result, as enacted by the European Commission at the turn of the millennium, now seem likely to be reversed at least in part. This somewhat artificial introduction of competition does not bode well in times when states are forced, regardless of all ideological considerations, into strong

government intervention. This situation has made it clear that energy is a matter of national security and a sector in which the government should take a keen interest. In Germany, the Federal Network Agency is already controlling significant parts of the German energy market. The government has not just taken over Uniper, but also nationalized Sefe, a gas wholesaler which was the subsidiary of the Russian company Gazprom in Germany (Stratman 2022). Germany, where the liberalisation was more impactful than in France, is therefore seemingly moving in the direction of France when it comes to state control of energy supply.

Taking a step further, it is worth asking if this is a turning point in the fundamental transformation of Germany's, France's, and Europe's energy system away from private, national competition intent on finding the cheapest energy at any cost, and towards a green, integrated European energy market in which governments take charge of their nation's energy policy.

The likely answer is that governments will for the foreseeable future have a significant say in directing the procurement of energy supply. Any further prognosis, those asking whether this is renewables' time to shine, for example, cannot be made at this point.

When it comes to the role of the EU, the situation appears more complex. In this context, it seems difficult to imagine a common energy policy that will erase separate national paths and institute EU-wide mechanisms of coordination. Indeed, as mentioned, most of the member states are acting unilaterally and the path to a collective response remains long.

IV. Conclusion

The historical background of the two countries, France and Germany, led to two distinct economic models and energy mix. While Germany is too dependent on Russian gas, France is comparatively more independent. Indeed, France uses less gas and has multiple sources, with Norway being its main supplier of gas. The French desire for independence after WWII led to today's situation where France's electricity production is not reliant upon

other countries, even if one should note that France still uses outside sources for a significant portion of its overall energy mix. However, France's nuclear situation shows that one should not be too dependent on one source, even if it is safe or guarantees energy independence to do so in theory. Moreover, France's centralised and nationally-controlled system makes it possible to better respond to the interests of the population and the country. For instance, the price of electricity is lower in France with an average of €0.17 per kWh in November 2022 (Fournisseur Énergie 2022) whereas Germany is among the countries with the highest electricity prices in Europe with an average of €0.42 per kWh in November 2022 (Hesseling and Behrend 2022). German profit-run corporations do not take long-term climate goals, or matters of national security, into account. Indeed, even if the share of renewable energy sources in the energy mix is significantly more important in Germany, the country has the highest greenhouse gas emissions among all European countries. Concerning power supply, Germany previously seemed to be more at risk than France, but currently it appears that both countries are going to be able to ensure steady supply of electricity and other energy needs for their citizens throughout the winter. Here, I conclude that France is better equipped to deal with exogenous crises due to its centralised economic model, even if France still faces some limitations in this model. Many of the EU's objectives and measures are in the medium- and long-term suited to make the entire European energy market safer, more reliable, and more sustainable, but only if there is consensus and enough political will.

This paper has some limitations, mainly due to the fact that the current situation is very dynamic, and consequently changing over short timescales. Thus, some parts of the research may be somewhat out of date within a few months. Nevertheless, this article still provides general insights into European energy policy that is likely applicable over the medium- and long-term.

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Identity in the Empire Borderlands: A Comparative Account of Ukrainian and Belarusian Nationalism

Ciara McGarry

Ukraine and Belarus are similar in a number of respects; however, they differ greatly in terms of the strength of their respective national movements. This essay argues that this difference may be attributed to a) Ukraine's comparatively richer historical repository from which national myths are drawn and b) historical policies taken by Austria-Hungary and tsarist Russia, and later by Soviet authorities, which have facilitated the development of the Ukrainian language and the association of Catholicism as a Ukrainian religion in western Ukraine, but prevented the association of language and religion with a Belarusian national identity in western Belarus. This paper concludes by examining western Belarus' limited contribution to Belarusian nationalism, and attributes this largely to 'Belarusisation' policies adopted by the Catholic Church. Both western Ukraine and western Belarus are culturally and historically distinct from their respective eastern counterparts, which are more Russified; however, only western Ukraine has succeeded in cultivating a viable nationalist movement. Despite this peculiarity, no notable works compare western Ukraine and western Belarus in terms of their contributions to their respective nationalist movements. This essay serves to fill this gap.

Introduction

In December 1991, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics collapsed, leaving in its wake fifteen newly independent republics. In the final years of the Soviet Union's existence, rising nationalism swept across the USSR at the republic-level, leading to highly nationalist independence movements in many of the former SSRs; however, the degree of nationalist mobilisation and support varied significantly across republics. Ukraine, for instance, was characterised by strong nationalist mobilisation and Ukrainian independence was widely supported at the time of the collapse (Beissinger 2002, pp. 190–198). In contrast, Belarusian nationalism has been described as 'undeveloped,' 'weak', and, in certain accounts, 'nonexistent' (Pershái 2010, p. 381).

Indeed, both during and in the wake of the Soviet Union's collapse, pro-independence nationalist sentiments were significantly stronger in Ukraine than in Belarus. Despite this, Ukraine and Belarus are similar in numerous ways: together, the nations formed the so-called 'Slavic core' of the Soviet Union, being the most culturally, historically, ethnically, and linguistically similar to Russia, the most dominant Soviet republic (Armstrong 1998, p. 238), thus constituting the tripartite 'all-Russian' people according to Russian nationalists (Plokhy 2005, pp. 3–4). Ukraine and Belarus' similarities and shared connection to Russia raise an important question: why did nationalism thrive in Ukraine and fall short in Belarus?

To address this question, this essay will begin with a brief discussion of competing theories of nationalism. It will then consider a pluralist account of national identities that comprise both the process of 'mythologisation', which serves to consolidate and strengthen nationalist sentiments, and the development of ethnic characteristics (namely language and religion) that provide the basis of a national identity. Ultimately, it will argue that Ukraine has stronger nationalism than Belarus due to a) Ukraine's comparatively richer historical repository from which national myths are drawn and b) historical circumstances that have facilitated the development of the Ukrainian language and the association of Catholicism as a Ukrainian religion in western Ukraine, whereas different historical circumstances prevented the association of language and religion with a Belarusian national identity in western Belarus. The final section of this essay will then argue that Catholic-majority western Belarus also played a limited role in supporting Belarusian nationalism relative to the rest of the country, despite the aforementioned historical reasons that hindered nationalist mobilisation in Belarus.

Additionally, it is important to note that the comparison between Ukrainian and Belarusian nationalism is relatively uncommon.[1] There are numerous explanations of the durability and strength of Ukrainian nationalism, as well as many historical accounts of the Ukrainian nationalist movement over time (see Armstrong 1955; Kuzio 2001; Magocsi 2002); indeed, one may reasonably argue that Ukraine is somewhat overrepresented in the nationalism literature, particularly amongst eastern European specialists. In contrast, English-language scholars on Belarus are rare, and even rarer are Belarusian nationalism experts (Pershái 2010, p. 380), which in part explains the notable absence of comparative accounts of Ukrainian and Belarusian nationalism. To the author's knowledge, no notable works have been written comparing western Ukraine and western Belarus in terms of their contributions to their respective nationalist movements, despite both regions being historically and culturally distinct from their eastern counterparts and possessing identities clearly distinct from ethnic Russians. This paper thus serves to fill this gap.

Theories of Nationalism

Numerous influential scholars have advanced differing conceptions of nations and nationalism. For instance, in *Nations and Nationalism* (1983), Ernest Gellner argues that the nation is a product of industrialisation. Novel industries and technological advances resulted in a reorganisation of society, which necessitated a workforce with a common language and culture so as to communicate and work effectively. Individuals that possess a common language and culture, and

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[1] For notable exceptions, see Smith et al. (1998) and Wilson (1997)

recognise these commonalities, therefore form a nation. On this, Gellner writes, '[a] mere category of persons (say, occupants of a given territory, or speakers of a given language, for example) becomes a nation if and when the members of the category firmly recognise certain mutual rights and duties to each other in virtue of their shared membership of it' (Gellner 1983, p. 7). To Gellner, nationalism is the result of the desire to politically perpetuate and protect a national culture and language. Gellner, therefore, is a modernist, and rejects primordial or perennial conceptions of nationhood or nationalism.

Like Gellner, Benedict Anderson is a modernist. In *Imagined Communities* (1983), Anderson underscores the role of print capitalism, which coincided with industrialisation, in creating a common language, and thus the development of a national identity. Anderson writes that the printing, publication, and dissemination of holy texts, newspapers, and novels served to homogenise dialects and vernaculars to create a common language by standardising said language and reducing the rate of change thereof. Consequently, and similar to Gellner, Anderson asserts that a nation exists through the recognition of commonalities. Anderson further suggests that a nation is 'an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign' (Anderson 1983, p. 5). By this, Anderson means that a member of any particular nation cannot know each of his compatriots personally, but can imagine their existence and understand that they possess commonalities, and, as such, forms a nation in his imagination. Crucially, Anderson rejects Gellner's assertion that nations are falsified societal necessities, but rather argues that the act of imagining communities effectively creates, rather than falsifies, nations.

Anthony D. Smith differs from both Gellner and Anderson in that he rejects a purely modernist definition of a nation, and instead argues that a nation exists not through the commonalities shared between members, but rather through sharing a common historical memory. Smith argues that nations are preceded by premodern '*ethnie*'—that is, 'named human populations with shared ancestry myths, histories and cultures, having an association with a specific territory, and a sense of solidarity' (Smith 1986, p. 32). As such, nations are not solely the product of industrialisation. Collective identity and shared historical memory establish a sense of continuity from premodern ethnie to a modern-day people, and thus create a nation: '[c]ollective cultural identity refers not to a uniformity of elements over generations but to a sense of continuity on the part of successive generations of a given cultural unit of population, to shared memories of earlier events and periods in the history of that unit' (Smith 1991, p. 25). In short, a nation defines and identifies itself by tracing its origins to an ancestral community. Based on this conception of nations, Smith underscores the significance of historical myths and symbols as well as collective memories and traditions in differentiating a particular culture, and thus assisting in the formation of a particular national identity.

This paper defines nationalism broadly, in the context of Ukraine and Belarus during and in the wake of the Soviet collapse, as any sentiments or actions that assert Ukrainian and Belarusian society as distinct from that of Russia, in an effort to gain and/or justify independent statehood from the Soviet Union. This definition does not reject nor accept either Gellner, Anderson, or Smith's conceptions of nations and nationalism; rather, it assumes that these accounts are not mutually exclusive. It may be the case that nationalist mobilisation often operates along the ethnic lines identified by Smith, but that the imperatives of modernisation necessitate the systematisation of language, as argued by Gellner. In this way, it is possible that all these accounts offer important insights. This paper's discussion of the importance of national historiography and mythologisation is informed by Smith's conception of nations as possessing a collective historical memory. This paper's later discussion of certain policies that contributed to the development of Ukrainian and Belarusian languages and homogenisation of culture, including religious identity, draws on the ideas of both Gellner and Anderson, who discuss the way in which the homogenisation of culture and language contribute to the development of a national identity. Beyond this, this paper does not attempt to argue in favour of any particular account of nationalism.

Ukrainian and Belarusian Mythologisation

Due to its longer history of independent political existence, Ukraine has a richer historical repository from which to create national myths, which strengthens independence-minded nationalist sentiments in Ukraine. Ukraine's first iteration as an independent state may be traced back to the Cossack Hetmanate, which existed from 1648 to the 1780s (Kohut 1986, pp. 561–562). The Cossack Hetmanate came into being after an uprising led by Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and ultimately controlled most of present-day Ukraine (Kohut 1986, p. 561). Throughout its existence, it developed several judicial and fiscal institutions as well as its own system of government and military organisation (Kohut 1986, pp. 561–562).

Ukraine's former existence as an independent state (i.e., the Cossack Hetmanate) has informed and strengthened its national myths. The popularisation and development of Ukrainian national myths are often attributed to Mykhailo Hrushevsky, who is considered 'the greatest of Ukrainian historians' (Prymak 1987, p. 3); indeed, according to Smith et al., '[t]he "Hrushevs'kyi school" has been the single most powerful influence on modern Ukrainian historiography' (Smith et al. 1998, p. 28). Hrushevsky's historical account demonstrated the continuity of the Ukrainian state from the Kievan Rus', a premodern state, to modern-day Ukraine, and heavily emphasised the Cossack Hetmanate as a manifestation of Ukrainian statehood (Plokhy 2011, p. 118).

Hrushevsky's work has been highly influential in the Ukrainian nationalist movement (Prymak 1987, p. 6). To this day, myths regarding the Hetmanate are frequently incorporated into nationalist narratives and politics, thus contributing greatly to the strength and durability of nationalist sentiments in Ukraine (Plokhy 2005, pp. 207–211). According to Anthony D. Smith's ethno-symbolism approach, Hrushevsky's historical account contributed to the development of myths and symbols related to the Cossack Hetmanate, which remain important to Ukrainian national identity to this day.

Belarus, on the other hand, suffers from a lack of national myths informed by history and, as a result, its nationalist movement is considerably weaker. Belarus cannot reliably claim to have ever controlled an autonomous polity, but rather, has experienced waves of imperial domination by the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the Russian empire. Most Belarusian myths that claim historical continuity or a pre-existing political existence reconstruct the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as an 'ersatz Belarusian polity' (Smith et al. 1998, p. 25) by asserting that a distinct Belarusian culture and identity were pronounced under Lithuanian rule. As Smith et al. (1998, p. 25) write, this myth hinges upon the claim that a Belarusian identity 'supposedly survived both dynastic… and eventual political union with Poland'. Therefore, Belarus effectively has no legacy of autonomous Belarusian state-like structures or political institutions, as is the case in Ukraine.

At this point, one may raise an objection by arguing that there is a question of reverse causality: why is it that Ukraine has a richer history of political existence? Does the existence of the Cossack Hetmanate, an ethnic Ukrainian polity, not imply that a more unified Ukrainian movement existed prior to the Hetmanate's establishment? The Cossack Hetmanate is therefore the incorrect 'starting point' of Ukraine's political existence.

In response to this objection, it is important to clarify that no particular historical event (in this case, the existence of the Cossack Hetmanate) has any direct bearing on the present-day Ukrainian national movement; rather, it is the mythologisation thereof around which Ukrainian nationalists mobilise. In this case, mythologisation refers to the idealised reconstruction of historical events through historical writing and political actions such that said events become national myths. In other words, one may attribute the consolidation of a Ukrainian nation to several events throughout history; this is, however, unimportant and perhaps inaccurate: Ukraine's existence as an independent polity has been interrupted, leading to the eventual erosion of any sustained, continuous national identity (Rudnytsky 1963, p. 201; p. 211). Notably, Ukrainian national identity has had to be reinvented following these periods of imperial domination (Prizel 1998, p. 301). It is therefore no particular historical event that 'began' the existence of a Ukrainian nation; it is only the way in which historical events are reconstructed and remembered in the present moment that contributes to modern-day nationalist sentiments, because it is through this mythology that Ukraine justifies its return to independence and historical existence as a distinct nation (Smith et al. 1998, p. 26). It is indeed the case that Ukraine has a richer history of political existence than Belarus, but this is not why Ukraine has a stronger nationalist movement—it is the successful mythologisation of this historical political existence that has strengthened nationalist sentiments.

It is therefore clear that Ukraine has a richer political history than Belarus, which informs Ukraine's relatively stronger national myths, and, through its mythologisation, strengthens nationalist sentiments. This distinction between Ukraine and Belarus is significant and, in part, explains the different levels of nationalist mobilisation during and in the wake of the Soviet collapse in Ukraine and Belarus. As Anthony D. Smith argues,

national identity is constructed through the development of myths, symbols, and traditions that connect a modern-day nation to a premodern community. It is clear that Hrushevsky has successfully mythologised certain events in Ukraine's history despite this historical discontinuity of the Ukrainian nation, and these national myths and symbols continue to bolster Ukrainian nationalism. Belarus, on the other hand, has not undergone a successful mythologisation process, and has thus failed to develop a collective identity based on the historical, continuous existence of the Belarusian nation.

The above argument, however, is incomplete in that nationalist mobilisation may be strengthened through the development, promotion, and dissemination of national myths, but a national identity most often also comprises distinct ethnic characteristics and commonalities, such as language and religion. In other words, although the process of mythologisation is important to the consolidation of nationalism, there must exist a concept of a nation in order to ascribe a history to said nation and encourage mobilisation around that shared memory. To be clear, I do not argue that the development of distinct ethnic characteristics, such as language and religion, necessarily caused or directly preempted the mythologisation process, but rather that these distinct and separate processes coexist in order to cultivate a successful nationalist movement. Both Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson emphasise the importance of commonalities, particularly language in the case of the latter, to the creation of a nation and in strengthening nationalist sentiments.

LANGUAGE POLICIES IN WESTERN UKRAINE AND BELARUS

I will now turn to the role of language and religion, with a focus on the westernmost regions of both Ukraine and Belarus, to explain varying nationalist mobilisation. One plausible explanation for the strength and durability of Ukrainian nationalism points to the importance of western Ukraine as a regional stronghold for anti-Russian, pro-Ukrainian nationalism (see Magocsi 2002). Western Ukraine is predominantly Catholic and Ukrainian-speaking (Liber 1998, p. 191), and is thus culturally and historically distinct from eastern Ukraine, which tends to be Russian-speaking, Orthodox Christian, and more closely tied to Russia proper (Marples 2012, p. 50). In addition, western Ukraine only became a part of the Soviet Union following the Soviets' victory in World War II (Halavach 2022, p. 476), and was therefore subjected to Sovietisation and oppressive Soviet rule for forty years, rather than seventy. Due to its outsized role in contributing to Ukrainian nationalism, western Ukraine has often been referred to as the nation's 'Piedmont' (see Magocsi 2002) and as a '[b]astion of Ukrainianism' (Subtelny 2000, p. 307).

Belarus similarly possesses a westernmost region with a distinct religious identity—the majority of Belarusians in its Grodno oblast are Catholic, rather than Orthodox Christian. In 2000, 52.9 percent of Belarusians identified as Orthodox Christians and 10.7 percent identified as Catholic compared to 68.9 and 8.8 percent of Ukrainians respectively (Johnson & Grim 2022). The majority of Belarusian Catholics are concentrated in western Belarus, along the Polish border, as is the case in Ukraine. This region, like its

Ukrainian counterpart, was only incorporated into the USSR after World War II (Halavach 2022, p. 476). These undeniable similarities between western Belarus and western Ukraine thus raise further questions: why did a historically and culturally distinct western region succeed in cultivating a successful nationalist movement in Ukraine, but fail to do so in Belarus? And despite its overall failure in cultivating a successful Belarusian nationalist movement, to what extent, if at all, has western Belarus contributed to Belarusian nationalism relative to the rest of the country?

To address these questions, this paper will consider historical explanations for the varyingly successful cultivation of a national identity by contrasting policies adopted by Austria-Hungary, tsarist Russia, and later the Soviet regime toward the western regions of Ukraine and Belarus that have affected the development of a national identity in said regions.

In the latter days of the Austro-Hungarian empire, the Ukrainian language became more widely used in public spheres, educational institutions, and publications, thus contributing to the consolidation of a distinct national identity. In 1848, the Austro-Hungarian Constitutional Charter granted the 'inviolability of nationality and language' to all nationalities within the empire, and the 'unhindered development of all nationalities' (quoted in Moser 2018, p. 91). As a result, the Ukrainian language became equal in status to other Central and Eastern European languages used in Austria-Hungary, including German. In the following decades, laws related to the promotion and development of national languages became increasingly liberal; Austro-Hungarian authorities engaged in and encouraged the promotion and development of the Ukrainian language (Moser 2018, p. 95). Perhaps most notably, schools in Ukrainian-majority areas began implementing Ukrainian language classes and soon thereafter adopted Ukrainian as the principal language of instruction (Moser 2018, p. 97). Simultaneously, Ukrainian publications and periodicals began to be published en masse, along with literary and academic works in the Ukrainian language (Himka 1993, p. 8). It is crucial to note that such lax policies regarding the Ukrainian language only existed in present-day Ukraine's westernmost regions, as they were under Austro-Hungarian rule, whereas eastern Ukraine was under tsarist Russian rule.

In contrast, western Belarus was subject to the Russian Empire's stricter policies on language, and the Belarusian language was consequently neither developed nor systematically disseminated as was the case in western Ukraine. After 1863, Moscow passed decrees that prohibited the use of the Belarusian language in educational establishments, promoted the Russian language in Catholic religious settings, as well as restricted the publication of books in Belarusian (Weeks 2006, p. 38). According to Nelly Bekus, the Russian Empire's policies toward the Belarusian language, as well as its Russification policies in general, were 'aimed at a complete elimination of Belarusianness and transformation of Belarusian lands into western Russian ones' (Bekus 2010, p. 151). Belarusian, as a language, therefore declined in use to the point of only being spoken by ethnic Belarusians in rural villages, whereas more educated and urban individuals disproportionately spoke Russian and were, as a result, less likely to

identify with a Belarusian national identity (Marples 2012, pp. 50–51).

The lack of publication and dissemination of texts in Belarusian significantly hindered the development and standardisation of the language and, by extension, the development of a Belarusian national identity, as discussed by Benedict Anderson, compared to the relatively laxer policies taken by Austria-Hungary in the case of western Ukraine. This phenomenon was exacerbated by Belarus' low levels of industrialisation relative to other areas of the former Russian Empire, including Ukraine (Marples 2012, p. 11). According to Ernest Gellner, industrialisation is crucial to the development of commonalities such as language, which contribute to the creation of a national identity.

These historical language policies greatly affect the nationalist movements in western Ukraine and western Belarus respectively. Western Ukraine comprises Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians (Liber 1998, p. 191), whereas the vast majority of Belarusians speak Russian, including those in western Belarus (Marples 2012, p. 50). Lucan Way notes that the promotion of the Ukrainian language in Austria-Hungary directly contributed to the strength of support for Ukrainian nationalism (Way 2015, p. 46), whereas, David Marples writes, 'for Belarus, national development without the native language, especially under the shadow of a much larger Slavic neighbour with a lengthy historical tradition as an empire, was virtually impossible' (Marples 2012, p. 52). It is therefore clear that national language use contributed significantly to the construction of a national identity and thus the strength and durability of nationalist sentiments.

Ethnic Homogenisation in Western Ukraine and Belarus

This paper will now argue that western Ukraine serves as a regional stronghold of nationalism in Ukraine not only due to a stronger sense of linguistic national identity, but also due to its relatively ethnically homogenous nature; western Belarus, on the other hand, is hindered by its significant Polish minority in terms of nationalist mobilisation. The existence of a Polish minority in western Belarus has rendered Catholicism a less useful ethnic characteristic with which to construct a Belarusian national identity in opposition to the dominant Russian-affiliated Orthodox identity. Specifically, this paper will discuss the disparate approaches taken by the Soviet Union in dealing with the Polish population in western Ukraine and western Belarus upon their incorporation into the USSR, and will argue that the resultant ethnic makeup in these territories impacts religion as an ethnic identifier, which in turn affects the strength of nationalist sentiments and viability of nationalist mobilisation therein.

Due to the higher levels of Polish deportations in Soviet Ukraine following World War II, western Ukraine became relatively ethnically homogenous, thus strengthening the sense of national unity and identity amongst its ethnic Ukrainian population. From 1939 to 1941, the Soviet Union occupied and annexed territory from eastern Poland, and later reoccupied said territory in 1945 following German retreat. The Soviets then incorporated said territory into the western regions of the Ukrainian and Belarusian SSRs, as well as the southern region of the Lithuanian SSR (Halavach 2022,

p. 476). The Soviet Union underwent a population swap between Poland and the Ukrainian and Belarusian SSRs from 1944 to 1947: in the end, 872,217 individuals were categorised as ethnically Polish in Ukraine and 789,982 were transported (i.e., deported) to Poland, whereas, in Belarus, 535,284 were considered Polish, but only 231,152 were deported (Halavach 2022, p. 476). In other words, in Ukraine, 91 percent of Poles were deported, but only 43 percent of Poles in Belarus were deported. The stark contrast in the extent of Polish deportations in the case of the Ukrainian SSR and the Belarusian SSR can be attributed to the different approaches taken by and motivations of the Soviet authorities.

In the case of Ukraine, Soviet authorities pursued a strict nationalist policy by expelling as many Poles as possible in a systematic attempt to 'Ukrainianise' the newly incorporated Polish-majority oblasts (Amar 2017, p. 145). Under Nazi occupation, approximately one-fifth of the Polish population in western Ukraine had been killed by Ukrainian forces (Snyder 2008, p. 102). Following the German retreat from eastern Europe and the Soviet reoccupation of western Ukraine, Soviet Ukrainian authorities were therefore highly motivated to deport Poles to avoid further ethnic conflict. Soviet Ukrainian authorities ignored prewar citizenship, and instead only acknowledged one's self-proclaimed ethnicity in an attempt to retain as many ethnic Ukrainians and dispose of as many ethnic Poles as possible, thereby reducing the risk of ethnic conflict (Snyder 2008, p. 102). Following the deportations, only a small minority of Poles remained in western Ukraine, which then nearly entirely comprised ethnic Ukrainians (Amar 2017, p. 143).

In contrast, Soviet Belarusian authorities attempted to block Polish deportations from western Belarus by limiting the number of individuals able to identify as Polish, as they were not motivated to avoid ethnic conflict, but rather to maintain a sufficiently high labour force (Halavach 2022, p. 478). Western Belarus experienced a small influx of Belarusians from Poland; in order to prevent a mass exodus of Poles from western Belarus, Soviet authorities designated all those who had been born within Belarusian borders as Belarusian, ignoring those who self-identified as Polish (Halavach 2022, p. 480). This is in stark contrast to the Ukrainian case, in which self-identified Poles were often removed to Poland. In Soviet Belarus, only Poles who were able to show the correct documentation were designated as Polish and thus eligible to be transported to Poland (Halavach 2022, p. 479). This requirement was difficult to meet given that many Belarusian residents had lost their official documentation whilst under Nazi occupation. In the limited number of cases in which Poles were able to prove their Polish identity, Belarusian authorities often destroyed their documents and refused their transportation to Poland: '[t]he documents could be declared insufficient, fake, or simply torn apart by a bureaucrat in the commission. The practice of destroying certificates of Polish nationality was systematic' (Halavach 2022, p. 481). This approach taken by the Soviet Belarusian authorities in terms of deporting Poles means that, to this day, western Belarus maintains a significant Polish minority, whereas ethnic Poles are a very small minority in present-day western Ukraine despite its proximity to Poland proper. Only following the population swaps did western Ukraine obtain this relative ethnic homogeneity.

The consequences of the different approaches taken by Soviet Ukrainian and Belarusian authorities in the Polish deportations on the strength of contemporary nationalist sentiments are two-fold: ethnic heterogeneity as is the case in western Belarus not only a) renders mobilisation more difficult, but also b) dilutes the value of a Catholic religious identity as a distinct ethnic characteristic against the Moscow-affiliated Orthodox identity in Belarus. Needless to say, ethnic Poles in western Belarus are less likely to support Belarusian nationalism and/or mobilise in support thereof. In western Ukraine, on the other hand, nearly the entirety of the population is united in their ethnicity, and its logistical capacity for mobilisation is therefore stronger.

Second, and more interestingly, ethnic Belarusian Catholics are less able than Ukrainian Catholics to instrumentalise the religious component of their identity to support a nationalist movement. In the case of western Ukraine, Ukrainian Catholics' national identity is in opposition to Moscow-affiliated Orthodoxy, thus succeeding in strengthening anti-Russian nationalist sentiments. In western Belarus, despite the fact that more Catholics in Belarus identify as ethnically Belarusian than ethnically Polish (Ioffe 2003, 1252), Catholicism is less often associated with 'Belarusianness' than with 'Polishness' (Zaprudnik 1993, p. 66; pp. 217–218), rendering Catholicism an ambiguous characteristic rather than a characteristic that contributes to the construction of a distinct Belarusian national identity. As Nelly Bekus writes, 'In Belarus, traditionally, Eastern Orthodoxy is identified–either subconsciously or explicitly–as the Russian faith, while Catholicism is seen as the Polish creed' (Bekus 2010, p. 157). As such, while western Ukraine's Catholic identity strengthens anti-Russian nationalist sentiments, western Belarus' Catholic identity is less viable as a vector for mobilisation due to its association with a Polish identity rather than a Belarusian identity.

Therefore, neither language nor religion are as useful vectors for nationalist mobilisation in western Belarus as they are in western Ukraine due to a) different policies taken by Austria-Hungary and tsarist Russia in promoting national languages and b) different approaches taken by Soviet Ukrainian and Belarusian authorities in deporting Poles following WWII. These two reasons, taken together, partly explain the differing levels of nationalist support in these regions.

Catholicism in Western Belarus

This essay will now examine the higher levels of Belarusian nationalism in western Belarus relative to the rest of the country and will attribute this to its majority Catholic population. As previously stated, Catholic Poles are less likely to mobilise in favour of Belarusian nationalism, thus reducing western Belarus' overall capacity to cultivate a successful nationalist movement. This latter section of the essay does not seek to contradict this argument; rather, this paper argues that the existence of a Belarusian Catholic identity, despite its association with Poland, has nevertheless rendered western Belarus more nationalist relative to the rest of Belarus, even if western Belarus is less nationalist relative to western Ukraine.

In the western half of the Catholic-majority Grodno oblast, which borders Poland, most Catholics identify
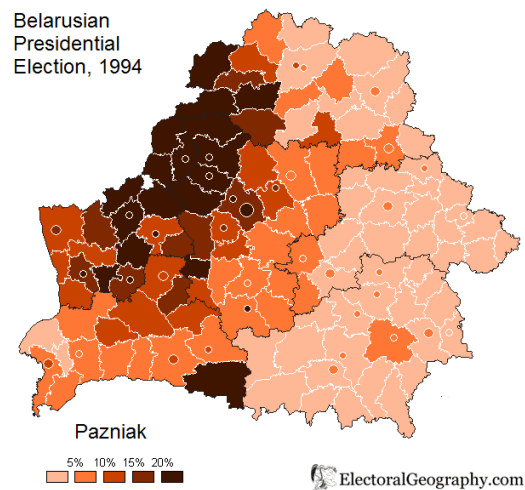
Belarusian Presidential Election, 1994

Pazniak

5%   10%   15%   20%

ElectoralGeography.com

Figure 1 | Percentage of voters in support of Pazniak in the 1994 presidential election. From Kireev (2023).

as Polish, whereas in the eastern half, most Catholics identify as Belarusian (Ioffe 2003, p. 1252). According to Grigory Ioffe, '[i]t is from these Catholic Belarusians that most active Belarusian nationalists recruit' (Ioffe 2003, p. 1252). This observation supports the proposition that western Belarus may indeed be more nationalist relative to the rest of Belarus. For further evidence, one must look no further than the results of the 1994 Belarusian presidential election.

Figure 1 depicts the percentage of voters who cast their ballots in support of Zianon Pazniak, the then-leader of the Belarusian Popular Front (BPF), widely considered to be the most nationalist candidate. Natalia Leshchenko describes the BPF as 'a wide civic movement for democracy and national revival' (Leshchenko 2004, p. 335), and Lucan Way describes Pazniak as propounding 'highly anti-Russian nationalism' (Way 2015, p. 118).

Although there are several factors that may have contributed to western Belarus' disproportionate support of Pazniak, these electoral results strongly suggest that these Catholic-majority areas possess relatively stronger nationalist tendencies in comparison to the rest of the country, and therefore support Ioffe's assertion.

There are two main causal mechanisms that explain western Belarusian Catholics' relatively stronger nationalist tendencies in comparison to their eastern Orthodox counterparts. First, given the Orthodox Church's historic ties to Moscow, a Catholic identity inherently represents a significant distinction from Russia and ethnic Russianness. Belarusian Catholics may thus feel more inclined to categorise themselves as Belarusians, rather than Russians, and are therefore more likely to harbour Belarusian nationalist sentiments. Second, the Church as an institution may have served to perpetuate nationalist sentiments. On this, Anthony D. Smith notes that 'organised religion supplies much of the personnel and communication channels for the diffusion of ethnic myths and symbols' (Smith 1986, p. 36). It is plausible that the Catholic Church, in opposition to the Russian-controlled Belarusian Orthodox Church, propagated Belarusian national symbols in their sermons and religious messaging. It is difficult

to isolate the cause: the Catholic Church and Catholic officials may take on more nationalist policies and practices, which then influence Belarusian Catholics' political leanings, or Belarusian Catholics' existing political leanings may have influenced the Church's official nationalist stance. Most likely, these are mutually reinforcing explanations.

Nevertheless, by examining the Catholic Church's policies and practices in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet collapse from 1991 until the mid-1990s, it is evident that the Belarusian Catholic Church supported and promoted Belarusian nationalism. In 1991, Kazimierz Świątek became the Archbishop of the Minsk-Mahilyow Archdiocese and later the first Cardinal in independent Belarus. As the leader of the Belarusian Catholic Church, Świątek initiated and led 'the policy of Belarusisation of Catholicism in Belarus' (Bekus 2018, p. 181). Namely, under Świątek, the Church translated religious texts, prayers, and songs into Belarusian, and began conducting religious services and sermons in the Belarusian language, as well as banning the use of Polish symbols in the Church to further promote Catholicism as a Belarusian religion, rather than one associated solely with Poland (Bekus 2018, p. 194). It is highly plausible that the initiation of these policies in the immediate aftermath of independence led to a higher level of nationalist sentiments amongst western Belarus' Catholic population; at the same time, however, nationalist leanings amongst Catholic Belarusians likely predated the implementation of these policies by the Church and in turn encouraged the Vatican, as well as Świątek, to 'Belarusise' the Catholic Church.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this paper has compared Ukrainian and Belarussian nationalism, drawing on influential theories of nationalism, particularly those of Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, and Anthony D. Smith. This paper argued that Ukraine has stronger national myths and symbols, which continue to reinforce Ukrainian national identity, whereas Belarus' historical repository from which to draw national myths and its attempts at mythologisation are comparatively weaker. It then argued that the publication and dissemination of texts in Ukrainian in western Ukraine under Austro-Hungarian rule strengthened a Ukrainian national identity; in contrast, the lack of such texts, coupled with low levels of industrialisation, hindered the development of a Belarusian national identity in western Belarus. Subsequently, this article argued that different approaches taken by Soviet authorities during the post-war Polish deportations affect the ethnic homogeneity in western Ukraine and western Belarus, and, in the case of the latter, hinder the viability of Catholicism as an ethnic characteristic that is recognisably Belarusian. Finally, the article has concluded that, despite weaknesses in Catholicism as an ethnic Belarusian characteristic, the existence of Catholic institutions and a Catholic identity in western Belarus has nevertheless contributed to nationalist sentiments.

The comparative analysis of Ukrainian and Belarusian nationalism is underrepresented in English-language scholarship; this paper has aimed to fill this gap, but the author urges scholars to produce further comparative works on nationalism in Ukraine and Belarus. In particular, the author highlights the

importance of further investigation into the role of Catholicism as a personal identity and the Catholic Church as an institution on Ukrainian and Belarusian nationalism.

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Imagery in International Relations: Analysing the Value in Absence

Ben Brent

Whilst the field of international relations (IR) scholarship of analysis of imagery has grown in recent years, a consideration of the benefit of absence has remained neglected. This article challenges this neglect to argue that the inclusion of absence is unavoidable for an accurate exploration of the socially constructed foundations of the international system. This is because absence both reveals relations of power and is itself an exercise of power. Accordingly, in an attempt to consolidate this scholarly void, this article will explore five sources to highlight how absence has served to spatialise international relations (IR) via hierarchical and binary relations of power and identity. Differentiating (and coining) the terms 'tacit' and 'deliberately' enforced absences, charitable advertising, in conjunction with an analysis of EU cartography reveals the curation of a West/Rest hierarchical binary. This has been aided by light/dark, parent/infant and, more broadly, self/other, binaries, and retains important political and academic implications. Not only does the recognition of these socially constructed relationships erode their legitimacy, challenging their corresponding claims for exclusionary policy, but it facilities the scholarly challenge to conventional ontological and epistemological biases. Thus, this article argues that absence both reveals the underlying flows of power and is, itself, an agent in its perpetuation. Absence proves integral to the curation and maintenance of hierarchical and binary relations of identity and power.

1. Introduction

Distinguishing between, what this article coins, *tacit* and *deliberately* enforced absences, this article will argue that it is their inclusion in analysis that enables a holistic insight into the ways in which international relations (IR) are discursively constructed through informal, hierarchical binaries. '*Tacit*' absences relate to the foundations of a source, such as underlying power relations and the identity of those that exert influence over the source. '*Deliberate*' absences relate to the distortion of discourse through intentional omission. This novel distinction provides further insight into the socially constructed foundations of IR and greater evidence to engage with the discipline's Eurocentric epistemological bias. This complicates the notion of an 'objective truth' and gives credence to alternative critical theories. Beyond reflecting power, and in line with a poststructuralist ontology on the interrelation of knowledge and power, absences are a means of power themselves. Accordingly, the construction of imagery and choices over absences are both a reflection of the underlying flows of power and, themselves, an agent in its perpetuation.

Structurally, this article will analyse how absences have constructed hierarchical binaries, sculpting international identity and power relations. First, a Save the Children commercial will be explored through comparison to complementary sources. This will show that absences have spatially constructed relations and identity by curating iconographical self/other binaries. To stress, this article is not suggesting that the presence of such absences renders a source's content irrelevant or entirely untrustworthy. Instead, it argues that a holistic response to an analysis of a source requires a combined attention to both content and absences. Next, shifting towards official cartographical mediums, this article will analyse the EU's Frontex map, demonstrating how *deliberate* and *tacit* absences interlink in reinforcing IR's spatialisation.

Therefore, responding to the traditional scholarly negation of an analysis of absence, this article's own differentiation between *tacit* and *deliberate* absences aims to expand the currently limited breadth of available literature. This incorporation of absence, alongside included content, is integral to a holistic analysis of the socially engineered foundations of IR. This is because absence reflects power and, at the same time, is a means of power itself. By illustrating IR's constructed nature, conventional ontology can be challenged. On a scholarly level, this broadens the discipline. Politically, it gives rise to the possibility of less exclusionary policies.

2. Charitable Imagery: Benign Humanity?
2.1 Parent/Infant

Produced by Save the Children in 2015, **Source 1** demonstrates the importance of visual sources in reflecting and influencing relations of power. The source, written as a television advert (and part of a larger media campaign), focuses on an emaciated child named John. Yet, and as will be delved into below, the lack of explanatory context, compounded by the inclusion of other unidentified African children 'like John', creates a homogenised narrative. This generalisation negates specific context, conveying a sense of continental
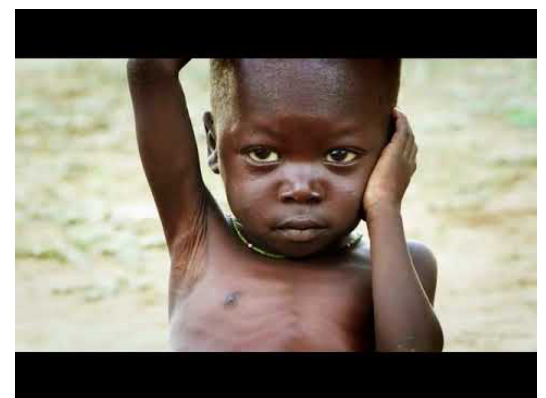
Source 1 | Thumbnail of a Save the Children TV commercial from 2015. From isis ariadne (2018). Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kA6TLQn8U7s

ubiquity. Perceived as a 'period of dependency' (Burman 1994, p. 239), the almost exclusive focus on children iconographically relays a sense of vulnerability (Mills & Lefrançois 2018, p. 503). This is reinforced through the visual depiction of 'bloated bellies'—an image traditionally used throughout famine coverage. Despite reflecting the source's purpose of eliciting sympathy, to encourage donation, the metaphorical infantilism has come to represent the wider African continent, as contemporary journalistic and charitable coverage focuses almost exclusively on such imagery. This reinforces racialised historical precedents such as colonialist Cecil Rhodes' argument that 'the native [was] to be treated as a child' (ibid., p. 508). Accordingly, as will subsequently be developed, visual depictions of infants have created informal racial hierarchies, to the detriment of African people's agency. It is only through the visual absence of adults that such connotations can be relayed. As infants are understood to depend upon adults, deliberate omission of the latter pronounces vulnerability for the former. As Andersen and Möller valuably affirm, absences activate the imagination (2013, p. 206). By excluding clarification over the broader context, such as the parents' whereabouts and respective ability to offer protection, the depicted threat is exacerbated. This combination of vulnerable children and absent adults reveals that, for a contextually informed analysis, attention to content and absences should occur together.

Alongside the implicit infantilisation, parental absence appropriates responsibility to the children depicted in **Source 1**. This negates any specific and informing contextual information, exonerating alternatively liable parties. As such, solutions presented in charitable appeals are superficial as they respond to the symptoms, not the cause. Put another way, depicting only starved infants to incentivise aid donations, whilst necessary, negates the underlying political and economic causal factors. Such 'parachute journalism' perpetuates the problematic trope of 'African incapability' to ensure stability and absolves the target audience of historical responsibility. It can be argued that the need for wider contextual knowledge limits the acknowledgement of absences' practical value as this requires additional research and secondary sources. Ironically, this provides merit to the argument for a need to thoroughly analyse absence. By highlighting that omission deliberately distorts causes and events, an informed and holistic analysis can only arise through an exploration of these aforementioned absences. Accordingly, whilst scholars such as Bucy and Joo (2021) argue that visual sources' merit stems from their accessibility to be fully and clearly understood, this negates that a comprehensive understanding must incorporate a focus on the broader context.

Despite being absent from many sources' implicit depictions of causation, images of Western involvement in solutions are widespread. This perpetuates the myth of the white saviour which misguidedly depicts the African continent as passive recipients of Western benevolence. **Sources 2** and **3** illustrate that imagery has helped to create and perpetuate this myth. Following the relative subsiding of colonial conquest in the nineteenth century, visual sources shifted from depicting the 'Rest' as a threat. Instead, as Pieterse (1992, p. 88) illustrates, Western-centric imagery sought to justify a 'civilising mission' by presenting a sense of dependency. **Source**
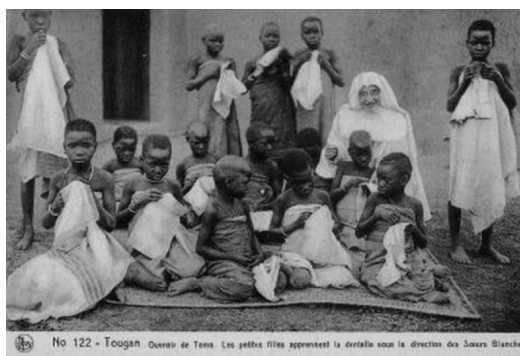
Source 2 | Photograph from 1930 titled 'Embroidery and the White Sisters', depicting a Christian missionary group teaching lace making to Burkinabè children lace-making. From Textile Research Centre (TRC) (2017). Available at: https://trc-leiden.nl/trc-needles/regional-traditions/middle-east-and-north-africa/pre-modern-middle-east-and-north-africa/embroidery-and-the-white-sisters

2—a photograph depicting a missionary nun teaching embroidery in Burkina Faso—visually confirms the white saviour, with a lone white adult amongst multiple naked or near-naked Burkinabè children. The dichotomy in dress reflected a traditional justification of empire as a 'civilising mission', with nudity conflated with 'savageness'. The lessons in embroidery reflect the conferring of dress (alongside its civilisational attachments) onto the children. Moreover, given that the photograph was taken in 1930, a comparison with **Source 3** elucidates change and, more importantly, continuity. **Source 3**, published by Comic Relief in 2017, shows British singer Ed Sheeran playing with Liberian children and wearing the traditional Comic Relief red nose. Despite altering the preferred visual medium (from photography to videography) and moving away from religious imagery, changes proved nominal. Intended as part of a charitable campaign, Sheeran's 'celebrity humanitarianism'—a term which refers to the phenomena whereby celebrities champion human rights, representing an ultimate antithesis of wealth and power—illustrates the myth's continued prominence (Bleiker 2018a, p. 82). Much like **Source 2**, this collates white Europeans with the solution. Indeed,

Source 3 | Photograph of Ed Sheeran posing with Liberian children for Comic Relief in 2017. From Gleisner (2020) in Utblick Magazine. Available at: https://www.utblick.org/2020/11/26/moving-away-from-the-white-saviour-complex/

whilst **Source 1** depicts the problem through partially naked children and no white adults, **Source 3**, showing Sheeran with laughing (and fully clothed) children, is deemed the solution and the product of charitable giving. Thus, imaginations informed by historical tropes can be seen to shape contemporary visual imagery. The sources propagate a racialised hierarchy, with the connoted dependency centred towards an individual, white adult. Pieterse recognises this, yet their analysis fails to incorporate the value of absence. This negation is constitutive of a broader, mainstream scholarly dismissal of absence. The intended effect relies on the absence of white adults from depictions of the 'problem'. Equally, it leans on the absence of autonomous adults from 'solutions'.

Source 1 alone does not explicitly perpetuate this narrative. However, when taken alongside the additional sources, the construction of the parent-infant relationship is illuminated, with the 'West' assuming the parental role in the absence of adults from the 'Rest'. This counters Bleiker's suggestion that, because visual sources are non-verbal, studying absences is too interpretive (2018a, p. 28). The idea, that once absences are incorporated, the possibility for tenuous extrapolation increases, has led to an omission of specific literature on the sub-topic that is detrimental to accurate analysis of visual sources, despite their increasing popularity. Irrespectively, the previous amalgamation of sources counters the lack of available information surrounding **Source 1**'s creation and substantiates the prospective merits of an 'interpretative' analysis. By revealing that hierarchy guides IR, the traditional realist notion of international anarchic equality is challenged. Valuably, this has the potential to deepen scholarly debate and conveying ontological alternatives, detached from mainstream IR theories. Therefore, the inclusion of absences, alongside content, reveals the implicit power dynamics that shape informal hierarchies and, more broadly, IR.

Beyond the revelation that absences exist, attention should be paid to how such absences are a means of exerting and perpetuating power. Just as **Source 2** connoted dependency to justify a 'necessary mission', contemporary visual imagery has served to legitimise neo-colonial action. Peacekeeping missions, sanctioned by the UN Security Council in response to famine, have arisen in, for example, Somalia. These actions were legitimised to the public through the visual entrenchment of alleged dependency, enabling the violation of postcolonial state sovereignty and, subsequently, the possibility of exploitative politico-economic restructuring. As a result, visual sources, constructed through political mediums, have shaped binaries over relative dependency. Again, these arose just as much through absences as through content. If adults were depicted as present for both the 'West' and the 'Rest', then notions of hierarchical dependency would depreciate. To stress, this is not to entirely eradicate individual agency from the equation. Instead, the accumulation of notions of dependency, materialising through multifaceted visual avenues, strengthens, to a greater extent, the collective historical imagination. Thus, attention to absences enables reflection on the relative agency of different international actors, revealing informal hierarchies to challenge concepts in traditional scholarship.

2.2. A Caveat

To qualify how visual imagery is influenced by political mediums and to analyse their foundational role in exerting power, it is necessary to briefly diverge from the source-led analysis and explore visual discourse theory. Understanding this as an assessment of meaning, based on their intended impact, visual sources act as systems of meaning-production. This echoes the poststructuralist argument of the interrelation between knowledge and power, as it depicts the ability of images, as a source of knowledge, to represent, produce and reproduce power (Rose 2016, p. 187–190). Moreover, this reflects how visual sources are a politically influenced medium, as their wider provenance, shaped by power, is undetachable from their creation. Accordingly, choices on what to include and what to omit are not only shaped by *tacit* absences, including the contextual discourse in which they operate, but they contribute to shaping that same discourse.

Whilst this focus on discourse may be criticised for downplaying material reality and negating the role of 'practice', it is these discourses that enable image creation and practical action (Ó Tuathail & Agnew 1992, p. 191). For example, whilst this article is not critiquing the desired charitable purposes, Save the Children's late-colonial British origin suggests that the imagery's construction of dependency was, at least partially, shaped by its wider provenance. Employing vulnerable infants, the source echoes the discursively conventional means of evoking sympathy, whilst consequentially reproducing the discipline's wider doxa. More broadly, despite being freelance, photojournalists need to sell their images. This tailoring to contemporary norms indirectly prescribes their focus. By demonstrating that, not only are decisions over *deliberate* absences interrelated with *tacit* absences but that they shape narratives, their inclusion into analysis reflects the discursive construction of IR. Furthermore, visual analysis has become increasingly important. Despite always retaining geopolitical influence as a mechanism for sharing distant information (Campbell 2007, p. 358), digitalisation has exacerbated this trend. Accordingly, the influence of images and inferably, absences, has exponentially increased following their diversification and increased interconnective speed (Bleiker 2018b).

Mirroring the acknowledgement that discursive power influences the creation of representative visual sources, Roland Bleiker argues that this power peaks when representation can disguise its subjectivity (2001, p. 515). This 'illusion of authenticity' (Bleiker 2018a, p. 30) is shown in each of the explored sources as, unlike, for example, satirical political cartoons, they appear to present objective 'live action'. This conveys an air of realism. Thus, having traditionally been condemned for proving 'mute witnesses', by, amongst others, Peter Burke (2001, p. 18), this illusion, in itself, advances analysis by revealing how alleged 'muteness' acts as an enablement for influencing IR. The increased employment of imagery corresponds with technological advancement. The deconstruction of 'objective sources' enables an exploration of foundational power dynamics, credentialing critical theories that challenge mainstream ontology. This study both provides an inlet into analysing *tacit* absences and demonstrates that the interlink between underlying discursive construction and *deliberate* omissions acts as a means of power.

Source 4 | Photograph by Sebastião Salgado as part of his (Leica Oskar Barnack) award-winning *Ethiopian Hunger* series (1985).
Available at: https://www.leica-oskar-barnack-award.com/en/winners/winner-1985-sebastio-salgado.html

Combined, these absences, alongside included content, have discursively constructed hierarchies, contributing to the production and reproduction of both power and knowledge within IR.
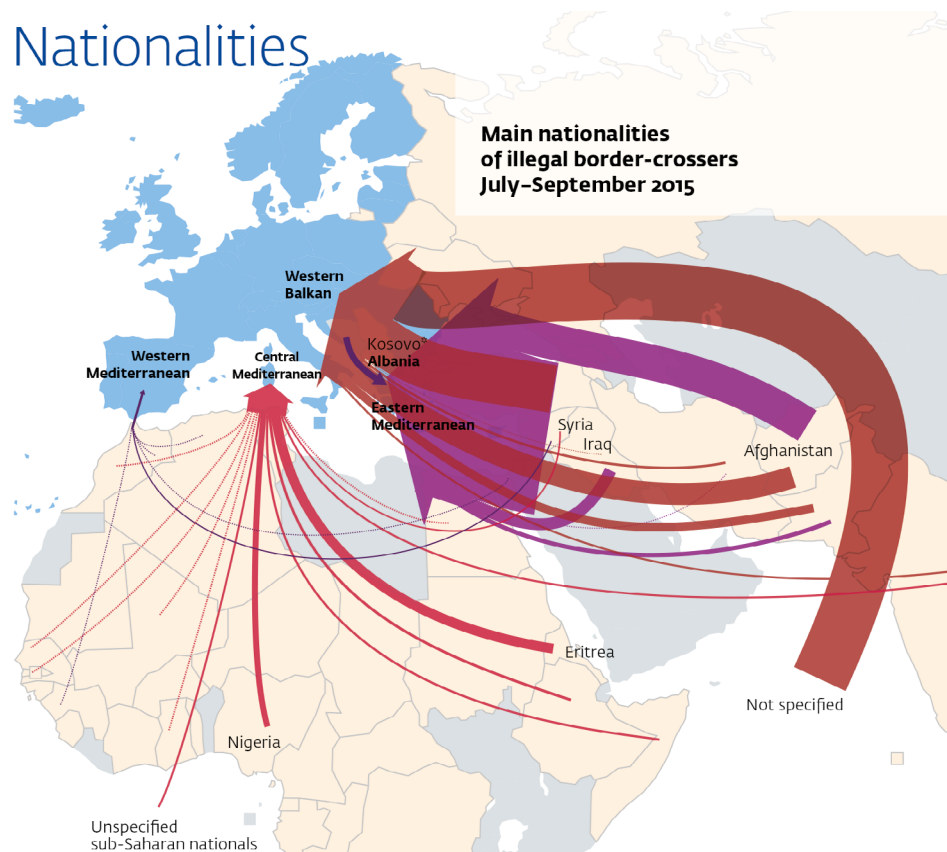
Accordingly, the sources' hierarchical division between infants and adults has contributed to the fundamental West/Rest binary, or, more broadly, the distinction between the self and the other. These divisions relationally position subjects within IR. Indeed, it is in defining the other that, through the illustration of difference, a sense of self can be affirmed (Reinke de Buitrago 2012). Similarly, childhood relies upon the bounded definition of adulthood (Burman 1994, p. 241). The *deliberate* absences in visual sources, that reflect and shape the adult/infant distinction, contribute to the creation of identity within IR along the self/other binary. Notably, these constructions are reliant on a romanticised Western concept of childhood (ibid., p. 239). This demonstrates that underlying discursive construction is intertextually bounded to other discourses. The reliance on meanings explored in other images, by definition, requires an analysis of absences, moving beyond the visual source in question, to the wider background. It is hoped that an improved analysis, which appreciates that the 'othering process' is a multi-discursive construction (Reinke de Buitrago 2012), will enable greater inclusivity of different 'groups' and narratives, at a scholarly and polity level. Therefore, the deliberate omission of certain adults, as developed previously, has both reflected on and contributed to, the creation of identity and relationships within IR. Having shown that, not only are images discursively constructed but that they operate within multiple layers of discourse, it is clear that this article's analysis of *tacit* and *deliberate* absences is necessary to accurately explore sources' wider contexts.

2.3. Light/Dark

One particular affirmation of the self/other binary is through the metaphorical distinction between light and dark. Historically described as the 'dark continent', African imagery, within Western-centric discourse, aided the affirmation of the Western self. This is because it was deemed to contrast the 'enlightened', 'light' and 'civilised' Europe. Sebastião Salgado's award-winning photojournalist series (**Source 4**), depicting the Ethiopian famine (1983–1985), provides a valuable example of employing the traditional notions of darkness. An absence of infrastructure and modern transportation compliments the included depiction of desolate landscapes, sculpted with cracked ground. The voidness of natural growth paradoxically arises in an image framed within nature. Moreover, the only artificial constructions shown are makeshift camps and distant huts. The characters' movement away from these structures alludes to their insufficiency. Ultimately, this lifelessness serves to reinforce notions of darkness. This echoes the colonial tropes that depicted the continent as failed and primitive (MacDonald, Hughes & Dodds 2010, p. 169). Again, this relies on Western constructs of modernity, with famine imagery associated with a 'pre-modern era' (ibid., p. 185). This hierarchy reaffirms binary distinctions, with the 'West' presented to have overcome pre-modern difficulties. On a superficial level, this is reinforced through the *deliberate* absence of colour, with the monochromatic depiction constructing a 'mono-reality' (Bleiker 2018a, p. 120). Accordingly, including absences in analysis enables an appreciation of both their impact in the metaphorical construction of IR and their intrinsic value in this process.

Not only does **Source 4** deliberately omit Ethiopian culture in general, contributing to the sense of 'civilisational backwardness', but the image presents the

Nationalities

**Main nationalities
of illegal border-crossers
July–September 2015**

Western
Balkan

Western
Mediterranean

Central
Mediterranean

Kosovo*
Albania

Eastern
Mediterranean

Syria
Iraq

Afghanistan

Eritrea

Not specified

Nigeria

Unspecified
sub-Saharan nationals

Source 4 | Map depicting the main nationalities of illegal border-crossings for the third quarter of 2015 (right). From the FRAN Q3 report, Frontex (2015). Available at: https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/FRAN_Q3_2015.pdf

population as a homogenised mass, negating uniqueness in the reaffirmation of binary distinctions. Depicted with increasingly unrecognisable facial features (Azevedo et al. 2021, p. 2), the migrating group disappears into a dehumanised and indistinctive conglomeration. Although the source may be critiqued for being out of date, when viewed alongside **Source 1**, continuity is exposed. Beyond acknowledging that both images employ similar tropes of vulnerable infants, often without clothes, the Save the Children advert fails to provide any information about their image's specific location and context. This deliberately avoids an appreciation of regional differences, contributing to cultural homogenisation. The denial of heterogeneity within Western 'pan-African imagery' compounds the self/other binary (Young 2012). Resultantly, taking multiple sources together reveals, through absences, that a central Eurocentric discourse remains dominant. This illuminates that *deliberate* absences remain salient techniques in constructing discursive binaries and, correspondingly, prove a useful tool in critically engaging with mainstream IR's Eurocentric epistemological substructure (Fonseca 2019, p. 53).

It is important to briefly note that visual sources can challenge, as well as perpetuate, discourses. Again, this is particularly true in lieu of digitalisation and the rise of social media. Having diversified sources and, implicitly, agency, greater opportunities to challenge the existing narrative have manifested. For example, #TheAfricaTheMediaNeverShowsYou went viral on Instagram in 2015. This visual trend, originating amongst Ghanaian

teenagers, spread across the continent and constituted a generational challenge to the notion of 'absent civilisation'. Retweets and posts focused on nature, culture and technological innovation. By countering ideas of homogeneity and 'darkness' through the offering of alternative perspectives, the distinct binaries of identity that propagate informal hierarchical relations were undermined. Whilst these challenges have proved, as of yet, unable to completely dislodge damaging binaries, they nevertheless reveal that discursive construction is malleable. Discreetly, the increasing ease of challenging discourse via social media highlights that the aforementioned absences are 'important' in reaffirming against such 'challenges'. Their contribution to archetypes of the dominant discourse perpetuates the narrative against IR's discursive competition.

Thus, absences are revealed to be a direct means of exerting power, informing analysis into the construction of IR. Having recognised that discourse is multifaceted, this article's second half will delve further into the reasoning behind Eurocentric discourse's continued primacy. In doing so, an analysis of the spatialisation of relations and absences within cartography, as a particular substring of visual imagery, will occur through the EU's 'Frontex map' (**Source 5**). Its provenance, as a map (on migratory routes to Europe) and an official source of policy, presents it as possessing intellectually objective authority.

3. A Turn to Cartography
Employing iconographic metaphors and symbolism, the Frontex map, as will be explored below, exemplifies

the influence of 'geopolitical cartography', which combines traditional cartographic features and geometric representational shapes (Boria 2008, p. 280), with *deliberate* omissions. Although these absences fail to relay the complexity of the migratory situation, the apparent simplicity serves to present an unambiguous image (ibid., p. 282). Indeed, it is this failure that again merits the focus on absences, as these omissions misconstruct 'realities', moulding relations by expanding an internal sense of Europeanism, and, at the same time, carrying out a process of 'othering', in a deliberate fashion that is discussed below.

Firstly, although the source reflected fears of a 'migration crisis', spurred by events specific to the Middle East, the use of arrows is largely indistinguishable. Usefully described by van Houtum and Bueno Lacy (2020, p. 199) as 'cartographic cleansing', the *deliberate* absence of distinction, compounded through the included label of 'unspecified sub-Saharan nationals', contributes to homogenising the 'other', reaffirming the West/Rest binary. Further, the near absence of internal border distinctions within the EU contributes to the binary through notions of 'Western' similarity and unity. This contrasts the clear colour difference between the EU and its surroundings, echoing Anderson's (1991) argument that maps create a 'totalising classification'. Ultimately, the combination of absences and inclusion has constructed arbitrary binary divisions, informing imaginations of community to the detriment of heterogeneous identity. By including both in analysis, this article holistically appreciates that cartography has spatially constructed relations, in support of 'identity-difference' (Shapiro 2009, p. 19). Notably, this impact, facilitated via *deliberate* absence, is further explained through *tacit* absences, reflecting the EU's attempt to reaffirm its alleged primacy and further its desired internal sense of Europeanism. Just like photography, this is especially significant due to maps popularly presumed authoritative objectivity. Henrikson (1998, p. 96) describes this as '*cartohypnosis*', whereby many view the presented information without scepticism or critique (Bueno Lacy & van Houtum 2015, p. 494). However, visual sources are not apolitical. Frontex's *deliberate* absences are shaped by the creator's subjectivity and the relations of power that prescribe their specification (Harley 2008, p. 129, p. 135). Consequently, cartography both reflects on IR and acts as a means of shaping it. By presenting socially constructed binaries as reality, the likelihood of their perpetuation is increased. As consistently alluded to, it is only through the inclusion of *tacit* motivations and power relations, alongside *deliberate* absences that their constructive ability is revealed. Put differently, the inclusion of absence (and the distinction between *tacit* and *deliberate*) enables an insight into the views of the creators and a holistic analysis of the mechanistic workings of IR.

Specifically, these revelations enable an insightful analysis of international policy. The use of arrows, traditionally employed in military cartography (Walters 2010, p. 178), connotes a purposeful invasion. This is exacerbated given that the arrows appear to be converging from all directions and mirrors **Source 4**'s depiction of a massive conglomeration (van Houtum & Bueno Lacy 2020, p. 205). By connoting an invasive threat, a sense of criminality is conferred onto the migrants (Black 2003, p. 47). This is a *deliberate* political construct, reinforced

through visual imagery. The deliberate absence of both the benefits of migrants and the contextual reasoning behind their desire to flee is integral to their delegitimisation. Consequently, an analysis of the employment of absences to justify an exclusionary border policy reflects the source's provenance. More specific than the EU's foundational goals, Frontex, as the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, is defined to 'reduce [the] vulnerability of the external borders' (Frontex n.d.), showing that *deliberate* omissions stem from their purpose. A perceived migration crisis would increase the political will toward enhancing funding for the agency. Indeed, curated by the source of authority itself, the *tacit* absences of the Frontex map prove more direct than the previous images. Given that the European shift rightwards coincided with the production of this source, a study of *tacit* absences reveals the interlink between underlying power relations and the source's mode of production and *deliberate* omissions. To stress, this is not to suggest that Frontex has propagated the migration crisis itself. Nor is it rejecting the existence of potentially destabilising migratory transitions to the EU. Rather, it is highlighting how the choice of cartographical inclusion and absence is not only reflective of a broader political context but that it shapes the context itself.

Although mainstream IR scholars focus more on empirical methodology, and discourse scholars reject such workings (Milliken 1999, p. 226), this article argues that a study of visual sources can and should combine both. For instance, computing the number of times migrants are depicted as criminals would qualify 'interpretative' analysis and, subsequently, bridge tensions within the discipline. This empirical coupling is especially necessary for cartography, as scales require qualification to counteract distortions. Thus, the inclusion of absences, cartographic content and statistics are all necessary for a substantiated analysis.

Through comparison with the earlier legitimation of peacekeeping forces, the exclusionary border policy appears hypocritical, failing to offer protection to vulnerable migrants. This highlights that, fundamentally, the previous policy served to maintain spatially distinct relations, preventing migratory interconnection. Accordingly, through this analysis, the underlying motivations of internationally orientated policy can be obtained, with the desire to entrench binary divisions of paramount importance.

Finally, alongside entrenching binary relations, cartography specifically perpetuates the associated hierarchy. A further function of the arrows is to directionally suggest Europe as the desired endpoint. Coupled with an understanding of the exclusionary border policy, a sense of exclusivity constructs Europe as hierarchically superior. Needless to say, this reflects an EU agency focusing on the EU in fulfilment of their 'border-security' brief. Yet, at the same time, the *deliberate* absence of alternative migratory destinations hyperbolises the scale of the issue and the extent to which Europe is the desired endpoint. Indeed, the suggestion of linear and homogenised migration negates that 73 percent of refugees settle in the nearest 'safe' nation-state (British Red Cross n.d.).

The cartographical analysis of the Frontex map illustrates how absences within visual sources, through their contribution to the discursive construction of

hierarchical binary distinctions, have created and entrenched the spatialisation of relations, moulding international politics. Beyond ensuring a comprehensive reflection of the mechanisms that influence IR, an analysis of underlying *tacit* absences offers a partial explanation for *deliberate* absences.

4. Conclusion

Seeking to counter the current void of literature, a focus on absences provides a holistic insight into the relational structure of IR. Without neglecting included content, absences have contributed to the discursive construction of hierarchical binaries, engineered along racial and spatially determined axes. In lieu of visual-discourse theory, *tacit* and *deliberate* absences are themselves, a means of perpetuating and entrenching knowledge and power. This is particularly important given that notions of realism, in photography and cartography alike, lend them disproportional influence. Charitable imagery has perpetuated historical, colonial tropes of light/dark and parent/infant divisions. Ultimately, the distinction of the 'self' in contrast to the 'other' has shaped relations and identity, with engineered hierarchies of dependency negating causational responsibility and providing the guise for neo-colonial intervention. Without absences, this distinction's clarity would subside. Correspondingly, their incorporation into future analysis is integral to eroding the apparently 'objective' binary sense of difference. This facilitates the discipline's broadening at both a scholarly and polity level to challenge conventional ontology and epistemological bias, and support less exclusionary policies. More deliberately, geopolitical cartography, including the Frontex map, has entrenched the spatialisation of tiered binary relations. Beyond respectively homogenising both sides, Europe was centrally positioned with alternative migratory destinations *deliberately* omitted. This deliberateness was moulded by *tacit* absences, emphasising the interconnection of underlying flows of power and the source's content. Accordingly, just as content and absences should be employed together, so too should *tacit* and *deliberate* strands. Indeed, *tacit* restraints and the reliance on symbols, beyond the visual source, definitionally require a focus on the absent, broader context.

Thus, furthering the currently limited literature and providing an evaluative framework through a novel *tacit*/*deliberate* distinction, this article has demonstrated that it is only through the combination of content with absence that the foundations of IR can be substantively relayed. The combination of *tacit* and *deliberate* does, itself, facilitate a holistic exploration into an image's various informing (yet potentially obscured) dynamics. This reveals how socially engineered, hierarchical binaries have guided structural relations of power and identity; and it is this revelation that can facilitate greater disciplinary breadth at a scholarly and political level.

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The Beholders of Time: Is the Duration of Interstate Conflict Subject to State Reputations?

Carl Lawrence

Why do some wars between states last longer than others? Most scholarship to date has paid attention to material factors such as shifts in 'relative power' between a pair of states at war with each other for aggravating the duration and destructiveness of conflict. This article re-evaluates the puzzle of war by using a subjective, immaterial variable—'reputation'—in a quantitative study that seeks to further explain war's longevity. Specifically, I combine the logic of commitment problems with a theory of 'reputation'. 'Reputation', as it is understood in this article, refers to the subjective knowledge about a state that is informed by the observation of its past behaviour towards third-party states. Building on this understanding, I introduce two mechanisms through which I expect reputations for aggressive behaviour will lead towards longer wars. Subsequently, I test my hypotheses using an event-history analysis, or a Cox proportional-hazard model, with a large-*n* dataset built from two extant studies, one on conflict duration, and the other on reputations. My most significant finding is that the reputation of the initiator of a war as an aggressor does affect the duration of interstate conflict, but surprisingly a reputation for aggression leads to shorter, not longer, wars. Finally, I discuss potential explanations for why the results confound my expectations, before introducing avenues for future research that can help further our understanding of reputations and their relationship with state behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

Why do some wars between states last longer than others? Most scholarship to date, particularly in the realist schools of international relations theory, has paid attention to material factors such as shifts in 'relative power' between a warring-dyad; that is, a pair of states at war with each other, for aggravating the duration and destructiveness of conflict (Mearsheimer 2001; Waltz 1979).[1] One of the most complete explanations that appears in the literature that draws on shifts in relative capabilities are 'dispositional commitment problems' (Weisiger 2013). Put simply, dispositional commitment problems expect that a war between two states following a shift in relative capabilities will become especially long and destructive if one of the states develops a perception of their adversary as 'dispositionally' aggressive or evil and so needs to be eliminated entirely for the war to end.

In this article, I introduce a novel assessment of commitment problems and the study of conflict duration by combining it with recent scholarship in the field of 'reputation theory' (Jervis, Yarhi-Milo & Casler 2021; Crescenzi 2007; 2018). 'Reputation', as it is understood in this article, refers to the subjective knowledge about a state that is informed by the observation of its past behaviour towards third-party states. My focus is on reputations for aggressive behaviour. Some scholars suggest a reputation for 'resolve', i.e., the *willingness* to fight over issues, functions as a military deterrent (Schelling 1966). Others suggest the opposite—that it frequently leads to the escalation of crisis into war (Crescenzi 2007; 2018). Following this, I expect that reputations for aggressive behaviour will contribute towards the dispositional commitment problems that lead to the longest and most destructive wars. My most significant finding is that the reputation of the *initiator* of a war does affect the duration of interstate conflict, but surprisingly a reputation for aggression leads to *shorter* wars, not longer.

The article follows in four parts. In the first section, I review the literature on commitment problems and

conflict duration to outline why I expect 'reputations' to be a variable of significance to be researched in this field. In the second section, I propose a theoretical framework to guide my expectations, introducing two possible mechanisms through which 'reputations' can lead to longer wars. In the third and fourth sections, I describe my research design and results, introducing a quantitative method for studying reputation's effect on conflict duration. In the Discussion and Conclusion, I summarise my findings and describe future research that could be done in this area to help better understand my results.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The duration of interstate conflict is not duration dependent. By this it is meant that 'such variables other than the duration of war itself perpetuate the conflict' (Bennett & Stam 1996, p. 239). Literature on conflict duration has empirically established multiple causes of longer and shorter wars. Why, then, introduce another study into the field which focuses on 'reputations'? As I expand on in the theoretical framework section of this article, reputations are considered in this study to be a subjective type of information about a state informed by the observation of its past behaviour towards third-party states (Crescenzi 2007; Jervis, Yarhi-Milo & Casler 2021). Within this literature review, I infer that this missing factor—past behaviour towards *third parties*—should in fact matter but remains overlooked.

The following section of the article is in two sections. The first explores the literature on commitment problems, a logic of war that results in longer and more destructive conflicts caused by mutual distrust over the future intentions of states experiencing a shift in relative power. The second section explores the literature on third-party interventions, past direct interactions between warring states, and their respective effects on conflict duration. In these two discussions, I identify that studying the relationship between 'reputations' and interstate conflict duration will first bring insights into

[1] Defensive realists such as Kenneth Waltz argue that it is disruption of the balance of power which states try and preserve that leads to miscalculation and subsequent war. Offensive realists like John Mearsheimer argue instead that it is the competition to maximise relative power that leads to conflict escalation between rival states.

whether beliefs about adversaries are formed in conflict or through observation of past behaviour, and second whether there are limitations to the interdependence of interstate conflict duration with external and historical events.

The Origin of Perception

I argue that if reputations are important in the study of conflict duration, it is because the perceptions states have of each other are informed by their observed past behaviour. In this section, I explore the *bargaining model* of war (Fearon 1995), which conceptualises interstate conflicts as a negotiation process to resolve disputes that otherwise could not be settled through peaceful bargaining. I then introduce a study on *commitment problems*, an explanation of war that sees mutual distrust between states as a barrier to dispute resolution. After, I explain the escalating effect of *dispositional* commitment problems, in which the perception of an adversary as 'dispositionally' untrustworthy or evil by its negotiating partner prohibits the termination of conflict under any condition other than an absolute surrender or actor elimination (Weisiger 2013). Current explanations of dispositional commitment problems expect that the perception of an adversary's war-loving or evil disposition forms through fighting (ibid., pp. 25–33). I resurface a question of whether the formation of this perception can be attributed to the observed past behaviour of a belligerent towards third-party states (Fearon 1994).[2]

The bargaining model of war offers a 'rationalist explanation' for why some interstate wars are longer than others (Reiter 2003). In this framing, war is seen as a negotiation process, that is a means of contesting an 'object of dispute', be it a resource, power, or status. It originates in the work of Prussian political theorist Carl von Clausewitz, who claimed war to be 'the continuation of policy with other means' (1984/1832, p. 87). In his conception, war serves as a tool of last resort, in instances when diplomacy alone cannot settle the interests of political actors. Similarly, James Fearon argues that states fight wars because they think the gains of war as a negotiation strategy will be more beneficial than the costs of a pre-war concession, stating that leaders 'find that the expected benefits of war sometimes outweigh the expected costs, however unfortunate this may be' (1995, p. 380).

Fearon presents three 'types' of disagreement in a negotiation that will prevent a settlement from being achieved through conventional means (Fearon 1995, p. 381). First, two states may not reach a settlement because they do not agree on the extent of their own and their respective other's military capabilities and willingness to fight, either because of deception or information disparities (Fearon 1995, p. 381). Second, if the object of dispute is considered by both parties as 'indivisible' because neither are willing to share or divide it, then reaching a negotiated settlement without conflict becomes much harder (Fearon 1995, p. 382). Finally, two states may not be able to reach a pre-war settlement because neither state can feel assured that the other will uphold such an agreement owing to 'incentives to renege on the terms', this being what is termed a '*commitment problem*' (Fearon 1995, p. 381). It is a powerful cause of war, in which one, or both, state(s) expect that their adversary will behave aggressively or offensively in the future simply because there is no way of guaranteeing that they will not.

Alex Weisiger (2013) argues that wars driven by commitment problems are more likely to become 'unlimited'. By 'unlimited', Weisiger refers to those wars which are unusually long in duration and destructive in material, human and political costs. He writes that wars driven by 'the commitment problem mechanism', unlike other types of wars, lack 'an internal logic that guarantees that opponents will reach a negotiated settlement after some period of fighting' (Weisiger 2013, p. 11). Wars driven by commitment problems are difficult to resolve because the dispute is defined by mistrust of the opposition, which is not easily assuaged through fighting. He then differentiates commitment problems into two distinct mechanisms described as *situational* and *dispositional* (Weisiger 2013, pp. 11–34).

The *situational commitment problem*, also referred to as the '*preventive war mechanism*', suggests that some wars will emerge because of shifts in relative power between two states and the fear that the state in decline experiences (Weisiger 2013, pp. 16–19; Copeland 2000). Weisiger presents the following logic explaining how this leads to war: 'leaders who anticipate relative decline must decide how to respond, often without knowing for sure what the rising power intends to do once stronger' (Weisiger 2013, p. 18). A state experiencing relative decline sees its future position becoming increasingly insecure. As it becomes relatively weaker, it also becomes less able to effectively deter future aggressions and coercion. The declining power might, therefore, insist that the rising power make a guarantee to leave it alone in the future by offering its own pacification in the present moment. Such a deal may logically appear 'preferable on each side to the expected utility of going to war' (Weisiger 2013, p. 18). However, with no overarching guarantor of such commitments in an anarchic international system, there is no credibility to such an agreement (see Waltz 1979). Weisiger even suggests 'it may well be stupid' for the rising power to accept such a deal or commitment (Weisiger 2013, pp. 18–19).

From this, the power experiencing a relative decline is expected to try to prevent the rising power from achieving material preponderance in the future whilst it has the capabilities to do so. Weisiger concludes that '[i]n this context, forcibly imposing a significant defeat on one's opponent holds out the potential to resolve the entire problem in one quick move' (Weisiger 2013, p. 19). The *situational commitment problem* can explain what motivates fighting between states experiencing relative shifts in power. Following the bargaining model of war, we should expect that for this type of conflict to terminate, the distribution of relative power needs to become redistributed in such a way to bring credibility of commitment to any negotiated settlement. This would be achieved when the damage incurred by warfare renders continued fighting too costly for either one or both states involved, which may, and often does, take a significant amount of time and military expenditure.

The second logic Weisiger describes is the *dispositional commitment problem*. It is triggered when a leader comes to believe 'that the opponent is by nature (i.e., *dispositionally*) committed to aggression (Weisiger

2013, p. 29.; emphasis mine). This scenario starts with a 'declining power' launching 'an aggressive preventive war, based on a belief that its rising opponent will impose painful concessions on it once its rise is complete' (Weisiger 2013, p. 26). However, if 'the rising power lacks the intentions that the declining power ascribes to it' it will fail 'to appreciate the true motivation behind the declining power's aggressive war' (Weisiger 2013, p. 26). This misunderstanding of the declining power's future fears then leads to a perception that it is *dispositionally* evil, aggressive, or war-loving in the eyes of the opponent.

Weisiger argues that the information which inspires this perception is generated during the process of conflict. He writes '[i]n wars driven by a preventive motivation, the initiator tends to have particularly high war aims and is willing to adhere to these aims even in the face of initial military defeats' (Weisiger 2013, p. 31). This matters to the target of such a declaration because if the initiator's demands remain so high that they do not rationally correspond to the reality of 'military developments' then this becomes 'compatible with a view of the opponent as a war lover' (Weisiger 2013, p. 31).

Put simply, if a state experiences military setback after launching a preventive war, and then continues to make demands from the target of war which exceed what now seems reasonable in the military context, the target will assume that the initiator is simply a war-lover, i.e., that it is dispositionally aggressive (see Reiter 2009). As a result, the target of war limits what it considers an acceptable outcome to 'the reformation or removal of the offending actors on the opposing side, be they an individual leader, a broader government, or even the entire society of the opposing country' (Weisiger 2013, p. 26) . Thus, these conflicts tend towards being fought to the bitter end, rather than achieving a preferable power parity that can enable a negotiated settlement. In this process, conflicts that are driven by the dispositional commitment problem result in 'the most destructive interstate wars' as they become the most difficult to resolve (Weisiger 2013, p. 26).

Weisiger's argument is that the perception of one's opposition as '*dispositionally* evil' emerges from information updating through conflict. However, what has not been explored concretely is whether information derived from an adversary's past behaviour with other states also affects these perceptions and in turn drives the cost threshold that a state is willing to commit to achieve an absolute military victory (Fearon 1994). It is this mechanism that I seek to further understand in this article by exploring reputation's effect on conflict duration.

The Interdependence of Interstate Conflict

I argue that reputations should affect the duration of interstate conflicts because I expect that the past behaviour of belligerents towards third-party states is interdependent with the decisions made by states and leaders at war.[3] In my assessment of the broader literature on conflict duration, I infer this expectation by identifying the relevance of variables which intersect on the two dimensions that reputations lie: first in 'external factors' specifically relating to third-party states; and second in 'historical factors', relating to variables that have significance in the present despite

occurring prior to the conflict's onset. Through this, I observe that interstate conflict duration is shown to be interdependent with *direct* internal, external, and historical, interactions. By internal, I refer to interactions that describe or are caused solely by the main warring parties. By external, I refer to interactions that are governed by external entities, such as intervening third-party states. By historical, I refer to interactions that emerge from the past, such as the development of economic interdependence. The observation of the external and historical interdependence of interstate conflict drives a second question of my research: is the interdependence of a warring dyad limited to direct interactions between belligerents, or is it also subject to indirect interactions, consistent with its historical and external dependencies?

The earliest studies of conflict duration paid attention to characteristics of the two main parties involved in the conflict (Bennett & Stam 1996). Variables shown to affect conflict duration include, as examples, the geographical terrain between the two countries; political features such as the warring parties' political regimes; or, as rationalist theories expect, the relative balance of material power (Bennett & Stam 1996). All of these have been empirically tested to show that they affect the amount of time two states will continue to fight if engaged in a war (Bennett and Stam 1996; Fearon 1995; Weisiger 2013). I describe these as 'internal level' interactions: variables that affect conflict duration, but describe only the warring pair of states together or individually. We also can identify direct external and historical interactions affecting conflict duration, from which I infer conflict's external and historical interdependence.

Starting with external interactions, third parties are already known to affect the duration of inter-state conflict. Conflicts rarely, if ever, exist in isolation,[4] and it has been empirically shown that third-party interventions do affect duration, usually by prolongation. Upsetting the balance of power and relative material capabilities between the primary warring parties is the most obvious causal mechanism to explain this effect. Third parties may affect conflict through immaterial as well as material interactions. They introduce their own impartialities to the bargaining process, deviating the dispute away from the original object of disagreement by introducing new and external perspectives. Zachary Shirkey's research into external interventions and interstate conflict duration showed that an intervention made *after* the first month of a war will have a greater effect in prolonging the war than an intervention made *within* the first month (Shirkey 2012). The explanation of this phenomena is that a later intervention implies the external actor's decision to intervene is *not* motivated by the primary object of dispute that emerged between the original pair of states, but instead is motivated by autonomous ambitions.[5]

As such, I infer that third parties, which are entities external to a warring dyad, influence conflict in more than just direct material ways. They introduce new information, as well as interests, that perpetuate the duration of conflict and muddy the waters of the bargaining process. If third-party interactions with a warring pair can shape the subjective information held by these two states about the conflict and each other, I argue that this means interstate conflicts are

3   Deutsch (1954) makes a case that states and conflicts are interdependent, yet research methodology has simply not been advanced enough to explore this.

4   Siverson and Starr (1991) described what they call 'diffusion' or 'contagion' of conflicts. When conflicts and wars occur, they draw in other states and actors who find their own interests relevant to the outcome and process of the war itself.

5   Shirkey (2012); also Regan and Stam (2012) show similar findings on the effect of international mediation efforts.

interdependent with the decisions and perspectives of third-party states. My question is: does this process only work in one direction? If the indirect interactions of two warring parties towards third parties has a similar effect as the direct interactions of third parties towards the conflict, then this would mean that the external interdependence of conflict is not limited only to direct events.

The next step of inference is to explore how information and events derived from the past affect the decisions which perpetuate conflict in the present. I make two observations which support the argument that past actions can change the social relations between states and thus affect conflict's duration. First, Krustev shows that 'economic interdependence', formed through a history of trade between two belligerents, limits conflict duration (Krustev 2006). He argues that this occurs because the costs of prolonged conflicts exponentially increase when the two states rely on each other for their national economic needs. Therefore, historically cooperative relationships affect the duration of conflict.

Conversely, Long (2003) shows that a history of conflicting behaviour between states also affects the duration of wars. Employing a similar dataset and explanatory variable to those used in this article, he shows that a history of conflicting interaction between two states also results in longer durations of conflict. They argue that two states with a history of conflict develop perceptions of the respective other as a 'rival'. Over time, this perception becomes integrated into the national psyche, resulting in domestic pressures exerted on the political elite to increase the demands in negotiation and limiting what might be considered acceptable terms.

Both examples indicate that there is interdependence between historical interactions and the duration of interstate conflict, conditioned by both material relations and social perceptions. In turn, this leads to my question: do indirect interactions such as the past behaviour of belligerents towards third-party states also have an effect?

This assessment of the literature on conflict duration convinces me that the effect of reputations on conflict duration should be researched further. First, dispositional commitment problems expect that a state's *perception* of an adversary as 'war-loving' or 'aggressive' leads to longer wars (Weisiger 2013). Testing the effect of reputation on these perceptions will introduce novel understandings of whether indirect interactions matter in the formation of social identities, and whether states refer only to the information updating process of war itself when deciding on their adversary's 'disposition'.

Second, the direct interaction of external actors and the past actions of the two main parties in a war are also shown to influence conflict duration. This implies that interstate wars as political processes are interdependent with direct external and historical interactions. Asking whether indirect interactions have a similar influence would further knowledge of the extent to this interdependence. If they do, this would encourage further research into how states react to the actions of other states. If they do not, it would indicate that there are limits to the interdependence of state behaviour and the range of information available to them in the international environment.

Theoertical Framework

How can 'reputations', informed by past behaviour towards third-party states, cause longer wars? In this section I rationalise the processes by which I expect reputations might affect the duration of interstate conflict. I do this in two stages. First, I elaborate current theories on how state 'reputations' function in international politics. Second, I form the basis of two causal mechanisms which predict how reputations for aggression would prolong wars between states. I conclude by introducing my hypotheses with which to test these mechanisms.

What are Reputations, and How Do They Work?

Reputations remain a contentious issue in international relations theory.[6] They are highly subject to interpretation and difficult to pin down precisely with a universal definition and theoretical construction. I take the understanding that reputations are, as Jonathan Mercer puts it, 'in the eye of the beholder' (Mercer 1996, p. 227). By this I mean that they are subjective: their importance, value and meaning are determined by the *viewer* and not the state that the reputation is attached to. Whatever information a reputation 'tells' about a state is relative to the identity of whoever is interested in it. Reputations are also taken to be informed by the past behaviour of states (Dafoe, Renshon & Huth 2014, p. 375). However, when a subject state refers to another state's past behaviour to attain information on its reputation, the subject state will pay greater attention to behavioural patterns that are more *contextually* informative. These will be instances when the observed state interacts with states that are *like* the subject state.

In this way, reputations can be understood as having a relativity described by both a 'spatial' and 'temporal' dependence on interactions (Crescenzi 2007; 2018). Reputations are spatially dependent in the sense that they are only important as far as the subject state, that is that state *observing*, is *like* the third-party states that are being interacted with by an observed state. Reputations are temporally dependent because the value of the information they provide decays over time (Crescenzi 2007; also see Weisiger & Yarhi-Milo 2015). In turn, a state which is *recently* observed escalating conflicts militarily with states that are like the observing subject state will develop a reputation for being aggressive or war-loving. The subject state will then base its expectations of how the observed state will behave towards itself on this reputation and, as I argue for in the next section, will adjust its foreign policy strategy in response.

Reputation's dependence on observed case similarities is described by what may be termed *spatial relativity* (Crescenzi 2018, p. 47). The information reputations provide is only useful as far as the third-party states that are interacted with are spatially similar—geographically, materially, or politically—to the subject state that is observing. We might consider, for instance, the escalation to war between Cambodia (then under the Khmer Rouge as Democratic Kampuchea) and Vietnam in 1978 as an example of proximate states informing reputations. Democratic Kampuchea in the mid-1970s identified the Vietnamese as possessing an ideological end of federalising Indochina (Farrell 1998, p. 195). Continued occupation and intervention by the Vietnamese in Laos, as well as historic tensions with

Kampuchea itself, entrenched this perception. Following the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, the Chinese government sought to counter Vietnamese regional aggression (Thu-Huong 1992). Kampuchea's spatial proximity to Laos relative to Vietnam, as well as China's proximity to Kampuchea itself, informed Vietnamese reputation and in turn drove military reactions and behaviours. In this example, we can conceive how spatial relativity contributes to reputations for aggression and an increased likelihood of conflict escalation.

The spatial relativity of reputations means that the value of observing a state interacting with third-party states depends on the spatial proximity of the observing state with the third-party states. In turn, if the observed state acts cooperatively with states that are spatially proximate to the subject state, then the subject state will ascribe to the observed state a reputation for being cooperative, or what I refer to as a 'positive' reputation. If, on the other hand, the observed state acts aggressively towards states that are spatially proximate to the subject state, then the subject state will ascribe to the observed state a reputation for being aggressive, or what I refer to as a negative reputation (Crescenzi 2018, pp. 74–79).

As well as being spatially dependent, I also argue that reputations are *temporally* dependent (Crescenzi 2018, p. 51). The informational quality that a reputation provides about a state diminishes over time and in absence of any recent observations to be based off. If State A rarely witnesses State B interacting with states that are spatially proximate to State A, or if any such interactions occurred far in the past, then State A will have little information to base State B's reputation on. In this instance, we might consider State B as having no reputation of value to State A, rather than having no reputation at all.

A clear question that emerges from this is how do we account for recent *direct* histories of interaction between two states? Direct histories between states have already been shown to affect the duration of conflict (Krustev 2006; Long 2003), and so cannot be dismissed. Crescenzi argues that states defer to reputations when there is little recent direct history to depend on when a state wishes to predict the behaviour of another state (Crescenzi 2018). I would therefore expect that when a strong direct history exists, reputations matter less. However, I still expect that 'reputations' as they are measured in the quantitative study should indicate significance even if they matter only slightly to the perpetuation of conflict.

The basis for the expectations in my research and which informs my choice of explanatory variable is defined by this theory of reputation formation. A reputation is considered to be a type of information used to estimate a state's future intentions, based on the observation of its past behaviour towards third-party states that are spatially similar to the subject state.

Reputations for Aggression

How do we conceptualise reputations as causally related to longer durations of interstate war? My answer begins by discussing reputation's effect on the onset of war to inform my expectation of how it affects its duration (Crescenzi 2007; 2018). Next, I argue that if reputations do inform the decisions states make during war, then I expect this to affect conflict duration through one or two proposed mechanisms. In the 'directed' mechanism,

I propose that the reputation of the *initiator* of a war is the most relevant for perpetuating conflict. In this mechanism, reputation is the cause of the commitment problem that prevents a pre-war settlement, and subsequently provides an explanation for the perpetuation of war. In the 'undirected' mechanism, it does not matter who initiated the war. Instead, it expects that shifts in relative power coupled with a reputation for aggression will result in longer wars.

This article's measurement of 'reputation' is taken from an extant study by Mark Crescenzi which asks whether reputations for aggressive behaviour result in an increased likelihood of conflict onset (Crescenzi 2007; 2018). This, in and of itself, is a controversial claim amongst theories of reputation which needs to be unpicked before exploring the mechanisms that I introduce.

Most literature on 'reputations' refers to what are called 'reputations for resolve'. Mercer defines 'resolve' as 'the extent to which a state will risk war to achieve its objectives' (1996, p. 1). The conventional theory is that a 'reputation for resolve' would function as a military deterrent (Alt, Calvert & Humes 1988; Huth 1988; 1997; Nalebuff 1991; Schelling 1966; Weisiger & Yarhi-Milo 2015). According to this theory, if a state escalated conflict and fought to victory more frequently when challenged by other states, demonstrating 'resolve', it would cause would-be adversaries to become increasingly averse to pursuing military confrontation lest they come across a foe so prepared to war. On the other hand, there are many arguments that suggest 'reputations' do not matter in any sense because they are too complicated, or only make up a small part of the wider concerns states consider when assessing the credibility of threats (Mercer 1996; Press 2005; Hopf 1994).

My argument is fundamentally inspired by Mark Crescenzi's observation that reputations correlate with an *increased* likelihood of conflict onset, contrary to the expectations of the deterrence camp (Crescenzi 2007; 2018). He writes that his 'core finding … is that conflict is too highly correlated with incompetence in crisis management, and thus attempts to project a reputation of strength often end up translating into reputations for aggression' (Crescenzi 2018, p. 162). Put simply, when a state acts to demonstrate 'resolve' through military escalation in disputes, their peers interpret such action 'as incompetence, and thus as aggression' (Crescenzi 2018, p. 163). If a crisis emerges that involves a state with a reputation for 'incompetence' or 'aggression', other involved states will expect a militarised escalation from their aggressive adversary, and so will militarise themselves in anticipation of a war. Thus, 'violence begets violence'; preparation for war leads to war itself (Crescenzi 2018, p. 163).

Crescenzi's results indicate that state reputations for aggressive behaviour correlate with increased likelihood of conflict onset. If reputation is strong enough to shape the decisions of states and make war's *onset more likely*, then my expectation is that these beliefs ought to carry on into the war and affect the choices that would make war's *termination less likely*.

Reputable Commitment Problems

If a state with a reputation for aggression becomes involved in a war with another state, how does this reputation contribute to the perpetuation of the conflict?

Figure 1 | Directed reputable commitment problem.

I propose two different mechanisms that explain this which I call 'reputable commitment problems'. One is directed and the other is undirected.

The directed reputable commitment problem expects the reputation of the *initiator* to be the relevant factor in prolonging conflict. It is a helpful starting point both conceptually and theoretically. Conceptually, it is telling when a state that initiates a war against a target state already has a reputation for aggression in the target state's beliefs. It would imply that the initiator of war has, in recent times, behaved aggressively to comparable states, which at its extreme may resemble an imperial quest like Nazi Germany's invasions of neighbouring states in the years up to 1941 (Reiter 2009). Theoretically, it incorporates the failed negotiation process that results in commitment problems, identifying reputation as the cause of both war's onset and perpetuation, instead of shifts in relative capabilities.

Figure 1 illustrates how this mechanism works in a flow diagram. Key to the understanding of this mechanism is that the initiation of a war by a state with a reputation for aggression functions to confirm this belief for the target of war. Unlike the dispositional commitment problem proposed by Weisiger (2013, pp. 25–33), this mechanism does not update information through fighting. Rather, the act of aggression and violence is confirmation of a belief that is already held. Following the bargaining model of war (Fearon 1995), this mechanism identifies reputation as both the cause and perpetuating variable of conflict. If State B believes State A has a reputation for aggression or incompetence, then we would expect it be less likely to engage in a pre-war settlement as per the commitment problem, meaning any dispute is more likely to ferment into war. Furthermore, it presents a rationale for understanding why the war would go on for so long. If a state refuses to engage in negotiations because of its opposition's reputation for aggression, it would also prepare itself militarily to meet such aggression. Military preparation would then allow it to perpetuate conflict, as well as incentivising its continued resolve in eliminating an actor it sees as dispositionally aggressive.

This leads to my first hypothesis related to the directed reputable commitment problem:

H1: If the initiator of an interstate war has a reputation for aggression in the view of the target of war,

then this will lead to longer durations of conflict.

The undirected reputable commitment problem, illustrated in **Figure 2**, is not dependent on the reputation of the conflict's initiator. Instead, it functions in a similar way to the dispositional commitment problem, in that it starts with a shift in relative capabilities between states. The expectation is that if two states experience a shift in relative power, and one or both has a reputation for aggression, this will exacerbate the commitment problem as it arises. Consequently, with one or both states viewing their adversary as committed to war from the outset, they become incentivised to perpetuate conflict until they resolve the commitment problem through imposed material destruction. The undirected mechanism is a bit looser than the directed mechanism. It is difficult to account for any 'mutual' reputation between the two parties to a war. However, it seems rational as a way of explaining how a dispute over a state's rising status, coupled with a pre-war perception of aggressive reputations, might ferment into war, and furthermore provides an explanation for why it perpetuates.

I devise a second hypothesis to test the undirected reputable commitment problem:

H2: If a warring pair of states experience a pre-war shift in relative capabilities and one has a reputation for aggression, then this will lead to longer conflict.

In this section, I argued why it is that I expect 'reputation' to prolong the duration of conflict and the mechanisms through which I expect this to occur. First, reputations as I consider them are subjective constructions. Their importance is dependent on the subject state's spatial and temporal proximity to the observed behaviour that informs them. Second, I recounted the argument that reputations for aggression result in increased likelihood of conflict onset because they cause an observing state to anticipate war and thus militarily prepare for it. Finally, I articulated how I expect this to link to conflict duration through the directed and undirected reputable commitment problem mechanisms, both of which expect conflict duration to be prolonged by pre-war reputations for aggressive behaviour. The next section describes how I test my hypotheses using a quantitative approach that identifies where, if at all, there is validity
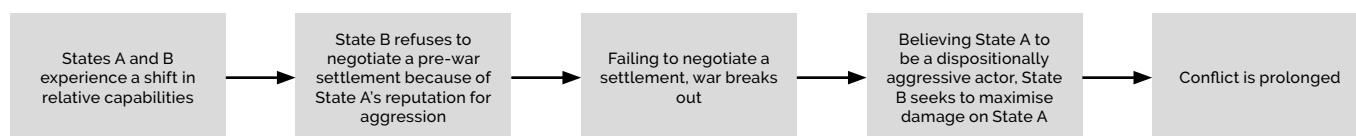

Figure 2 | Undirected reputable commitment problem.

to my arguments.

RESEARCH METHOD AND DATA SELECTION

In the first section, I claimed that, within the literature on conflict duration, we can infer that the past behaviour of states towards third-party states should have effects on the duration of interstate wars. In the second section, I introduced a theory of how reputations could prolong the duration of interstate conflict through two possible mechanisms. In this section, I explore these claims quantitatively to see how the empirical record holds across multiple cases. I chose to use a quantitative method because I want to make an initial exploration into a mechanism yet understudied. Using a qualitative analysis at this stage would be circumspect to confirmation bias in choosing a single, or multiple, case(s) because they appear to confirm my hypotheses. If the quantitative method is revealing of significant correlations across a varied sample of interstate wars, then this would give grounds for future research into case studies that appear to demonstrate the pertinence of reputation prolonging conflict duration.

DATA SOURCING AND METHOD SELECTION

The study of conflict duration has advanced considerably in using statistical methods to estimate correlations between variables (Bennett & Stam 1996; Kertzer 2016; Koch 2009; Langlois & Langlois 2009; Shirkey 2012; Weisiger 2013). Here, I have created a dataset by merging the datasets used in Crescenzi's (2007) study of conflict onset which introduces a variable for 'reputation' and Weisiger's (2013) study of conflict duration. The entries in the dataset drawn from version 4.0 of the Correlates of War (COW) list of interstate wars (Sarkees & Wayman 2010), which includes all interstate wars in the post-Napoleonic period. The dataset disaggregates multilateral conflicts into single dyadic partner entries; for example, the Second World War would be described through single pairings such as Germany and Britain. I have excluded entries according to Weisiger's five conditions of flagging: there is doubt that there were more than a thousand deaths, violating the definition of a war; some wars 'are better described as internationalized civil wars'; some wars are not endorsed by the leaders; some wars have a period of intermission, raising doubt as whether to consider it two wars instead of one; and finally some multilateral wars were reaggregated for inclusion (Weisiger 2013, pp. 58–59).[7] Using this application, the final dataset has 103 'primary observations' (Weisiger 2013, p. 58).

I use a semi-parametric Cox proportional-hazard model to attain my results (Tuma 2011/1994), the same method used by Crescenzi and Weisiger in their own studies. Also known as event-history analysis, this method indicates what the effects of variables included in the model have on the *timing* of a specified event (Tuma 2011/1994, p. 4). The specified event is the termination of conflict. Thus, the model estimates correlations between the explanatory variables and the likelihood of conflict terminating at any given time. This means that the covariates themselves are reversed to what one would expect when measuring conflict duration: instead of estimating the number of days until the conflict ends, it predicts the likelihood of it terminating at any given time.

DEPENDENT VARIABLE: CONFLICT DURATION

The dependent variable measures the number of days it took for a conflict to end, taken from Weisiger's dataset (2012; 2013). The duration of a conflict generally remains one of the most salient measurements of the conflict's destructiveness, albeit with its own caveats. For example, there have been long protracted wars such as the Vietnam War which were not as destructive for every side as more intense wars such as World War II (Weisiger 2013, p. 60). Data on conflict duration is sourced from the Interstate War Initiation and Termination dataset (Fazal & Page 2015). The day that fighting started is used as the starting date and the day that it stopped as the end date. This is a trade-off to using, for example, the Correlates of War (COW) data which benchmarks initiation and termination using 'diplomatic developments like declarations of war or peace treaties' (Weisiger 2013, p. 60; Sarkees & Wayman 2010). Using these definitions may obfuscate political events which otherwise might constitute the start of war. For example, in the dataset, the Chadian reconquest of Northern Chad is used as the benchmark Chadian–Libyan War of 1987. This is a helpful turning point in this conflict as it marked when it transitioned for the Chadian state from an intra-state to inter-state in absence of any formal declaration at the time (Nolutshungu 1995, pp. 215–216).

EXPLANATORY VARIABLES: CRESCENZI'S REPUTATION SCORE AND SHIFTS IN RELATIVE POWER

The explanatory variable used comes from Crescenzi's (2007; 2012) studies on reputation and the onset of conflict. The reputation score (R_{ijN}) is measured using the conditions of reputation specified in my theoretical framework. That is, it measures the reputation of one state, i, in the view of state j through its interactions with multiple states k that are spatially proximate to j, with the following equation:

$$R_{ijN} = \frac{\sum\limits_{k \neq i,j}^{N} IIS_{jk}S_{jk}C_{ikt}}{N-2}$$

in which the reputation of state j in the view of state i (R_{ijN}) within a system size of N is measured by the sum of the interaction score of state j and k (IIS_{jk}), as well as the similarity between i and k, represented by S_{jk} and C_{ikt}, respectively, divided by the size of the state system minus two.[8]

In turn, the interaction scores between state i and states k for a given year t (i_t) are measured by the following (Crescenzi & Enterline 2001, p. 420):

$$i_t = i_{t-1}(e^{-\left(\frac{\text{PeaceYears}_t}{\text{PrevDisp}_t+1}\right)}) - \frac{\sum\limits_{i}^{n}\text{HostLev}_{it}}{\text{PeaceYears}_t}$$

in which PeaceYears_t is the number of years that the dyad has had of peace, whilst PrevDisp_t indicates the amount of time since the last militarised dispute. HostLev_i indicates the level of hostility, drawn from the COW Militarised Interstate Dispute dataset to account for 'the occurrence and severity of a militarized dispute for the given year t' (ibid., p. 420).[9] Hostile or cooperative relationships are indicated on an i_t score scale of -1

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[7] To ensure the accuracy of this process, I consulted Weisiger directly through personal correspondence.

[8] For a full and detailed explanation of how these values are calculated, as well as how the equation is derived, refer to Crescenzi (2007) and Crescenzi and Enterline (2001).

[9] For a full and detailed explanation of the equation's rationale, refer to Crescenzi and Enterline (2001).

Explanatory Variables	Mean	S.D.	Min.	Max.	N
Minimum Reputation	−0.013	0.023	−0.137	0.015	103
Reputation of Initiator	−0.004	0.017	−0.137	0.018	95
Direct History	−0.151	0.301	−0.917	0.033	88
Minimum Reputation × Direct History	0.002	0.008	−0.011	0.061	85
Reputation of Initiator × Direct History	0.001	0.007	−0.013	0.061	78
Capability shift (10 year lag)	0.282	0.216	0.007	0.884	86
Log(War Intensity)	−6.61	2.03	−11.0	−1.67	102
Democracy Initiator	0.21	0.41	0	1	102
Loser Regime Type	−3.17	5.71	−10	10	93
Terrain	0.62	0.24	0.20	1.05	103
Contiguity	0.59	0.49	0	1	103
Relative Capacities	0.793	0.141	0.503	0.988	96
No. of Participants	2.41	0.76	2.0	6.0	103
Military Strategy	3.96	1.08	2	8	103
Major Power War	0.14	0.34	0	1	103
Cultural Difference	0.602	0.492	0	1	103
Duration (Days)	422.4	743.4	1	4293	103

Table 1 | Descriptive statistics.

to 1 respectively. Measurements are controlled against two measures of state j and states k's spatial proximity: the COW Composite Index of National Capabilities (CINC) (Singer, Bremer & Stuckey 1972) measurement and Signorino and Ritter's S-similarity score for foreign policy (Signorino & Ritter 1999). Theoretically, the value has a range of −1 (perfectly aggressive reputation) to 1 (perfectly cooperative reputation), though as can be seen in **Table 1**, it has a practical range of −0.14 to 0.02. I then introduced the variable into Weisiger's dataset, lagging the entry by one year so that the score used for each observation was from the immediate or the most recent year preceding the war's onset.[10] Finally, using version 4.0 of the COW list of interstate wars' definition of the 'initiator' of conflict (Sarkees & Wayman 2010), I created two versions of the reputation score, one which indicates the '*minimum*' reputation of either party, and the second that indicates the reputation of the *initiator*. This was so I could test my two alternative hypotheses.

A second explanatory variable that I introduce accounts for shifts in relative power before a conflict. Again, I use Weisiger's own measurement, which is based off the COW's CINC score (Weisiger 2012; Singer, Bremer & Stuckey 1972). The CINC score accounts for the annual material power capabilities of states using six criteria—'total population, urban population, iron and steel production, energy consumption, military personnel, and military expenditure' (Weisiger 2013, p.

62). This variable accounts for shifts in relative capabilities with a ten-year time lag, measured by comparing how state A and state B's scores change relative to each other over a ten-year period. This assumes that leaders pay attention to shifts that have occurred in the past to draw their own hopes and fears of experiencing a relative rise or decline by anticipating that these trajectories will continue (Weisiger 2013, p. 61). The variable ranges theoretically from 0 to 1, with a larger number indicating a more significant power shift over the time in observation. Whilst the CINC score is an imperfect way of measuring relative capabilities, it has been used across multiple studies of conflict duration with significant results.

Control Variables

For the control variables, again, I use the same variables as Weisiger, as well as some of Crescenzi's state interaction variables—all of which have been shown to correlate with the duration of interstate conflict (Crescenzi 2011; Weisiger 2013). The choice of these variables was simple: replicating a pair of models from extant, published studies ensures its accuracy and validity. For this reason, I use the same control variables as Weisiger's default models (2013, p. 65; Weisiger 2012).

In total, I use ten different control variables. I control for the war's intensity, measured as the rate of death proportional to the national population sizes of

[10] This was done for empirical as well as methodological reasons. 41 of the observations in the year that conflict was noted as commencing in Weisiger's set were missing in Crescenzi's replication set. Six of these had the observation value missing for multiple years before conflict onset, for example, the Mexican–American War of 1846 only had the reputation score from 1843 as the most recent observation. The Iraq–US war had the longest time break of 6 years. The empirical rationale, that the appropriate observation to use was the reputation score of the immediate or most recent year preceding conflict onset was arrived at through personal correspondence with Crescenzi himself.

the involved parties, using data personally collected by Weisiger from Clodfelter's Encyclopaedia of War Statistics (Clodfelter 2007) and from COW's National Military Capabilities dataset (Singer, Bremer & Stuckey 1972). This variable was also logarithmically scaled to account for skew (Weisiger 2012; Weisiger 2013, p. 65).

I also control for the regime types of the warring states (Fazal & Page 2015). First, I use a dichotomous variable coded as 1 if true, and 0 if false, indicating whether the conflict was initiated by a democratic regime (Weisiger 2012; Weisiger 2013, p. 64; Marshall, Jaggers & Gurr 2010). Second, I control for the authoritarian regime of the losing state on a twenty-point scale, with −10 indicating most authoritarian, and 10 indicating most democratic (Weisiger 2012; Weisiger 2013, p. 64; Marshall, Jaggers & Gurr 2010; also see Reiter & Stam 2002).

I include a variable on the terrain type that the war was fought on using data sourced from a study by Slantchev (2004). In this variable, a larger number indicates more rugged and less easily traversed terrain, whilst a smaller number indicates flatter and clearer terrain. I also use a dichotomous variable to control for contiguity, defined by whether the states at war share a land border, with the data sourced from version 3 of the COW contiguity dataset (Stinnet et al. 2002).

I control for the relative capabilities of the warring parties at the time of conflict's initiation, measured using the CINC scores of each state. This variable ranges from 0.5 to 1 'with higher values representing a more unequal distribution of capabilities' (Weisiger 2013, p. 65). I control for whether the conflict can be considered a 'major power war' using a dichotomous variable indicating if each state was defined as a major power by Levy's 'identification of major powers over time' (ibid., p. 65; Levy 1983). I include a variable controlling for the number of states that were involved in the conflict that were considered 'major participants' (Weisiger 2013, p. 65; see Cunningham 2006). I also control for the strategies employed by each side, using the coding system devised by Bennett and Stam (Weisiger 2013, p. 65; Bennett & Stam 1996). The lower numbers indicate the employment of 'blitzkrieg' strategies, which involve swift attacks, whilst lower numbers indicate the use of guerrilla and punishment strategies. Finally, I use Weisiger's dichotomous variable which determines if a conflict could be defined as a 'civilizational clash' between the main two parties, either based on incompatible political ideologies, or a clash of the broad categories of civilization defined in Samuel Huntington's infamous thesis (Weisiger 2013, p. 65; Huntington 1993; 1996; Haas 2005; Owen 2010).

From Crescenzi, I use two variables controlling for a history of direct interaction between the main two warring parties. This is the direct interaction score developed by him and Andrew Enterline (Crescenzi & Enterline 2001). This variable indicates on a scale on −1 to 1 whether the two main warring parties have a recent direct history that was respectively conflicting or cooperative in the same fashion at the reputation variable. It is necessary to include this in the study to control for the possibility that reputation, in the context of conflict duration, does become negated by direct histories. Consequently, I also include interaction variables between the two reputation scores and the direct history (Crescenzi 2007; 2018). The minimum

reputation interaction value comes directly from Crescenzi's dataset, whilst the initiator's reputation interaction variable was constructed by myself.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To test my hypotheses, I ran four data models, the results of which can be seen in **Table 2**. The first two models test **H1**, which predicted that if the initiator of a conflict has a reputation for aggression, then we can expect to see a longer duration of conflict. Model 1 shows only the results for the effect of the initiator's reputation on conflict duration without the measure of a shift in relative capabilities, whilst controlling for all variables except for the direct history scores. Model 2 shows the results for the initiator's reputation with all other variables. Models 3 and 4 test my second hypothesis on the undirected mechanism, **H2**, which predicted that regardless of the initiator, either state having a reputation for aggression, when coupled with a shift in relative capabilities, would result in longer durations of conflict. Model 3 shows the results for the minimum reputation score without the measure of a shift in relative capabilities, whilst controlling for all variables except for the direct history scores. Model 4 shows the results for the minimum reputation score with all other variables included. In this model, I also allowed the reputation variable and the shift in capabilities to interact so that I could test the relationship between the minimum reputation and shifts in capabilities.

The values indicated are variable coefficients, rather than hazard. For interpretation, the coefficients are multiplied by the value of the variable that is inputted, and the resultant effect is to increase or decrease the likelihood of a conflict terminating at any given point in time by this total. This means that for any variable that has a range of exclusively positive values, a positive variable coefficient indicates an increased likelihood of conflict termination at any given point, and so correlates with shorter durations of war. However, because the 'reputation' value has a range of less than zero to greater than zero, it means that we are looking for a positive variable coefficient to support my hypotheses. This is because a positive coefficient, with a 'negative' reputation for aggression, will result in a *decreased* likelihood of conflict termination and, thus, longer wars.

RESULTS

The results are surprising. The directed reputable commitment problem hypothesis, that an initiator of conflict with a reputation for aggression, is indicated as incorrect. Whilst the results show that there is a statistically significant relationship at the ninety-fifth percentile between the reputation of the initiator of the conflict with the likelihood of the conflict terminating, the variable coefficient is negative. This means that if the state that initiates the war has a reputation for aggressive behaviour, then the likelihood of conflict terminating at any given point increases. This means that if the initiator of a war has a reputation for aggression, we can estimate the war to be *shorter*, rejecting **H1**.

The results also do not support the undirected hypothesis **H2**, which expects a lower 'minimum' reputation following a significant shift in material power to correlate with longer durations of conflict. Models 3 and 4 both indicate that there is no statistically significant relationship between the 'minimum'

Predictors	Initiator Reputation		Minimum Reputation	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Reputation	-20.26*	–26.54*	–2.42	–8.717
Direct Conflict History		0.203		0.041
Reputation × Direct Conflict History		–84.89		–54.71
Capability shift (10 year lag)		–3.14***		–2.038*
Log(War Intensity)	0.164‡	0.307**	0.142	0.272**
Democracy Initiator	0.337	0.789	0.426	1.039*
Loser Regime Type	0.040‡	0.036	0.033	0.036
Terrain	–1.632**	–3.647***	–1.291*	–2.959***
Contiguity	-0.084	0.076	–0.271	–0.225
Relative Capacities	0.063	0.057	0.026	0.007
No. Participants	0.256	-0.017	0.106	–0.096
Military Strategy	-0.372*	–0.486*	–0.450**	–0.533*
Major Power War	–0.746‡	–0.219	–0.894*	–0.836‡
Cultural Difference	–0.243	0.011	–0.195	–0.227
Reputation × Capability Shift				23.067
Observations	84	63	91	68
Log Likelihood	36.01	51.99	35.18	35.18
AIC	568	378	632	425
χ^2 (Wald)	36.29	45.14	34.49	34.49
				‡$p < 0.10$, *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$

Table 2 | Results for Cox proportional hazard models.

reputation of two states that engage in a war and the likelihood of it terminating. Furthermore, the interaction variable between the shift in relative capabilities and the reputation score does not show any statistical significance either.

For other variables that were statistically significant, the results replicated past studies which in turn helped to support their validity. Both Models 2 and 4 show that there is statistical significance in decreasing the likelihood of conflict terminating at any given point with an increased pre-war shift in relative capabilities, therefore correlating with increased conflict duration and replicating Weisiger's findings (2013, p. 69). In three out of four models, the variable for conflict intensity indicates that more intense conflicts are shorter (Weisiger 2013, p. 74). The polity variables which indicated whether the initiator of conflict was a democratic state, and the authoritarian level of the losing state, also replicated Weisiger's findings (Weisiger 2013, p. 72), with democratic states shown to fight in shorter wars, whilst authoritarian regimes appear to

grind out their defeats over longer periods. Wars that take place in areas that have less easily traversed terrain also tend to be longer, with all four models indicating statistical significance of this effect, again meeting expectations (Bennett & Stam 1996). The military strategy variable replicates Weisiger's results, 'with blitzkrieg wars shorter and guerrilla wars longer than conventionally fought conflicts' (Weisiger 2013, p. 74). Finally, conflicts that are fought between major powers are also longer in duration with statistical significance in three models. There was no statistical significance for any of the direct history scores, the variables on contiguity, relative capacities, number of participants, nor cultural differences.

Discussion

These results confound the expectations of the theory employed in this article. Reputations, as they are considered in this study, do not affect conflict duration in a way that means they inform the dispositional commitment problem. This is evidenced in two separate parts of the

results. First, the variable coefficient of the initiator's reputation estimates that a reputation for aggression corelates with *shorter* conflict duration. Second, the lack of significance of either the minimum reputation score, or its interaction effect with a shifts in relative capabilities, indicates that reputation does not couple with shifts in power to affect conflict duration. Reputation's effect on conflict duration is not what I expected it to be.

What is particularly striking however, is that the reputation of the initiator is statistically significant. More so, it is statistically significant whilst the direct interaction scores were not. This indicates that in this model, past behaviour of the initiator towards third-party states has a more significant effect on conflict duration than the direct interactions of the warring pair. At minimum, this confirms my expectation that indirect interactions affect the decision-making processes of states that start and continue to be engaged in war. This ultimately means continued research into this relationship remains a valid and potentially fruitful endeavour.

There are a few potential explanations for these results. The first consideration is in the explanations for *limited* wars that are shorter and less destructive that are introduced by Weisiger (2013, pp. 33–53). One possibility is that the reputation of a state might create the settings for the 'informational mechanism' (Weisiger 2013, pp. 36–42) in which disagreement over an adversary's resolve or capabilities can lead to conflicts that are settled in fighting. In this case a 'reputation' might mask the truth of a state's material capabilities prior to the initiation of a war. A second suggestion is that a reputation for aggression functions as the initial dispute. If this is the case, then the outbreak of war might encourage third parties to intervene themselves early on, having borne grievances against the initiator, which as discussed in the literature results in shorter conflicts than if they made late interventions (Shirkey 2012).

Alone, however, these results do not provide enough information to give a definite answer. To fully explore reputation's effect on the conduct of war, there needs to be an investigation into at least two features that were outside of the scope of this article. First, how does the reputation of the initiator of a conflict affect the choice of military strategy the target of war makes? Studying this variable would give greater insight into the way pre-war perceptions affect in-conflict decisions more completely. Second, are there any correlations between the reputation of the initiator of conflict and the outcome? Knowing how reputation affects outcome will reveal information such as whether they are shorter

because the aggressive initiator overstretches itself militarily.[11]

Finally, qualitative studies of course would be invaluable. In particular, I believe that further study of the Iran–Iraq War of 1980–1988 is most worthwhile. Both states have positive reputations (that is, reputations for cooperation) prior to the onset of that war. Furthermore, Iraq especially was making ready regional alliances through which to leverage its bargaining position prior to its initiation of the war (McLachlan 1993, p. 29). Studying a conflict with such complex regional interactions (Karsh 1990) in the years preceding that turned into one of the longest and most destructive of the twentieth century (Ashton & Gibson 2013) would undoubtedly provide an excellent case study into the role that the past behaviour of belligerents towards third-party states plays in affecting conflict duration.

To summarise, reputations for aggressive behaviour do not appear to affect the bargaining process of war in the same way as the information updating process that occurs through fighting and which leads to dispositional commitment problems. However, the results have presented evidence to support the expectation that conflict duration is dependent on the past behaviour of the initiator of conflict. This at the least reveals new insights to suggest that reputations do matter in international politics. How they matter, however, remains to be investigated further.

Conclusion

Overall, this article sought to understand whether the reputations of states, informed by their past behaviour towards third-party states, affect the durations of conflicts in a way similar to dispositional commitment problems. This expectation was derived first from the observation that the perception of states caused decisions in the war that affected the duration of conflict. It was also derived from an observation that direct internal, external, and historical interactions affect the behaviour of conflicting dyads. My hypothesis that reputations for aggression would result in longer durations of war was shown to be false in my data models, however, the results are still valuable. First, it presented evidence supporting the claim that reputations *do matter* in affecting the duration of interstate conflict; they just do not matter in the way expected. Second, and following on from this, it leaves a large scope of future research to be conducted into this area, with scope for new hypothesis testing and qualitative analysis that can hopefully provide new insights.

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[11] See, for example, Kennedy (2017/1987).

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China's Diasporic Public Diplomacy in the UK: Mobilisation through Diaspora Associations and Diasporic Media, and the Paradox of Social Media Use

Chloe Lee

Diasporic public diplomacy that covers diplomatic efforts aiming to mobilise members of the Chinese diaspora overseas, since its proposal in 2011, has gained central spotlight in China's quest for soft power. Academia has, however, yet to explore the role that two important strategies, namely diasporic associations, and the diasporic media, play in the process of mobilisation. This article, through a case study of the Chinese diaspora in the UK which analyses news and WeChat articles qualitatively, argues that the strength of economic, political, and emotional ties with China and pro-China narratives has a positive correlation to the effectiveness of mobilisation through diaspora associations and diasporic media with the help of social media. It also argues that the Chinese government's lack of information control over overseas social media platforms has rendered this social media a double-edged sword and countered part of the effect of Chinese diasporic public diplomacy efforts.

1. Introduction

Defined as Chinese living outside mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan (Tan & Wong 2018), thereby designating both 'overseas Chinese' (海外华人) who are usually first-generation migrants and 'Chinese with non-China nationalities' (華僑) which more commonly refers to descendants of Chinese migrants who do not have Chinese citizenship, the 'Chinese diaspora' consists of more than 60 million people (Zhang 2015). China's diasporic policies date back to the 1980s, the very beginning of the country's 'Reform and Opening-up' period. However, since the last decade, China has shifted away from engaging the diaspora primarily for domestic economic development and highly skilled resources to 'serve the country', to claiming them as 'public diplomats' as part of her quest for soft power (Thunø 2018).

The concept of 'diasporic public diplomacy' (僑務公共外交) was first proposed at the National Overseas Chinese Affairs Work Conference in 2011, where State Councillor and top diplomat of the Hu Jintao administration, Dai Bingguo, emphasised the need to encourage the diaspora to act as 'friendly ambassadors' in promoting cooperation and interaction between China and their host countries amidst 'complicated external circumstances'. In the same conference, Li Haifeng, the then-Director of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (OCAO), succinctly summarised the aim of diaspora engagement as recruiting the diaspora to act as a 'bridge' between China and their host countries (以僑為橋) (Xie 2011). He Yafei, upon being appointed as the OCAO's Deputy Director in 2012, reiterated the importance of diasporic public diplomacy in advancing China's 'international image' and 'soft power' (He 2012). In other words, China's public diplomacy does not aim at the diaspora solely as targets to rally support from, but also as potential actors to be mobilised to improve foreign perceptions of China.

As shall be seen in Section 2, a wide array of strategies was formulated subsequent to the proposal of diasporic public diplomacy. Such diaspora engagement policies have been a popular topic in recent years, appearing frequently in news, commentaries, and literature. Yet, literature on China's diasporic public diplomacy remains relatively sparse. Current research almost invariably focuses on cultural-oriented strategies like language education and exchanges, paying little attention to those that mobilise the Chinese diaspora through diaspora associations and diasporic media. This article, therefore, wishes to contribute to this strand of literature by studying these neglected strategies through a case study of the United Kingdom.

The UK is selected as the case study for four reasons. First, the UK hosts the largest number of members of the Chinese diaspora in Europe. As of 2011, more than 433,000 people of Chinese ethnicity resided in the UK, making up 0.7% of the total population and the largest immigrant group (Office for National Statistics 2011). Second, due to unique political ties and tension with China, the UK hosts a vibrant body of Chinese diaspora associations and diasporic media. With Chinese migration traceable to as early as the Opium Wars in the 19th century, the UK has also become a popular destination for Chinese students and merchants (Benton & Gomez 2008). More recently, a new wave of migration from Hong Kong, China's Special Administrative Region and once a British colony, was sparked by Beijing's (perceived) increasingly tightened political grip since 2019 and the UK's introduction of a new immigration route for British National (Overseas) status holders from Hong Kong in 2021, with which more than 97,000 applications were approved (Gilchrist 2022). Thus, there are diaspora associations based on various common identities, as well as diasporic media both in Chinese and English languages, making the UK a case study with interesting new perspectives to look at. Third, as this article is being written, major political events and clashes have recently been occurring among the diasporic community in the UK, like the alleged attack by China's consulate general on an anti-China protestor who is a member of the diaspora from Hong Kong in October 2022. In these events, social media were heavily relied on as a tool for physical mobilisation. The UK thereby offers unique contemporary events for
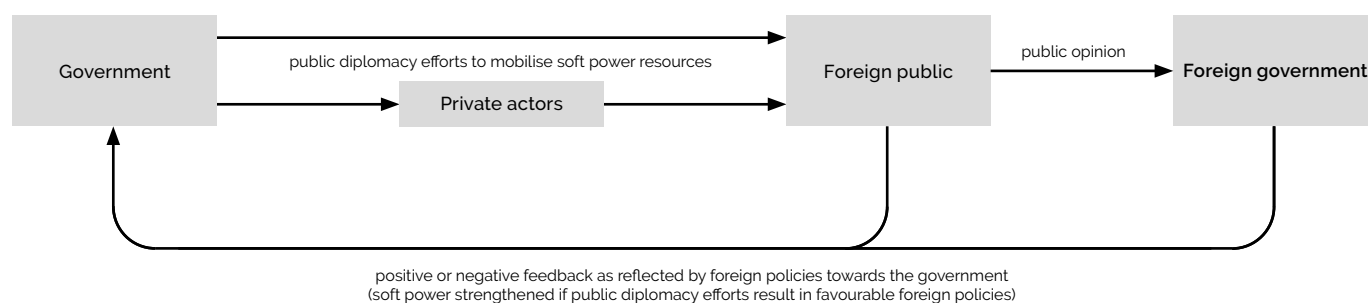
Figure 1 | Relationship between public diplomacy and soft power in Nye's theory.

the analysis of how China's state activities aimed at the diaspora abroad may influence political development in their host countries. Finally, most current research efforts choose Southeast Asian countries as the focus of study and this case study of the UK therefore contributes to existing research by enabling a more comprehensive understanding of how China's diasporic public diplomacy efforts are implemented and received outside of Southeast Asia.

In the following, Section 2 reviews literature on China's diasporic public diplomacy and that on diasporic mobilisation through diaspora associations and diasporic media. Section 3 studies China's engagement with diaspora associations and diasporic media in the UK by analysing news and WeChat articles. I argue that the stronger the economic, political, and emotional ties with China and pro-China narratives, the more effective the mobilisation through diaspora associations and diasporic media, though social media, acting as a double-edged sword, has countered part of the effect. Section 4 concludes by discussing the implications of China's diasporic public diplomacy.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Diasporic Public Diplomacy: A Theoretical Framwork

Despite being coined by Edmund Gullion in 1965 as a term dealing with the influence of domestic and foreign public opinion on the formulation and implementation of foreign policies (as cited in Cull 2006), the term 'public diplomacy' is now more commonly associated with 'soft power', which refers to 'the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment' (Nye 2008). Nye (2008) describes public diplomacy as policy efforts to mobilise a country's soft power resources of culture, political values, and foreign policies to attract the foreign public and thereby influence foreign public opinion and subsequently foreign policies in their host countries. These policy efforts often involve broadcasting, subsidising cultural exports and arranging exchanges, which may be done both directly or indirectly, where the governments 'keep in the background' and private actors like non-governmental organisations, inter-governmental organisations, and companies take the lead. Where a country successfully converts these efforts into positive or even supportive foreign public opinion that brings favourable foreign policy outcomes, soft power is strengthened (see **Figure 1**). Therefore, what distinguishes the concept of public diplomacy from 'traditional diplomacy' is implementation targets:

traditional diplomacy targets foreign governments, while public diplomacy targets the foreign public (Cull 2006).

As observed from the official discourse, Nye's concept of soft power was extremely influential to the proposal of diasporic public diplomacy in 2011. As well as He Yafei, who directly linked diasporic public diplomacy with the concept, President Xi Jinping, at the National Propaganda and Ideology Work Conference in 2013, stressed the need for China to establish a Chinese discourse and to 'tell the Chinese story well' (講好中國故事) to international society (Yu et al. 2020). Scholars therefore mainly analysed the proposal as a kind of public diplomacy under Nye's theoretical framework.

Literature on China's diasporic public diplomacy generally addresses two questions: what the policies are, and how effective are they. The former strand focuses on shifts in both the diaspora's role in contemporary Chinese diplomacy (for example, Liu 2011) and the diasporic institutions' approaches to diasporic diplomacy (for example, Yan & Li 2021); while the latter strand is concerned with the effectiveness on foreign targets, i.e., whether the policies change foreign public opinion towards China (for example, Wei 2016; Mattingly & Sundquist 2021).

Scholars generally agree that, in China's diasporic public diplomacy, the diaspora are both targets and actors: the Chinese government targets and engages them in order to mobilise them as 'public diplomats', who in turn influence foreign public opinion (Hartig 2016; Sun, Fitzgerald & Gao 2018). Underlying this is the desire for more personal and thus more trustworthy narratives told by the diaspora, rather than the Chinese government, as Liu (2022) finds out in his interviews with officials, which corresponds with Nye's (2008) theoretical explanation of engaging in indirect public diplomacy to overcome the problem of public scepticism and mistrust towards foreign governments. This model is, therefore, a form of indirect public diplomacy deploying a non-conventional consideration of the diaspora as private actors, instead of the examples of non-governmental organisations, inter-governmental organisations, and companies, which are envisaged by Nye.

Since this article focuses on the effectiveness of China's diasporic public diplomacy efforts on the diaspora, the Chinese government's efforts or strategies in engaging them should also be given ample consideration. In terms of state apparatus, main central institutions that institutionalise relationships with the diaspora include the United Front Work Department
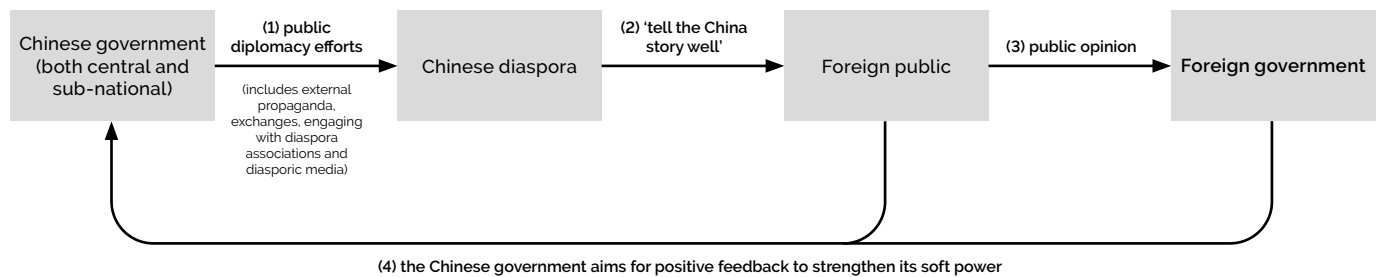
Figure 2 | China's diasporic public diplomacy.

(UFWD) under the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) structure, which had absorbed the OCAO since 2018, and the CCP-affiliated Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese (FROC). Ministries and government agencies were also established at provincial and local levels, with structures and responsibilities corresponding with those at the central level. In terms of strategies, in the official discourse, these include external propaganda targeting the diaspora, Chinese language education, protecting the diaspora's rights overseas, cultural exchanges, and engaging with the diasporic media (Xie 2011; He 2012), which commonly refers to overseas Chinese language media controlled by the diaspora (Sun, Fitzgerald & Gao 2018). Ho and McConnell (2019) helpfully identified another crucial strategy: engaging with diaspora associations that have ties with China. These strategies do carry strong resemblances with Nye's public diplomacy efforts. **Figure 2** summarises China's diasporic public diplomacy model, where step (1) refers to this article's focus: the process of adopting strategies to convert the diaspora into actors.

2.2 China's Engagement with Diaspora Associations and Diasporic Media

Shangguan (2018) describes diaspora associations as the main points of contact between diasporic communities at the grassroot level and official institutions. The types of connection and underlying motivations vary: associations may promote economic ties and be driven by mutual needs (for the diaspora to open investment opportunities in China, and for Chinese institutions to attract foreign investments from the diaspora); they may also be simply driven by a sense of belonging, for instance, for the betterment of their ancestral homes. Whilst some diaspora associations are established through the diaspora's own initiatives, evidence suggests that the Chinese government is in frequent contact with, or even in actual control of many of them. Though the degree of connection with the Chinese government varies, it is found that most diaspora associations are dominated by CCP-affiliated individuals (Wong 2022). In researching the effectiveness in mobilising the diaspora, the general conclusion is that the stronger the ties with China, the more effective the diaspora associations in mobilisation (Liu 2011; Ho & McConnell 2019).

With regards to the diasporic media, Sun and colleagues' (2018) Australian case study found that, over the past three decades, the diasporic media owned and operated by Chinese from Hong Kong and Taiwan have been gradually replaced by those from mainland China. Virtually all diasporic media are now owned by the Chinese government or CCP-affiliated individuals.

As a result, Australia's diasporic media landscape has changed in two ways: the content caters more for the Mandarin-speaking audience from mainland China and displays stronger pro-China nationalism, which by extension, perpetuates Chinese propaganda externally.

For both diaspora associations and diasporic media, social media is an important tool to engage with their audience. Current research almost invariably focuses on WeChat, China's dominant instant messaging application with over 1.2 billion monthly active users, including 100 million overseas users (Ryan, Fritz & Impiombato 2020). On one hand, Sun, Fitzgerald & Gao (2018) observes WeChat's role in circulating pro-China sentiment in Australia; similarly, Ceccagno and Thunø (2022) study how WeChat was used to circulate pro-China sentiment during the COVID-19 pandemic in Italy. On the other hand, scholars have noted opposite effects. Ding (2021) argues that, whilst WeChat has created a virtual community connecting the diaspora with China, it increases the likelihood of disseminating criticisms against the CCP internationally. Wong (2022), in her case study of diasporic media in the United States, contends that pro-China sentiment is disseminated by wedge narratives that highlight discrimination and racism against the Chinese. Similar to Ding, she also argues that the availability of social media has reduced the effectiveness of diasporic public diplomacy efforts, as the CCP cannot censor or control opposing narratives that the diaspora has access to more freely overseas. She further proposes that these efforts are more effective in mobilising the diaspora who are less integrated into their host countries, which contradictorily limit the effectiveness in convincing the foreign public of 'the China story'.

3. China's Diasporic Public Diplomacy in the UK

3.1 Diaspora Associations

The network of diaspora associations in the UK is one of the largest and strongest among host countries of the Chinese diaspora. Diaspora associations are established to connect different identity groups, ranging from merchants, students, to those of common ancestry. They are also established at national and sub-national levels. Consistent with research findings, they are dominated by CCP-affiliated individuals (if not already controlled by the CCP) at corresponding central or sub-national institutional levels. For example, the Chinese Students and Scholars Association in the UK (CSSAUK), the largest diaspora association in the UK connecting students across the whole of the UK, is funded by the Chinese Embassy's Education Section (CSSAUK

2022), a central government agency; whilst sub-national diaspora associations like the Shunde Friendship Association of the UK (SFAUK) targeting diaspora with Shunde ancestry is supported by the Shunde District Foreign Affairs Bureau (Liu 2015) and works closely with the Society for the Promotion of China Re-Unification in the UK (UKPCRS), an organisation controlled by the central UFWD (UKPCRS 2017).

Diaspora associations in the UK do confirm the positive correlation between the strength of ties, whether economic, emotional, or political, with their effectiveness to mobilise the diaspora. To exemplify, during the 9th World Shunde People Convention held in Newcastle in 2014, the SFAUK's Honorary President, Wu Shanxiong, through his ties with the Shunde General Chambers of Commerce (which is supervised by the Shunde District Government), facilitated the signature of a memorandum of friendship between the Shunde district and Newcastle city (Tan 2015). It is not hard to understand why the SFAUK is willing to facilitate Sino-British sub-national collaboration through its economic and ancestral ties. Apart from promoting development of their ancestral home which they have emotional bonding with, maintaining friendly ties with the Shunde District Government ensures the diaspora can continually reap material benefits from their ancestral home. This example also demonstrates the role of political ties: in addition to ties with agencies of the Shunde District Government, Wu himself is CCP-affiliated. Indeed, his role in the SFAUK led to political endorsement by the CCP, as reflected by his recognition by the China Central Television, the State Council Information Office and the OCAO as one of the ten '2015 Annual Persons in Spreading Chinese Culture' (Liu 2014). Particularly because of his strong political ties with China, he is more willing to act as the 'bridge' to expand the reach of China's diasporic public diplomacy.

Another example more directly relevant to the mobilisation of Chinese diaspora in the UK concerns political ties. Since the outbreak of anti-China protests in Hong Kong in 2019, CCP-affiliated diaspora associations, including the CSSAUK, the London Chinatown Chinese Association and the UK Fujianese Association (UKFA), have co-organised events to counter efforts by members of the diaspora from Hong Kong in rallying international support. One example of such an event is the demonstration in London's Chinatown against 'Asian discrimination' in 2021, which was one of the largest-scale demonstrations organised by diaspora associations since 2019 (Cheung 2021). The effectiveness of this demonstration in actually countering anti-China narratives aside, it did, through using wedge narratives to highlight discrimination which Wong (2022) contends, effectively mobilise nearly one-hundred members of the pro-China fraction of the diaspora to defend China.

Despite having strong ties that connect the diaspora, diaspora associations still rely on social media for communication. In areas with strong diaspora associations, WeChat presents an effective tool for mobilising the diaspora and coordinating such mobilisation. By way of illustration, in March and April 2020 when COVID-19 first became a global pandemic, the UKFA organised WeChat groups to gather and distribute personal protective equipment (PPE) for the Fujianese Chinese diaspora. Notably, in its WeChat articles (**Table 1**; next page) on supplies distribution, the UKFA reiterated concepts relevant to emotional ties like 'family' and 'the motherland' (see excerpt of Article 1 in **Table 1**), and stressed the role of Chinese government institutions, namely the Fujian Provincial FROC and Changle District UFWD in donating those supplies, as well as the Provincial Health Commission in offering free medical consultation services to the diaspora (see excerpt of Article 2 in **Table 1**). Reciprocally, the UKFA organised WeChat groups for donations for Fujian. A total of around 40,000 pieces of disposable medical supplies were donated to the Changle District. In response, the District UFWD issued a letter of gratitude towards the diaspora's 'deep love and affection towards [their] ancestral home', again reiterating concepts of emotional ties. This letter was subsequently circulated to the diaspora, regardless of whether they participated in the donation, through an article posted on the UKFA's WeChat account (see excerpt of Article 3 in **Table 1**).

The UKFA illustrates how the virtual community created via WeChat aids diaspora associations by strengthening emotional ties between the diaspora and their ancestral homes. Moreover, social media use proves effective in mobilising members of the diaspora to act for both their ancestral homes and the wider diasporic communities in their host countries, which, especially the latter, may enhance the Chinese image abroad.

3.2 Diasporic Media

Turning to the Chinese diasporic media in the UK, one feature of the diasporic media landscape distinguishes it from that of many other host countries that have been studied academically: there is no dominating diasporic media. Even if the diaspora seeks information in Chinese language, their main sources are often the Chinese editions of mainstream British media like the *BBC* and *Financial Times* (Wei 2013). With a smaller audience reach *vis-à-vis* competitive mainstream media, and a lack of ties as strong as diaspora associations to bind readers, the diasporic media in the UK is inherently less able to mobilise the diaspora.

Yet, the pro-China sentiment among the diasporic media is still evident. A recent example is the clash at the Chinese Consulate in Manchester during a protest organised by pro-democracy members of the diaspora from Hong Kong on the 16th of October, 2022. In the incident, the Consul-General, Zheng Xiyuan, was alleged to have dragged a protestor into the Consulate and attacked him. Though covered at length by both Chinese- and English-language mainstream and diasporic media in the UK, Chinese and English editions of the *BBC* presented the story with a more factual and objective tone (see **Table 2**; p. 44), laying out responses from British and Chinese government officials and the protestor allegedly being attacked; while CCP-affiliated diasporic media *European Times* and its English edition, *China Minutes* recorded only China's official discourse, focusing on the righteousness of Zheng's act and condemnation of the protestors' 'malicious instigation and illegal entry' into the Consulate (see **Table 3**, p. 45). This suggests that Sun and colleagues' (2018) observation that the diasporic media generally displays a pro-China stance may apply beyond Australia—at least also to the UK, even though the diasporic media landscape is vastly different.

Original excerpt	Translation	Features
Article 1 (UKFA 2020a) 英伦福建一家亲，风雨同舟共抗疫 英国福建同乡联谊总会 2020-04-25 10:06 庚子年初，新冠肺炎疫情在全球蔓延，给海外侨胞带来严峻挑战，福建家乡人民感同身受，万般牵挂。面对海外疫情的肆虐，祖国是永远的坚强后盾。福建省侨联和长乐区统战部等各级领导高度重视海外闽籍华人的安全健康，福建省政府组织采购了大批物资，支援海外乡亲抗击疫情。同时，福建省多个政府部门和世界福建青年联合总会，台州市福建商会，等也都慷慨解囊。所有物资将分批次陆续抵达英国，再由英国的各个社团进行分配，派发给需要的福建乡亲们。英国福建同乡联谊总会荣耀的成为其中一个助爱接力社团，尽其所能不漏掉任何一个需要帮忙的福建乡亲。	**The UK and Fujian are like family, weathering the pandemic together** UKFA, 25 April 2020 In the beginning of the lunar Gengzi year, the COVID-19 pandemic has spread across the world, posing severe challenges to fellow overseas Chinese, which the people in their Fujian ancestral home empathise with and worry about a lot. <u>Facing the havoc wrought by the pandemic overseas, the motherland is your eternal stronghold. Leaders of the Fujian Provincial FROC, Changle District UFWD, etc. are highly concerned with the safety and health of overseas Fujianese Chinese; the Fujian Provincial government has purchased large amounts of supplies, to support fellow Fujianese overseas in fighting the pandemic.</u> At the same time, multiple government departments of the Fujian Province and the World Fujian Youth United Federation, Taizhou City Fujian Chamber of Commerce, etc., have contributed generously. All the supplies will arrive in the UK in batches, and will then be distributed by various associations in the UK to the our fellow Fujianese who are in need. The UKFA is honoured to be one of the associations to relay the love and care, and will do the best in not missing out any fellow Fujianese who need help.	• Reiterated the emotional ties between the Fujianese Chinese diaspora and mainland China • Emphasised the role of sub-national government institutions in supporting the UKFA's distribution of PPE to members of the diasphora
Article 2 (UKFA 2020b) 英国福建同乡联谊总会免费发放10万口罩给旅英闽籍乡亲 英福联 英国福建同乡联谊总会 2020-04-05 00:26 咨询通道已开启 可能会有人担心，我的英语不好，如果出现什么情况我没有办法很好的沟通应该怎么办？别担心，福建12320卫生健康热线服务平台海外闽籍侨胞专属通道开通，16日0时起，海外闽籍侨胞可拨打008659112320，在线与福建医疗专家咨询有关新冠肺炎内容。 该通道由省卫健委，省侨联及中国电信福建分公司等单位联手筹建，平台接线人员已在省卫健委完成相关培训，105位来自省立及省属医院的呼吸，重症，感染，护理等科室的专家到位，将24小时不间断为海外乡亲提供新冠肺炎咨询服务。	**UKFA distributes 100 thousand masks for free to fellow Fujianese residing in the UK** UKFA, 5 April 2020 *The consultation channel has opened.* Some of you may worry: my English is poor, what should I do if there are circumstances that I cannot communicate well to others? Don't worry, <u>the Fujian 12320 Health Hotline Services Platform Exclusive Channel has opened</u>. Starting from 00:00 on the 16th of April, fellow Fujianese overseas may call 008659112320 to consult medical experts in Fujian online on anything about COVID-19. <u>The Channel is co-established by help from the Provincial Health Commission, Provincial FROC, China Telecom Fujian Sub-Company, etc.</u> The staff listening to calls has already undergone relevant training by the Provincial Health Commission. 105 experts from the departments of respiratory, critical illness, infection and nursing of hospitals established by or belonging to the province are in place, and they will provide COVID-19 consultation services to their fellow overseas Fujianese 24/7 without pause.	• Emphasised the role of sub-national government institutions in supporting the diaspora in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic by setting up an exclusive channel to provide them with free medical consultation services • Highlights solidarity and concern towards the Fujianese Chinese diaspora, even though they are currently living abroad

Article 3 (UKFA 2020c)
英国福建同乡联谊总会与长乐公会公布为国内疫情捐赠物资者名单
 	
英国福建同乡联谊总会 2020-03-16 06:54
 	
中共福州市长乐区委统战部
 	
感谢信
 	
英国福建同乡联谊总会：
  近期时间以来，新型冠状病毒感染的肺炎疫情给人民群众的身体健康和生命安全带来了严重的威胁。广大长乐人民按照区委，区政府的决策部署，万众一心，众志成城、和衷共济、迎难而上，全力打赢这场攻坚战。
  为了缓解防疫物资紧缺的困难，你们捐赠的一次性工作帽 19700 个、一次性鞋套 18950 只、防护眼镜 1000 个于2月 20 日下午送达长乐市及区防疫工作应急指挥部入库，并已在第一时间发放使用。当前这些防疫物资对我们来说不仅仅是物质上的支持和帮助，更是精神上的安慰和鼓舞。在此，谨向你们致以崇高的敬意和衷心的感谢！
  我们知道，一件件防疫物资都凝结着你们的一片片爱心深情；我们完全了解，当前世界各地的防疫物资都很紧缺，你们为购买如此上捐赠物资付出了极大的心血，我们为你们爱国爱乡的情怀而深感自豪和欣慰，长乐因你们会更有力量！
	The UKFA and the UK Changle Association announce list of donors of supplies for the domestic epidemic response
	UKFA, 16 March, 2020
	UFWD of the CCP Fuzhou City Changle District Committee Letter of Acknowledgement
	To the UKFA:
	Recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought serious threats to public health and safety. The people of Changle District, in accordance with the decisions and planning of the District Committee and District Government, have faced this tough battle in unity and with strong determination.
	  To ease the difficulty of PPE shortages, the 19,700 pieces of disposable work caps, 18,950 pieces of disposable shoe covers, 1,000 pairs of protective googles you have donated have arrived at the Changle District and have been sent to the Pandemic Prevention Work Emergency Command Department to put them in use immediately. These PPE supplies are not merely material forms of support, but also mental support and encouragement. Here, we would like to sincerely extend our highest respect and heartfelt gratitude to you!
	  We know that <u>each piece of PPE is a crystallisation of your deep love and affection towards your ancestral home</u>; we totally understand that currently PPE supplies are in short supply all across the world, so you must have spent a lot time and effort to buy these donated supplies. <u>We are deeply proud of and grateful for your love towards your country and ancestral home, Changle will be more empowered because of you all!</u>
		• Official recognition of the Fujianese Chinese disapora's contribution to their ancestral home
		• Reiterated the emotional ties between Fujianese Chinese diaspora and mainland China

Table 1 | Excerpts, translations and analysis of articles published by the UKFA on its official WeChat account.

Original excerpt of the Chinese language report (Lam 2022)	Translation
	20th National Congress of the CCP: Row over Manchester protest by Hongkongers residing in the UK; 'deeply concerning', British Prime Minister states Lam Tsz-ching, 18 October, 2022 At the eve of the 20th National Congress of the CCP, associations of Hongkongers residing in the UK organised a demonstration at the Consulate-General of China in Manchester on Sunday (16th of October) afternoon; during the demonstration, someone walked out from the Consulate and physically clashed with the protestors, causing concerns among British media and politicians, which escalated the incident to diplomatic levels. The Spokesperson for British Prime Minister Liz Truss responded by stating that 'these reports were obviously deeply concerning', and that '[she] understood that the Manchester police had immediately responded to it and is investigating, so it is inappropriate for [her] to comment'. MPs across multiple parties urged the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office to summon the Chinese Ambassador for an explanation, and said that they will raise an emergency question in the House of Commons earliest next Tuesday, enquiring the government on its response. The spokesperson for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, Wang Wenbin, responded to media enquiries at the regular press conference this Tuesday (18th of October) and said, 'instigators illegally entered the Manchester Consulate, threatening the safety of Chinese diplomats', and that 'the peace and dignity of Chinese Consulates shall not be infringed'. This demonstration was organised by the 'Hong Kong Indigenous Defence Force', an organisation of Hongkonges in the UK. 'Hong Kong Indigenous Defence Force' spokesperson Tim said, that day they hoped to, on the occasion of the commencement of the 20th National Congress, present voices opposing the CCP 'through peaceful demonstration, including displaying slogans and pictures'; the attack makes them feel that 'their human rights in the UK were infringed, and that they hope the British government will take measures' to respond.

Original excerpt of the English language report (Tan & Fraser 2022)

Table 2 | Excerpts of news reports on the Manchester Consulate incident by the British mainstream media (*BBC*).

Every form of diasporic media relies on a platform to reach members of the diaspora, hence shifting their major circulation platform to the social media helped the diasporic media overcome their limited audience reach. *UK Chinese Times*, the UK's largest Chinese-language print weekly newspaper (Li 2013), aptly illustrates this trend. This was the first UK diasporic media to establish its own website (Wei 2013), enabling online circulation. It subsequently developed a mobile application and created an official WeChat account. However, as of January 2023, its website domain has expired, its mobile application was last updated in 2019 (Google Play 2022), and its print edition was last published in January 2020 (UK Chinese Times 2020). Only its

Original excerpt of the Chinese language report (Li 2022)	Translation

19 October, 2022, China News Agency
Spokesperson of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, Wang Wenbin, sajd at the regular press conference on October 19 that the Chinese government has made a formal complaint to the British government with regards to the instigations that occurred at the Manchester Consulate.

The China News Agency has reported that, Wang also emphasised that due to the malicious instigation and illegal entry into the Consulate General, Chinese officials were injured and the institution's safety was threatened. 'The peace and dignity of Chinese Consulates shall not be infringed. We hope that the British government performs its duty and takes effective measures and strengthens its protection towards the personnel and the property of Chinese Consulates, Wang said.

Original excerpts of the English language reports (Yu, Tian & Yan 2022; Yan 2022)

Ashley Yu, Tian Haoxuezi, Chris Yan / 26 October 2022 / Categories: News

China claims right to protect consulate after diplomatic staff hurt during protest

Chinese diplomatic staff suffered injuries, including one hit unconscious, during a violent protest at the country's consulate general in Manchester on Oct 16. Police failure to protect staff from the attack left them no choice but to act in "self-defence", Chinese official said at online media briefing on 24th Oct.

Yang Xiaoguang, Chargé d'affaires at the Chinese Embassy in the UK pointed out that the incident was "not about peaceful demonstration or freedom of speech, but violent harassment by Hong Kong independence advocates and their illegal assault on the premises and members of the Chinese Consulate."

Chris Yan / 21 October 2022 / Categories: News

CCTV footage of Manchester consulate shows staff member grabbed by protestors

On Sunday October 16th, a group of Hong Kong independence activists staged a protest in front of the General Consulate in Manchester. A video emerged that appeared to show a brawl between protesters and staff during a demonstration. On October 18th, the Chinese consulate in Manchester gave the CCTV footage to the Manchester Evening News regarding the incident. The consul-general Zheng Xiyuan also revealed the contents of a letter he has written to the Greater Manchester Police. He said he was waiting to hear back from the force over a proposed meeting and confirmed the footage would be handed over to officers.

Table 3 | Excerpts of news reports on the Manchester Consulate incident by the diasporic media (*European Times* and *China Minutes*).

WeChat account remains active, publishing an average of one to three news articles daily. Whilst shifting to WeChat assists *UK Chinese Times* in overcoming its inherent disadvantage, the fact that other platforms to reach the audience were shut down draws attention to another concern: the shift may instead have been driven by financial difficulties. It may therefore be inappropriate to jump from the diasporic media's use of social media to the conclusion that China can now engage with them to expose more members of the diaspora in the UK to pro-China narratives more effectively, let alone to an evaluation of their effectiveness in mobilising the diaspora.

3.3 Social Media: A Double-Edged Sword

The previous two subsections have noted the importance of social media, particularly WeChat, in building a virtual community to connect members of the diaspora in the UK with the larger diasporic community as well as China. As discussed in Section 2, one of the motivations of the Chinese government in relying on diaspora associations and the diasporic media to disseminate pro-China narratives through social media is the need for more personal and trustworthy narratives. This mode of indirect engagement also confirms another motivation: to avoid foreign scepticism towards the Chinese government. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, the world's most popular social media platforms, had introduced a labelling policy to accounts operated by state-controlled or -affiliated media since 2020 (Gleicher 2020; Twitter 2020), mainly targeted at Chinese, Russian and Iranian media and widely understood as a move to contain foreign political influences by the named governments (Paul 2020). Twitter has gone even further

to stop recommending the content posted by these labelled accounts on home timelines, notifications, and search results (Twitter 2020), reducing the audience reach of Chinese state-affiliated media accounts by 30% (Schoenmakers & Liu 2021). It is simply unrealistic for the Chinese government to engage with and mobilise the diaspora using social media directly, not only because foreign backlash may come more easily, but also because the reduced audience reach further limits the effectiveness of such efforts in mobilising the diaspora.

Yet, whilst this virtual community built on social media aids diaspora associations and the diasporic media in cultivating their nationalism and mobilising them, the UK case study has showcased how it also has a potential to counter or even destroy China's diaspora public diplomacy efforts. Right before the opening of the CCP's 20th National Congress in October 2022, a lone protestor hanged banners calling for the removal of President Xi outside Beijing's Sitong Bridge. Like the fate of many other protestors in China, he was soon arrested and the CCP swiftly censored the protest by banning relevant keywords on Chinese social media (Mao 2022). Still, domestic Chinese people managed to post images of the protest onto overseas social media, which the CCP has no information control over. Those images were not only widely circulated internationally, but, more importantly, sparked members of the diaspora in voicing support towards the protestor. Signs were posted in over 350 universities worldwide (Citizens-DailyCN 2022), including University College London and Central Saint Martins College in the UK (Tang 2022); in London, a group was created on Telegram, an overseas instant messaging application, to organise

the diaspora in posting signs over the city, gathering over 400 members of the diaspora in just four days (Yuan 2022). Notably, many of these members were recently emigrated students and professionals, who are more likely to have maintained strong emotional and political ties with China and, according to Wong's (2022) argument, should be less easily mobilised to act against China. For instance, the protestor inspired students to join a demonstration at the Chinese Embassy in London, for many the first demonstration in their lifetime, when some of them had only been in the UK for a month (Yuan 2022).

Most recently in November 2022, nationwide protests in mainland China against the 'zero-COVID' policies have, like the Sitong Bridge protest, gained widespread publicity over social media platforms overseas and mobilised members of the diaspora to act against the Chinese government (Tung 2022). Though the local protests were soon pacified by the Chinese government's swift response to lift the strict lockdown restrictions that had been in place for two years, leading to the pacification of international protests by members of the diaspora as well, this is again an example of how social media connects members of the diaspora with the local Chinese and mobilises them in acting against the Chinese government.

The main cause of such diaspora mobilisation against the Chinese government is the free flow of information on overseas social media platforms. The CCP is known for constantly monitoring, censoring and banning sensitive content on Chinese social media platforms like WeChat and Weibo to prevent social unrest, but even with such powerful information control tools accompanied with digital surveillance technologies, local Chinese people have found ways to evade the censorship in order to express their discontent and organise mass demonstrations. This was seen in protests against the 'zero-COVID' policies, where protestors successfully voiced their disobedience with blank sheets of paper and communicated on social media platforms using oral Cantonese in written form (instead of the standard written Chinese) that the artificial intelligence censoring systems failed to understand and remove (Yeung 2022). Outside of China, information control by the CCP is even more ineffective. This is therefore why the CCP faces increasing difficulties in managing and suppressing the diaspora overseas: ties with China alone are no longer sufficient to tame their criticisms. By extension, the CCP cannot effectively mobilise the diaspora to work obediently for China's diasporic public diplomacy, confirming Ding's (2021) argument but partly refuting Wong's (2022) proposition that members of the diaspora who maintain stronger ties with China are more likely to be mobilised as China's 'public diplomats'.

4. Conclusion

The case study of the UK proves that China has, by engaging with diasporic associations and the diasporic media, mobilised members of the diaspora to act as her public diplomacy actors. Mobilisation is particularly effective for diaspora associations organised based on ancestry and/or affiliation with the Chinese government, which has stronger economic, political and emotional ties with China. It is also effective where diaspora associations and diasporic media employ pro-China narratives, but the narratives propagated by the diasporic media are inherently weaker due to audience constraints.

Though this article places much emphasis on the roles of government institutions, it also demonstrates how such top-down mobilisation for China is increasingly tainted by bottom-up mobilisation against her in the social media era. Though the availability of social media platforms has facilitated communication with the Chinese diaspora and enabled the dissemination of pro-China narratives to a larger diasporic community, it has also facilitated the dissemination of anti-China narratives in the same way. The transnational nature of social media also means that the Chinese government cannot apply its powerful information control tools over those platforms as effectively as in domestic China. Consequentially, even with more effective dissemination of pro-China narratives, diaspora mobilisation may not be as effective, or in the worst cases, be ineffective. As diaspora associations and diasporic media continue to employ social media to engage with the diaspora, they require different strategies to manage downsides of this double-edged sword if China is to realise her goal of converting diasporic public diplomacy efforts into soft power.

Despite so, this article does shed some light on China's way forward. Examples of effective mobilisation in Section 3 are, interestingly, all driven by sub-national diasporic associations and Chinese government institutions at corresponding levels. Indeed, even though more central strategies and agencies like the FROC have been doing much to connect with the diaspora, scholars like Tan (2015) and Shangguan (2018) have rather focused on sub-national government institutions in studying the diaspora mobilisation. Given the heterogeneity among the diaspora, a common set of strategies formulated at the central level and implemented universally to different diasporic communities are less effective than those that pinpoint each community's characteristics. It is therefore suggested that China may accordingly consider shifting the main state actor of diasporic public diplomacy to sub-national level actors, focusing on each region's unique needs regarding economic opportunities and ties with ancestral homes. This warrants further research to confirm this suggestion that is drawn based on the UK, because historic and cultural contexts of host countries and their governments' public diplomacy efforts also influence the effectiveness of China's diasporic public diplomacy, and to explore more direct responses to the disruptive countereffects of social media use.

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The March to Mons Sacer: British Immigration Policy, 1951–1979

Dominic McGinley

Historians and political scientists have researched issues adjacent to the question of how or when governments can pursue policy with which their electorates disagree but, until now, their separate streams of work have rarely been synthesised. This paper seeks to unite these two streams by using a case study of immigration policy in the UK between 1951 and 1979 to establish the conditions under which elite policymaking is possible in democracies. Assuming a Downsian model of party competition, three necessary conditions are proposed: a non-permissive electoral system, an opposition unwilling to oppose, and no threat of rebellion from within the governing party. I use standard qualitative analytical methods, as well as some original quantitative studies of parliamentary debate topics. I argue that all these conditions were met during the 1950s, when successive Conservative governments pursued policy contrary to public opinion. By contrasting this equilibrium with the changes in immigration policy after 1961, I show that the emergence of a powerful right-wing lobby within the Conservative Party was the primary reason that the liberal immigration policy of the 1950s was abandoned.

Introduction

When can leaders, enlightened or otherwise, carry out policy with which the electorate disagree?

This prospect strikes those of us raised on lengthy encomia to 'democracy', 'self-government', and 'people power' as odd. But just such a situation emerged in the 1950s in the United Kingdom under the Conservative governments of Churchill, Eden, Macmillan, and Douglas-Home. These governments have gained a reputation for moderation and restraint and as such have suffered from a lack of scholarly attention to their plodding pragmatism. Instead, historians and political scientists are much more interested in the Attlee and Thatcher governments, which were outstanding for reasons good and bad.

But the governments of the 1950s and 1960s are noteworthy for other reasons. Britain's government during this period, aristocratic in nature and liberal in temperament,[1] pursued two policies which fundamentally altered Britain's domestic and foreign situation. Firstly, they kept the terms of the *British Nationality Act 1948* unchanged until 1962, thereby granting unlimited immigration rights to over 800 million Commonwealth citizens. Secondly, they embarked upon a campaign of decolonisation, dismantling the British Empire they inherited more-or-less intact.[2]

A very specific question which has received little to no attention in the literature remains unanswered. This is not about the rights and wrongs of the policies in question. Nor does it concern the reasons why Conservative politicians *wished* to adopt liberal policies, except where this is directly relevant for its aims.

Instead, this paper seeks to set out the conditions which must be in place to allow elite politicians to pursue their objectives, even in the face of public opposition. It seeks to unite historical and political science research, by conducting a case study of immigration policy in the period between 1951 and 1979. The fifteen years following the fall of the governments in this study are included in order to examine the disestablishment of the liberal policy consensus they established, and to conduct a closest-case study to identify which conditions were relevant in their facilitating policy. These findings are placed in the context of Downsian theory of party competition, in order to propose some conditions for

unpopular government policymaking.

There are three necessary conditions for the failure of normal party competition to drag policy back to the median voter:

1. *A non-permissive electoral system;*
2. *An opposition unwilling to oppose;*
3. *No threat of rebellion from within the governing party.*

It can be shown that these conditions were in place for both immigration and colonial policy during the 1950s, but that condition three failed around 1961/1962. The emergence of an organised right-wing faction within the Conservative Party precipitated a shift toward restrictive immigration policies over the next fifteen years.

The paper proceeds with a discussion of political science theory concerning party competition, setting out a basic Downsian model by which we can understand the Conservative Party's manoeuvres during this period. This is followed by a case study of immigration policy between 1951 and 1979, consisting of an historical review and an analytical section. The analytical section of each case study seeks to assess the conditions proposed in the theoretical discussion. These are summarised in the final section.

Theoretical Review

Over the past seventy years, a substantial literature discussing British immigration policy in the post-war period has emerged. As is natural with research areas like this, most published work straddles historical and political analysis, both of which tend to be characterised by different research methods, different areas of focus, and different theoretical debates. It is the intention of this paper to integrate these strands of research in a single account of policy formation between 1950 and 1979.

Two debates emerge. The first is a largely historical debate, which analyses *why* policymakers chose to pursue liberal immigration policy. Archival documents and political speeches are used to assess the relative importance of several factors in creating a consensus in favour of liberal policies. The second is more familiar to scholars of political science and asks a more

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[1] Two of the four Prime Ministers of the period were actual aristocrats (Churchill and Douglas-Home), and one of the non-aristocratic ones (Eden) married into the family of one of the aristocrats. They pursued policies such as ramped-up housebuilding and an expansion of the National Health Service, which would have been unthinkable to Conservatives just 10 years previously.

[2] India, Pakistan, Burma & Sri Lanka had been granted independence by the 1945–51 Labour government.

comparative question about the sorts of institutional arrangements which shape policymaking. These studies ask questions like whether parties matter, or whether electoral systems determine the policy freedom of political actors (Schmidt 1996).

1. Why did the Conservatives pursue unpopular liberal immigration policies until 1962?

There are two rival accounts of Conservative immigration policy. The first, the *pragmatic* view, argues that immigration policy during this period was formulated with reference only to British national interests. These policies were undoubtedly liberal compared to the post-1979 settlement, but these were not justified with recourse to a belief in cosmopolitanism or internationalism. Instead, the government sought to maintain British influence with the so-called *White Settler Colonies* (e.g. Canada, Australia, South Africa) by offering all 'British subjects' unlimited rights to migrate to the UK. Wendy Webster has written about documentary support for the *pragmatic* view in records of meetings held in the 1950s about the unintended influx of non-white British subjects from across the Commonwealth (Webster 2011). Rab Butler, a senior minister in the Macmillan and Douglas-Home governments, also wrote in 1962 that the introduction of restrictions in that year was 'intended' to reduce Black immigration to Britain (Butler 1961). This, combined with the pressure placed on colonial administrations to limit the issue of passports for African British subjects even in the 1950s, point to a *pragmatic* interpretation of government policy.

The second interpretation places much more emphasis on the *liberal* policy preferences of Conservative governments. Focusing on statements made by ministers opposing the introduction of overtly racist immigration policies, this account sees ministers as activists in contrast with a largely reactionary public. There is much to support this line of argument in the correspondence of politicians: much of the rhetoric spoke of the need to welcome immigrants from across the Commonwealth, regardless of skin colour. Colonial Secretary Alan Lennox-Boyd set himself firmly against a colour bar of any kind, ultimately carrying the day in Cabinet (Lennox-Boyd 1955). Moreover, writers who favour the *liberal* interpretation often point to the sheer extent of immigration from the Commonwealth during the 1950s, which was permitted to increase substantially until restrictions were imposed in 1962 (Sobolewska and Ford 2020).

The results of this debate are not directly relevant to the question pursued in this paper. They are included here to provide context, and to define more clearly the question which is to be discussed:

2. Why were the Conservatives able to pursue unpopular policies during this period?

The question above is very interesting, of course. But the answers provided over the last seventy years only present a bigger puzzle. Whatever the reasons for unpopular policy—be they *liberal*, *pragmatic*, or otherwise—how were they able to get away with it? The debate around this question more closely resembles those on other topics in political science. It is to this question that this paper attends.
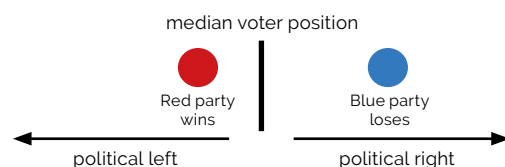

Figure 1 | Basic model of party competition.

Various scholars have sought to provide institutional explanations for policy outcomes. Most of these depart from a basic model of party competition (first formalised by Downs (1957)), in which we imagine two parties on a linear political spectrum. In this model, we assume for simplicity that there is just one salient political issue, and that each voter casts their ballot for the party closest to their own position. The idea is that, under perfect competition, parties will converge on the position of the median voter, indicated in **Figure 1** by the vertical line. Any other policy choice would be sub-optimal.

Of course, the Downsian model contains scope for failures of convergence. Much has been written about the failure of the assumptions which underpin the basic theory, but most of these focus on multi-party competition and abnormal turnout dynamics.[3] In the context of 1950s Britain, however, these do not appear to be relevant. Turnout was high: between 75 and 85 percent in all general elections. Moreover, this high turnout did not systematically differ by age, class, or political affiliation.[4] The 1950s also marks the closest British parliamentary democracy has come to a pure two-party system. Around 95 percent of votes were cast for the two major parties, and the traditional third party, the Liberals, had minimal parliamentary representation.

The purpose of this debate is to explain situations such as that found in **Figure 2**. Here, both parties occupy a policy space away from the median voter. Blue wins the election, of course, but most voters have policy preferences to the right of both major parties. In a fundamental sense, the settlement illustrated by **Figure 2** is inefficient. At the very least, the policy preferences of voters are not being transmitted into policy outcomes. There is consensus in the literature up to this point—but several writers have sought to provide different institutional explanations of situations like that shown in **Figure 2**.

The first rests on the permissiveness of the electoral system. An electoral system which makes it easy for small parties to gain seats in the legislature prevents parties from congregating on one side of the debate. Otherwise, as in **Figure 2**, an upstart political party could emerge which attracted the votes of those to the right of the existing consensus. It is not necessary for these parties to emerge in actual fact—the mere
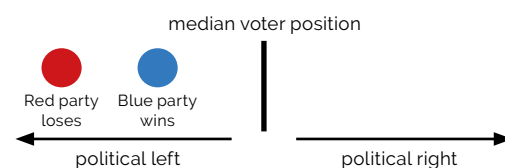

Figure 2 | Basic model of party competition.

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[3] For a neat overview, see Grofman (2004). For a sympathetic challenge, see Stokes (1963).

[4] See Butler, D. for election studies of the period.

possibility is enough to confine existing parties to the median. But under a majoritarian system (or a proportional system with a sufficiently high entry threshold), established parties feel secure enough to pursue policy away from the centre ground. Moreover, Schmidt (1996) provides an account of why majoritarian systems make the ideological positions of parties more *relevant*, as it is more likely that they will govern alone. In coalitions, parties usually come to policy positions which closely mirror the median position, or the existing policy of governmental institutions.

A non-permissive electoral system is a necessary condition of a situation such as that found in **Figure 2**, or in Britain in the 1950s, but it is quite clearly not a sufficient cause on its own. On many more issues, parties have converged on the centre ground, even under majoritarian electoral systems.[5] The literature on this does not appear to go much further in seeking to provide the conditions under which a **Figure 2**-type situation may emerge. I shall seek therefore, to propose some institutional and policy conditions under which governing parties can pursue unpopular policy.

The first seems to be the relative policy position of opposing parties. In **Figure 2**, it is imperative that the Red party is to the left of the Blue, for Blue to pursue unpopular policy. In other words, all relevant opposing parties must be at least as far from the median voter as the governing party. This can take a number of forms. In the most obvious case, it is because the opposing parties have stronger views on the issue than the governing one (as on the issues discussed in this paper). In the second, it can be because both parties have congruent preferences, for example if a matter is judged to be 'above politics' or of 'national importance'. It has been argued that the seemingly apolitical pursuit of aggressive monetary policy in the UK in the 1980s took this form (Kettell 2008).

A further necessary institutional condition is intra-party cohesion. In other words, the leadership must be satisfied that members of the legislature for the governing party will not threaten the passage of its policy. In the context of this paper, this concerns the rigid discipline exercised over Conservative MPs by party managers. Even though a sizeable group of backbench Conservative MPs were opposed to measures like decolonisation and Commonwealth immigration,[6] party managers were able to use their powers of intimidation, patronage, and persuasion to minimise rebellion. This condition could also be met by a governing party with a highly cohesive ideological profile. Governments with high numbers of newly-elected MPs find it easier to meet this condition. It should also be noted, as an avenue for potential future research, that presidential systems are considerably less likely to meet this condition. Members of the legislature do not depend on the executive for their seats, and legislative parties usually retain much more institutional autonomy.

It is the purpose of this paper to conduct a case study of unpopular liberal policies pursued in the UK, and to assess these against the conditions I have proposed.

Research Methods

My central thesis is this: if a party wishes to pursue policy which is far removed from the preferences of the median voter, a particular set of conditions must be in place. The necessary conditions I have proposed are:

1. *A non-permissive electoral system;*
2. *An opposition unwilling to oppose;*
3. *No threat of defeat by backbenchers.*

To make the case, it must first be established that government policy did diverge significantly from the preferences of the median voter. Then each of the conditions must be tested against available evidence. Naturally, condition one holds trivially in both cases studied here.

Conducting high-quality research into historical cases such as these is difficult. Opinion polling from the time was limited (particularly at the beginning of the period), and very rarely policy-specific. There are, however, qualitative means at our disposal which can grant a glimpse into public opinion. This is done largely by reference to qualitative analysis of events: diary entries of leading politicians, attempts by party members to unseat sitting MPs, and limited opinion poll evidence.

It is my intention to use modest quantitative data, sourced from the written record of proceedings in the UK Parliament, Hansard. Every word, debate, and vote is recorded there, and this data is in the public domain. Whether by ignorance or design, this source is relatively rarely utilised by those conducting political research in the UK. I believe there is considerable potential here for large-*n* textual analysis of rhetoric over time, as well as the salience of issues.

Here I use this rich source sparingly, only to chart the willingness of MPs to discuss government policy in areas relating to immigration policy. I use a basic dataset, included in the appendix, which details the frequency with which a certain topic or subject has been raised in Parliament. This includes private members' bills, debates, and questions to ministers. We must be careful to avoid drawing the inference from parliamentary salience to salience in wider society, particularly given that part of my thesis is that parliamentary proceedings *do not* replicate public opinion. However, these data can safely be regarded as good ways to code the willingness of opposition parties to oppose and the propensity for backbenchers to rebel.

Beyond this, the rest of this paper relies heavily on traditional qualitative case-study research. The changing willingness of governments over the period 1950–1979 to ignore public opinion provides good opportunity for a most-similar style research design. I shall seek to look at what changed between the periods where governments seemed happy to ignore the public, and those periods just a few years later when policy shifted dramatically. I shall draw on the speeches and diaries of politicians from the time, the election results in 1955, 1959, 1964, 1966, 1970, and 1974, and the available opinion polling data.

Immigration Policy, 1951–1979: The March to Mons Sacer

British immigration policy between 1950 and 1979 underwent perhaps the most drastic transformation of the post-war era. A settlement which was one of Europe's most liberal had, by 1979, morphed into one of its most restrictive. This change was driven, in large part, by the gradual shift in Conservative policy on this issue. As this paper explores, there is little evidence

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5 The 1950s have indeed become a watchword for party convergence. On economic and social policy, there was little disagreement between the parties, to the extent that pundits coined a portmanteau term for the new settlement: 'Butskellism' (after Rab Butler and Hugh Gaitskell).

6 For a typical speech on the matter by Cyril Osborne, the informal leader of this group, see *Hansard* HC vol. 542 c. 1143, 21 June 1955. It is difficult to assess the size of this faction, but when the Monday Club was eventually formed, it quickly counted 11 MPs as members. We may assume that several more harboured sympathies with the Club.

to suggest that popular attitudes toward immigration changed at all over this time, so this case study provides an excellent opportunity to assess the conditions necessary for governments to execute policy against the wishes of their constituents. The Churchill, Eden, and Macmillan governments were able to maintain open immigration policies, but not under Edward Heath or later Margaret Thatcher. This study examines the relevant conditions which were present in the 1950s but not in the later 1960s and 1970s, and which facilitated unpopular policy. In Section I, it provides an account of the changing policy of the period, and dismissing the notion that public opinion was in favour of this liberal approach. In Section II, it shall then assess the importance of various institutional and circumstantial factors in allowing policy to deviate from party and public opinion in the 1950s. It shall analyse, in order: *the electoral system*; the *position of the opposition Labour Party*; and *internal Conservative Party discipline*. Section III discusses the illiberal immigration regime which succeeded that discussed here.

Section I: The Liberal Equipoise, 1951–c. 1958

The Conservatives were returned to power in the 1951 general election, under the command of their ageing wartime leader, Sir Winston Churchill.

The 1951 Conservative election campaign focused on allaying concerns amongst working-class voters that a return to the Conservatives would mean a return to the high levels of unemployment experienced between the wars. Their manifesto, *Britain Strong and Free*, promised to safeguard the National Health Service and welfare state (Conservative Central Office 1951). Indeed, comparing *Britain Strong and Free* to the Labour document, *Forward with Labour or Backward under the Conservatives*, it strikes the reader that very little separated the parties (Labour Party 1951). The main areas of disagreement concerned the pace of 'decontrol' (the removal of food rationing), and the prospect of further nationalisation.

There is evidence to suggest that the public largely supported the Conservatives' commitment to end rationing and other wartime controls faster than Labour intended to (Zweiniger-Bargielowska 2000). Even so, the victory for Churchill and the Conservatives was modest. They won a slim majority of 16 seats, and polled over 200,000 fewer votes than Labour (Butler 1952).

Perhaps chastened by this, Churchill's government pursued moderate, pragmatic policies across all major issues.[7] They maintained the welfare state and universal healthcare launched by the Attlee governments, and Labour's house-building programmes were accelerated. Likewise, the Churchill government sought to make no changes to the immigration policy it inherited. This policy was defined by the *British Nationality Act 1948*. This legislation gave citizens of all Commonwealth countries the status of 'British subjects' and unlimited rights to live and work in the UK.

There is disagreement in the literature about the intentions behind the *Act*. Some (e.g. Roberts 1994) have sought to cast it as a poorly drafted law which did not say what Parliament wished it to. But, as Randall Hansen (2000) argues in his impressive history of immigration in the UK, this interpretation is unfounded. The low level of immigration from colonial countries up

until 1948 lends support to the argument that politicians were not expecting large numbers of people from Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean to immigrate to Britain. But, nonetheless, the *Act* was certainly passed in the knowledge that it liberalised immigration controls. By the time the Conservatives came to power, roughly 4,000–5,000 non-white immigrants from the Commonwealth had arrived in Britain.

Imposing control on this unexpected immigration had already been considered by Labour. A Cabinet report from 1951 examines the case for control, based on the social problems which might be caused by permanent immigration from the Commonwealth. It recommends against restricting the terms of the *British Nationality Act*, however, stating:

> [t]he United Kingdom has a special status as the mother country, and freedom to enter and remain in the United Kingdom at will is one of the main practical benefits enjoyed by British subjects. (cited in Hansen 2000, p. 90)

The Churchill government maintained this uneasy position of elite concern for the consequences of migration, but mixed with the firm conviction that it was Britain's responsibility and in Britain's interests, to be seen as the metropole of the newly enlarged Commonwealth. Immigration from the Caribbean increased after 1952, as Congress passed legislation restricting the rights of Caribbean people to land in the USA. In response, the Churchill Cabinet commissioned another inquiry into the possibility of imposing controls on Commonwealth immigration (Cabinet 1953). It stopped short of making recommendations but advised that restricting the migratory rights of the newly-minted 'British subjects' abroad would be possible.

Study of the records of the period show that much of the Churchill and Eden Governments' time was spent discussing possible controls on immigration. The first Home Secretary under Churchill, Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe, was a right-leaning figure. There is evidence, discussed by Hansen, that he had been persuaded—by the Marquess of Salisbury and others—of the case for immigration control towards the end of his tenure (Hansen 2000). He was replaced in Churchill's 1954 reshuffle by the much more liberal Gwilym Lloyd George. Son of the radical Liberal Prime Minister David Lloyd George and originally a member of the Liberal Party, Lloyd George remained at the Home Office until the fall of the Eden government. He ruled out discrimination on the basis of colour. Confronted with the choice between allowing all Commonwealth immigration or none, the rest of the Eden Cabinet fell in line behind his liberal policy.

There is lively debate in the literature about the reasons for this liberalism. Conservative histo-rians have often attempted to portray the 1951–1957 Cabinets as weak-willed elitists, unable to seize the initiative and exercise the popular will. Revisionists have instead emphasised the for-eign policy imperative, and the influence of individual figures, like Lloyd George. It is to some extent irrelevant to the purpose of this paper to adjudicate on this matter, but it seems that the documentary evidence available supports the revision-ist account. Liberals and pragmatists to-gether agreed not to limit immigration from the Commonwealth, partly out of a desire to be seen as a 'welcoming' mother

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7 See Pelling (1997). For a more critical account which still acknowl-edges the basic pragmatism of the 1950s ministries, see Jeffreys (1997).

country and partly out of aversion to an explicit colour bar (R. A. Butler, quoted in Roth 1970, p. 206).

It is important for the purposes of this paper to establish that public opinion was indeed against the liberal policies maintained throughout the period. If, on the contrary, policy drifted toward control because the public became less liberal, then there is no problem to solve: democracy would be functioning precisely as Downs plots.

Importantly, for this paper's thesis to be undermined does not require that public opinion changed suddenly (in 1962, for instance), but rather that the position of the median voter moved toward restriction, and that the parties moved with them. Very few analysts of the time have given much credence to this argument. Admittedly, polling evidence on the views of the public about immigration in the 1950s is scant. But we can piece together a picture from what we know about events. First, the outbreak of riots in 1958. Riots do not spring up because of new-found policies or beliefs. They often reflect simmering resentment and long-standing grievance. Even if we do not accept this rebuttal, the attitude of newspaper editorials toward the white rioters at the time hints at the persistent opposition of native Britons to the arrival of Commonwealth immigrants (The Times 1958). The readiness with which Conservative strategists (in Smethwick and elsewhere—see below) turned to racial campaigning suggests that they knew that anti-immigrant feeling was pervasive. Moreover, sociological research has found plenty of evidence that racial prejudice was endemic in Britain in the post-war period, independent of the presence of Commonwealth immigrants (Hirsch 2019). In sum, it is a reasonable assumption that public opinion was solidly against immigration from the outset.

A second challenge argues that the policy changed in 1962 and 1968 as politicians and civil servants recognised the genuine need for immigration control. This thesis is popular among conservative historians, who tend to rue the slow revelation of their truth amongst the Conservative politicians of the late 1950s.[8] But this, too, lacks credibility. If the argument is that Conservative leadership became more restrictionist over time, then this is demonstrably false: Edward Heath and the Earl of Home were no more right-leaning than their predecessors. Edward Heath, in fact, was a prominent and dogged supporter of European integration. If, on the other hand, the argument is that these liberals were genuinely persuaded that immigration needed to be restricted (and ultimately halted), it is similarly flawed. The timing of the legislation does not fit where we might expect it to, were this argument to hold. We would expect restrictive legislation to be passed when immigration levels were rising.

This holds true for the *Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962*, but not for the *Immigration Act 1971*. Net migration had been steadily negative throughout the 1960s, when the 1971 *Act* was conceived. Moreover, it did nothing to halt the true cause of immigration in the 1960s and 1970s: family reunification. Indeed, it came into force at the same time as Britain's European Economic Community (EEC) membership, which offered immigration rights to all EEC member states. This would be a very odd policy combination for a government truly convinced of the need to halt

immigration. And, in order to dismiss the possible objection that this elite persuasion argument applies in the 1950s but not the 1970s, it should be noted that nearly all of the policymakers in the Macmillan government went on to support European freedom of movement strongly. Evangelical Powellites these were not.

SECTION II: WHY DID THE EQUIPOSE BREAK DOWN? (C. 1958–C. 1962)

The fine balance was not to last. Shortly after Harold Macmillan succeeded Eden as Prime Minister, popular discontent amongst both immigrant and native populations spilled over into rioting. In August and September 1958, gangs of young white men roamed areas of Nottingham and London with large Commonwealth migrant populations, intimidating their new neighbours. Randall Hansen studied newspaper clippings from the period and describes scenes with as many as 4,000 white men participating in these so-called 'race riots' (Hansen 2000, p. 81). Notting Hill, in West London, experienced similar disturbance, as young Caribbean men formed rival gangs in order to counter the threat to their safety (Hansen 2000).

Immigration from the Commonwealth continued to rise, from around 5,000 per year at the beginning of the decade, to around 100,000 at the end (Turner 2003).

A consensus did emerge in favour of informal restrictions on immigration, including halting the distribution of passports in South Asia and the Caribbean. This remained the only policy on which Cabinet agreed on until 1961. Partly fuelled by concern that controls would be forthcoming, immigration peaked in 1961 at 136,000. At this point, the Home Office began drafting what later became the *Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962*.

The bill repealed unlimited migration rights, and imposed controls on all Commonwealth citizens who were born outside the British Isles. All migrants already in Britain—and, importantly, their dependents—were granted permanent leave to remain. Other prospective immigrants would be assessed regarding qualifications and work potential (*Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962*). The exclusion of Irish citizens from the Bill was attacked by Labour as evidence of its racist character. It remained a point of pride for Labour politicians of the period that they had opposed this bill in Parliament (Labour Party 1964).

The effect of the bill was limited. The exceptions granted for those with useful skills and qualifications allowed for annual immigration of around 40,000. In fact, immigration remained static throughout the 1960s.

Taking on the task of explaining the decision to reimpose control, I have proposed three necessary conditions which must be in place for governments to pursue unpopular policy. In order to work out which are relevant here, we should look for changes over 1958–1962, when the important shift in policy took place.

SECTION IIA: A NON-PERMISSIVE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

This condition held throughout. Britain's electoral system during the 1950s was as close to the pure two-party paradigm as it has been at any time since mass enfranchisement in 1918. In 1951, the Liberal Party were reduced to just six seats and 2.5% of the popular

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8 For discussion, see Horowitz (1970).

median voter position
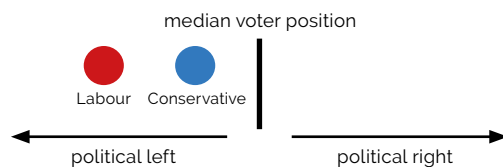
political left   political right

Figure 3 | Schematic of the political situation, 1951–1962.

vote. Even in February 1974, when the party system was at its most fragmented, 75% of votes were cast for the two main parties, which between them won 96% of the seats.[9] In any case, none of the minor parties stood on an anti-immigration platform before or after 1962.

Section IIb: An Opposition Unwilling to Oppose

Throughout the period between 1951 and 1957, Labour had not publicly criticised the government's immigration policy, nor had they called for the imposition of controls on migration. The government's only electoral test during this period came shortly after the accession of Anthony Eden in 1955. Largely as a result of depressed turnout amongst working-class voters, Labour (still led by Clement Attlee) lost ground. The Conservatives were returned to office with a comfortable majority of sixty (Butler 1955). Immigration was not mentioned in either party's manifesto.[10]

In the period between 1958 and 1962, Labour was divided internally on immigration. The Shadow Cabinet, under moderate leader Hugh Gaitskell, was unanimously in favour of a liberal policy. They believed that a racial bar was simply unconscionable. However, before the emergence in the 1960s of the New Left, many backbench Labour MPs considered themselves to be the representatives of the sectional interest of the British (white) working class. Throughout the period, however, these voices were marginalised by the leadership, at least as far as the voting lobbies. The Labour Party remained quiet on the topic of immigration in the 1950s. It did not feature in their manifesto in 1955 or 1959 (Labour Party 1955; 1959). No criticism was made of the government's policy, perhaps because it was itself inherited from the Attlee Administration. In other words, the Conservatives faced a situation like that in **Figure 3**.

Because the opposition (red) were further from the median voter than the government (blue), they had no incentive to raise the profile of immigration as an electoral issue. Moreover, this constraint on the behaviour of the opposition did not change during 1958–1962, or after this. Labour remained at least as far from the median as the Conservative Party throughout the period. As such, we can draw two conclusions. First, that this condition held during the period of liberal policy. Second, that it is not the relevant change in circumstances which brought about the introduction of restrictions.

Section IIc: No Threat of Defeat by Backbenchers

This condition held during most of the 1950s. But it was worn down by the growing importance of the right-wing backbenchers, culminating in the establishment of the Monday Club in 1962. Around the time of the 1958 riots, speeches were made in parliament which explicitly

called for an end to free movement within the Commonwealth, including by both MPs whose constituencies were affected by the riots. The right-wing factions of the Parliamentary Conservative Party began to speak openly against government policy. Figures such as Cyril Osborne and Enoch Powell had long spoken out on matters of colonial policy: the 1958 situation emboldened them to presume to speak for the entire white British population on Commonwealth immigration (Roth 1970).

Importantly, this rebellion did not extend to the Cabinet. Indeed, Cabinet debates about the imposition of control continued without resolution for four years. Iain Macleod, the Colonial Secretary from 1959 to 1961, emerged as a tireless Cabinet advocate for free movement. Very little of the pressure to impose controls came from within the Cabinet—instead an increasingly noisy group of backbenchers and Peers were the key right-wing constituency. In 1961, Iain Macleod was replaced by Reginald Maudling, a similarly disposed, left-leaning politician of the Conservative Party. Also significant is that, throughout this period, the Home Office was occupied by Rab Butler, who was likewise a keen advocate for continued free movement. With the Marquess of Salisbury, the last real right-wing force in Cabinet, having left frontline politics in 1957 over a relatively insignificant issue, the baton of restrictionism was taken up by John Hare, the Minister for Labour.

Throughout this period, a growing number of Conservative MPs were becoming dissatisfied with government policy on immigration and colonial matters. They grew in numbers and prominence throughout the late 1950s, under the informal leadership of Cyril Osborne in the Commons and the Marquess of Salisbury in the Lords. The coherence and strategy of this group became more unified over time, until they were officially formed in 1962 as the 'Monday Club'.

The Monday Club was an internal Conservative faction, which welcomed MPs as well as ordinary party members. It was initially formed in 1962 to oppose the government's policy of rapid decolonisation. Led in the early 1960s by the Marquess of Salisbury (see above), it quickly shifted its focus to the aim of promoting more restrictive immigration policies.

The literature on the theory of intra-party disputes is extensive and lies outside the scope of this paper.[11] It is sufficient for our purposes to note that the emergence of such groups changes the nature of a government's policy decisions. They face an immediate threat to their agenda, as groups come to possess vetoes over policies.

The key decision-makers were aware that the anti-immigration faction of the Conservative Party was becoming bolder, as the perceived threat of Commonwealth immigration increased. **Figure 4** (next page) illustrates the frequency with which questions, bills or debates featuring the word 'immigrants' were discussed in the House of Commons.

The largest spike is around the time the 1962 *Act* was under discussion. But what is striking is the degree of willingness of backbench MPs to table questions about immigration. If 1959 (an election year) is removed as an anomaly, the growing noise in the Commons presents itself in **Table 1**.

Careful study of the debates and questions contained within this data yields a finding in line with my theoretical expectations: most of the noise comes not from the

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9 Northern Ireland excluded.

10 **See the Conservative Party's** *United for Peace and Progress* (Conservative Central Office 1955) **or the Labour Party's** *Forward with Labour* (Labour Party 1955).

11 **For an historically grounded thesis, see Krauss and Pekkanen (2011).**

Year	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1960	1961	1962
References to 'immigration', 'immigrants', or 'race'	3	1	3	12	17	9	10	24	14	40	35

Table 1 | Frequency of references to 'immigration', 'immigrants', or 'race' yearly, between 1951 and 1962. Data from the Hansard archives, UK Parliament (n.d.).

opposition, but from government backbenchers. This is in line, firstly, with stated Labour policy from the period, which was firmly in favour of a liberal migration system. Secondly, this chimes with the account of Andrew Roth, biographer of Enoch Powell, who recalls increasingly bold challenges to government policy over the course of the 1958–1962 period (Roth 1970). While Rab Butler was calling for Britain to show 'hospitality' to immigrants, Cyril Osborne was introducing an explicitly racist private member's bill in the Commons (Roth 1970).

What changed, then? The control, or 'catholicity' as Harold Macmillan put it (1972, p. 37), which Conservative leaders must exercise over their MPs was eroded over the late 1950s. By 1961, the problem had become such that it posed a dual threat: firstly, to the passage of government legislation, and secondly to the public perception of the government. Macmillan, Macleod, and Butler were forced to move toward the position of the median voter.

Section III: The Politics of Immigration After 1962

The 1962–1979 period was characterised by progressive shifts to the right by both major parties. After 1962, the Conservatives adopted an unambiguously pro-restriction policy, forcing the Labour governments of the period to respond by conceding ground.

Section IIIa: The Drift Right, 1962–1979

Macmillan left office in 1963 due to ill health, and was replaced by the Foreign Secretary, Alec Douglas-Home. This government was short-lived and did little in the way of major policy. The election of 1964 was fought primarily over perceived economic sluggishness. The Labour campaign focused not on any specific Conservative policy, but on 'thirteen wasted years' and their alleged outdated thinking. However, this was the first election in which both parties laid out policies on immigration. Labour's manifesto, *The New Britain*, said the following:

[A] Labour Government will legislate against racial discrimination and incitement in public places and give special help to local authorities in areas where immigrants have settled. Labour accepts that the number of immigrants entering the United Kingdom must be limited. Until a satisfactory agreement covering this can be negotiated with the Commonwealth a Labour Government will retain immigration control. (quoted in Roth 1970)

The Conservatives' defence of their record, *Prosperity with a Purpose*, said the following:

A Conservative Government will continue to control immigration from overseas according to the numbers which our crowded country and its industrial regions can absorb. We shall ensure that the working of the *Commonwealth Immigrants Act*, which we passed in 1962 against bitter Labour Party opposition, is fair and effective. (Conservative Central Office 1964)

What is most striking here is that Labour have performed a complete volte-face on the issue of immigration control within two years (after opposing controls in 1962). Moreover, the Conservatives were aware that both parties were more liberal than the median voter—they attempt here to portray themselves as the less out-of-touch of the two.

The Wilson governments did not seek to amend the *Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962*. It is difficult to speculate on the precise motivations, but it is plausible that they reasoned that there was nothing to be gained by being further from the median voter than the Conservatives, and so moved to the right.

Labour politicians made much of the laws passed by the Wilson governments banning racial discrimination within Britain. Despite this, their commitment to anti-discrimination is somewhat belied by the passage of the *Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1968*. A group of people living in Kenya, Asian by descent, were facing persecution by the newly installed nationalist
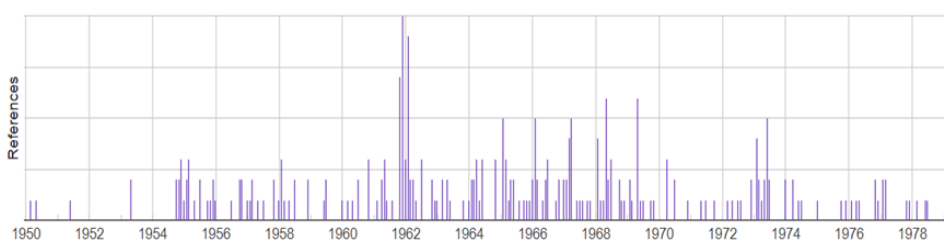

Figure 4 | Bar plot showing the monthly frequency of the word 'immigrants' in questions, bills or debates in the House of Commons between 1950 and 1979. Data from the Hansard archives, UK Parliament (n.d.).

government there. As most had only British passports, they faced barriers to employment in Kenya, but enjoyed an unlimited right to enter the UK. Home Secretary Jim Callaghan proposed the 1968 *Act*, which created two-tiers of British citizenship. The first, those who had been born, naturalised, or adopted in the UK, enjoyed unlimited migration rights. The second, including nearly all the Kenyan Asians, would be subject to the same controls as all other Commonwealth migrants (*Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1968*). This bill was passed with the support of most Labour and Conservative MPs. In just six years, both parties had shifted so far that they now accepted an effective colour bar on immigration to the UK.

In the 1970 general election, which pundits expected Labour to win comfortably based on improved economic conditions, Labour sought to present the matter as settled in *Now Britain's Strong*:

> With the rate of immigration under firm control and much lower than in past years, we shall be able still more to concentrate our resources in the major task of securing good race relations. (Labour Party 1970)

The Conservatives, however, devoted a much more pungent passage in *A Better Tomorrow* to plans to limit immigration:

> [Our] policies mean that future immigration will be allowed only in strictly defined special cases. There will be no further large scale permanent immigration. (Conservative Central Office 1970)

Even under a liberal-minded leader, the Conservatives had moved toward a much more restrictive position over the course of a few years. The Conservatives secured a working majority of thirty.

Back in government, the Conservatives further tightened the conditions laid down in the 1968 *Act*. The notion of naturalisation was replaced with one of 'patriality'. Only British subjects abroad who had a grandparent born or naturalised in Britain could claim unlimited immigration rights. In practice, this was confined to the white settler colonies (e.g. Canada, Australia). This settlement remained in place until Margaret Thatcher overhauled the system in 1981.

Labour once again replaced the Conservatives in office in February 1974. They proposed and carried out no further amendments to the restrictive immigration policy they inherited.

Section IIIb: What Caused the Drift?

As much of the Downsian analysis above makes clear, in the context of a two-party system in which both parties are to the left of the median voter, the party closest to the median is able to change policy consensus unilaterally. Therefore, in seeking to explain the rightward drift by both parties in the latter years of the period under study, we must focus on the Conservative Party. As I outlined above, there is no reason to believe that the leadership was any more pro-restriction after 1962 than before. Indeed, the mainstream of the Conservative Party were passionately in favour of granting unlimited rights to work to all citizens of the European community. Instead, the key change came

again from the new anti-immigration faction.

During this period of opposition, the 'Monday Club' bloc on the Conservative Right grew in number and prominence. By 1970, the Club had thirty-five members, six of whom were in Heath's Cabinet (Copping 1972). They were set on weaponising immigration as a political issue. The success of a racially-charged election campaign in Smethwick in 1964 seemed to show the potential profitability of exploiting latent tensions. The lobbying power of this group, which alone had the power to deprive the government of its legislative majority, was considerable. After each piece of legislation concerning immigration, the group renewed its calls for further restriction and, indeed, repatriation.

But it would be remiss to analyse the politics of immigration in this period without noting the exceptional impact of one man, the MP for Southwest Wolverhampton, Enoch Powell.

As detailed above, Powell had been a minor irritant for Conservative leaders since resigning from the government in the mid-1950s. He had come to advocate for monetarist economics and restrictive immigration policy. He came to national prominence in 1968, shortly after the pas-sage of the bill excluding the Kenyan Asians from British citizenship rights. Powell delivered a speech on immigration after which, Harold Wilson said that British politics would 'never be quite the same again' (Wilson 1971).

Reacting to an incident of excrement being pushed through the letterbox of an embattled white resident in an area with a large immigrant population (the details of which have never been verified), Powell's words have become infamous:

> [We must proceed by] stopping, or virtually stopping, further inflow, and by promoting the maximum outflow. Both answers are part of the official policy of the Conservative Party. It almost passes belief that at this moment twenty or thirty additional immigrant children are arriving from overseas in Wolverhampton alone every week—and that means fifteen or twenty additional families a decade or two hence. Those whom the gods wish to destroy, they first make mad. We must be mad, literally mad, as a nation to be permitting the annual inflow of some 50,000 dependants, who are for the most part the material of the future growth of the immigrant-descended population. It is like watching a nation busily engaged in heaping up its own funeral pyre. (Powell 1968)

After this speech, immigration rapidly became one of the foremost issues in British politics. Polling found large majorities in favour of the sentiment expressed in his speech. A Gallup poll, conducted shortly after the speech, found that 74% of respondents agreed with Powell, with 15% disagreeing, and 11% unsure (Schoen 1977). Moreover, the media attention given to Powell's words seems to have turned public opinion against the government's second Race Relations Bill which was in the process of going through Parliament (and eventually passed as the *Race Relations Act 1968*). Before the speech, Gallup found that 42% approved and 29% disapproved. Afterwards, just 30% approved and 46% disapproved (Schoen 1977).

The internationalist leader of the Conservative Party from 1965, Edward Heath, disapproved of Powell. He

sacked him from his post as Shadow Secretary of State for Defence. But Heath struggled to contain Powell's effect. Polling throughout the period showed higher approval ratings for Powell than for Heath (Schoen 1977). Powell sought to undermine Heath's position by remaining loyal to the Conservative Party while opposing Heath's internationalist policies.

It is worth pointing out, however, that Powell—having left the Conservatives to stand as an Ulster Unionist—endorsed Labour in 1974 and directed his supporters to do likewise.

The impact of Powell's endorsements on electoral politics is a matter of historiographical debate.[12] It may be argued that his endorsement dissuaded liberal voters from backing whichever party he happened to be hitched to at any given time. But, as Schoen observes, there were notably higher swings to Labour in 1974 among constituencies in the West Midlands, where his influence was strongest (Schoen 1977).

I wish to reject thoroughly the notion that Enoch Powell is crucial to this research question. It is not the case that without Enoch, liberal policy was popular, but after him, it was not. Experience of popular and effective extra-parliamentary leaders of campaigns has shown us that effective leadership is perfectly compatible with continued anti-populist policymaking, if the other three conditions are met: consider the immigration policy pursued by Tony Blair's governments, for instance (Consterdine 2018).

That said, it would be churlish not to acknowledge his importance in shaping the debate around immigration once the control exercised by liberal elites in the Conservative party had been broken. The polling evidence is quite clear: Powell enjoyed the support of large majorities throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s (Schoen 1977). Through his campaigning he was able to place even greater pressure on Edward Heath to adopt restrictive immigration policies. In 1964 and 1966 most people did not know which of the two parties was 'tougher' on immigration, whereas in 1970 a large majority identified the Conservatives. This is despite Edward Heath leading the party in both the 1966 and 1970 general elections.

Over a period of 25 years, British immigration policy had been transformed from a system with unlimited rights for 800 million people around the world to one which almost explicitly screened migrants based on race. Instrumental at every point was the pressure placed on the moderate Conservative leadership throughout this period by right-wing backbenchers.

The popular sentiment against immigration has remained a potent issue in British politics ever since it was unleashed in 1968 by Enoch Powell's openly anti-immigration campaigning. Even liberalising governments have sought to downplay the importance of their liberal policies—the 1997 Labour manifesto did not mention the removal of restrictions later carried out. 'Immigration' and 'asylum' regularly topped voters' list of policy priorities in the 2010s and played a key role in the campaign to leave the European Union in 2016.

Enoch Powell was a classical scholar, so perhaps it is fitting to end by exposing the classical analogy referenced in the subtitle of this chapter. Mons Sacer was the site of one of the first instances of an elite's agenda power being ended by the emergence of effective

demagogic leadership. In the early years of the Roman Republic, dissatisfaction brewed amongst plebeian citizens, whose views were not considered by the Senate. Mons Sacer was the site of a mass secession in 494 BC, when the plebeians appointed tribunes to speak on their behalf. After this, the Senate were forced to concede the permanent position in government of the tribune of the plebeians.

The period between 1951 and 1979 can be considered as the prelude, process, and aftermath of a march to Mons Sacer on the British right. Control over policy, previously held solely by liberal figures at the top of the Conservative Party, was seized on behalf of a disenfranchised public by figures who presumed to be their tribunes.

They never had a more effective tribune than Enoch Powell, whose visceral, unashamed exploitation of racial division has continued to shape British policy well into the modern era.

CONCLUSION

In immigration policy, the 1950s saw a liberal consensus amongst senior politicians and civil servants imposed on an unwilling public. This study has taken no position on the debate about immigration and colonial policy, nor has it sought to rule on whether it is legitimate for public opinion to be ignored in this way. However, such a situation is certainly not the norm, at least in modern democracies. It is incumbent on those who take sides in these debates to understand what happened and what allowed it to happen.

Previous scholarship on this issue has tended to settle into two silos. Historians tend to concern themselves with why Churchill, Eden, and Macmillan made the policy decisions they did. They try to settle what *persuaded* these leaders to pursue certain policies. Political scientists tend to formulate theories of what drives party competition in the abstract—no case study I have encountered has analysed an apparent failure of party competition in depth.

The aim of this study has been to synthesise these approaches. The important question here is not why Macmillan and the others wanted to keep borders open and to decolonise, but *how* they were able to have their way in spite of public opposition.

I have proposed here three necessary conditions which govern the potential for government policy making unconstrained by the median voter. The first borrows directly from the existing political science literature on Downsian party competition: a non-permissive electoral system. This must be in place to prevent an upstart political party taking advantage of the 'gap in the market'.

The second necessary condition is that the opposition parties must not be in a position to oppose the relevant policy. Either because of tactics or ideology, a constrained opposition allows the governing party not to fear that the primary opposition will exploit the 'gap in the market'.

The third necessary condition is that the government must not fear disruptive backbench rebellion. A backbench faction which threatens to organise and withhold support because it wishes to see policy closer to the median voter's preferences can force the government to shift its position. Whether such a faction emerges will be shaped by numerous factors, like party

12 cf. Schoen (1977) and Hansen (2020).

institutions and the strength of voter feeling on the matter, but the presence of the factor remains the correct independent variable, as it is the stage of the process at which the relationship becomes strong enough that it becomes a necessary condition.

I have found that comparative study of immigration and colonial policy in the 1951–1979 period shows the importance of these conditions. Unpopular immigration policy was possible until 1962, and then quickly drifted toward the anti-immigration views of the median voter. Colonial policy remained 'liberal' throughout. The only difference between the two was that the right wing factions of the Parliamentary Conservative Party became organised and relentlessly offered a competing narrative on immigration policy, without criticising colonial policy as firmly. By 1961, when the group became formally constituted, they understood that decolonisation was too far underway to reverse or halt. They instead focused their efforts on restricting nationality and immigration law.

In the immediate aftermath of the bitter debates of the 'Brexit years' (2016–2020), during which the legitimacy of elite policymaking was called into question, it is crucial that we understand the theory and practice of policy formulation in the UK. The 'will of the people' was the clarion call during that period. Perhaps the application of the necessary conditions proposed in this paper to the Brexit negotiations will shed light upon why the Parliamentary consensus in favour of close UK–EU relations was unsuccessful. At the very least, with the rise of right-wing anti-immigration movements in most Western countries, it is imperative to understand the conditions which have facilitated the suppression and subsequent rise of this movement in the UK.

Further research may seek to develop a sophisticated institutional history of the Conservative Right, who have played such a crucial role in the formation of policy since 1961, but on whom the scholarship is remarkably light. Comparative study of unpopular policymaking, including countries with coalition governments, may shed further light on the wider applicability (or lack thereof) of the principles I have outlined here.

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Appendix 1 | Frequency at which the words 'immigration', 'immigrants', 'race' or 'colonial' was mentioned in debates in the House of Commons from 1951 to 1979. Data from the Hansard archives, UK Parliament (n.d.).

Year/Reference	'immigration'	'immigrants'	'race'	'colonial'
1951	2	1	0	38
1952	1	0	0	31
1953	1	2	0	22
1954	5	7	0	18
1955	4	13	0	30
1956	3	6	0	20
1957	1	8	1	24
1958	8	10	6	19
1959	2	3	1	28
1960	2	8	4	27
1961	15	25	0	32
1962	11	23	1	35
1963	0	7	0	3
1964	5	15	0	4
1965	21	17	9	11
1966	5	20	4	4
1967	8	18	5	0
1968	14	21	8	1
1969	8	13	8	1
1970	6	6	12	3
1971	19	3	4	0
1972	8	6	1	0
1973	13	16	2	1
1974	3	6	1	0
1975	9	3	2	0
1976	13	6	10	0
1977	6	6	1	0
1978	8	3	2	0
1979	3	0	0	0

What is Moral Actualism?

Marta Bax

Does philosophy figure into our discussions about political theory and policy making? For many the answer is two-fold: when philosophy is practical—i.e., when it is a direct enquiry into government practices and the relationship between states and their citizens, the discipline is a crucial means to legitimising policies, and grounding actions in a set of coherent and justifiable beliefs. On the other hand, thought experiments, logic problems, language riddles—philosophy of a more theoretical nature—is not typically consulted. In politics, we want to narrow down pragmatic answers that can intuitively appeal to the masses, not overcomplicate ideologies to such a linguistically technical point that they become unintelligible to most. This essay is an attempt to 'do' political philosophy in the second, less appreciated way. At the end of my arguments, I aim to explain how these kind of enquiries might inform our politics, particularly when it comes to political discourse which is, by nature, theoretical—such as debates regarding our impact on future generations.

INTRODUCTION

Sofia intends to have a child. She has recently been offered a promotion in New York, which has left her with an important decision to make. She could choose to move, and pursue a fulfilling career, or she could stay in Manchester, where she knows her mother would help with the new-born. Suppose she chooses the latter. When asked by her colleagues why she passed on the opportunity, Sofia replies 'it was the best option for the people involved. I'm not too attached to this particular job, and I think it would benefit my daughter to have her grandparents around. My wife is also staying in Manchester, and although she supports me unconditionally, I know she'd prefer to avoid long-distance. I'd also like to stay close to her, if possible.' Most people would think this a reasonable response.

Kalani has also been promoted. She too would like to have children someday. If she chooses to stay in her home city, Liverpool, she and her partner will try for a baby. If she moves to New York, however, she has decided to refrain from conceiving for a few years. Suppose Kalani opts for the latter. When asked by her neighbour why she passed on the chance to conceive, she replies 'it was the best option for the people involved. This job will bring me financial stability, and living elsewhere is a great opportunity I might not get later in life. Waiting until I am back in Liverpool to conceive means my partner won't have to live far from his child, and that I get the childcare support I need.' Now suppose her neighbour retorts 'but you haven't chosen the best option for all the people involved —your decision not to conceive was bad for the baby that would have been born if you had stayed in Liverpool, who would have had a good life. Because of your decision, he will not be born!'

Both Sofia and Kalani explain their actions by appealing to the interests of the people affected by their decision. The concern Kalani's neighbour has however raises a question for justifications of this kind: who counts as a person affected? Why do the interests of Sofia's future child, in part, determine the outcome of her decision? Why should this not apply to Kalani's case?

Here is a relatively intuitive assumption: in order to be affected by an action, a person must first exist. Here is a more intuitive assumption: this person need not exist at the time the action first takes place. A sufficient condition for being affected by an action is that one exists whilst the effects of that action take place. When Sofia chooses to stay in Manchester, her future child does not exist. However, the consequences of Sofia's choice to stay in Manchester will affect said child. Therefore, the child's eventual interests contribute to Sofia's decision. Kalani is not in the same position as Sofia. When she chooses to leave for New York, her future baby *does not and will never exist*. As a result, the effects of Kalani's actions cannot violate that child's interests. She is under no obligation to consider the interests of this child, due to the fact that they *will never be affected by her actions*.

If you share these intuitions, you might find yourself drawn to a particular moral doctrine: 'Moral Actualism', wherein the moral status of any action a_j—actual or not—is determined by whether its outcome is better or worse for the people who exist given action a_j, than the outcomes of other available actions.[1]

In other words, what makes an option morally better than its counterpart is that its outcome is better for the people who actually exist, given that action is performed.

In this essay I defend moral actualism from a particular attack launched by philosopher Caspar Hare. Hare's counter paints actualism in untenable colours— he argues that the position ultimately is not a reliable moral doctrine because it occasionally leads to deontic absurdity. We should reject it and look for a different way to evaluate the moral status of actions, particularly those concerning future generations.

I want to provide actualists with an alternative. Instead of abandoning what feels like an intuitive moral doctrine—particularly one which lends itself well to legitimising democratic policies (which are supposedly good 'for the people'), they need only revise their position to defend it from attack. This revision is made possible by the vagueness of the terms 'actual' and 'exist'. It is evident that in his characterisation of moral actualism, Hare assumes that to be actual is to exist in the *modal* sense: existence is satisfied by membership in the actual world. I am going to argue—contra Hare—that this alone is not a sufficient condition for existence. To be actual is also to exist in the *temporal sense*: existence is satisfied by *present* membership in the actual world.

This revision is not only prompted by a need to defend actualism against Hare's counter. In fact, before explaining how temporal actualism is invulnerable to Hare's argument, I motivate the position without reference to Hare. Ultimately, we should favour temporal

moral actualism not just because it is the version of actualism that overcomes Hare's counter, but because careful consideration shows that it aligns better with our general intuitions about morality.

A word of warning: this paper lies at the intersection of ethics and metaphysics. As such, many of the labels I use have appeared in different debates associated with both these areas of philosophy. 'Modal actualism' and 'Actualism' are examples (Hare 2007, p. 499; Cohen & Timmerman 2020). In the context of this essay, please treat any label with the word 'actualism' in it as meaning a version of *Moral Actualism*, the position outlined prior.

Section 1: The Problem
§1.1: Hare's Moral Actualism
Let us begin by getting clear on some actualist essentials i.e., those beliefs that fall directly out of the definition provided in the introduction. The first concerns the concept of the good. Moral actualists think goodness is relational: an action is good if it is *good for a particular person* (or people), compared to alternatives (Hare 2007, p. 499). Often these approaches to morality are rights-based: moral duties are generated by agents' right to determine what actions are imposed on them. To act correctly is to do nothing more than respect these rights.

The second obvious credo to moral actualism is this: rights—such as the right to have one's interest count towards moral deliberation—are strictly reserved for actual people: individuals who exist in the world the relevant action takes place in (Hare 2007, p. 499). Existence is crucial supposedly because it is a prerequisite for having interests, which is in turn a pre-requisite for having rights (Hare 2007, p. 509). For an action to be good for someone, that someone must first *exist*.

What exactly is existence? Who counts as an actual person, according to actualism? The answer to these questions does not seem to fall directly out of *Moral Actualism*.

Caspar Hare thinks that existence for the actualist must extend to future people who will be born as well as current people who are already alive, given a_j is performed.[2] His concept of existence is modal: a person exists insofar as they are alive—at some point in time— in the real world as opposed to a merely possible world (Hare 2007, p. 498). Both present people who are alive at the time a_j takes place and future people who will live in the world created by a_j therefore have the right to have their interests contribute to that action's moral status. After all, these are the people who risk being harmed by a_j. For Hare, then, actual people and non-actual people are mutually exclusive. All actual people, like Sofia's child, exist (in the sense that they exist in the real world), and all possible people (like Kalani's child) do not.

Let's allow for now that this characterisation of existence is exactly what moral actualists are after when they call a person actual. If this is correct, they should exclusively worry about the interests of current people and future people *who will be born* when deciding between possible actions. Put a different way: only individuals who are presently alive or will be alive in the future have the right to demand their interests be considered when it comes to moral deliberation.[3]

§1.2: Hare's Counter
In compliance with his characterisation of moral actualism, Hare launches into a critique of the position to conclude that it inevitably leads to deontic absurdity. His counter starts with a thought experiment:

Imagine there is a person Kate, who has to decide between two actions:

a_1 – bring relentlessly miserable Jack into existence.
a_2 – bring relentlessly miserable Jane into existence.

Assume both Jack and Jane would prefer not to exist than to exist miserably (Hare 2007, pp. 503–504).

Kate doesn't know what to do, since both options seem equally bad.

Here is actualism again:

> (*Moral Actualism*) The moral status of any a_j is determined by whether its outcome is better or worse for *actual people*, than the outcomes of other available actions.

And here's a question: what should actualism say about Kate's dilemma?

Remember that moral actualism generates *rights-based* moral obligations: an action is better than its counterpart *if it respects the right of actual people to have their interests count towards deliberation*. The action that is better for actual people, therefore, is the action that Kate should perform.

As per the thought experiment, a_1 and a_2 will create separate worlds: a_1 will create a world containing the actual individual Jack (call this Sa_1), whereas a_2 will create a world containing the actual individual Jane (or Sa_2) (Hare 2007, p. 504). A world where Jack is actual hence is a world where Jane is merely possible; a world where Jane is actual is a world where Jack is merely possible. Actualism will therefore say that Jack has the right to have his interests contribute to Kate's decision only if Kate picks a_1; vice versa for Jane. Kate, however, exists in both worlds. She retains the right to have her interests count towards the decision-making process, regardless of what action she ultimately picks.

The problem materialises the second we are told to assume that both Jack and Jane prefer non-existence over miserable existence. Imagine the actualist trying to help Kate decide what action to perform. She knows only to pick a_1 if it is the best option available for actual people. The actual people given a_1 are Kate and Jack. To call a_1 a *better* option for Kate than a_2 would be a stretch: both actions—from Kate's perspective—aren't great; both force her to create a miserable child. However, assuming Kate does not have a preference for gender, one might reasonably assume Kate is indifferent with regards to whether a_1 gets performed over a_2. To recommend performing a_1 therefore would not violate *her* interests. Things change when we consider the interests of Jack, however. He *does* have a specific preference between a_1 and a_2, and it's for a_2 to be performed, since this would mean escaping miserable existence. a_1 therefore cannot be the best option for the people who exist in Sa_1 (the actual people) since a_2 is equally as good for Kate, and a_2 is better for Jack. If Kate chooses a_1, then, actualism will say she has done the wrong thing; the interests of actual people were such that she *should have picked* a_2.

[2]   I will not be focusing on past people for the purposes of the essay, although it is worth mentioning that for Hare, past people are also actual: they share the property of existing, at some point in time.

[3]   The 'or' here is inclusive.

What happens if the actualist recommends a_2? Once again, a_2 can only be picked if it is the best option for actual people. Once again, Kate is indifferent about a_2 being performed over a_1, so her rights are not violated when a_2 is performed. However, *this time*, it's not the interests of Jack that contribute to decision-making because Jack ceases to be actual, given a_2. The actual people in Sa_2 are Kate and *Jane*. But Jane, like Jack, *prefers non-existence*, i.e., the outcome of a_1 is better for her than that of a_2. a_2 is therefore not the best option for the people who exist in Sa_2 (the actual people) since a_1 is equally as good for Kate, and a_1 is *better* for Jane. If Kate chooses a_2, actualism will *also* say she has done the wrong thing; the interests of actual people were such that she *should have picked* a_1.

This means that whatever Kate does, she does the wrong thing (Hare 2007, pp. 503–504). Moral actualists are committed to telling Kate not to pick either a_1 or a_2 when picking one of these options is required of her. In other words, their verdict—to not perform either action—is *deontically absurd*, i.e., it violates a deontic principle of obligation: *if given alternatives {x, y}, x ought not to be done, then, given alternatives {x, y}, y ought to be done* (Hare 2007, pp. 504–505). These are the grounds on which Hare abandons the position, altogether.

Another way of putting the issue is this: Hare's *Kate* case shows that moral actualism is internally incoherent. The two founding principles of actualism—(1) to have people's interests contribute to decision-making, and (2) to only consider the interests of actual people—contradict. Jack's interest not to exist only counts when he is actual. But the second Jack is made actual, his interest not to exist gets violated. In fact, for both Jack and Jane, they become actual when it is too late: Jack's interest to not-exist only counts when we bring him into existence, as does Jane's.

At this point one might wonder whether the principle of deontic absurdity is so convincing as to lead us to such a conclusion. Might there not be tragic situations in which one is faced with two options equally as bad as each other so that the correct verdict is that one ought to perform neither? And if the thought experiment demands a decision be however made, could it not be acceptable to perform an action whilst contemporarily realising that it should not have been performed? One might want to judge both actions as *equally* bad, since both are bad for the relevant people affected. Kate is therefore free to choose from either a_1 or a_2 for this reason. It's not that a_1 (for example) should be picked because it is *best*, but because it is *no worse* than a_2 (Hare 2007, p. 505).

As Hare notes, this solution, though superficially inviting, would spell ruin for the actualist. Say Kate does use this reasoning to pick a_1. When questioned about why she purposefully chose to perform an action that was worse for Jack, she justifies herself by saying that *not* performing it would have been *equally as bad* for Jane. This is a roundabout way of making a_1 permissible because, although it harms Jack, it avoids a harm to Jane. The problem is that according to the actualist's own doctrine, the interests of merely possible people can never count towards moral deliberation. Jane (given a_1 is chosen) does not and will never exist. She is not an actual member of Sa_1, and therefore does not have the right to have her interests count towards the enactment

of a_1 (Hare 2007, p. 505). To justify picking a_1 because of the equally tragic entailment of a_2 is to allow for the interests of possible people to count towards deliberation. And that is enough to violate actualism irreparably.

SECTION 2: THE SOLUTION

The fact that this big issue facing *Moral Actualism* is buried deep within a thought experiment might irritate political theorists. Unless we suddenly form the ability to predict the miserable lives and consequent wishes not to live of the unborn, and believe instances like Mary's will be common, we might be tempted to dismiss Hare's counter. Most people generally perfectly understand *Moral Actualism* as a doctrine, and are not confused when the actualist claims the important factor when it comes to decision-making is respecting the wishes of people who are alive and will live, given they are those who will be affected by contemporary policies. To call this simple credo 'incoherent' on technical grounds—though logically accurate—seems supercilious and practically ineffective.

Despite this, I am instead going to accept the nature of Hare's argument, and argue against it on his own terms. I do this mainly because I think the solution I am presenting has interesting repercussions for how we think about policymaking and reveals an insight into legislators may more effectively justify their policies so they are endorsed by more people. I'll come back to this thought towards the end of the essay, once my proposed counter is made clear.

The key to resisting Hare's counter is understanding that this modal characterisation of existence is a product of *Hare's* conviction that the actualist need not engage with.

With §2.1 I aim to provide an alternative reading of actualism, one which understands existence in more than simply modal terms. This is the proper way *Moral Actualism* should be understood. The first reason for this is that temporal actualism by itself seems an intuitive moral doctrine. To illustrate this, I consider an argument against adopting temporal actualism, but ultimately explain that the best this can do is slightly weaken the position; in fact, this weakening of actualism might actually work in its favour.

The second and more pressing reason to adopt temporal actualism over Hare's modal interpretation is to ensure that Hare's counter fails to get off the ground. §2.2 explains why it is that moral actualism—understood in temporal terms—is invulnerable to Hare's counter

§2.1: TEMPORAL MORAL ACTUALISM

What does it mean to exist? Hare provides us with one option: to exist is to be a member of the *actual world*, at some point in time. But there's another option: to exist could also mean to be a member of the actual world, *in the present*. This kind of existence is determined by one's temporal status as well as their modal status. An actual person—under this interpretation—is a *present person who exists in the actual world*. Possible people, then, are people who do not presently exist in the actual world. Temporal actualism implies that modally actual people and possible people are *not* mutually exclusive. Some possible people *will become* actual, like Sofia's child. Others, like Kalani's, will not.

This would make it the case that people only gain

the right to have their interests contribute to moral decision-making *once they are born*.[4] Moral agents only have a duty to consider the interests of future people *once those people exist in the present*.

Why think the temporal interpretation is what moral actualists are after when they call a person actual?

Here's one reason: temporal actualism parallels how rational people tend to think about when duties should come into effect, in real life. I might think that my future soulmate is already out there in the world, and that *once I notice them*, I will be completely monogamous. Does this generate a duty in me now to be monogamous to that person who I will *eventually meet*, pre-encounter? Most people would think not: I do not owe that person any particular loyalty until I get into a relationship with (or at least meet) them. Similarly, just because someone *will eventually* become a moral agent, does not mean that they are to be treated like one in the present.

Furthermore, in order to understand the preferences of future people and therefore act in a way which fulfils those preferences, we must first have some source of information which tells us what they are. The obvious problem that is not made so clear in the *Kate* case is that, in real life, we *don't* know who the future children are, or what they want. When Sofia makes a decision she thinks will be better for her future child, she is not respecting the wishes of a future individual—her daughter—but her own idea of what her future daughter will want. This process is more accurately explained by saying that we justify our actions which affect future generations *not* as duties *we* owe *them*, but duties *we* owe *ourselves*, in which the rationale is that they will someday benefit a future person. But the fundamental mistake here is to believe that there is some other person who is committing us to perform in one way over another; there cannot be, because that future person does not *presently* exist.

To use a highly politicised current example—often, arguments against the depletion of global resources contributing to global warming share a morally favourable rhetoric of conservation because it satisfies the interests of future people (people who are actual in the modal sense), specifically. But there are other ways to justify these kinds of policies. There are authors who argue that the decision to conserve resources as opposed to depleting them stems more from the aesthetic interests of temporally actual people more so than it does the interests of future people (see Bennett 1978, pp. 61–73). Secondly, even if it is performed with the sole benefit of future generations in mind, the decision to conserve could still be explained by appealing to the interests of current people only. To commit to something with someone's benefit in mind is not necessarily to act in accordance with their interests. Instead, one might reasonably hold themselves to a general moral standard to do what is best for future generations in the same way they might believe one should always act with kindness, where possible. There are *general moral standards* that are not strictly relational. They are not generated by the interests of any individual, but by a collective interest, or a pre-constructed moral code. There is no particular person that can claim the general right to conserve the planet's resources, or the right to act with kindness, but current people might still believe and do act as though these standards are of genuine moral concern. The concern with conservation need not be justified by

the actual interests of future people', but by the perceived interests of current people regarding future people.

Parallel this thought to the *soulmate* example. What causes me to want to be monogamous to my soulmate is not generated by an understanding of what's good *for them*: for all I know, my soulmate could want an open relationship. The duty I think I have is instead generated by an *accepted* general social standard for good relationships: monogamy.

Importantly, this does not mean that our new understanding of what it means for something to be 'good' fails to conform to what had been previously outlined as a central credo of actualism: the idea that something is good only if it is good *for a specific person, or group of individuals*. The *good* is still relational, in the sense that conservation remains good if it is valuable to a specific group of people—it is not *inherently* good— however, those people may not be the set of future temporal generations which will eventually be affected by conservation policies. The goodness of conservation derives from the value current temporal people assign it—we ought to conserve because we think it will work out best for future people, and we collectively (or those who wish to conserve, at least) think that looking out for future generations is something we should do.

What it does mean, however, is that sometimes our rationalisations of why we ought to perform certain actions over others are slightly misguided. I originally framed Sofia's future child's interests as a partial motiva-tor towards her decision to stay in Manchester. This new version of actualism appears to deny that the future child has any right to moral consideration. Whilst this is true—and, I believe, reflective of real life—Sofia's assertion can still be actualist if what she really intends to say is that she wishes to enact an absolute moral rule she endorses, in that the moral rule to do what is best for your future children, whomever they might be. It is not that a particular future individual has a right to moral consideration which creates an obligation in Sofia to stay in Manchester, but instead Sofia's own belief that a particular course of action is best which results in her final decision.

Finally, nothing stated so far directly clashes with any of Hare's later solutions to his own problems (those which depart from Moral Actualism). Hare's own solutions to Non-Identity problems is not routed in a moral doctrine, but rather is tentatively sketched out in the second section of his essay:

> Mary does wrong because she has a certain kind of impersonal responsibility—a responsibility to nobody in particular. Some argue that this is a responsibility that any person has—e.g., to avoid bringing about suffering. Others argue that this is a special kind of responsibility that only parents have—to avoid creating children whose lives will have certain features. This seems to me broadly the right way to approach the problem. (Hare 2007, 513–514)

I see little difference between Hare's 'impersonal responsibilities' and the alternative I have been talking about. Hare suggests that these are truly what motivate people like Sofia when a decision is claimed to be made 'for the benefit of a future child'. This, in principle, is not incompatible with actualism, once we allow that

there can be relational duties (those current people owe to other current people, generated specifically due to individual interests) *and* 'absolute' or 'general' moral duties (those current people owe to each other, generated by communal interests, such as that to maintain human flourishing).

§2.2: The Application of Theoretical Philosophy to Political Theory

It is with this present sentiment that I want to highlight the place of theoretical discussions like these in political discourse and policy making. What temporal moral actualism essentially recommends is to stop justifying altruistic policies (such as those to conserve resources in order to reduce global warming) as being good for some future people that do not yet currently exist, but to instead route the rationale behind such policies in a common ground shared by present people, now—a sort of 'we're doing this for us, not (only) them'. This argument is illustrated by Samuel Scheffler in his book *Why Worry About Future Generations?* He writes:

> When we ask why we should care about future generations, we are not simply asking why we should care whether people exist in the future or how those people fare. We are asking why we should care that the chronological succession of generations, which has delivered each of us here, should extend into the future under more rather than less favourable conditions. The difference between these questions is important. If we ask why we should care about future people, for example, or what our responsibilities toward them are, we may be tempted to suppose that the only thing that is at issue is the weight we should give to their interests or welfare. **We may fail to consider the possibility that the importance to us of future generations lies partly in the fact that they are our *successors*, that their existence extends the chain of generations in which we ourselves are participants.** (Scheffler 2018, pp. 15–16)

There is something powerful and all-encompassing in the idea that pursuing policies which protect future generations is something that we owe not necessarily to them, but 'generally'. If future generations from now were to unanimously agree that they would have preferred to not exist, this would likely not alter current sentiments that protecting humanity was, *is*, the right thing to do. Scheffler grounds this general value we attribute to carving out a future for people who do not exist as a product of knowing that this is what our ancestors did for us—but importantly, ensuring a future for future people is not something we owe to them, either.[5] Rather, it is a moral duty we give to ourselves. It is more intimate and existential than doing someone in the future a favour—it is to carry on the legacy which we (present temporal people) value, the legacy that others valued before us.

If politicians promoting conservation efforts (reminder that the conservation/depletion example is just one of many) switched from building policies on this more personal ideal than a classic utilitarian picture, it would be interesting to see what the public reception would be like. More generally, theoretical discussions like these *do* have practical applications, ones that can be discovered when thinking about thought experiments and other non-traditional methods of political enquiry. Finally, this counter (if it works) offers a solid

solution to Hare's counter, one which ultimately allows us to maintain *Moral Actualism* as a political doctrine without the background knowledge that it is actually incoherent. As mentioned in the introduction, the idea that goodness is relational, and policies should be made with people's interest primarily in mind, is critical for systems of government like democracy. Theoretical discussions like these help us question and re-affirm the foundation these power structures are built on.

§2.3: The Temporal Response to Hare's Counter

So, how exactly does *Temporal Moral Actualism* solve Hare's counter? Remember that temporal actualism says that *if* the moral status of an action is determined by a relational duty—that is, a duty owed to specific people born of their specific interests—*then* that duty is owed only to *actual* people; people who presently exist in the actual world.

a_1 ought only to be realised if it is the best option available for the actual people in Sa_1. a_2 similarly ought only to be realised if it is the best option available for the actual people in Sa_2. But here is the difference between Hare's actualism and temporal actualism: whereas Hare's actualism judges the actual people in Sa_1 to be Kate *and Jack*, the actual person in Sa_1 under temporal actualism is just Kate. Hare's actualism judges the actual people in Sa_2 to be Kate *and Jane*, but under temporal actualism, the actual person in Sa_2 is, again, just Kate. It is therefore only Kate's interests that must be considered under temporal actualism. We know that Kate is indifferent about whether a_1 or a_2 gets performed (remember that both options to her just mean that she will birth a miserable child). Neither a_1 nor a_2 is the *better* option for Kate—both are equally bad as each other because both are equally bad *for her*. Therefore, actualism will say that she is free to choose either option.

This means that *whatever Kate does* under temporal actualism, *she does a permissible thing*. a_1 and a_2 truly are arbitrary: a_1 is better/worse for no one in Sa_1, and a_2 is better/worse for no one in Sa_2. a_1 and a_2 therefore have equal moral status, which makes either option permissible for Kate to choose. Therefore, the actualist verdict—to pick from a_1 or a_2—escapes deontic absurdity.

What *Temporal Moral Actualism* does is deny a key assumption of Hare's argument: when Kate chooses to bring Jack or Jane into existence, this is meant to be morally significant because the interests of two *future* actual people conflict in a way which generates a dilemma. But Hare never once considers that for actualism to survive, the interests of future people need not be relevant to decision-making. By ignoring the temporal interpretation of 'existence', Hare creates a strawman. He assumes freely that rights-based duties are owed to future people when they need not be.

Conclusion

With these final points I conclude my defence of actualism with respect to Hare's counter. I hope to have at least shown that temporal moral actualism is an available refuge for any actualist threatened by Hare's arguments. A stronger possible conclusion is that temporal actualism is a more *intuitive* moral theory than Hare's actualism, even without thinking about his counter from absurdity. Temporal actualism matches our intuitions about the kinds of people who can claim

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5 Some people might actually argue that it *is* a duty we owe to past people as opposed to present people. Similarly to how we might think we owe people who have died the right to fulfilling their wills, or not desecrating their character, we owe it to those people to build a future for generations to come. I think this is interesting but incorrect, but will not delve into a whole discussion of the topic in this essay.

to have rights, *people who exist in the present*. Finally, I have suggested that actualists might need to make space for both strictly relational and general conceptions of the good to account for instances where we think the right action need not necessarily be what is right *for specific individuals*. I imagine the next steps for temporal actualism will involve pitting actualism against other moral doctrines to further investigate any compelling alternatives.

If there was a key take-away from the discussion, I would say it was the power of carefully crafted thought experiments. With little information and an imagined scenario, Hare manages to convince us that future people, under actualism, are deserving of the same kinds of rights reserved for present people. When it comes to thought experiments generally—but especially in the literature on future generations—we need to be more careful. Ask yourself what assumptions the author is making, and whose perspective the experiment relies on. Otherwise, we risk generating conclusions that lead us to abandon a perfectly viable moral doctrine.

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Collective Impact: A Sceptical Approach

Conor Walsh

Enough people acting in a certain way can produce significant, collective harm. But if my individual act makes no perceptible difference to this harm, do I have a moral obligation to change my behaviour? Previous literature argues yes, individuals do have a moral obligation to change their behaviour in these cases; collective harm requires individual responsibility. But in this article I argue against this tradition by presenting a sceptical solution to problems of collective impact. This article will comprise four parts. First, we consider a definition of problems of collective impact. Second, we examine a consequentialist solution from Shelly Kagan, before, thirdly, presenting Julia Nefsky's *non-superfluous contribution* argument. Finally, I argue for a sceptical solution to these problems, claiming that, although individuals can make a non-superfluous contribution towards change, individuals *do not* have moral obligations in cases of collective impact problems. Instead, moral obligations fall to both the collective, either governments or regulatory-bodies, and those who profit from collective harms. In essence, this article argues that collective harms require collective responsibility.

Issues of collective harm, such as climate change, are more salient amongst younger generations (The Economist 2023), and individuals are also willing to make sacrifices in order to alleviate these harms. US consumers spent nearly $1.9 billion on plant-based milks in 2018, while the number of vegans in the US grew from 1% of the population in 2014 to 6% in 2017 (Kateman 2021). A recent study also found that consumers are willing to pay a 9% premium for environmentally friendly food (The Economist 2023). But what moral reason do we have to make these kinds of sacrifices—to switch from beef and dairy to Quorn and soy? Individually, it seems as if our actions make no perceptible difference to rising global temperatures or the cruelty of factory-farmed animals. The collective harm of climate change will remain whether I drive or take the bus, and the scale in which factory farms operate means that my refraining from buying bacon is unlikely to save the life of a factory-farmed pig. Therefore, it appears that I have no reason to change my behaviour.

This disconnect between individual actions and collective harm is often referred to as the *problem of collective impact*. These problems are found not only in climate change and animal cruelty, but also in everyday consumer choices, and even elections.

Traditional literature on this subject has predominantly sought a theory for why individuals ought to change their behaviour. However, in this article I will seek a sceptical solution (Nefsky 2018) to problems of collective impact. This approach is sceptical since it argues that individuals do not act wrongly in these cases, deviating greatly from recent, notable work in this area by Shelly Kagan and Julia Nefsky. Instead of finding moral reasons for individuals to change their behaviour, I will argue that the responsibility for reducing collective harm falls *upon the collective*. Although I accept that individuals, in the words of Julia Nefsky (2019, p. 11), can make a non-superfluous contribution towards change, I do not believe this is sufficient to generate a moral obligation for individuals to change their behaviour.

This article will comprise of four parts. In the first section, I will outline the problem of collective impact and why it matters. In the second section, I will present a consequentialist solution to this problem, as argued by Shelly Kagan (2011), who argues that individuals

might make a difference by being part of a triggering cohort. Following this, the third section will present Julia Nefsky's non-superfluous contribution argument (Nefsky 2019), which argues that individuals may not make a perceptible difference, but can still make a non-superfluous contribution towards change. Finally, in the last section, I will present my own sceptical approach to this problem, arguing that the moral obligation for solving these harms falls only upon collections of individuals, either in the form of governments, regulatory bodies or those who profit from collective harm, not individuals in their own right. In essence, I will argue that collective harms require collective responsibility.

I. Problems of Collective Impact

We begin by defining the problem of collective impact in more specific terms. This is where individual actions, taken collectively, produce harmful consequences, even though (a) no *single* act appears to make a difference and (b) had any individual acted differently, the collective harm produced would have remained the same. Since our individual actions produce no perceptible harm, nor make any difference to the collective harm, it appears that they cannot be wrong. Therefore, it is difficult to say that any individual *ought* to have acted differently (Nefsky 2011, p. 364).

This conflict between individual actions and collective harm creates a moral dilemma—it appears unclear how we can solve these problems of collective harm if individuals have no moral obligation to act differently. The crux of the problem lies in the aggregation of individual actions, leading to uncertainty as to who is responsible for these collective harms. The aggregative nature of this problem will be fundamental to the sceptical solution presented in Section IV of this article.

Multiple examples of this problem exist; having provided a definition for problems of collective impact, I will now present three examples to demonstrate the importance of these issues for both the study of politics, and society more widely. The first example is found in *consumer behaviour*. Collectively, consumer decisions can have significant implications for global poverty, worker exploitation, animal rights, and the environment (Nefsky 2019, p. 2). Many individuals buying clothes from a fast-fashion brand can result in the exploitation of many thousands of workers; yet my individual

decision to refrain from such a purchase is unlikely to have any perceptible impact. The scale at which such brands operate means that my purchase is insignificant.

A second example of a collective impact problem can be found in *elections and referendums*. The crux of the problem lies again in aggregation. Enough individuals voting in a large election for a 'bad' candidate or policy, could result in tremendous harm, and yet no individual vote is able to make a difference to this outcome (Nefsky 2019, p. 1). Even in cases where no harm is produced, what incentive would one have to vote in an election where popular support means the outcome is almost guaranteed prior to polling?

In cases where polls are close, collective impact problems are less relevant—take the United Kingdom's Brexit referendum, for example. National divisions meant the stakes were high. Every vote counted, and there appeared no issue of collective impact. But in states with non-partisan issues, and clearly defined executive parties, such as Singapore or Japan, or where outcomes appear guaranteed prior to polling, as in the case of recent Hungarian elections, the issue of collective impact is very real.

The third problem of collective impact that I will present is *climate change*. When enough people drive, fly, heat their homes, or even boil their kettles, the harmful consequences of climate change will occur. But individual choices to take the bus instead of driving, or to only turn one's heating on for an hour a day, instead of six, does not lead things to go differently. Climate change will occur regardless of whether or not I choose to make sacrifices, or act in a more environmentally friendly manner. If I flick the switch on my kettle, I will (arguably) be contributing to the climate crisis. Yet will my act make a significant difference? With such a small action, it appears unlikely.

Having presented three contexts in which problems of collective impact matter, the prevalence of these issues for both the study of politics and society more generally should now be apparent. Collective impact problems pose a real obstacle for electoral participation in non-partisan issues or systems that predict near-inevitable outcomes. Individuals appear somewhat powerless in these situations, but what of collectives—especially in the case of governments? Individuals on their own might not be able to act, but the collections in which we organise ourselves (nation-states, regions, political parties, activist campaigns, and so on) could have some influence. Asking questions about the roles and obligations of these groups is important and will be considered in Section IV of this article. As for society more generally, these problems are purely man-made, and oftentimes are issues that we wish to solve. If society is to attempt to solve global inequality, climate change, worker exploitation, political apathy, and other issues that fit the collective impact structure, we must ask serious questions about our individual responsibility in solving these harms, and the role that collectives can play.

Now that we have defined the problem of collective impact, provided three examples of the problem in action, and explained the significance of these problems for both the study of politics and society more generally, we will proceed to evaluate some solutions to these problems.

The following two sections, Section II and Section III, consider two traditional solutions, both of which aim to find moral reasons for individuals to change their behaviour. Section IV goes on to present a sceptical solution to these problems which deviates from the traditional literature. This sceptical solution will follow my thesis that collective harm requires collective responsibility.

II. I *Might* Make a Difference

The first traditional solution we shall consider is from Shelly Kagan. In his paper 'Do I make a difference?' (Kagan 2011), Kagan seeks to prove that consequentialism is sufficient in solving problems of collective impact. Initially, the nature of these problems appears troublesome for consequentialist theories since individual actions appear to make no perceptible difference—it is difficult to argue that individuals should change their behaviour because of the consequences of their actions when these consequences are irrelevant. Kagan attempts to overcome these problems and to solve these issues within the consequentialist framework.

Kagan argues that problems of collective impact can be limited to *triggering cases*. These are cases in which most individual acts make no difference at all, but for some act—the triggering case—a substantial difference can be made. This is the triggering act which brings about the collective harm (Kagan 2011, p. 119). Without this, the rest of the acts are unable to bring about a collective outcome, even when aggregated. It is only the triggering act that can bring into effect this harm. For example, one or two individuals leaving banana peels on the ground is unlikely to be considered a tripping hazard, but if enough individuals do this the ground could pose a real danger. Since the first two or so individuals dropping their banana peels are not sufficient to cause this tripping hazard, there is a triggering individual—let us say the third or fourth individual—who brings about this hazard. This individual is the triggering case. Two things must be extracted from this example. First, triggering cases may not be a specific number in every circumstance, it is not always the hundredth person who drives instead of taking the bus that is the triggering case, but a rough range which is open to interpretation. Second, triggering cases are only 'triggering' because they are part of a wider triggering cohort. Without the other cases that come before it, triggering cases are not able to be the trigger of anything. Therefore, all cases in a triggering cohort carry some causal weight in the collective outcomes which they produce.

This idea of a triggering cohort is Kagan's main premise for explaining why individuals can make a difference in cases of collective harm. Kagan argues that individuals can still act wrongly in instances of the collective impact problem since, in our consumer society of mass production, there is still a triggering number of acts, let us call it T, such that I have a 1 in T chance of being part of a triggering cohort. Limiting his arguments to cases of factory farming, it is clear that Kagan's cohort can have an impact: I can have a 1 in T chance of triggering a change in demand sufficient to reduce supply by level T (Kagan 2011, p. 127). This is assuming negative net utility—that the suffering produced in production is greater than the pleasure received from consumption (Kagan 2011, p. 124).

We can illustrate this further by considering an example of factory-farmed chickens. Let us imagine the triggering amount, T, is 100, so that if the sale of chickens falls by 100, the farm will produce 100 fewer chickens the following month. I only have a 1 in 100 chance of being part of a cohort which triggers a sufficient change in demand to reduce supply, but when I am part of this cohort I can make a big difference—my refusal to buy a chicken corresponds *exactly* to saving one chicken's life, so long as I am in the triggering cohort (this is inside knowledge that we are unlikely to have), because the fall in demand equals the fall in production. Therefore, as long as I am part of a triggering cohort, it seems that my actions *might* make a difference after all.

On the face of it, this seems a satisfying solution to problems of collective impact. Kagan has used a consequentialist framework to show that I *might* make a difference after all. This solution is not without its flaws and there are two major objections relevant to this example.

The first challenge facing Kagan's argument is that he assumes a fall in demand will directly correspond to a fall in supply (Nefsky 2018, p. 274). In essence, the fall in demand of 100 chickens achieved by the triggering cohort will result in exactly 100 chickens *not* being killed. In reality, this assumption seems foolish; there are many strategies that businesses can utilise in order to realign supply and demand. Of course, cutting supply, thus reducing the number of chickens killed, is one strategy. But slaughterhouses could also seek new markets in which to sell their chickens, devise a new marketing strategy to attract new customers, or simply lower their prices to realign demand without changing supply. So even when demand drops by a triggering amount there is no guarantee that supply will fall by an *equal* amount, if at all.

The second issue for this consequentialist solution is that the scale considered by Kagan is unrealistic—factory farms operate in the millions, not hundreds. As Julia Nefsky observes (2019, p. 8), this renders the chance of being in a triggering cohort *negligible*. So not only is my abstention from purchasing one chicken unlikely to save a corresponding chicken, the chance that I will be in a cohort producing any impact at all is statistically irrelevant.

Kagan is not likely to take these challenges lightly. He would likely accept the first objection, and admit that little can be done to predict the practices of large-scale corporations—after all, that is why the exact number of the triggering cohort is information unbeknownst to the consumer. But in light of the second objection, the size of T, the scale of the triggering amount, does not matter to Kagan. What matters for Kagan is the ideal that individual actions *might* make a difference. Yet, this does little to solve our problem because this 'might' is so small that it is negligible—our actions remain imperceptible, and so the core issue of the collective impact problem remains to be solved.

III. I *Can* Make a Difference

In the previous section, Shelly Kagan's expected utility argument was unable to prove that my actions *might* make a difference. Kagan's proposed solution to problems of collective impact appears unrealistic in its assumption that a fall in demand will correspond directly to a fall in supply, and the scale in which triggering amounts occur proves so large that they are insufficient in contradicting the imperceptible nature of individual actions. In this section, we shall examine an alternative solution from Julia Nefsky—the idea that I *can* make a difference. Like Kagan, Nefsky also seeks to prove that individuals *ought* to act differently in instances of the collective impact problem.

Nefsky argues that even if our actions do not make a perceptible difference, this does not mean they are superfluous. Change is still *possible*. Individual actions *can* play a non-superfluous part in changing the outcome of a collective impact problem, even if they are unable to materialise change in their own right (Nefsky 2019, p. 10).

By this logic, we might have moral reasons to make individual sacrifices after all: not driving my gas-guzzling car might not make a perceptible difference to greenhouse gas emissions, but it will make a non-superfluous contribution towards reducing emissions; voting in an election with a predictable, harmful outcome might not make a perceptible difference to this outcome, but it will make a non-superfluous contribution towards reducing the chance of the predicted victory; and not buying clothes from a fast fashion brand might not make a perceptible difference to the exploitation of vulnerable workers, but it will make a non-superfluous contribution towards reducing this exploitation. Therefore, it seems my actions *can* change something, or at least contribute towards bringing about change, contrary to what the collective impact problem might lead us to believe.

My action being imperceptible is no longer a problem—what matters is that my action *can* contribute towards change which can occur if the circumstances are right. The question of what these circumstances are poses a challenge for Nefsky's argument. Having considered the merits of Nefsky's arguments, we shall now go on to consider one objection facing her non-superfluous contribution solution, in addition to a fundamental limitation of the traditional approach employed by both Nefsky and Kagan.

We begin by considering an objection to Nefsky's argument. For my actions to make a non-superfluous contribution towards change, we must have good reason to believe that others are also willing to contribute towards change, otherwise our actions will be redundant. This is because if no other individual is willing to change their behaviour, it means that our individual sacrifices cannot contribute towards anything, since there is nothing to contribute towards. If this is true, my voting and not-voting in the case of a harmful candidate is irrelevant, since even if my vote is non-superfluous, it can only contribute towards change if there is a potential change to contribute towards. If I am certain that no other individual will act, perhaps for fear of violence, torture or disenfranchisement, then my act remains irrelevant. This time it is irrelevant because there is no change for it to contribute towards, and thus it cannot make a difference despite remaining non-superfluous.

Nefsky may claim that this objection misunderstands her argument. According to Nefsky, my action is not dependent upon others also acting, and its non-superfluous nature does not result from a *belief* in actual

change, but that I can make a step towards creating change—much like my donation towards Shelter, a British housing charity, is unlikely to *solve* homelessness, but *can* take a step towards creating change. The creation or potential for change is not dependent on others, but something which I can create, if not contribute towards, in a non-superfluous way (Nefsky 2019, p. 11).

Putting this aside, however, the argument that individuals refusing to make the sacrifices outlined in the perception argument would be morally wrong is unconvincing. In my view, Nefsky falls victim to the fallacy that individuals—in isolation—can have any impact. This fallacy exposes a fundamental limitation in the traditional literature on problems of collective impact: both Kagan and Nefsky overlook why collective action problems are problematic in the first instance. To solve them, we must ask what is at the core of these problems. The answer to this question lies in the aggregation of individual actions, the collective consequence of which can have harmful effects.

Since the aggregation of individual actions is why collective impact problems are problematic in the first instance, no moral reason can be sufficient in motivating individual behaviour change that can aggregate a collective which is sufficiently large to make a difference. As a result, it must be shown that collective harm requires a collective solution—to claim otherwise is naïve. Even if Nefsky's argument convinces some individuals to change their behaviour, it will not convince a sufficient number of individuals for any significant change to materialise. In order to overcome this limitation, we must seek a solution to problems of collective impact which is not limited to the confines of individual action, but which considers the wider scope of collectives and those who profit from collective harm. This is what I intend to do in the final section of this article.

IV. *We* Can Make a Difference

In the previous two sections, this article has considered two traditional solutions to problems of collective impact. These solutions are traditional in the sense that their authors wish to find reasons why individuals ought to change their behaviour. The first considered was Shelly Kagan's expected utility argument which uses a consequentialist framework to prove that individuals *might* make a difference. We then considered Julia Nefsky's recent work on non-superfluous contributions, the idea that I can make a difference, even if it is non-perceptible. I will now defend a sceptical response to problems of collective impact, presenting an argument which aims to prove that we, collectively, can make a difference.

Before presenting this sceptical argument, I will address why such an approach is appropriate, and how it might help us provide solutions to problems of collective impact. First, the way in which we organise ourselves, in communities, societies, nations and nation-states, must be acknowledged. It is this organisation of individuals which I believe is key to solving problems of collective impact. We are, as proven by these groups, social beings. Therefore, it is possible to imagine a collection of individuals who might be able to assume the responsibility of solving collective harms.

Second, I believe a sceptical solution of this sort—reducing responsibility to the collective, not the individual—is a more realistic approach to problems

of collective impact. Collective harm is bad because of the many millions of individuals acting in a particular way which, on their own, produce no perceptible harm. If we reverse engineer this issue, the collective good that is possible through collective action seems the only realistic option to solve collective harms, given the scale at which they occur.

Finally, this second point raises the need for an important clarification: I would like to distinguish reducing *responsibility* to collections of individuals and reducing *action* to collections of individuals. In presenting this sceptical approach I am not denying that individuals will have to change their behaviour, nor am I claiming that individual actions are superfluous—in fact, I strongly agree with Nefsky that individual actions can make a non-superfluous contribution towards change, even though this is insufficient in producing solutions on the scale required to combat collective harm. What I am attempting to do is to limit the *responsibility* of this harm to the collective, so that no individual *ought* to change their behaviour for moral reasons. Instead, with responsibility in the collective domain, it is up to collections of individuals—most likely governments, international agencies, regulators, local communities, and corporations—to incentivise change on an individual level, as well as changing the behaviours of those corporations who profit from collective harm.

Now that I have addressed the relevance of sceptical solutions in solving problems of collective impact, how such solutions might help reduce collective harms, and distinguished collective responsibility from collective action, I shall proceed to outline my sceptical argument.

This argument is two-pronged. First, it seems that given the scale of our economies, individuals are powerless unless they act as a collective—individual actions considered in isolation cannot make a difference. This was evident in the examples listed in Section I, such as buying clothes from a retailer which treats its workers well instead of one which exploits them; voting in an election with a certain harmful outcome instead of abstaining; and taking the bus instead of driving my car. The negligible act of the individual was also exemplified in the second objection to Kagan's arguments in Section II. Consequently, individuals acting alone *cannot* be morally wrong. Instead, collections of individuals have a responsibility (moral obligation) to prevent and solve collective harm in these instances, since it is only these collectives that have sufficient power to make a difference. Therefore, the collectives in which we organise ourselves—governments, both local and national, international organisations, corporations, charities, and many others—carry the burden of responsibility for solving collective harms when no individual act is sufficient in making a difference.

Secondly, in our consumer-centric society, every product has *some* value—there will always be a market for any good produced. As such, if corporations (firms or businesses) profit monetarily from goods or services which create or contribute towards collective harm—either in the production, use or disposal of these goods or services—then they also have a moral obligation to reduce these collective harms.

Therefore, individuals do not act wrongly in problems of collective impact, since the moral responsibility for

preventing harm falls on collections of individuals—like governments—and those firms who profit from collective harm. As previously stated, this is not to say that individuals should not be expected to change their actions, but only that the reasons for changing their actions should not result from individual moral obligations. Instead, a change in actions should be decided and incentivised by that of the collective in which they are organised.

This argument builds upon the work of Walter Sinnott-Armstrong (2010), who argued that our individual moral obligation in problems of collective impact is to get governments to do their job. Instead of selling my heavily-polluting sports car—or making other significant sacrifices, like switching to oat milk instead of dairy—I should continue to drive my heavily-polluting sports car whilst campaigning the government to change policy so that driving such sports cars would be illegal (Sinnott-Armstrong 2010, p. 304). After all, it is the collective that has the power to create such significant harm, and so it is the collective—in the form of, or represented by, the government—which has the power to do something about it. One could argue that expressing views through our actions is of equal importance, and so I should not continue to drive my sports car. However, the impact of driving my sports car is so insignificant and imperceptible that my individual action does not matter. What matters is my ability to change the agenda and successfully campaign for a change in government policy, that is, to successfully campaign for collective action.

This collective approach, argued by Sinnot-Armstrong and developed by my own argument, finds strength in humanity's natural ability to aggregate, a feature which both Nefsky and Kagan overlook; one that is at the core of collective impact problems. The responsibility of corporations who also profit from these collective harms is an important nuance which I believe crucial to my sceptical approach.

To illustrate this sceptical approach, let us consider what it means for the examples given in Section I. In the first example, *ethical consumerism*, it means, firstly, that governments and collective institutions (such as regulators) have a responsibility to promote clothing production which does not take advantage of its workers. This could be done through labour protection policy, a minimum standards policy for goods, trade restrictions on countries whose labour laws allow such exploitation, or policy which promotes transparent supply chains, an example of which can be found in the *Modern Slavery Act 2015* (Home Office 2018). Secondly, those corporations who profit from exploitation of workers—the collective harm in this instance—must also share the responsibility of reducing exploitation. This could be done through improving their environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG) practices: changing suppliers, improving pay and conditions of workers, or ensuring transparent supply chains.

The second example, *elections and referendums*, could be seen as more problematic for this sceptical approach. However, the sentiment remains the same. It is up to institutional arrangements, drawn up by the collective of individuals, the government, to prevent candidates from enacting potentially dangerous policies—perhaps through checks and balances—or to increase competition in electoral systems to raise the stakes and incentivise voter participation. In the first instance, preventing harmful candidates from obtaining office or harmful policies from coming into effect would not be the responsibility of individuals, but the institutional safeguards enacted by the collective. In the second instance, individuals should be incentivised to participate by improvements in electoral competition.

Finally, in the example of *climate change*, it is again the responsibility of collectives—in this instance multiple governments across the world and the international institutions in which they organise, as well as those corporations who profit from the harmful effects causing climate change—to act. In many ways we have already seen these collectives taking responsibility through climate conferences, like the Conference of the Parties of the UNFCC (COP); investments into state infrastructure and public transport; as well as corporations switching to renewable energy sources and investing in climate-friendly methods of production. Individuals can be incentivised by governments to walk or use public transport instead of driving, but this can only be done if the right infrastructure has been delivered by the government, the collective. A similar point can be made about heating. Individuals can be incentivised by governments to insulate their homes or use more environmentally-friendly heating techniques, but this can only be done if the government has reduced the costs of these technologies and made them easily accessible.

These three examples highlight the ability of collectives to solve problems of collective harm in instances where individual actions can make no difference. Many of these examples are evident in real life, as with the *Modern Slavery Act 2015* and COP, two government initiatives that have already been mentioned. Therefore, we can see that the collective approach to solving these problems is already embodied in our everyday lives. This must add to the validity of this approach.

Reducing responsibility to the collective in these instances is not the same as claiming individuals are not responsible for their actions. The responsibility for solving and preventing collective harms falls only upon the collective in instances where individual actions make no difference. Furthermore, individuals may still be required to change their behaviour, as explained earlier in this article, but the reasons for doing this come not from a moral argument of obligation at an individual level, but from the incentives of the collectives in which we organise ourselves.

V. Concluding Remarks

In this article we have considered various solutions to problems of collective impact. We first defined these problems of collective impact, before presenting three examples of these problems: ethical consumerism, voting and climate change. I then argued that problems of collective impact are important in the study of politics, and society more widely, if we wish to solve some of the world's most pressing issues, such as: global inequalities, food poverty, and climate change. We then considered three solutions to these problems. The first two, from Shelly Kagan and Julia Nefsky, were from the traditional literature on this subject, and tried to find moral reasons for why individuals ought to change their behaviour. The third solution was sceptical; it sought

to prove that the responsibility for solving problems of collective impact falls not upon individuals, but the collectives in which we organise ourselves—primarily governments—and those corporations who profit from collective harm.

This article argued that collective harm requires collective responsibility. This does not contradict the idea that individuals are responsible for their actions, or that individuals can be required to change their behaviours in order to reduce these harms. Instead, the collective is responsible only in instances where no single act can make a difference, and individuals will be required to change their behaviour, not for

moral reasons, but through incentives provided by the collective.

So, should I, as an individual, seek to act in a more ethical way—to vote in an election to prevent a harmful political actor from gaining power, or, more simply, to use oat milk instead of soy? This article says yes, if you wish to. Your individual actions can, in the words of Julia Nefsky, make a non-superfluous contribution towards change (Nefsky 2019, p. 10). But you should feel no obligation towards performing these actions. Instead, the responsibility for preventing problems of collective impact falls upon the collective, not the individual.

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The Failed Guardianship and The Sunrise of Media-Reality: The Effect of the Media's Political Participation in Affecting the Voter's Identity during Brexit

Kirill Bedenkov

Previous Brexit analyses showed that major British media significantly influenced the public's opinion and substantially affected the vote outcome. However, this 'mediacractic' effect has not been studied in the comparative context between Leave and Remain media actors, dissecting their utilised approaches. Intrinsically, the preceding justifies the following research question: *Compared to* The Guardian's *failure, how did* The Sun *successfully construct and maintain the Leave identity for its readers during the Brexit campaign?* The neutral-Remain *The Guardian* chose the role of an intermediary informer with limited commentary and expression of its position. In contrast, the pro-Leave *The Sun* became a vocal and highly persistent political actor, regularly declaring itself as an active political participant. My analysis shows that active participation in the political campaign in a referendum-type environment is more effective than the publication of restrainedly detached assessments. Specifically, *The Sun*'s three core approaches manifested in constructing a pro-Leave political media-reality. By creating and taking hold of the issue through priming and framing, *The Sun* established itself as a relevant and accessible issue entrepreneur. This created a foundation upon which the outlet constructed the bond of credibility while discrediting its ideological opposition via the stimulation of motivated scepticism. At last, given its nurtured 'reputation for honesty' and 'likeability', the tabloid consolidated its influence through a change to positive in-group messaging, leading to an imposition of a Eurosceptic media-reality. *The Sun*'s experience leads to a more general inference, the normative implications of which necessitate stringent regulation and future research on the viability of media-democracy.

INTRODUCTION

The increased involvement of 21ˢᵗ-century citizens in the political process is facilitated by their ability to assess authorities' decisions and form Internet communities rapidly. The latter made it possible to effectively coordinate joint political action via the mutual hostage scenario between media and politics, creating a confluence of 'mediacracy'. Such a phenomenon uncovered a wide range of roles that the media plays in the political process. These cover a spectrum from the media's role as an intermediary between the government and society (McLeod & McDonald 1985) to the media becoming an influential and active participant in the political process (Page 1996). The latter role represents this research paper's focus, the empirical basis of which features the 2016–2020 Brexit campaign. Previous analyses showed that major British media significantly influenced the public's opinion and consequently affected the vote outcome (Gavin 2018; Gorodnichenko, Pham & Talavera 2021). However, this effect has not been studied in the comparative context between Leave and Remain media actors. Intrinsically, the preceding justifies the following research question: *compared to* The Guardian's *failure, how did* The Sun *successfully construct and maintain the Leave identity for its readers during the Brexit campaign?*

During the outlined period, *The Sun*'s three core approaches manifested in constructing a pro-Leave political media-reality. I highlight each by situating the systematised cross-comparison between the chosen media's presence and content approval across three Brexit phases in political behaviour literature. The findings posit challenges regarding the plausibility of

media-democracy and necessitate stringent regulation. If the biased media can effectively claim ownership of a specific issue while asserting its special significance through agenda-building and consolidation mechanisms, then they are in a solid position to capture public favour. This means that the power of the unelected media to drive support for particular policy outcomes should be viewed as a critical threat to liberal democracy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The recent evolution of media technologies led to the destruction of the unidirectional communication paradigm in which the media represented a mere political instrument (Newton 2006). Instead, the media has become an autonomous and essential player in the public space, with a vast potential for influencing voters' opinions and behaviours (Bennett & Iyengar 2008).

Notably, numerous studies have shown that the media can have a significant influence on the outcome of elections (Murphy & Devine 2018), both through direct coverage of candidates and issues (Iyengar 1990; 1994) and through indirect messaging (Shanahan, Jones & McBeth 2011). For example, a 2005 British general election study has shown the media coverage to be heavily biased towards the incumbent Labour government, substantially affecting voting behaviour (Deacon, Wring & Golding 2006). Further analyses highlighted the media's critical influence on the public's understanding of political issues and their attitudes towards political institutions (Foos & Bischof 2022). For instance, Anstead and O'Loughlin (2014) found that media coverage of the 2010 general election significantly
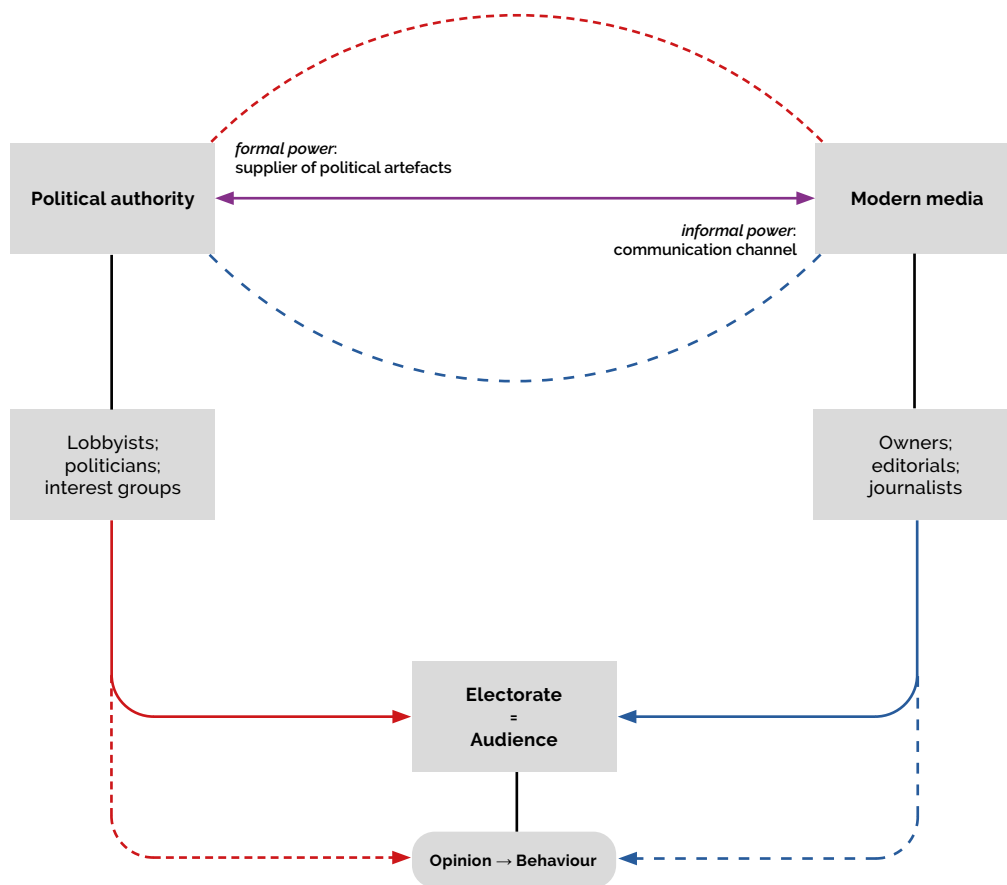
Figure 1 | Mediacratic power configuration on the median voter.

impacted the public's perceptions of the parties and the candidates by providing evaluation frameworks. At last, the media's inter-relationship with the political process has also been highlighted. Studies have found that the media can play an essential role in setting (McCombs & Shaw 1972) and even building (Zoch & Molleda 2006) the agenda of the mass public and political elites, influencing the discourse around particular issues (Bennett & Entman 2000). A study conducted by Boomgaarden et al. (2011) emphasised that the media's coverage of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis strongly influenced future economic development in a direction beneficial for the current administration.

Altogether, the media has become an active and highly influential political actor by bartering its communication channels for partial autonomy. Through its permitted monopoly over the immediate telling of political history, the media can influence what its audience considers and ignores, consequently shaping the opinion and behaviour according to the media's needs and political authority's wants. **Figure 1** visualises this mediacratic interplay.

Nonetheless, despite the media's growing role in shaping the political landscape, recent analyses of its participation in large-scale political campaigns featuring referendums have been limited (but see Jackson, Thorsen & Wring 2016). If mediacracy carries uncertainty and challenges to journalistic and democratic norms, it is critical to deconstruct the essential elements that constitute the media-political actor's success. The recent experience of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from

the EU and the interrelated roles of its core media outlets can fill this intellectual gap. I hypothesise that the modern media's success in affecting political identity depends on its ability to construct a well-defined media-reality. Through manipulative signalling and issue consolidation, the media can create a social bond with the core audience and immerse the readers into the political media-reality, affecting voters' opinions and behaviour.

METHODS

To test my hypothesis, I use the methodological basis of systematisation. Both qualitative and discourse analysis of *The Sun*'s and *The Guardian*'s content and its readership's approval made it possible to clarify their roles and impacts during the Brexit campaign. Additionally, the comparative analysis made it possible to juxtapose *The Sun*'s successful pro-Leave and *The Guardian*'s failed neutral-Remain efforts.

The chosen chronological framework covers the period from then-Prime Minister (PM) James Cameron's formal introduction of Brexit on the 10th of November, 2015, to Britain's withdrawal from the EU on the 31st of January, 2020. This timeline was subdivided into three key phases: (1) the media's participation in the referendum's preparatory phase; (2) their involvement in Brexit discussions under then-PM Theresa May; and (3) their role in Brexit implementation under ex-PM Boris Johnson. Since the total number of Brexit articles during this period exceeded multiple thousands in both outlets, only publications with a thematic 'Brexit'

mark were analysed within the UK Web Archive ([2022](#)). The choice of relevant publications was inferred from the conditions of being published on the main page and a minimum number of 500 online comments. As such, the total number of analysed publications was 264 in *The Sun* and 257 in *The Guardian*.

Analaysis and Discussion
Phase 1: 10 November, 2015–13 July, 2016

94 Brexit articles in *The Sun* and 92 in *The Guardian* were analysed

A characteristic form of *The Sun*'s publications before the referendum was the editorial's political manifestos designed to create the issue within specific semantic boundaries. Three days before the referendum, *The Sun* ([2016](#)) published 'A vote for Brexit is all it takes to set Britain free', representing a compilation of theses from prominent Brexit supporters. It emphasised the potential for genuine independence from the 'elitist' EU. As such, *The Sun*'s biased but consistent coverage introduced the artificially constructed issue of Britain's lack of international independence. It further increased its perceived importance by priming the public to *The Sun*'s issue-ownership. The media outlet stimulated the accessibility of the 'top-of-the-head' opinions based on the induced cognitions and emotions when the specific attitude had to be expressed ([Walgrave & Swert 2004](#)). While employing these accessible short-cuts and incorporating what they think they know about that domain into the overall judgement, more than 90% of the manifesto's commentators actively spoke out in Brexit's support and noted *The Sun*'s role in providing 'unbiased and brave' commentary. Consequently, after announcing the preliminary results of the referendum on the 24th of June, the outlet released an article calling the victory the result of a massive popular uprising against the London elite ([Tolhurst, Dunn & Hawkes 2016](#)). Through a thematic framing of a class-based conflict, *The Sun* declared the underlying causes and likely consequences of the constructed issue while establishing criteria for evaluating potential remedies and successes for the problem. This storyline acted as an alternative formulation of a decision-making task, establishing a precise reference point for the audience, and outlining the outlet as a prominent issue-owner ([Gamson et al. 1992](#)). The readers thanked the editors for their support while celebrating cultural liberation—core issue components defined by *The Sun*. Through such a pre-package message and established evaluation boundaries, *The Sun* provided cues on how its readers should integrate their tailored beliefs into attitudes ([Nelson, Clawson & Oxley 1997](#)), by referring them back to the symbolic content designed to leave lasting impressions in an information-dense climate. As such, the large quantity of ideologically-consistent coverage paired with a Eurosceptic narrative made Brexit's Leave option not only accessible but also relevant in the readers' minds, simultaneously presenting *The Sun* as a critical issue entrepreneur during the first phase.

Conversely, *The Guardian* maintained a neutral position by publishing balanced and mainly economic argumentative pieces (e.g., [Inman & Monaghan 2016](#)). The adherence to journalistic norms dampened the ideological basis within the media outlet, bounding its influence to subtlety. Moreover, closer to the vote, *The Guardian* lost faith in victory, despite a slight advantage in the polls. The newspaper proclaimed that on the 23rd of June, disillusioned Britons would use Brexit to demonstrate dissatisfaction with the current political and economic situation, irrespective of EU membership ([White 2016](#)). In comments to such publications, more than 80% of readers agreed with the editors' position, emphasising the inevitability of the withdrawal. Hence, *The Guardian*'s initial approach, consisting of publishing expert assessments and forecasts about the consequences of Brexit were insufficient to sway a large audience to vote Remain.

Phase 2: 14 July, 2016–23 July, 2019

108 Brexit articles in *The Sun* and 102 in *The Guardian* were analysed

During the second phase, *The Sun* ([2017](#)) continued to play a pro-Leave political actor, with its central slogan: 'Theresa May must not betray the 17.4 million people who voted for Brexit'. By stressing its quasi-representation of the Leave supporters' views via a hyperbolic rhetorical apparatus ([Kaniss 1997](#)), *The Sun* strengthened the bond with its readership, thereby adding weight to its political influence. Around 85% of readers shared the editors' opinion, who believed that May should refuse the additional payments to the EU during the transition period. Consequently, *The Sun* ([2018](#)) published another manifesto directed at May and all British ministers and MPs, demanding further respect for the decision of British citizens. *The Sun*'s manifesto garnered several hundred positive comments accentuating the needlessness of a second referendum, the steadily declining support for May's negotiation efforts, and the apparent criticism of the Remain supporters. The latter became the subject of *The Sun*'s further effort to strengthen the bond of credibility with its readership. Accordingly, two main thematic currents can be distinguished in its political campaign for the next six months: the publication of polls confirming the desire to leave the EU (e.g., [Wooding 2019](#)) and criticism of May (e.g., [Hannan 2018](#)). The emphasis on the hostile rhetoric made it possible to establish a meta-contrast with the Remain supporters, thus stimulating 'motivated scepticism' ([Taber & Lodge 2006](#)). By effectively emphasising the pitfalls of its counterpart concerning the established issue and corresponding values, *The Sun* nurtured the principled dislike of ideologically incongruent information while enhancing the seeking of confirmatory evidence. According to *The Sun*'s Sunday poll results, 48% of the respondents believed that the political elites were deliberately delaying the agreement on a deal with the EU in the hope that it would make the public change its mind ([Wooding 2018](#)). For its readers, *The Sun*'s reference to Phase 1 priors and established contrast discredited the Remain supporters and calibrated them against any Brexit-deal propositions regardless of their consequences. Accordingly, Gye, Clark and Dathan ([2019](#)) report featuring the debunking of May's deal generated 90% approval in the comments. Consequently, the stimulated attitude polarisation and public backlash led to May's resignation and opened the doors to Number 10 for Boris Johnson. Therefore, throughout the second phase, *The Sun* constructed a bond of credibility with its audience and antagonised the pro-Remain camp.

In contrast, *The Guardian* continued its course of journalistic neutrality. Although the outlet did not stop

scrutinising Brexit, some journalists highlighted its potential advantages. Elliott (2016; 2018) and Herbert (2017) emphasised that Brexit forced the government to look closely at the British economy, while Hinsliff (2017) and Toynbee (2018) criticised May's chaos with the EU deal. However, at the second phase's end, *The Guardian* (2019) published an anti-Leave manifesto emphasising a clear-cut position of the media's staff concerning Brexit negotiations. The uncharacteristically emotional piece noted that the nation is going through a period of national democratic failures marked by entrenched class divisions and political incompetence. *The Guardian*'s inconsistent narrative, accompanied by its sudden change from a neutral intermediary to a vocal actor that still lacked a defined issue-ownership, confused the readers and failed to convince them to push for the second referendum.

Phase 3: 24 July, 2019–31 January 2020

62 Brexit articles in *The Sun* and 63 in *The Guardian* were analysed

During this stage, the tone of *The Sun*'s publications changed noticeably from targeted negative outbursts to positive digests about political events that were semantically congruent to the established issue. The outlet actively endorsed Johnson, signalling his strong character and unwillingness to give in to Brussels (Tahir 2019). Its constructed reputation as an issue entrepreneur allowed *The Sun* to interpose specific messages supporting the Brexit administration to a relatively uninformed but conditioned-for-trust audience based on the Phase 2 priors. The comments showed that the general mood of more than 95% of readers has notably changed, as the former dissatisfaction has changed to a positive expectation of a deal and confidence in the current administration. Building from the capture of the audience's attention, *The Sun* merged with Johnson's cabinet in their shared signalling aimed to cultivate further media support for Brexit's final push. Accordingly, on the 29th of November, 2019, the newspaper reported on Johnson's meetings with the 'veterans' of the Brexit campaign to stimulate support at the parliamentary elections (Clark 2019). At last, *The Sun* released another editorial manifesto five days before the official withdrawal day, stressing that the British would finally regain control of their borders, highlighting *The Sun*'s position as a leading voice of disillusioned voters (Kavanagh 2020). Hence, during the short third phase, *The Sun*'s efforts revolved around strategic communications models. The outlet's existence of nurtured 'likability' (Brady & Sniderman 1985) allowed its audience to condition the political behaviour on the content of a signal provided by the information supplier. The critical element for *The Sun*'s consolidation of influence was its ability to establish a reputation for consistent quality, such as its credibility in telling the 'truth'. This success made it possible to crystallise its signalling, given that the inadequately informed readers were induced to make more 'accurate' conclusions concerning the options accessible to them from the content of a signal to maintain their Leave identity. As such, *The Sun* finally imposed the Eurosceptic media-reality, wherein the political world acquired a specific ontological status, existing in the form of a semantic sphere that justified a pro-Leave political world.

Conversely, *The Guardian*'s position during this period became negative. After Johnson assumed office, *The Guardian* prepared a series of articles stressing: the lack of genuine popular support for Brexit (e.g., Mandelson 2019); the Conservative Party's elitist orientation (e.g., Lucas 2019); and the unfounded hope of Brexiteers that the EU will give up and continue trading with the UK (e.g., Edgerton 2019). The mistimed imposition of meta-contrast further confused the audience and signalled *The Guardian*'s inconsistent narrative. Correspondingly, the reader's comments were highly diverse. The majority continued to criticise Brexit. However, the second largest group highlighted the importance of the transition period, thus accepting the circumstances. The third expressed their willingness to dissociate from politics altogether. Ultimately, following the UK's final exit from the EU, *The Guardian* broadcasted a live report, 'Brexit day: end of an era as United Kingdom leaves the EU', negatively assessing the effects of Brexit and citing EU political leaders (Sparrow 2020). Given *The Guardian*'s apparent capitulation in light of its failed bond of credibility, about 82% of the comments embodied negative feedback from readers disappointed not only in the new political reality but in the media outlet itself.

Media-Reality

The above analysis outlines idiosyncratic approaches used by respective outlets during three Brexit phases. These explain why, compared to *The Guardian*'s failure, *The Sun* successfully constructed and maintained the Leave identity for its readers during the Brexit campaign.

By creating and taking hold of the issue through priming and framing, *The Sun* established itself as a relevant and accessible issue entrepreneur. This created a foundation upon which the outlet constructed the bond of credibility while discrediting its ideological opposition via the stimulation of motivated scepticism. At last, given its nurtured 'reputation for honesty' and 'likeability', *The Sun* consolidated its influence through a change to positive in-group messaging, leading to an imposition of a Eurosceptic media-reality. The discussed mechanisms are visualised in **Figure 2** (next page).

The Sun's experience leads to a more general inference. By collecting and interpreting political artefacts, the media constructs an artificial reality of political phenomena, adding distinctive information elements that meet the interests of formal political centres of power, simultaneously ripping the benefits of informal influence over agenda-building. The audience becomes mentally immersed in political phenomena through the media's concentration on constructed political issues. Through propagating adequate knowledge about the political world via ready-made fact structures, formal authority unites the world of political institutions into a single semantic order of symbolic entities in unison with the media. This creates a mediatised culture of mobilised supporters whose responses to political events can be tweaked based on the above-outlined framework.

Conclusion and Implications

The analysis shows that active participation in the political campaign in a referendum-type environment is more effective than the publication of restrainedly detached assessments. The neutral-Remain *The Guardian* chose the role of an intermediary informer
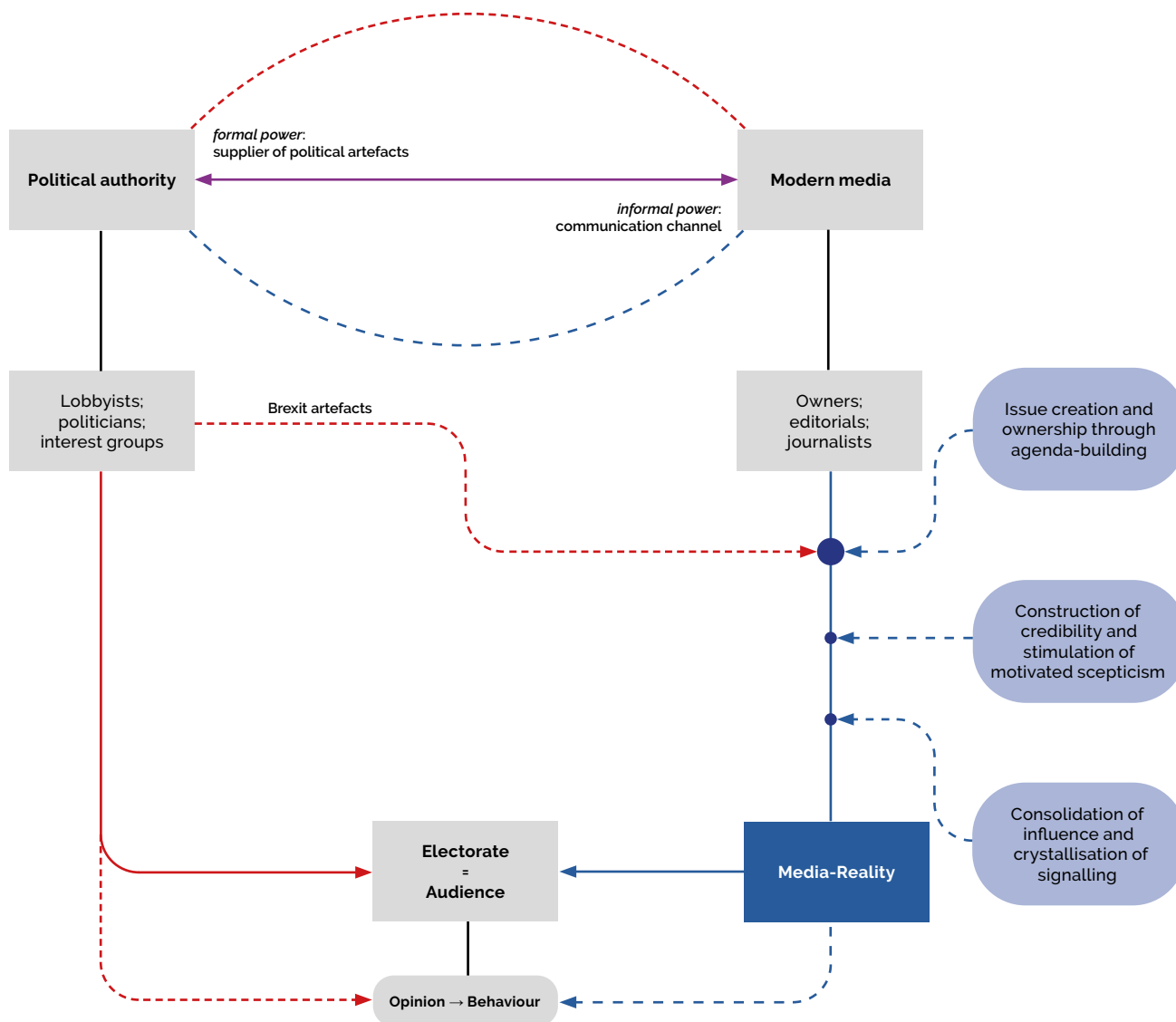
Figure 2 | *The Sun*'s Eurosceptic media-reality.

with limited commentary and expression of its position. In contrast, the pro-Leave *The Sun* became a vocal and highly persistent political actor, regularly declaring itself an active political participant. The latter's approaches made constructing a Eurosceptic political media-reality possible by establishing a bridge of social cohesion with the audience. This helped the inadequately informed electorate make seemingly accurate inferences about available options from the content of signals dispersed in the media-reality. This superimposed navigation through the political world explains how *The Sun* successfully mobilised its readers during the Brexit campaign, partially affecting their voting behaviour. Although my research design suffers from the lack of control over confounders in the information field and the non-inclusion of other media actors, this paper's general inference outlines normative and positive challenges concerning media-democracy. The observed effective departure from traditional journalistic norms, paired with the unelected media's mobilisation power, must be researched further, albeit quantitatively. Moreover, the introduction of additional variables that shape the political environment could broaden the validity of that research, creating a more comprehensive picture of the political world. After all, mediacracy plays only one of the central roles in affecting voting behaviour. This inevitably entails engaging with other analyses of Brexit that are less focused on the media environment in favour of a more general psycho-sociological perspective, thus unpacking the complexity of the topic and its broader context. Ultimately, only after dissecting the mediacratic phenomenon layer by layer will it be possible to reach its core.

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Brexit, Betrayal, and Blood: The Effect of Political Identities and Brexit-Related Issues on Support for Violence in Northern Ireland

Harris Columba Siderfin

Utilising social identity and categorisation theories, this study investigates the impact of identity strength, group threats and feelings of betrayal on individuals support for violence in Northern Ireland. Previous studies in the region have focused on the role of Catholic and Protestant identity strength in perpetuating intergroup conflict, and the impact of positive contacts to improve intergroup relations. This study examines the four main political identities in the region: Unionists, Nationalists, Loyalists and Republicans. Residents of Northern Ireland completed a survey asking about their identity, political views, attitudes towards Brexit and support for violence. The study uses correlation and regression analysis to investigate relationships between these variables. It shows that feelings of betrayal by Westminster and the Democratic Unionist Party positively correlates with support for violence. The study also demonstrates that higher levels of perceived group threat (the fear of Union breakup) and the strength of Loyalist identity predict stronger support for violence. Results further show that strength of Loyalist identity and fear of Union breakup both act as partial mediators on each other when investigating their predictive relationships with support for violence. To better illustrate these results, interviews were conducted with Northern Irish residents. The study demonstrates that political identity and group threats are predictive of support for violence, which might help explain current unrest in the region. This study utilised a small sample size and therefore should be considered an explorative pilot study.

1. Introduction

'An anarchy in the mind and in the heart, an anarchy which forbade not unity of territories, but also 'unity of being', an anarchy that sprang from the collision within a small and intimate island of seemingly irreconcilable cultures, unable to live together or to live apart, caught inextricably in the web of their tragic history.' (Lyons 1979)

With the dissolution of the Northern Irish Assembly by the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) over the Northern Ireland Protocol, the re-polarisation of sectarian communities and questions over the future of Northern Ireland (NI), the above quote feels as relatable today as during the Troubles, the ethno-nationalist conflict spanning thirty years in NI. However, the origins of the conflict in NI stretch further back (Cairns 1987). In 1998, a peace agreement was brokered between the British government and warring paramilitaries, creating a new Northern Irish General Assembly (Northern Ireland Office 1998). Known as the Good Friday Agreement, it ended the multigenerational conflict between Northern Irish Catholics and Protestants. However, tensions never completely disappeared, and when the United Kingdom (UK) left the European Union (EU), an event known as Brexit, inter-group relations became strained.

This study examines emerging tensions in NI through the lens of the social identity theory (SIT). Previous research examining identities in NI has primarily focused on the identity split between Catholics and Protestants and the effects of intergroup contact. There is little recent SIT research in the region, and with the re-emergence of potential conflict, it is important that the topic is discussed. This project aims to fill a gap in the literature, investigating the impact of political

identity on support for violence. The project discusses how Brexit-related issues pose a threat to Unionist identity groups, providing a psychological explanation for the recent rise in unrest. The study predominantly focuses on the Loyalist identity, as this group is most affected by Brexit.

The following sections discuss the NI conflict, define intergroup conflict and SIT, examine the current political situation, and explain the various identity groups in NI. The paper discusses the differences between the Unionist and Loyalist identities, determining that Loyalism is a distinct identity. Analysis showed that the strength of Loyalist identity and fear of Union (henceforth referring to the United Kingdom) breakup predicts support for violence, the implications of which are discussed.

Conflict in Northern Ireland

The identity-based conflict between British Unionists and Irish Nationalists has spanned centuries. As Great Britain's closest neighbour, Ireland has been plagued by British invasions since the 12th century (O'Byrne 2003) resulting in a state of near-constant inter-group conflict (Cairns 1987). The British monarchy struggled to control Ireland until Henry VIII conquered the region, forming the Kingdom of Ireland in 1542 (Ellis & Maginn 2007). He implemented Protestantism as the official religion but could not convert the majority who remained Catholic (Ford 1999). Two separate religious groups developed: the traditional Irish Catholic church and a new British Protestant church, creating an intrinsic link between national and religious identities (Claydon & McBride 1998). The continued Catholic rebellions led to the forced merger of the British and Irish Kingdoms at the end of the 18th century (Kelly 1987). Catholics were second-class citizens in this new state, with fewer rights than their Protestant counterparts, reinforcing

group differences (MacManus 2018). The majority of southern Ireland were Irish Catholics who wanted to supplant British rule and form an Irish free state, creating a Nationalist identity. The north of the island consisted of a Protestant majority affiliated to Britain who wanted to maintain the union; they formed the Unionist identity. After a series of violent revolts from the Nationalist community, the island was officially separated into 32 counties and two states in 1937 (Constitution of Ireland). The 26 southern counties, with a Nationalist majority, formed The Republic of Ireland (ROI). The remaining six counties with a Unionist majority became NI, and remained part of the UK, creating a 300-mile land border between the two nations (Ferguson & McKeown 2016). However, a prominent Catholic Nationalist minority remained in NI, separated from their peers. The partition of Ireland created divisions in NI, with intergroup conflict developing between communities with opposing goals regarding NI constitutional status (Moxon-Browne 1991). This escalated into violence developing into a multi-decade conflict known as the Troubles.

The Troubles spanned 30 years, from 1968 to 1998, leading to over 3,600 deaths and 40,000–50,000 injuries (CAIN Institute 2007). In 1998, the Good Friday Agreement between the British government and paramilitaries created a Northern Irish Assembly to govern the region, representing both communities (Northern Ireland Office 1998) and de-militarised the north-south border. The Northern Irish Assembly (metonymically referred to as Stormont) was formed, with an executive mandated to consist of two political parties representing the Nationalist and Unionists communities. The government could not form without collaboration between political representatives from both communities, ensuring that both were represented at the top level of government (Torrance 2022). However, this agreement highlights and ossifies intergroup differences (Leach et al. 2021). These communities still have opposing views on NI's constitutional status, while ethnic representation ensures that this conflict is maintained at the highest level of politics, institutionalising intergroup conflict. This type of ethnic representation has been shown to lead to political instability (Murer 2010). This is seen in NI, where the assembly has been suspended for over a third of its lifespan, due to inter-community feuds in the executive (McCann 2022).

The Good Friday agreement nearly broke down after Stormont collapsed between 2002–2007 over allegations that Sinn Féin supported a paramilitary spy network (Melaugh 2022a). In 2006, The St Andrews Agreement restored the executive with the DUP and Sinn Féin forming a government together. However, it caused division within the Loyalist community with some seeing the partnership as a betrayal of the Unionists (TUV n.d.). British forces finally departed NI in 2007, following the signing of The St Andrews Agreement (Melaugh 2022b) bringing relative peace to the region.

INTEGROUP CONFLICT AND SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY (SIT)

Psychological frameworks are critical for understanding why conflicts occur (Kelman 2009). They help us understand how individuals view themselves within conflict scenarios and their motivations for engaging in violence (Wolff 2022). Further, they help explain why conflict resolution is challenging and why hostility may re-emerge.

Intergroup conflict can be defined as competition between two or more groups over resources, values, or claims to status and power (Coser 1967). It can be understood as a spectrum. At one end, intergroup conflict exists as stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination, with overt violence, warfare, and genocide at the other (Fisher 1994). Extreme intergroup conflict requires more than outgroup prejudice and dislike (Al Ramiah & Hewstone 2013). Opposing group goals, paired with historical and structural factors like group oppression, can lead individuals to feel sufficiently strong emotions to engage in violence (Mackie, Devos & Smith 2000). One of the most common frameworks for explaining intergroup conflict is SIT.

Social identity is an individual's knowledge that they belong to a specific social group which they value. They form emotional connections with the group and group members (Tajfel 1978). Social groups create a shared identity, which guide actions and beliefs (Hogg 2016). SIT posits that even simple acknowledgment of group identity can produce intergroup conflict (Billig & Tajfel 1973), and argues that the more an individual values their group membership, the more they promote their group's superiority and goals over others (Tajfel 1978). When groups have mutually exclusive goals, it highlights group salience, heightening intergroup conflict and outgroup prejudice (Sherif & Sherif 1973; Tajfel & Turner 2004; Hogg 2016). As individuals spend more time in their group, they develop a stronger ingroup identity which can lead to ingroup bias and outgroup prejudice (Brown & Pehrson 2020).

The strength of individual identity can be predictive of outgroup views and how individuals respond to threats (Al Ramiah, Hewstone & Schmid 2011). Group-level threats (realistic and symbolic) challenge the group's power or belief system (Stephan, Diaz-Loving & Duran 2000). Studies have shown that individuals with stronger group identities are more likely to display outgroup hostility when the group is threatened (Bizman & Yinon 2001). Studies in NI show similar results with Protestant and Catholic groups (Tausch et al. 2007). That high-level identification associated with group-level threats is consistent with self-categorisation theory (SCT), which argues that as individuals develop stronger ingroup identity, they go through a process of de-personalisation, adopting the groups' values and concerns (Turner 1988). Thus, if the group is threatened, they feel personally threatened, creating stronger hostility towards the threat. High affinity with the ingroup does not necessarily predict negative behaviour or attitudes toward outgroup members (Brewer 1999; 2001). However, if group-level threats are present, highly-identified individuals are more likely to adopt extreme behaviour to reduce these threats (Bizman & Yinon, 2001; Tausch et al., 2007).

BREXIT AND THE CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION

SIT has been used to explain the NI conflict using sectarian identities. In the years following The St Andrews Agreement, promising signs indicated that the region was moving away from having perpetually divided communities (Lowe & Muldoon 2014). However, it appears that Brexit has triggered re-polarisation (O'Neill
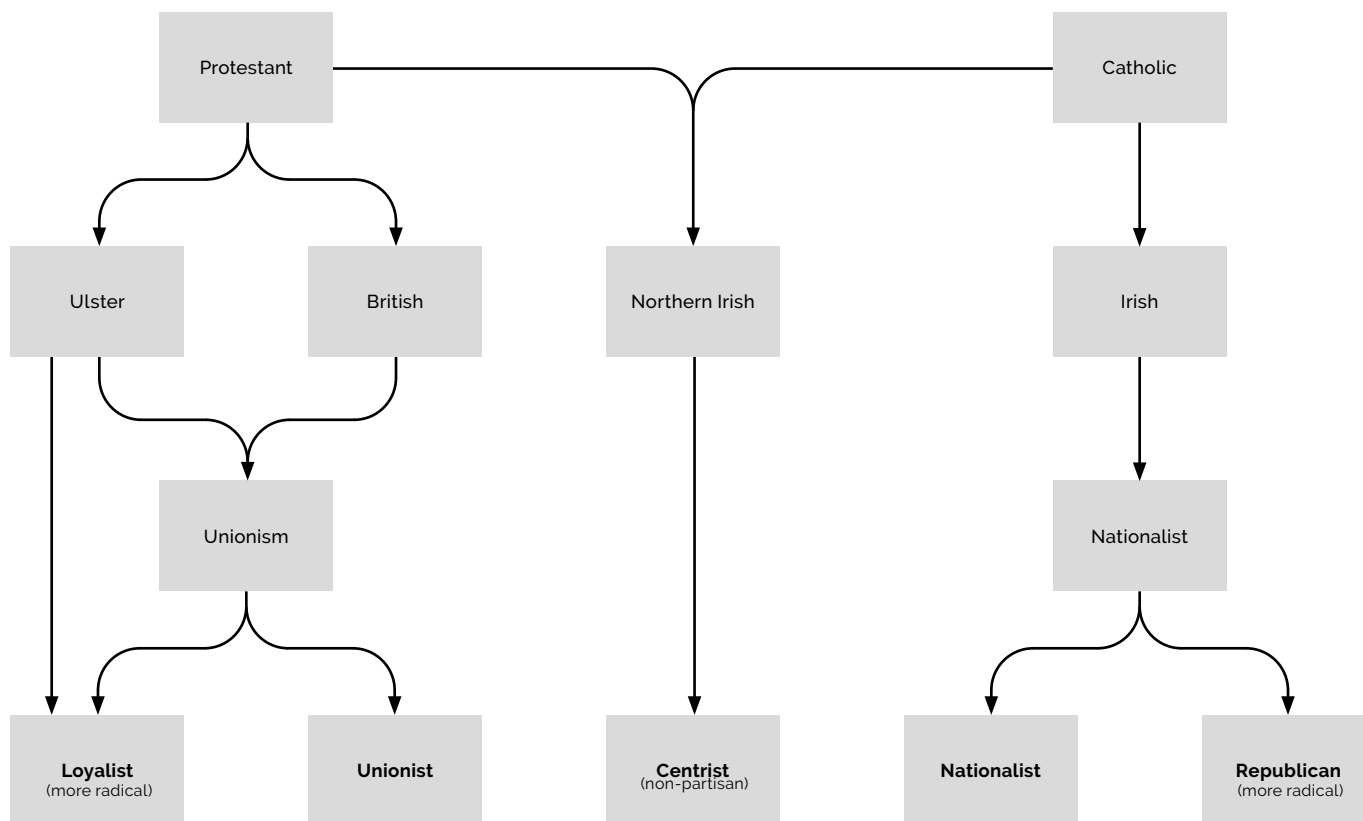
Figure 1 | Relationships between different identity groups in NI.

2022).

The European Single Market allows products and workers to flow freely between EU member states. Brexit necessitated an economic border between ROI and the UK (European Union 2022). A land border between ROI and NI threatened Nationalist identities, risking violence re-emerging from Catholic communities, and was therefore ruled out (Phinnemore & Hayward 2017; Shelly & Muldoon 2022). Instead, the Northern Ireland Protocol created an economic sea border between the island of Ireland and the UK (Parker & Brunsden 2019). This outraged the Unionist community, resulting in rising tensions, leading to political demonstrations and violent protests in 2021 (Carroll 2021; O'Carroll 2021; O'Neill 2022). In September 2021, the DUP threatened to collapse the government if the protocol was not changed, leading to the resignation of the First Minister (Preston 2021; Edgar & Flanagan 2022). A further threat to Unionist identity came in May 2022 when Sinn Féin won their first-ever majority in the Assembly. Still protesting the protocol, the DUP refused to restore the government after the elections (Davies 2022).

SIT and SCT offer explanations as to why the different communities responded to the positioning of the border in the way they did. Wherever the border was placed, it would isolate one identity group, enhancing group salience, once again making identity a central issue in NI (Shelly & Muldoon 2022). The sea border creates a physical and symbolic barrier, with NI citizens living under different constraints to other UK residents, threatening Unionist identity. A land border would undermine the Good Friday Agreement, potentially restricting the movement of people between ROI and NI, a central issue for Nationalists. The current political situation has caused dangerous polarisation between communities.

Identity Groups in NI

The Catholic and Protestant identities act as catch-all groups housing multiple identity groups in NI (Trew 1998). Group distinctions may be critical to understanding the actions and views of different communities. The following section will discuss religious, national, and political identities in NI, which are also summarised in **Figure 1**.

Religious Identity

The Protestant and Catholic identities act as fundamental reference groups (Trew 1998). They comply with critical tenets of SIT, with individuals categorising themselves and others as Protestants or Catholics. These groups demonstrate functional salience (Cairns & Duriez 1976; Stringer & Cairns 1983), and can lead to ingroup favouritism and outgroup bias (Kremer, Barry & McNally 1986). These categorisations are still relevant in contemporary NI, where communities remain segregated. In 2022, only 7% of schools officially offered integrated education (Meredith 2022), and over a hundred 'peace walls' still separate Catholic and Protestant neighbourhoods (Black 2022). Even individuals who do not attend church categorise themselves as Catholic or Protestant (Niens & Cairns 2001). In the 2021 Northern Irish census, of the 1,903,200 citizens, 1,475,800 identified as Christian (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency 2022). Most research examining SIT and hostile attitudes has focused on

these religious groupings.

Studies in NI demonstrate that individuals with stronger affinities to their respective identities displayed higher ingroup bias and outgroup prejudice (Cairns et al. 2006). Identification strength also predicts the impact of group threats on outgroup views (Tausch et al. 2007). Further, research-based interviews with former members of Northern Irish paramilitaries indicates that individuals with stronger religious identities were more likely to engage in politically-motivated violence for both denominations (Burgess, Ferguson & Hollywood 2005; Ferguson, Burgess & Hollywood 2008; Ferguson & Binks 2015). However, post-Good Friday Agreement, ex-combatants and individuals with strong group identities were more actively involved in community violence disengagement and conflict transformation (Shirlow & McEvoy 2008, Ferguson, Burgess & Hollywood 2015). This supports Brewer's (1999) theory that strong ingroup identity does not equate to outgroup hate. It demonstrates support for SCT, because when group-level threats are posed to highly identified individuals, they react in a hostile manner; but when no threat is present individuals are less likely to be hostile.

National Identities

Traditionally, national identities were linked with religious denominations, with Catholics identifying as Irish and Protestants identifying as British (Ferguson & McKeown 2016). However, unlike religious identities which are ascribed at birth (Cairns 2010; Ferguson 2006), national identities are more fluid. Over the last forty years, a new 'Northern Irish' identity has emerged, inclusive of both Catholics and Protestants, creating a shared identity group (Gaertner & Dovidio 2014; McNicholl 2017).

Shared identity groups have been shown to reduce prejudice between conflicting social groups (Riek et al. 2010). The Northern Irish identity may act as a superordinate group, moving away from the dichotomy of British and Irish identities, leading to a less polarised society (Tonge 2020). Some studies have demonstrated that the Northern Irish identity is more strongly associated with British (Protestant) identity than Irish (Catholic) identity (McKeown 2014).

Political Identities

There are multiple political identities in NI, with differing goals concerning the constitutional status of NI, while also linked to the national and religious identities discussed. Unionists wish for NI to remain in the UK, whilst Nationalists wish to unify NI with ROI (Ruane & Todd 1996). A centrist political identity developed alongside the Northern Irish identity (McNicholl 2017), aiming to reduce dichotomist viewpoints, and concentrating instead on improving NI.

Nationalists and Unionists can be further divided into Nationalists, Republicans, Unionists and Loyalists (Smithey 2011). Nationalists seek reunification of Ireland through moderate means, such as political negotiation, whilst Republicans would use more extreme actions such as violence (Wilson 2021). Political parties in NI represent this spectrum of extremism. The more extreme Republican party Sinn Féin was the political arm of the paramilitary Irish Republican Army (IRA) (Flackes & Elliott 1994). The moderate Social

Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) traditionally represented Nationalists.

There is greater nuance between the Unionist and Loyalist identities. Unionists view their national identity as British, whilst Loyalists identify with Ulster, considering 'British' a secondary identity (Ruane & Todd 1996). The Ulster identity used by Loyalists refers to the region in the north of Ireland where Protestants were placed during the reign of James I, known as the Plantation of Ulster (Smithey 2011; 'Ulster' 2013). Loyalists ally themselves with the British *monarchy* as opposed to the British *government* (Alison 2010). The British identity is secondary, being conditional on the Union, or the UK, protecting their unique Ulster identity (Cochrane 2001). Loyalists are seen as more extreme, willing to use more violent measures to maintain the Union (Bruce 1999; Smithey 2011; Wilson 2021).

There are several parties which represent Unionists in NI, the most moderate Unionist party being the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP). Like the SDLP, the UUP wished to work across sectarian divides to create an effective government in NI post-Troubles (Cowell-Meyers & Arthur 2022) The DUP, who are considered more hard-lined, initially refused to sign the Good Friday Agreement due to their more hostile views of Nationalist parties (Sproule 2022).

Radical Loyalist parties include the Progressive Unionist Party, which is connected to the paramilitary Ulster Volunteer Force (Graham 2004). The Traditional Unionist Voices (TUV) party has become the modern face of hard-line Loyalism (Bradfield 2021), arguing that the DUP and Westminster betrayed the Loyalist community by partnering with Sinn Féin (whom they claim are 'unrepentant terrorists') to create the Northern Irish Assembly after the St Andrews Agreement (TUV n.d.). The TUV have continued this rhetoric of betrayal over the Northern Ireland Protocol (Allister 2020), being the most outspoken group against the Northern Ireland Protocol and its handling by the DUP and Westminster. The TUV and Loyalist identity may be a rallying point for Protestants who feel threatened by Brexit. Loyalists and Unionists appear to have become more extreme, with the TUV increasing its share of the vote from 2.6% in 2017 to 7.6% in 2022 (Russell 2022), potentially signalling rising tensions from this community (Lowry 2022).

Multiple group threats from Brexit and the current political climate appear to have contributed to increased Loyalist riots and protests. In 2015, Loyalist paramilitary groups backed the creation of the Loyalist Community Council (LCC), which seeks to reverse what they describe as the political and economic neglect of working-class Loyalist communities post-Good Friday Agreement (BBC 2015). A letter from the LCC to the DUP leadership and Westminster warned there would be 'dire consequences' if the Northern Ireland Protocol issues were not resolved (Bradfield 2022). The Loyalist community has become increasingly hostile since Brexit. This study focuses on this group and its relationship with support for violence.

Gaps in Research, Research Aims and Hypotheses

This study investigates the relationship between the strength of different political identities and the impact

of group threats on support for violence in NI, focusing on the Loyalist identity. It also examines the impact of betrayal, as this emotion is frequently discussed within the Loyalist community.

The NI conflict has previously been studied utilising SIT (Hewstone et al. 2006; Tausch et al. 2007; Hewstone et al. 2008; Hughes et al. 2013). These studies have primarily focused on the split between Catholics and Protestants and the impact of intergroup contact in improving relations. SIT theory has demonstrated that stronger ingroup identity can be linked to more hostile action and outgroup views (Kremer, Barry & McNally 1986; Burgess, Ferguson & Hollywood 2005; Cairns et al. 2006). This study supports this hypothesis but posits that distinctions between political identifications critically influences outcomes like support for violence.

The study focuses specifically on the Loyalist identification, as it is considered the radical Unionist group (Bruce 1999; Smithey 2011). As tensions within the Loyalist community have risen since the introduction of the Northern Ireland Protocol (Carroll 2021; Bradfield 2022; Webber 2022), this study hypothesises that strength of Loyalist identity will correlate and predict support for violence.

Betrayal has been an important emotion in the context of the NI conflict. It has increasingly been utilised by the Loyalist community since the introduction of the Northern Ireland Protocol (Withnall 2019; Carroll 2022; Pollak 2022). This study aims to investigate the relationship between the feelings of betrayal by political groups and support for violence.

Finally, this study examines the impact of group threat on support for violence. The presence of group threats has been shown to enhance hostile actions (Burgess, Ferguson & Hollywood 2005; Ferguson, Burgess & Hollywood 2008; Ferguson & Binks 2015). This study hypothesises that group threat acts as a positive predictor for supporting violence.

The study utilises mixed methods to test these hypotheses using quantitative surveys and statistical analysis. Qualitative interviews are used to help explain the results.

> **H1**: Strength of Loyalist identity positively correlates more highly with support for violence compared to identification of other identity groups.

> **H2**: Stronger feelings of betrayal by the DUP predict a higher support for violence.

> **H3**: Strength of Loyalist identity positively predicts support for violence.

> **H4**: Fear of Union breakup positively predicts support for violence.

> **H5**: Strength of Loyalist identity mediates the relationship between group threat and support for violence.

Methods
Study 1 – Survey
Procedure
This study conducted a two-part longitudinal survey which was exclusively released to residents of NI. The first survey (**Appendix D**) was released in November 2021, when there were high levels of uncertainty surrounding the Northern Ireland Protocol. The second survey (**Appendix E**) was released in May 2022 the day after the Stormont election results. Participants were recruited through the research platform Prolific which has demonstrated high-quality participants (Peer et al. 2017). Participants were paid 77p per survey completed.

Participants
Survey 1
126 residents of NI completed the initial survey (mean age 39.40 years, SD = 12.12, age range = 18–75 years). The sample comprised 49 Catholics (27 males, 22 females) and 68 Protestants (34 males, 34 females). 9 participants (2 males, 7 females) did not disclose their religious denomination. To determine religious identity participants were asked what religious denomination they grow up with. If participants came from a mixed household, they were asked which religion was more prominent in their upbringing.

Survey 2
111 of the original respondents completed the second survey (mean age 39.77 years, SD = 12.40, age range = 18–75 years), comprising of 45 Catholics (26 males, 19 females) and 58 Protestants (28 males, 30 females). 8 participants (2 males, 6 females) did not disclose their religious denomination.

15 participants only completed the first survey, 8 males, 7 females, 10 Protestants, 4 Catholics, 1 no religious denomination (mean age = 36.67 years, SD = 9.78, age range = 18–48).

Measures
Outcome variable: support for violence
Support for violence was measured using three questions (Cronbach's α = 0.80). Using a 5-point Likert-type scale [1 (not at all) to 5 (very much so)], participants were asked to what extent recent violence was understandable and justified, and to what extent violence was justified to protect their community's interest. Support for violence significantly departed from normality (W = 0.802, p-value < 0.001). This was tested to ensure that appropriate statistical methods were chosen.

Predictor variable: betrayal
Feelings of betrayal were measured using a single item for political institutions and parties. Participants were asked 'To what extent do you feel betrayed by x in regard to the handling of Brexit'. The response format used the same 5-point Likert-type scale used to quantify support for violence.

Predictor variable: group threat
Threat to the Unionist identity was measured by a single item. Participants were asked 'To what extent are you worried about the break-up of the UK due to Brexit'. The same 5-point Likert-type scale was used.

Predictor variable: strength of identity
Strength of identity was measured using a single item for both national (British, Northern Irish, Irish and European) and political (Unionist, Nationalist, Loyalist and Republican) identities. Participants were asked 'To what extent do you identify with the following groups'.
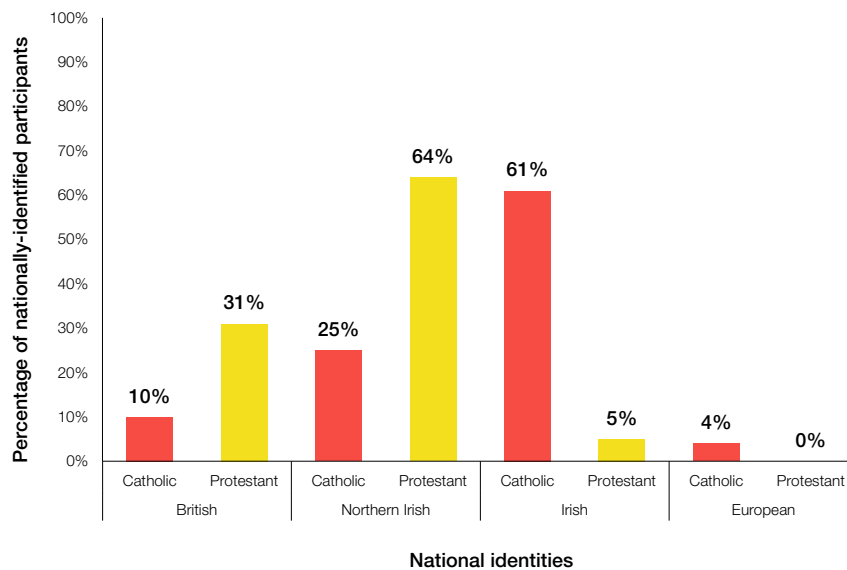
Figure 2 | Forced national identity percentage frequencies between communities.

The response format was a 5-point Likert-type scale [1 (do not identify with at all) to 5 (very strongly identify with)].

Study 2 – Interviews

Procedure
Opportunity sampling was utilised. The researcher contacted various political groups, asking if members would be interested in being interviewed about the current political situation in NI. Snowball sampling was then used to find more participants. Participants were asked a series of questions relating to identity, political views, and feelings of betrayal (**Appendix F**). Interviews were conducted between May and November 2022.

Participants
6 interviews were conducted (4 males, 2 females), comprising of 3 Protestants and 3 Catholics (mean age = 27.17 years, age range = 21−34).

Ethics
Both studies received ethical approval from the University of St Andrews (PS15841; PS16086) (**Appendix C**). As the project discussed support for violence and the political situation in NI, participants were clearly informed about the contents of the study before giving consent. Questions were chosen to minimise potential triggering of participants. The debrief included contact details for support groups in NI and the researchers' contact details if they needed to discuss the contents of the project (**Appendix F**).

Results
This study set out to test changes of identity and political thought over time. However, there was high stability of responses between Surveys 1 and 2, and therefore longitudinal result analysis is not discussed. There are several potential explanations for this stability between surveys. Overall, respondents displayed low engagement with political views at both time points. The region had been in a state of political crisis throughout the period, with uncertainty caused by the Northern Ireland Protocol and the DUP threat to not form the Stormont Executive until the protocol was changed. The analysis therefore does not focus on differences across time. Instead, it utilises correlation and regression analysis to investigate the relationships between strength of identity, group threat, and betrayal with the outcome variable, namely support for violence, using one time point.

The study utilised data from Survey 1, for several reasons. The sample size was larger for Survey 1 and the political situation was more stable. Survey 2 took place directly after the Stormont election, when the motivations of political parties and the political situation were still unclear. The political situation at the time of writing in November 2022 was more similar to timepoint 1, with ambiguity over the status of the Northern Ireland Protocol and increased levels of unrest in Loyalist communities.

Descriptive Statistics
Figure 2 shows the frequencies of national identities between communities. The largest identity group is Northern Irish, which supports theories that this identity group is becoming increasingly important in NI, with a movement away from the traditional dichotomy of British and Irish identities (Muldoon et al. 2007). Protestants form most of this identity, supporting the theory that this identity group is more representative of Protestants than Catholics (McKeown 2014). Less than a third of Protestants identified as British, potentially indicating that, for this sample, this identity label is becoming less relevant for Protestants.

Figure 3 (next page) shows frequencies of political identities between communities. The table shows that political identity mostly corresponds to traditional ethnic dichotomies, with Catholics choosing Irish political identities and Protestants choosing British. This supports the argument that ethnicity corresponds to political identity (Ferguson & McKeown 2016). The more extreme identities are less populated, but still form a significant percentage.
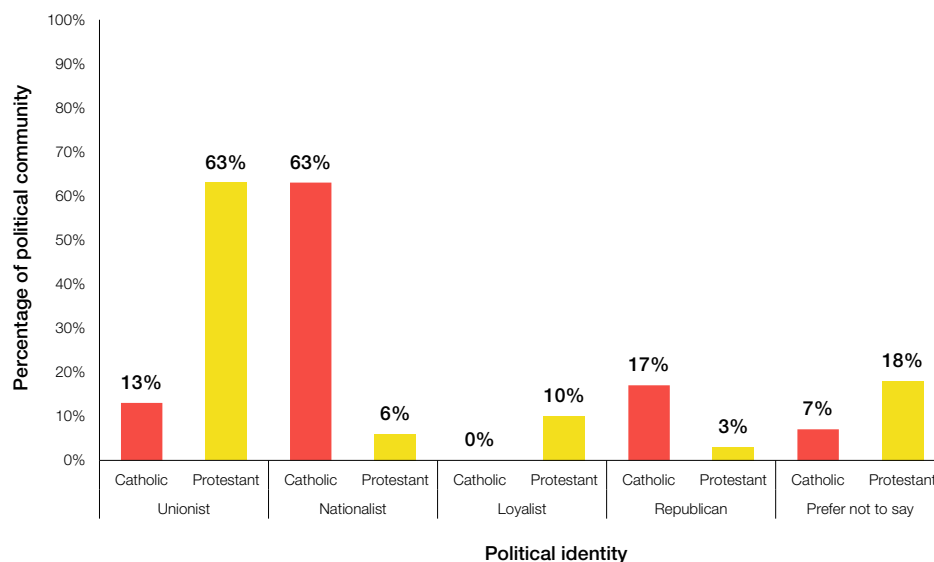
Figure 2 | Forced political identity percentage frequencies between communities.

Figures **4A** to **4H** (next page) show independent *t*-test results between Catholic and Protestant communities on various political views. Shapiro-Wilks tests were used to ensure normal distribution between groups.

t-tests demonstrated significant differences in opinion on issues such as the fear of breakup (**Figure 4A**), support for a re-unification referendum (**Figure 4B**), and feelings of betrayal from political institutions (Figures **4C** to **4E**). This illustrates that a dichotomy of political views between communities is still present in NI, especially on the constitutional status of the nation.

However, there are no significant differences in opinion on issues like trust in Stormont (**Figure 4H**) or feelings that Westminster considered the interests of NI during Brexit negotiations (**Figure 4F**). It is important to note that the variables shown (and other tested responses) were generally negative, indicating that participants were not happy with political decisions and representatives of the NI population.

An interviewee of this study described this phenomenon as 'crisis apathy … everything is a crisis in Northern Ireland, and people stopped caring about politics'.

TESTING STUDY HYPOTHESES

H1: Strength of Loyalist identity positively correlates more highly with support for violence compared to identification of other identity groups.

Pearson correlation was used calculated to examined the relationship between identity strength and support for violence across different national and political groups in NI (See **Appendix A** for full table).

Four identities had significant relationships with *support for violence*. There were negligible negative relations for *Irish and European identity strength* and *support for violence* [r(121) = 0.19, p = 0.034 and r(120) = 0.23, p = 0.010]. There was a negligible positive relation for *strength of Republican identity* and *support for violence* [r(120) = 0.19, p = 0.033]. There was a low positive

relationship between the *strength of Loyalist identity* and *support for violence* [r(120) = 0.36, p < 0.001]. All other identities had no correlation with support for violence. This supports **H1**, that a higher *strength of Loyalist identity* results in *increased support for violence*.

H2: Stronger feelings of betrayal by the DUP predict a higher support for violence.

Pearson correlation was used to examine the relationship between *betrayal of political institutions*, *fear of Union breakup* and *support for violence*.

Three other variables beyond *strength of Loyalist identity* had significant positive relationships with *support for violence*. These are shown in **Table 1** (p. 85), and their intercorrelated relationships explored further in **Appendix B**. In short, *fear of Union breakup* had a low positive relationship with support for violence [r(119) = 0.29, p < 0.001]. A low positive relation between *DUP betrayal* and *support for violence* [r(106) = 0.33, p < 0.001] is reported, and there was a negligible positive relation between *Westminster betrayal* and *support for violence* [r(122) = 0.17, p = 0.042].

H3: Strength of Loyalist identity positively predicts support for violence.

H4: Fear of Union breakup positively predicts support for violence.

A multiple linear regression model was used to test if *strength of Loyalist identity* and *fear of Union breakup* positively predicts *support for violence*. The data was screened for assumptions and outliers. Scatterplots demonstrated positive linear relationships with these variables and *support for violence*. Assumptions of linearity and multicollinearity were met. There was a singular bivariate outlier, which was removed from the analysis. *Support for violence* was not normally distributed. To account for this, bootstrapping (5,000 samples)
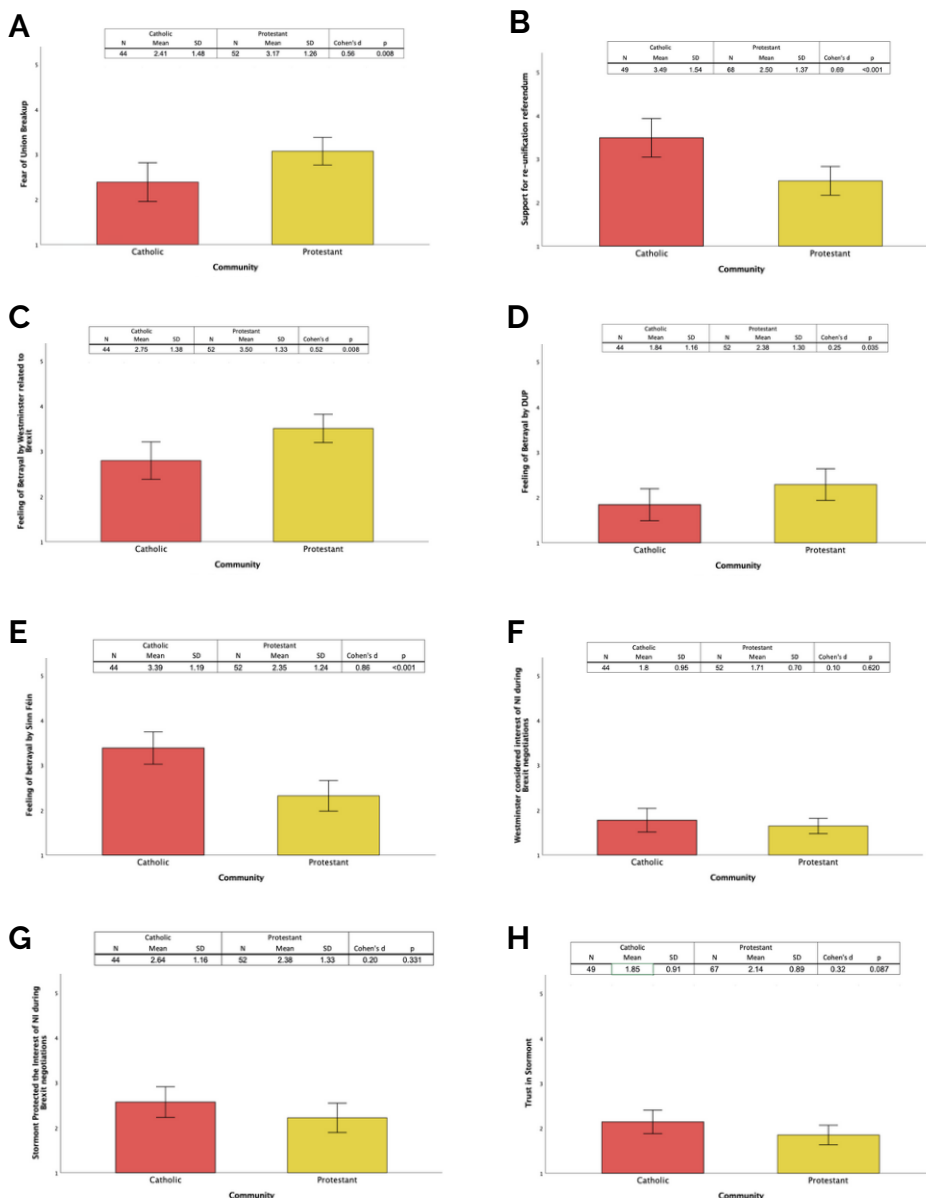
Figure 4 | Bar plots showing differences in the political views (listed from A to H below) between Catholic and Protestant groups. Data measured on Likert-type scale between 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Mean differences are significant if p < 0.05 as computed by independent *t*-tests.

- A. Fear of Union breakup (p = 0.008; p < 0.05).
- B. Support for reunification referendum (p < 0.001).
- C. Feeling of betrayal by Westminster related to Brexit (p = 0.008; p < 0.05).
- D. Feeling of betrayal by the DUP (p = 0.035; p < 0.05).
- E. Feeling of betrayal by Sinn Féin (p < 0.001).
- F. (Feeling that) Westminster considered the interests of NI during Brexit negotiations (p = 0.620; p > 0.05).
- G. (Feeling that) Stormont protected the interests of NI during Brexit negotiations (p = 0.331; p > 0.05).
- H. Trust in Stormont (p = 0.087; p > 0.05).

was applied to the model.

A significant regression equation was found $[F(2,118) = 9.718$, p <0.001, $R^2 = 0.141]$, meaning that these two factors collectively account for 14.1% of the variance in the *support for violence* outcome variable. Analysis determined that *strength of Loyalist identity* ($\beta = 0.173$, p = 0.006) and *fear of Union breakup* ($\beta = 0.105$, p = 0.043) were positive predictors of support for violence (see **Figure 5**, next page), supporting **H3** and **H4**.

H5: Strength of Loyalist identity mediates the

relationship between group threat and support for violence.

The study examined a simple mediation model (**Figure 6A**, p. 86). A mediation model was created using PROCCESS version 4.2 (Hayes 2022). Model 4 was used, applying bootstrapping of 5,000 samples. The outcome variable was *support for violence*, the predictor variable *fear of Union breakup* as a variable for group threat, and the mediator *strength of Loyalist identity*. The indirect effect of *strength of Loyalist identity* was statically significant [effect = 0.0560, 95% C.I. (0.0074,

	1	2	3	4	5
Support for violence (**1**)	–	0.36**	0.29**	0.18*	0.33**
Strength of Loyalist identity (**2**)		–	0.39**	0.26**	0.55**
Fear of Union breakup (**3**)			–	0.49**	0.30**
Feeling of betrayal by Westminster (**4**)				–	0.17
Feeling of betrayal by DUP (**5**)					–
Mean	1.65	1.74	2.78	3.19	2.12
SD	0.78	1.21	1.39	1.38	1.28

Table 1 | Intercorrelations between variables which positively correlated with support for violence.

0.1215)], indicating that *strength of Loyalist identity* acted as a partial mediator for *fear of Union breakup* when predicting *support for violence* (**Figure 6B**, next page).

It is also plausible that the effect could be happening in the opposite direction. To test if *strength of Loyalist identity* mediates the predictive relationship between *fear of Union breakup* and *support for violence*, a new model was tested (**Figure 6C**, next page). This model was tested with the predictor and mediator variables reversed. The indirect effect of *fear of Union breakup* on *strength of Loyalist identity* was statically significant [effect = 0.0488, 95% C.I. (0.0088, 0.0995)] indicating that *fear of Union breakup* is acting as a partial mediator for *strength of Loyalist identity* when predicting *support for violence* (**Figure 6D**, next page).

DISCUSSION
H1
Hypothesis 1 (**H1**) aims to ask questions on the relationship between *strength of Loyalist identity* and *support for violence*. Previous research has demonstrated that strength of identity can determine more hostile views in NI (Cairns et al. 2006). As political identities are used in NI to assess an individual's level of extremism, and Loyalism is considered a more extreme identity (Smithey 2011; Wilson 2021), the study theorised that higher affiliation with the Loyalist identity would result in higher support for violence, compared to other identities. This was demonstrated.

The current political climate in NI is most threatening to the Unionist identity groups, especially Loyalists who rely on the Union to protect their unique identity. This study found positive correlations between identity strength for Loyalists and Republicans and *support for violence*. This supports arguments that these identities are linked to a willingness to conduct more extreme actions to accomplish political goals (Flackes & Elliott 1994; Bruce 1999; Smithey 2011; Wilson 2021) and reflects trends seen in NI. Loyalist have been the most outspoken community against political changes resulting from Brexit, conducting protests, riots, and demonstrations against the Northern Ireland Protocol (Carroll 2021; Bradfield 2022; Webber 2022). Consistent with this observation, a Unionist interviewee noted that 'Loyalists are more hard-line and less likely to compromise with Nationalists'.

Strength of Unionist identity did not correlate with support for violence, demonstrating the importance of distinguishing between political identity groups in NI. According to the same Unionist interviewee, 'Unionism is what you're born into, Loyalism is a political outlook. You can say every Loyalist is a Unionist, but not every Unionist is a Loyalist.' Although Unionists and Loyalists are categorised using the same wider identity (Protestant/Unionist) and are indeed related, they are distinct from each other (Smithey 2011). Future SIT studies in NI should account for this distinction in political identity, with each identity being studied as distinct groups.
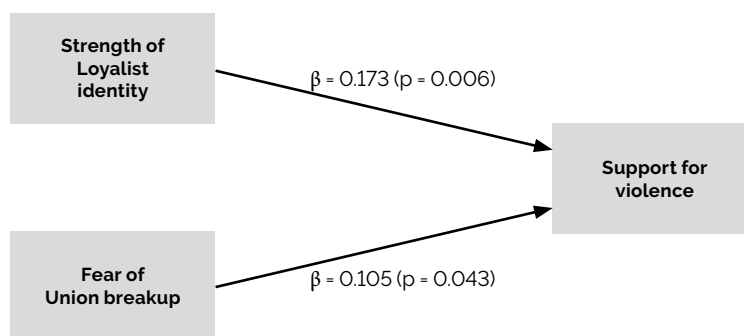

Figure 5 | Multiple linear regression diagram demonstrating that strength of Loyalist identity and fear of Union breakup are positive predictors of support for violence.
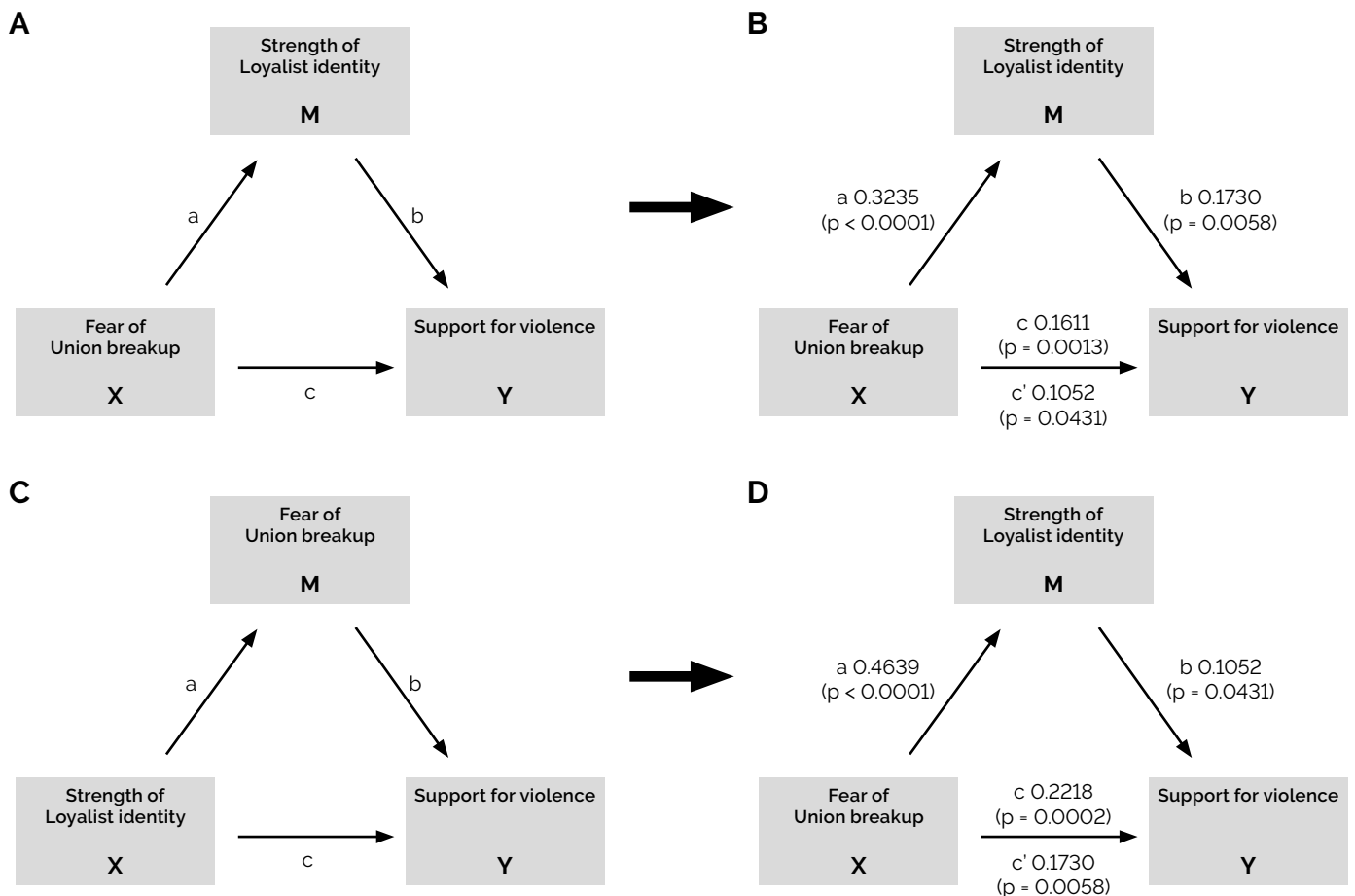
Figure 6 | Mediation models show that strength of Loyalist identity and fear of Union breakup partially mediate the other's relationship with support for violence.

A. Theoretical mediation model with strength of Loyalist identity mediating the relationship between fear of Union breakup and support for violence.

B. Mediation model showing partial mediation between fear of Union breakup and support for violence by strength of Loyalist identity.

C. Theoretical mediation model with fear of Union breakup mediating the relationship between strength of Loyalist identity and support for violence.

D. Mediation model showing partial mediation between strength of Loyalist identity and support for violence by fear of Union breakup.

H2

Hypothesis 2 (**H2**) aims to examine the relationship between betrayal and support for violence. Betrayal is an emotion discussed frequently within the NI context, especially within the Loyalist community (TUV n.d.). Mervyn Gibson, a prominent Loyalist leader, called Boris Johnson a 'lousy unionist' who 'betrayed' Northern Ireland over the Northern Ireland Protocol (Young 2020). This study investigated the connection between betrayal and support for violence, focusing on Unionist institutions because Brexit presents a larger threat to these communities.

The study found positive correlations between betrayal by Unionist institutions (the DUP and Westminster) and *support for violence*. This indicates that the more an individual felt betrayed by these institutions, the more they were likely to support violence. Feelings of betrayal by the DUP had a stronger relationship with *support for violence* than the group threat variable *fear of Union breakup*. This is interesting as stronger feelings of group threats have been shown to positively predict more hostile actions (Burgess,

Ferguson & Hollywood 2005). This result may indicate that betrayal could be a critical emotion in determining hostile attitudes. Further analysis was conducted on the relationship between betrayal and support for violence (see **Appendix B**), but as this was an unexpected result, there was insufficient data to explore this further. Future research should further investigate *betrayal* and the relationship with *support for violence*.

As a Unionist interviewee put it, 'betrayal is a big and emotive subject in Northern Ireland, and it's definitely the one word that I would use to sum up why people have reacted in the way they have'.

H3 and H4

Previous SIT research demonstrates that individuals with stronger identification hold more hostile views towards outgroups (Brewer 1999; 2001). Prior research has demonstrated that increased feelings of group threat facilitate individuals adopting more radical behaviours (Burgess, Ferguson & Hollywood 2005; Ferguson, Burgess & Hollywood 2008; Al Raffie 2013). Hypotheses 3 and 4 (**H3** and **H4**) tested the predictive relationship

between strength of Loyalist identity and perceived group threat (in the form of potential Union breakup) on *support for violence*.

Multiple regression analysis demonstrated that both variables had a positive predictive relationship with support for violence, consistent with previous SIT literature. Loyalists have a history of supporting more extreme actions to protect their community (Flackes & Elliott 1994; Smithey 2011). That the *strength of Loyalist identity* positively predicts *support for violence* agrees with literature arguing that this community is more extreme than other Unionist groups. This indicates that this identity may be critical in understanding current tensions and protests in NI.

The analysis also demonstrated that *fear of Union breakup* positively predicted *support for violence*, but to a lesser extent than *strength of Loyalist identity*. This corresponds with the literature (Burgess, Ferguson & Hollywood 2005; Ferguson, Burgess & Hollywood, 2008; Al Raffie 2013).

Fear of Union breakup is strongly emotive for Unionists. NI leaving the UK would most likely result in a united Ireland, increasing the risk of Unionist and Loyalist identities being lost, as these are protected by the union. Consistent with this, a Unionist interviewee stated 'I am a Unionist by default, because the Unionist way of thinking preserves the individuality of Northern Ireland. The only way that it exists is through the UK'. Individuals may therefore be pushed to more extreme actions to protect their identity. H3 and H4

H5
The final hypothesis further investigated the predictive relationship between these variables, testing for possible mediation.

A simple mediation path model demonstrated that *strength of Loyalist identity* partially mediated *fear of Union breakup* when predicting *support for violence*. Although slightly weaker, another partial mediation occurred when the path was tested with the predictor, and mediator variables reversed. This indicates that *strength of Loyalist identity* enhanced the predictive power of *fear of Union breakup* on *support for violence* and vice versa. Both mediation effects were small, but this is likely due to the small study sample.

The mediation pathway suggests that individuals who fear Union breakup identify more strongly as Loyalists and that individuals with a stronger Loyalist identity support more extreme action, like violence.

A significant indirect effect also occurred when the variables were reversed, indicating that Loyalists are more afraid of Union breakup and this fear may make them support violence to neutralise this threat. The indirect effect was smaller but still significant, suggesting that **strength of Loyalist identity** is a stronger predictor of *support for violence*.

These results highlight a weakness in the study: due to small sample sizes and the use of cross-sectional analysis, it is difficult to define the direction of the relationship. However, this could help explain recent unrest in the Loyalist community in response to the Northern Ireland Protocol. To understand the importance of these variables in predicting *support for violence*, future research should utilise larger samples.

LIMITATIONS
These hypotheses provide interesting results but also highlight critical weaknesses in the study.

The small sample size means that findings cannot be extrapolated to the wider population. Due to the exploratory nature of the initial survey, it used multiple single-item variables. This makes it difficult to assess if the variables are acting the way the analysis suggests, as other factors, which have not been measured, could be having an impact. Findings would have been more robust if multiple measures examining the same variable had been combined to assess factors such as group threat and betrayal. However, as an explorative pilot study examining novel identities and emotions, it is acceptable.

IMPLICATIONS
This study demonstrated that there were significant differences between political identity groups and the outcome variable, *support for violence*. Previous studies in the region have focused almost entirely on the dichotomy of Protestants vs. Catholics. However, this study demonstrated that political identities are also important in determining hostile views. Future studies should expand and incorporate these identities when looking at prejudice and support for violence in NI. Utilising these political identities would strengthen context and help develop tools for improving intergroup relations.

It also demonstrated that *fear of Union breakup* due to the Northern Ireland Protocol was an important variable in understanding why Loyalists may partake in more extreme actions. If a solution is not found to this issue, it could result in Loyalist tensions increasing further. This would threaten other identity groups in NI, potentially leading to conflict escalation as both groups attempt to protect their interests (Shelly & Muldoon 2022). Indeed, one Catholic interviewee remarked that 'I can see it [the Northern Ireland Protocol] reigniting things', and that 'increased tensions are already being seen between communities'. Another interviewee, identifying as Protestant, stated that 'violence has been, like, extremely real and still present throughout our lives … this violence is madness, like, we need to stop but Brexit is re-establishing it'.

Finally, the study demonstrated that the feeling of betrayal may be an important variable in predicting hostile actions. Although the study did not collect sufficient data to test this thoroughly, initial analysis indicated a positive relationship between betrayal by Unionist institutions and support for violence. As this emotion is often referenced by the Loyalist community, feelings of betrayal may be critical in developing more extreme attitudes and stronger feelings of identity. Future research should investigate this further.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH
This study demonstrates that Brexit-related group threats and strength of political identity are important variables in understanding recent unrest in NI. There appears to be a rise in tensions and a shift to Loyalist identity groups as Brexit places doubts around the future of the region. Psychological explanations for these phenomena are critical to understand and help mitigate potential rising intergroup violence.

If the strength of political identity can lead to support for violence in NI, then community and political leaders

may have significant influence in propagating tensions in the region. Indeed, the DUP and other Unionist political parties have been successful in rallying Unionists to protest the Northern Ireland Protocol (Carroll 2022). Further, extreme Loyalist groups such as the LLC continue to warn of unrest amongst Loyalist paramilitaries and communities if the new protocol deal does not meet their standards (Kula 2023). Political tensions and uncertainty give community leaders significant influence. It is therefore essential that the continued negotiations of the protocol are handled with extreme care, as this study demonstrates that strength of political identity, betrayal and fear of breakup are potential indicators of support for violence.

However, as this is an explorative study, future projects should attempt to validate these results using larger sample sizes and more robust measures to garner more representative evidence. It should examine the differences between political communities and what pushes individuals to more extreme action. Future studies could look at how betrayal relates to the Loyalist identity. Such sentiments could be important within the NI context and should be examined alongside group threats, the strength of identity and support for violence. If we can better understand these variables, more might be done to prevent the re-emergence of conflict in the region.

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The Weatherproof Process: The Education System's Role in Preventing Alt-Right Radicalism

Erin Stoner

In response to contemporary questions about the appropriate response to a rise in alt-right ideas amongst young people, this article argues that the education system has a responsibility to counter the factors which make the alt-right appealing to young people in order to prevent radicalism. Primarily, the alt-right gains traction through a falsified sense of political and intellectual credibility, its ability to evade political responsibility due to a societal tendency to dismiss extremism which does not fit the idea of a 'foreign other' and their use of dark humour and irony to reduce social empathy between its members and those minority groups which it opposes, allowing a sense of distance between the groups which makes violence and hate more probable. Through schemes which promote social empathy, a refreshed idea about what classifies as an 'extremist', ensuring young people have access to accurate and unbiased information and taking a firmer approach towards bigoted behaviour in schools, the education system has both an opportunity, and a duty, to instil young people with the empathy and information required to make them far less likely to be radicalised by alt-right ideology.

INTRODUCTION

The alt-right (alternative-right) is a form of far-right extremism which emerged in the mid-2010s, existing as an umbrella term for a predominantly online community that rejects typical modern standards of racial diversity and inclusion, gender equality and LGBT rights in favour of a modernised version of traditional values consisting of patriarchal gender roles and strong advocacy for racial segregation (Wendling 2018, p. 4). There is a belief that multiculturalism and political correctness are enforced to vilify, oppress and eventually eliminate the white race and that men are being driven from their 'rightful' place as the dominant sex by a feminist agenda. I argue that the increased popularity of the alt-right should be counteracted through educational means due to the increased vulnerability of young people to alt-right radicalism through falsified intellectual support of the movement, a narrow societal definition of extremism and the alt-right's use of satire to reduce empathy towards minority groups. Specifically, a remodelled education scheme which places focus on specific behaviours and knowledge would be able to reduce the appeal of the alt-right to young people. It is noteworthy that education cannot prevent the very existence of the alt-right, due to its ability to thrive in an online space, but can work to make its content far less appealing or convincing to students.

Primarily, it is necessary to establish a qualification for my argument that education has a vital role in preventing extremism: while the role of the education system is enormously important in preventing the radicalisation of young people, the very nature of the alt-right as a predominately online phenomenon means that the education system should aim to prevent students from being radicalised rather than prevent the radical content from existing. The existence of the alt-right as a body is an issue which is simply out of the hands of educational means in the short term; thus, the aim of my suggested educational measures is not to stamp out the community all together, for that would be impossible, but instead lessen the appeal of its ideology—to 'weatherproof' children to its effects.

My first argument claims that falsified intellectual backing gives the movement a sense of credibility, which plays into the biases of its followers and potential new members. Schools can counter such misinformation about other social groups through integrated social learning, ensuring all students receive factual education about social groups other than their own to prevent ideas about others from deriving from rumours or stereotypes. Here my argument will draw on examples from alt-right activist Nick Fuentes and Bates' research on the effects of students' exposure to social issues on the susceptibility to alt-right content.

Second, I investigate the societal normalisation of 'casual' racism and misogyny, which result in acts of violence from the alt-right community being viewed as isolated, instead of symptomatic of a wider radicalism issue. As a result, the alt-right has a level of social immunity to the results of the violence which occurs in its community. I acknowledge the failures of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)'s 'Don't Be a Puppet' scheme as a potential counterargument to the idea that education should be used to prevent extremism. However, I clarify that the fixed public notion of extremism as a 'foreign other' makes it an ineffective scheme. Alternatively, 'The Good Lad Initiative' displays a more effective form of educational activity which aims to have open discussions about masculinity and radical misogyny amongst young people. Furthermore, changing the sole definition of extremism from that which is foreign would help identify discriminatory behaviour as extreme rather than normalised.

Lastly, the alt-right gains credibility through its ability to clothe its ideology as dark humour, allowing the communities message to be consumed more lightly and easily by new members, making radicalisation easier while going undetected by social media's filtration systems. In order to combat the use of dark humour to radicalise, as seen in the case of the Christchurch shooting, education which instils social empathy can be developed to reduce the social distance required to make extreme content about the abuse of minorities humorous. As a result, the education system cannot prevent extremism from existing. However, it can affect students' perspectives concerning such extremism to

make it less appealing, thus preventing radicalism.

The Role of Education: The Weatherproof Approach

The primary barrier regarding the role of education in preventing alt-right extremism is that the matter is complicated by the fact that the root of the alt-right exists outside the reach of a formalised education system. This does not prevent a degree of responsibility resting on the education system; because the alt-right exists predominantly online, the group most vulnerable to conversion is typically those who access the online space most—young people (Petrosyan 2023). Nevertheless, one must comprehend the extent to which the online space harbours the alt-right to understand that the largest responsible party for attacking the roots of the issue is the tech industry and decrease its potency by equipping young people with the knowledge, empathy and critical thinking skills which decreases the appeal of the content when they come to interact with them.

The online space has a specific, unique appeal to the alt-right. There is a lack of accountability due to lower enforcement of hate speech laws, meaning content which would be policed in real life can thrive. Anonymity allows higher numbers of followers due to reduced social repercussions of endorsing extreme views. Finally, an international reach can connect individuals globally from an easily accessible platform. A lack of social accountability is the most prominent benefit for members of the alt-right online: Wendling argues convincingly that sites like 4chan 'takes, to put it mildly, a very libertarian view on free speech' (Wendling 2018, p. 52). To make his case, Wendling points out that 'officially on the site, moderators will remove … racism … but 4chan is a site where … a "n*gger hate thread" doesn't qualify as racism' (Wendling 2018, p. 52). Sites may have some laws and regulations that dictate what is and is not allowed online, but they are often implemented to a minimal extent due to the sheer size and amount of content that breaks such codes. That being said, some evident violations of online laws often go unchecked. This means that the hate thread mentioned can thrive and grow without the limitations or legal policing which would occur in real life. As a result, the online space acts as a hotspot for the alt-right due to the lack of accountability provided by anonymous posting and lax regulations. One can see, then, that the online space harbours the alt-right in a manner vastly out of the reach of the educational system. They cannot regulate 4chan; they cannot ban offensive users or even stop their own students from accessing such content, whether on purpose or by accident. As a result, one should not expect education to prevent extremism by locating and counteracting active members but instead focus on educating students on current social issues and instilling empathy, making alt-right content unattractive and thus less likely to succeed in radicalisation. This is what I refer to as a 'weatherproof' approach: the education system cannot prevent the 'storm' which is the alt-right from existing—that is out of their hands—but they can take actions which will make young people aware of the dangers of the alt-right and equip them with the empathy and knowledge they require for such content to lose its charisma. I argue that education settings can do this via three main ways: the building of social empathy through diversified learning and curriculums, the providing of unbiased information regarding social topics with the encouragement of open conversation around them, and the installation of stricter school rules regarding bigotry in order to represent racism, sexism and homophobia as serious issues.

False Intellectual Credibility

False intellectual credibility is a dominant element of the alt-right's ideological appeal and thus is a suitable target for the education system to focus on. Public endorsement of the alt-right by those with perceived intellectual credibility normalises ideas which would otherwise be viewed as radical, thus giving credit to alt-right ideology and pushing it into the realms of social acceptability, as opposed to extremity. This is dangerous because it can legitimise views detrimental to minority groups and give political credibility to extremist ideology. Nick Fuentes, a 24-year-old alt-right activist, is a key example of the alt-right pushing into acceptable mainstream politics through intellectual and popular endorsement. His rallies attracted the support of former congressman Steve King and Arizona state senator Wendy Rogers, showing that the ideology of the alt-right, as presented by Fuentes, who has promoted a 'white Christian nation' and compared interracial relationships to bestiality, has successfully begun to creep its way into social acceptability due to endorsement by political actors who have a level of perceived credibility (Southern Poverty Law Centre (SPLC) n.d. b). Fuentes openly displayed his desire to shift the alt-right into the window of political acceptability: 'If we can drag the furthest part of the right further to the right, and we can drag the centre further to the right, and we can drag the left further to the right … then we're winning' (Hayden 2021). This emerging trend of mainstream politicians rubbing shoulders with members of the alt-right, and the subsequent movement of the ideology into the central sphere of political acceptability, increase the perceived legitimacy of their movement, making white supremacy and sexism no longer fringe views but ones endorsed—or deemed insignificant enough to be looked past—by major political forces. Within a classroom space, issues arise when young people feel that the political opinions that Fuentes promotes are legitimate and justified opinions to hold within the political space. The guise of intellectual credibility promotes him from a rambling extremist to an individual with sincere political values, which US senators endorse, thus making his content far more legitimate in the eyes of young people who do not have the political knowledge to contextualise his work as extreme.

Educational Response: Countering Misinformation

In response, education systems should promote the integration of political and social groups among students so that they are well-informed about other social groups. Students should be encouraged to critically analyse a broad political spectrum of views, preventing the alt-right from being viewed as the whole truth and contextualising it within a broader spectrum of politics. Misinformation about 'the other' is a prominent part of what makes the alt-right effective. Fuentes' claims that white people are being put at a disadvantage due to 'PC' culture makes his ideology appealing to a white

audience searching for a reason for their feelings of political and social dissatisfaction, even though 24.3% of Native Americans and 19.5% of Black Americans live below the poverty line, compared to 8.2% of whites in the US (Statista Research Department 2022). His support from seemingly credible political figures from mainstream politics increases the perceived validity of his agenda, even though statistics counter them. False propaganda means that racialised or gendered issues can be distorted to promote the alt-right agenda, easily done online in which confirmation bias (the psychological phenomenon in which one will favour or seek out information confirming their beliefs) often prevents such content from being properly vetted. The best way this can be countered within education is through the provision of alternative, factual information and the promotion of critical thinking so that when the alt-right presents its ideology as intellectually credible or even as factual, students feel equipped enough to dispute and assess claims made by the alt-right about minority groups with their information. Specifically, there should be a focus on members of one social group being educated on other groups: for example, a white woman will likely have some knowledge of the struggles of womanhood due to her lived experiences and thus is less likely to be radicalised by misogynistic content in comparison to a man. However, because she is not educated with the same knowledge on race, she is more likely to engage with racially extreme content with a less critical mindset due to a lack of foundational information on the subject.

Bates makes a strong argument that the majority of students who engaged in misogynistic behaviour, linking into areas of the online alt-right, had never been exposed to any content about the subjects beforehand; a lack of information meant that they were not equipped with any prior knowledge to make them think critically about the information they were presented with online. A subject, Alex, 'had a markedly different perspective from his friends' because 'his mum had already talked to him about feminism and inequality … when he encountered the same online propaganda, it didn't have the same sort of impact' (Bates 2021). Here we see that a young man equipped with just basic information about women's rights from a few conversations was less likely to be impacted by online extremism. From Bates' research, I propose that the curriculum needs to diversify content so that it is not only minority groups who receive information about minority issues; for example, classes and talks which promote women's rights within schools should not be held as an optional extra which is promoted amongst female students, but instead integrated into the essential curriculum so all students, regardless of gender, are taught about feminist issues from a non-biased and factual source. Of course, some arguments would state that this is a heavy-handed approach; many activists have claimed that enforcing a diversified curriculum is a form of propaganda in and of itself. In particular, the alt-right scene points eagerly at the sight of schools enforcing such rules as evidence of a liberal agenda aiming to brainwash young people into being politically correct, oppressing the freedom of speech rules we hold valuable. I understand the concern for freedom of expression, but the nuances of schemes such as this are of major importance in this context. Classes on minority issues should not be set up as lectures or forceful spaces in which any child who expresses a rogue opinion is scolded—instead, they should be structured to provide young people with arenas and opportunities to discuss opinions on sensitive topics in a controlled, safe space. Furthermore, the main aim of this change would be to make students aware and provide information on gendered and racial issues: it would be about ensuring that a child's first experience with the term 'feminism' is in a space which is safe to ask questions, and provides a range of accurate information for students to engage with, as opposed to it being through an alt-right post which tells young men that 'feminism is cancer'. Diversifying the education system is not about enforcing an opinion but providing students with context to the content they will encounter online so that they can see it as radical, as opposed to normalised. This ensures that students are equipped with information about social groups other than their own, meaning that when they are presented with extreme content, they have the skills and knowledge to engage with it critically rather than take it as factual or make assumptions about other social groups based on rumour or stereotype. By instilling effective curriculum changes which educate all students on issues which do not necessarily affect them personally, students are equipped with enough information that their knowledge of social others is not only formed by the internet.

Lack of Recognition as a Violent Ideology

Education can further protect young people from radicalisation by ensuring that they recognise the severity of alt-right content and understand the implications it has as an ideological community, as opposed to just the odd individual. The alt-right protects its integrity due to the public dismissal of its acts of violence and hate as acts of a 'lone wolf' rather than acts resulting from wider movement. As a result, the movement enjoys a reduced responsibility for the violence which occurs because of its ideology in ways other terror groups do not.

In 2014, 22-year-old Elliot Rodger killed his two flatmates, another friend and then drove to the Alpha Phi sorority house of University of California, Santa Barbara, where he shot three other women, killing two. From that followed a shooting spree in which he killed one and injured 14 more before finally turning the gun on himself. The manifesto he left—'My Twisted World'—was a 107,000-word declaration of his anger towards the people, but mostly the women he was surrounded with, who he felt treated him unfairly. His underlying ideology surrounded the fact that he was being robbed of sex by attractive women who viewed him as an inferior man and thus refused him the sexual pleasure he felt entitled to. Rodger felt that his physical appearance as a 'short, bad-at-sports, shy, weird, friendless kid' meant that women would never see value in him and thus needed to be punished. His manifesto was steeped in racist and misogynistic hate, comments including 'if this ugly black filth (referring to a black acquaintance) was able to have sex with a blonde white girl… while I've had to suffer virginity all my life, then this just proves how ridiculous the female gender is' (quoted in Wendling 2018, p. 61).

Srinivasan's analysis of the event emphasises the

reaction of the wider 'incel' community as a telling example of the extent to which the alt-right is steeped in the complicity of its most violent members. 'Incel' is short for 'involuntarily celibate' and was originally a term coined by a woman for both men and women who struggled romantically or sexually; however, it has now emerged into a community primarily comprised of men who harbour extreme misogynist views and blame a social hierarchy of selfish women only ever picking 'alpha men' for their lack of sexual luck. They blamed women for Rodger's actions; Srinivasan summarised their sentiments well in that 'had one of those "wicked bitches" just fucked Elliot Rodger he wouldn't have had to kill anyone' (Srinivasan 2021, p. 75). Srinivasan's commentary makes a convincing point about how Roger's actions were not only seen as excusable but actively justifiable and a cause for celebration to many community members. Many incels hail him as a 'prince' of the movement for his killings (Edwards 2018), endorsing his actions as righteous and a symptom of a desperate young man acting out due to being deprived of sex by women (Wendling 2018, p. 60).

This event is just one of multiple attacks and assaults committed as a result of a broader trend of far-right violence, including the killing of Heather Heyer at the Charlottesville Unite the Right rally and the 2019 Christchurch mosque shooting. On these occasions, events are rarely treated as acts of terror and are more commonly viewed as the work of a lone individual, often one who is viewed as being mentally ill rather than spiteful. Following the killings, California sheriff Bill Brown responded to a question about what can be done to prevent similar crimes in the future: he cited the difficulty surrounding arms laws and the fact that 'many suspects in mass murder incidents suffer from severe mental illness that is untreated or undertreated, yet in this instance the subject was receiving treatment' (Woolf 2015). There is no mention here of the incel ideology, the violent misogyny and racism in his manifesto, nor the community which spurred him on and hailed him as 'the supreme gentleman' following his killings (Srinivasan 2021, p. 112). As Srinivasan indicates, by the incel community, Rodger was seen as a lone, desperate young man whose actions resulted from being deprived of something owed to him: it was a cry for help from a sick young man whose world did him wrong. I argue from this that this sentiment somewhat transcends just the incel community, and the depiction of Rodger as a troubled young man extends to the wider coverage of the event. While coverage of the killings did not go so far as to justify him in any way, there is a sense of isolation in the sheriff's comments: the notion that it was the act of a singular, mentally ill young man, as opposed to a symptom of a more comprehensive ideology. While some perpetrators are likely to have experienced mental health problems, this does not detract from the fact that these events are linked closely to the violent and dehumanising rhetoric of the alt-right, which devalues the lives of women in the case as mentioned above, which the sheriff's comments do not touch on. The manifesto left behind by Rodger reeks of essential elements of alt-right culture; it consists of dark attempts at humour, a sense of victimhood, and the notion that they are taking 'revenge' on a group that the alt-right ideology believes is not only inferior to them but is actively trying to remove them from existence.

The activity of the alt-right is not simply the odd loner committing random acts of hate and violence. It has, in the cases shown, fatal implications for the minorities which it demonises. Thus, the acts of violence should be assessed in relation to the alt-right movement rather than be seen as isolated acts of violence, in order to recognise the links between the violence committed and ideology.

Educational Response: Reimagining the 'Foreign Other'

The main reason for the dismissal of violence committed by the alt-right as randomised and isolated is that the perpetrators do not fit the notion of an 'extremist', which is widely held as 'foreign'. Both the education system and wider government plans must move on from this fixated image of a terrorist as a distinctly foreign threat if the alt-right is to be held responsible for the political hate and violence which has been committed as a result of their ideology. There are strong arguments that the government's educational approaches towards counter-extremism are too centred on the notion of the 'foreign other' to be applied effectively to the alt-right, seeing as the alt-right consists largely of modernised forms of traditional white nationalism (SPLC n.d. a). I argue that the current anti-extremism laws fall short of being efficient with the alt-right because racist extremism, which aims to preserve an imagined 'authentic' national identity, cannot be counteracted by measures which focus on preserving national identity by targeting those construed as a foreign other. If one took the 'Don't Be a Puppet' scheme (see later) as an example of an educational response to extremism, then one would be rightly suspicious of its efficacy. The scheme was massively criticised, and one cannot deny that it spotlighted what issues can arise with using education to counter extremism. However, I argue the scheme itself was ineffective, not the use of education to address radicalism. While it was a poor use of education, the use of education itself can have a positive impact on reducing radicalism if done correctly—a manner which accounts for multiple forms and manifestations of extremism. The alt-right is steeped in a paradoxical sense of futurism and traditionalism—it relies on a thriving online space to root itself communally, while clinging to ideas that counter the egalitarian standards foundational to modern politics. This is, in fact, not what makes it unique—Islamic extremism shares this futuristic traditionalism in many ways. The difference, however, is that the notion of the 'outsider' is no longer applicable: members of the alt-right are typically young, white men who do not fit into the public imagining of an extremist. In many cases, members pride themselves on being 'real Americans', claiming that the country has fallen from grace due to modernity. They cannot be analysed through the same frame of the foreign threat as Islamic extremism so often is and are often harder to identify due to this lack of apparent cultural otherness.

One could argue that education can negatively affect young people's attitudes towards extremism, evidenced by the American 'Don't Be a Puppet' scheme. The current American anti-violent-extremism educational programme is heavily centred on Islam, failing in its profiling of Muslim students and lacking applicability to far-right extremism, which functions differently and thus requires an alternative approach. In 2016, the

FBI released a website to educate schoolchildren on the dangers of violent extremism. 'Don't Be a Puppet' consisted of a game in which students could navigate scenarios, quizzes and activities aimed at teaching teenagers 'how to recognize violent extremist messaging and become more resistant to self-radicalization and possible recruitment' (FBI 2016). The intent behind the project was sensible: it attempts to ensure that extremist messages are recognised as extreme, as opposed to mundane and make students less susceptible to radicalisation. However, it is a clear example of narrowing focused project that received mass criticism for profiling Islamic students as potential terrorists. In an open letter sent to the FBI requesting the shutdown of the site, criticisms focused on the website's encouragement of individuals to 'contact someone you trust if someone you know is … traveling to places that sound suspicious' (American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) et al. 2016). A place which 'sounds suspicious' is a problematic term: the underlying meaning here is, in reality, a place which sounds *foreign*. A holiday to central Europe is likely not to be viewed as 'suspicious', even though, as pointed out by the open letter, it hosts various far-right extremist parties, but a trip to the Middle East is far more likely to raise concerns as a 'suspicious' place. This unfairly targets Muslim and Middle Eastern students, displaying a huge blind spot for the scheme in terms of any form of extremism which is not connected to a 'suspicious' sounding location. The scheme is so focused on this idea of the vicious outsider, of the foreign other, that it completely discounts the idea that extremism might be grown and produced domestically. If taken in isolation, the 'Don't Be a Puppet' scheme would make a strong argument against using education to counter extremism in young people. However, I argue that this example is not so much evidence for flaws in an educational approach as a narrow-minded one. The previously mentioned criticisms are perfectly justified but result from a cultural focus on the foreign other as the image of a terrorist, which means that those who do not fit into that image often slip through the net. Instead of developing awareness skills, students are encouraged to profile 'foreign sounding' places; this would be of little use when the majority of radicalism amongst the alt-right takes place online, within the nation's borders. The scheme has an outdated and racialised idea of extremism, but that does not mean it could not be edited to have more effective content. For this scheme to apply better to more alt-right forms of extremism, it must move on from this idea of a racialised, foreign threat as the poster of extremism, particularly when such cultural villainization is, in fact, in line with much of far-right ideology.

Educational Response: Denormalisation of Hate

To counter the fact that alt-right ideology is not typically recognised as authentic extremism, education can work to contextualise the bigotry of such a group to ensure it is treated seriously and with consequences. The maintenance of social expectations which reframe intolerant behaviour as serious means that attitudes which link to or could be taken advantage of by alt-right ideology are reduced. Opposite the failures of the 'Don't Be a Puppet' scheme sits the successes of Beyond Equality, an educational group who deliver talks to schools, universities and sports teams on masculinity. Their schemes, like 'The Good Lad' initiative, are great examples of pastoral interventions in educational settings which focus on ideas of masculinity and challenges the normalisation of 'lad culture'. The project aims to 'prevent gender-based violence and create communities which are safe for everyone' (Beyond Equality n.d.), focusing on examining gender roles and what it means to be 'manly'. Schemes like this are key for undoing the normalisation of sexism within education spaces, which goes on to produce more confident young men who feel secure and informed enough that the victimhood and sexist environment of extremism seems far less appealing. Bates' (2021) research into sexism within schools again points out a correlation between schools which had opened discussions about sexism and prescribed gender roles and a decrease in sexist behaviour. She explains that in schools which had conversations about sexism, the students recognised its implications and that it was unacceptable. On the other hand, in schools where sexism was normalised and went unchecked, she 'watched boys jeering at female teachers then snapping to attention when male staff walk in' (Bates 2021, p. 265). Here we see that in schools which create a clear social boundary which states that sexism is not tolerated and social issues surrounding gender were discussed, there was a healthier environment with regards to gender. On the other hand, schools which dismissed such behaviour as 'laddish' produced a culture in which sexism, racism and homophobia were commonplace and often went without punishment. As a result, sexism becomes normalised within that space, the views deemed permissible, which then validate bigotry on a wider level—including that of the alt-right. If a schoolchild is not told that sexist or racist behaviour is wrong, they are unlikely to meet extreme content with the same criticism as one who understands the implications of such bigotry. When sexist or racist behaviour is normalised or excused, the boundary is blurred outside the educational setting online. The intolerance promoted by the alt-right is then not viewed with the severity it should be because students are not only desensitised to such levels of bigotry, but their sexist or racist attitudes are politically validated and thus strengthened. In order to contextualise the racism and sexism of the alt-right as extreme and negative, one must contextualise sexism and racism within educational settings as extreme, negative and serious. This is achieved by working towards a school culture that does not tolerate such attitudes and has open conversations about the implications of strict gender roles (as seen in the 'Good Lad' initiative) and the classification of bigotry not as simple 'laddish behaviour'.

Dark Humour and Irony

It is impossible to understate the prevalence of meme culture for the alt-right and the subsequential ease with which young people can encounter its content. The word meme is defined as 'an image, video, piece of text, etc., typically humorous in nature, that is copied and spread rapidly by internet users, often with slight variations' (Oxford English Dictionary 2022). By no means are all memes a link to the alt-right—they are a diverse and ubiquitous cultural phenomenon to which most young people have access to and enjoy. However, this is the primary reason for its danger as a radicalisation

tool. For the alt-right movement, memes act as a way to convey ideology amongst the community in a humorous manner, enabling a sense of satire, which for potential new or less extreme members, makes them more digestible. It also means they can claim they are simply partaking in 'dark humour' as opposed to bigotry, making their content harder to police for social media platforms. It is noteworthy that dark humour is not always a bad thing; it is used by many as a way of making light of difficult situations, particularly ones which affect them personally. However, dark humour and satire are taken advantage of by the alt-right in order to reduce levels of accountability. If one is constantly walking the line between humorous and authentic content, it is easy to mask authentic commentary on race and gender as 'just a joke' instead of it being viewed sincerely and judged as such.

In 2019, over 50 people were killed in a mass shooting of two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. The gunman, Brenton Tarrant, targeted the mosques during Friday prayers, when they were busiest, hoping to inflict 'as many fatalities as possible' (BBC 2020). He live-streamed the massacre on Twitter, so his followers could watch the murders happen in real-time. The footage of the Christchurch shooting was quickly gripped by the meme culture of the alt-right, as users edited the footage to make it look like a classical shooting game, equipped with a kill count and ammo supply in the corners of the screen. The video was spread amongst individuals who were not even necessarily members of the alt-right, many of them everyday schoolchildren who swapped the video in group chats. There is a heavy sense of derealisation to this act; it is not an approval of the shooting for all members of the alt-right, but it distances the individual from the severity of his act, thus further dehumanising the victims and adding to the lack of empathy often shown. Members of the alt-right responded to this content in two ways; some considered it an example of dark humour, a satirical, but not necessarily endorsing, edit of the livestream video. Many of these were not promoting the act but exist as members on the outskirts of the alt-right community, possessing enough levels of dehumanisation of minority groups to bypass its severity enough to find humour in an animated 'kill count' being crudely pasted over a real-world massacre. However, for other members, the video was an opportunity to show authentic endorsement of his act by spreading it amongst friends in celebration. In August that same year, another gunman who had hailed Tarrant as a 'saint' online launched a failed attack at a mosque in Norway (Dearden 2019). The glorification of the act, whether in jest or sincerity, has a detrimental effect on the victims and other members of the minority groups targeted here; newer members learn to dehumanise Muslims through the spreading of the video in jest, and more radical members use the same content to hail the gunman as inspirational, going on to commit copy-cat cases.

Meme culture and dark humour mean that the alt-right can normalise cultural othering and reframe, or even glorify, the severity of its ideology. Irony further reduces the responsibility the movement has for its claims, as individuals can make hateful or misleading commentary which, if held accountable for, they can claim was 'ironic'. Contorted forms of dark humour, as

seen in the Christchurch shooting, act as a foundational sense of 'othering' and instils a lack of empathy, making an individual more susceptible to extreme ideologies while simultaneously relieving the movement of the responsibility of their views. To return to Fuentes, he commented that 'irony is so important for giving a lot of cover and plausible deniability for our views', referring to comments he made denying the Holocaust (Dreisbach 2021). By taking the Christchurch shooting footage and Fuentes' Holocaust denial as examples, a Schrödinger's cat effect is produced: the content is both meant seriously and as a joke until a user receives it. If the user is far enough into the alt-right frame, it will contain some genuine and inspirational points about race; if they are newer to the scene, it is simply humorous by absurdity, which begins the foundational detachment process. Bates' moving sentiment rings true when she argues that the beginnings of alt-right radicalism are rooted in the casualisation of abuse under the guise of humour because 'it can't really be hating women if everyone is laughing about it online' (2021, p. 273); or in this case, it cannot really be racial hatred if everyone is laughing about it online. Even though an individual may not fully engage with the politics of the sincere side of the alt-right when faced with memes joking about opening fire on a mosque, there is still a distinct lack of empathy and 'othering' which is formed by humour being related to the abuse of minorities.

Educational Response: Building Empathy and Reducing Hate

Education schemes must focus on building empathy amongst students to respond to this use of humour to radicalise and encourage dehumanisation. A key aspect of the alt-right's radicalisation process is building of an 'us vs. them' narrative. This typically stems from the movement's populist links, the notion that followers of the movement are the 'real' or 'original' members of a society and that those who lie outside of that social group are threats to the peace of the original society, or at fault for whatever may be going wrong within it. Empathy is significantly reduced in this process of detachment from social groups, from which comes a heightened probability for violence due to the dehumanisation and villainisation of a particular group. Davies' commentary on research by the Violence Prevention Network on politically radicalised prisoners and staff throughout intervention processes reached the critical conclusion that 'there is no change in behaviour without the capacity for empathy' (Davies 2018). In order to counteract this detachment and restore a sense of socialised empathy, the education system can instil learning values within students, which break down this notion of 'us vs. them' through extracurricular schemes and curriculum changes.

A good example of this is the Swedish 'Tolerance Project', created with a particular interest in neo-Nazi and far-right extremism. The 'Tolerance Project' recognised that intolerance and social othering could not be changed without instilling information and empathy. Unlike the FBI's 'Don't be a Puppet' scheme, the Tolerance Project focussed on long-term education and a sense of open conversation surrounding social issues in order to encourage students 'to express their ideas, even the controversial ones' through 'giving the students the historical and philosophical tools to ask

themselves the right questions' (The Segerstedt Institute 2019). The project is closely tied into the curriculum and traditionally ends with a trip to the Holocaust memorials in Poland, aiming to develop a sense of empathy and understanding of violence against minority groups. I argue that a similar line of thinking could encourage the same level of empathy to make the alt-right less attractive in the student body, acting as a preventative rather than a reactive measure. I propose a version of the 'Tolerance Project' adapted to address the growing numbers of alt-right radicalism amongst young people, where a curriculum was formed to instil empathetic values and valuable information in students who else would not learn about important social issues. However, the 'Tolerance Project' targeted those deemed vulnerable to, or already involved in, neo-Nazi ideologies. As opposed to this aspect, I argue that the scheme should target *all* students. Targeting students who are 'vulnerable', or cornering those engaged in content should be seen as a last resort rather than a preventative measure; in the proposed alt-right version of the project, schemes should be applied to the entire student body for any student with access to the internet (95% of US teenagers have access to a smartphone, and 89% said they were online 'almost constantly'; Bates 2021, p. 268) has access to such content, and is likely to encounter it either online or amongst peers. Similar to the focus on the Holocaust helping prevent neo-Nazi numbers from rising in Sweden, informed discussions on issues such as female genital mutilation, child marriage and abortion access would build empathy and prevent misogynistic attitudes which dismiss women's concerns. This sort of education scheme is not to shock or scare students, but to give a sense of realism and severity to the issues

they discuss and encourage sensitivity and empathy to social groups other than ours. Bigoted extremism is challenged by confronting attitudes with information and knowledge, instilling empathy into students, and preventing them from dehumanising other social groups.

Ultimately, education is a valuable preventative tool in regard to alt-right extremism, not only because the strong presence of the alt-right online means that young people are the most at risk of being radicalised, but because this is an ever-growing movement which is gaining political traction and has been behind multiple acts of violent terror. Thus, on a communal level, efforts must be made to prevent radicalisation. One must recognise the fact that many current government schemes are too far steeped in the notion of the cultural other to be applied well, and thus education schemes similar to that seen in the 'Good Lad' initiative and the 'Tolerance Project' can be employed to promote empathy, counter misinformation and decasualise bigoted behaviour in schools. Education cannot stem the very existence of the alt-right, for the group is too steeped in the online space, but education should seek a 'weatherproofing' approach: a focus on reducing the 'us vs. them' narrative in which the alt-right is steeped, providing information on other social groups to allow a better level of critical engagement with such content, and creating firm boundaries through recognising racism and sexism as wrong, rather than humorous or unimportant. Achieving these aims can make a strong counterbalance to the momentum of the movement by reducing its appeal and credibility.

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Double-Fragmentation and Bleeding Democracy: The Drug Trade, Violence, and Democratic Health in Mexico

Justin Weir

This paper seeks to explain the drastic increases in violence related to the drug trade in Mexico since 2000, arguing that a 'double-fragmentation'—a decentralisation of both political and criminal power—has been the key factor driving the violence. For over seven decades, Mexico's one-party state protected cartel activities, while governing inter-cartel interactions and thus restricting violence. Democratisation (a decentralisation of political power) eliminated the state-cartel protection mechanisms that had persisted throughout the 20th century, leaving cartels free to compete more violently with one another. This competition led the Calderón administration to adopt an aggressive approach to cartel policing which militarised DTO (drug-trafficking organisation) activities and targeted organisation leaders. This fragmented the most prominent cartels in Mexico into smaller, subnational units with access to military equipment and expertise, such as Los Zetas. These subnational units have individually sought to expand their territory and control, corrupting judicial and electoral activities along the way while engaging in increasingly theatrical forms of violence. The paper emphasises the insecurity and instability produced by escalating violence as a concerning factor in the weakening of Mexico's democratic health, and questions whether the popularity of the incumbent Obrador administration—despite power-consolidating behaviour—is a result of those factors.

INTRODUCTION

After a single-party authoritarian state dominated the political sphere in Mexico for the majority of the 20th century, Mexico finally achieved electoral democratisation in the year 2000. Yet, since then, rates of violence have skyrocketed, and drug trafficking groups have plagued all arenas of Mexican life. How could democratisation lead to worsened social conditions? In Mexico, democratic transition has led to the collapse of state-cartel collusion and protection agreements. This produced increased competition between the cartels to re-establish state connections and consolidate territory. A key symptom of this competition was increases in violence, leading the Calderón administration to intervene and over-militarise the conflict. As a result, many cartels splintered into smaller local factions—increasing the prevalence of turf wars, violence, acts of terror, and corruption—predominantly at the subnational level. In this sense, a double-fragmentation occurred in Mexico—the fragmentation of political power, and the fragmentation of criminal power—both caused by leadership turnover. Broadly, Mexico has become caught in a self-perpetuating cycle of violence that has weakened democratic health and made the country susceptible to democratic backsliding. This paper will argue that Mexico's democratic transition has caused a double-fragmentation—one which led to an exacerbation of drug-related violence and political corruption, producing high levels of insecurity, and damaging public perceptions of democracy.

This paper is in no way meant to argue against democratisation. Rather, it draws on a long line of scholarship that recognises the difficulties of democratic transitions in states that have had their social fabrics partially defined by the activities of criminal organisations—sometimes referred to as 'perverse state formation' (Pearce 2010, p. 286). Instead, it seeks instead to understand the links between democratisation, violence, and democratic consolidation. While previous scholarship has examined Mexico's democratisation, violence, and subnational criminal governance, this paper seeks to propel an understanding of these issues toward a discussion of broader democratic health in the country. Further research should examine current democratic health and stability in Mexico, as a symptom of the aforementioned issues.

FRAGMENTATION OF POLITICAL POWER
THE PRI PERIOD

For seventy-one years, Mexico's Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) governed the country uninterrupted. Although elections were conducted throughout this period, they were not free and fair, and election fraud was widespread (Trejo & Ley 2020; Thompson 2004). Scholars generally recognise that the country's true political shift towards democracy occurred with the 2000 election and the victory of Vincente Fox's National Action Party (PAN) (Schedler 2022; Trejo & Ley 2020; International Crisis Group 2021). The PRI's political monopoly had been slowly eroding since the late 1980s, when the left-wing factions broke off to promote policies that differed from the PRI's. By 2000, popular support for other parties, such as the PAN and the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) had increased, and the Mexican political system became a multiparty affair which enjoyed newfound political pluralism. As a result, the total dominance of the PRI party over the Mexican political sphere was diminished, and previously entrenched norms of political behaviour began to disappear.

Prior to this period, the drug trade in Mexico was characterised by centralisation of power—both in terms of drug trafficking organisations (DTOs)[1] and politics. Four major cartels[2] dominated the drug trade; these were the Sinaloa Cartel, the Juarez Cartel, the Gulf Cartel, and the Tijuana Cartel. The country was a major exporter of narcotics in this period, but these larger organisations remained surprisingly peaceful under what has been aptly referred to as the PRI's '*pax mafioso*' (Trejo & Ley 2020, p. 71; Rios 2013, p. 139).

[1] Use of the term 'drug trafficking organisation' (DTO) refers broadly to a spectrum of sizes of criminal drug-trafficking organisations in this paper.

[2] Use of the term 'cartel' refers to a large drug-trafficking criminal organisation in this paper.
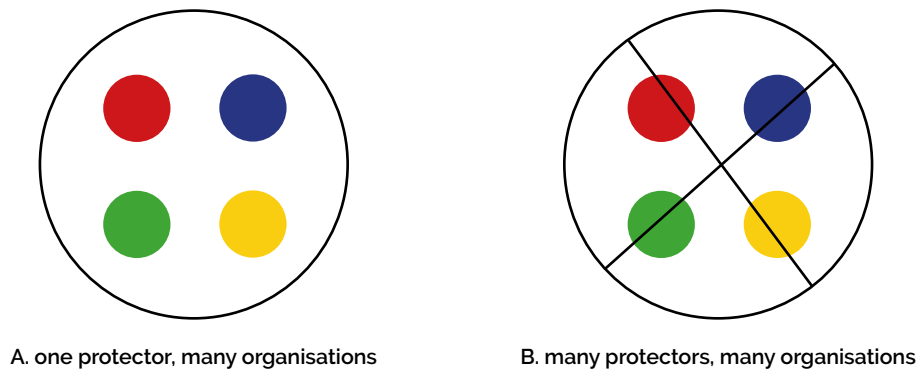
A. one protector, many organisations   B. many protectors, many organisations

Figure 1 | Representation of state-criminal organisation structures in Mexico. Solid lines represent state protection; coloured shapes represent criminal organisations such as cartels. Adapted from Snyder & Duran-Martinez (2009, p. 258).

The sheer political hegemony of the PRI ensured that the drug trade could be organised around state activities, and a high degree of peacefulness was maintained, especially compared to other drug-trafficking countries (Snyder & Duran-Martinez 2009; Trejo & Ley 2020). The PRI established patronage networks with the cartels, ensuring protection of public officials and civilians, in return for judicial protection of cartel members— the PRI 'defined the rules of the game for traffickers' (O'Neil 2009, p. 65). There were high levels of collusion occurring between state officials and cartels; perhaps most notably, General Jesús Gutiérrez Rebollo was in the pay of the Juarez cartel while in office as the regime's most 'senior drug official' (Morris 2012, pp. 30–31; Reuter 2009, p. 278).

Political scientists Angelica Duran-Martinez and Richard Snyder refer to this phenomenon as 'state-sponsored protection rackets' (Snyder & Duran-Martinez 2009, p. 253). They can be understood as informal agreements where 'public officials refrain from enforcing the law or, alternatively, enforce it selectively against the rivals of a criminal organization, in exchange for a share of the profits generated by the organization' (Snyder & Duran-Martinez 2009, p. 254). Mexico's PRI essentially institutionalised corruption as the norm for interactions between the state and drug cartels through state-sponsored protection. Cartels that enjoyed the protection of the state would provide information about other criminal groups which did not have agreements with the state. This allowed state forces to eliminate the cartels' competitors, generating promotions and praise for the police, and increasing market share for the cartels (Snyder & Duran-Martinez 2009). Under this structure, the state was able to control the market and reduce competition, thus reducing violence (Rios 2013).

Figure 1 is a visual reference for different structures of state-criminal organisation interactions. In the PRI's ruling era, Mexico's structure resembled that of example 'A'—where a single centralised protector commits to protection deals with all organisations inside of their jurisdiction. In a case where a single hegemonic political party such as the PRI has central control over state functioning and elections do not take place, it is less prone to violence compared to other structures. This effect occurs because the given government has the full latitude required to enforce, commit, and guarantee deals with organisations over a long-time horizon[3]

(Snyder & Duran-Martinez 2009). Cartels could expect that their deals would be upheld because there were no threats to political hegemony of the ruling party; the drug trade remained stable and controlled under the PRI.

ELECTORAL DEMOCRATISATION

When Mexico's transition to democracy occurred, the state's pre-existing patronage networks were shattered, sending the drug trade into an increasingly competitive free-for-all. Although the PRI did not lose a general election until the year 2000, its political monopoly began to erode in the late 1980s. In 1989, the PRI lost its first governorship, in the region of Baja California. In response, drug trafficking-related violence in that region increased sharply (O'Neil 2009, p. 65). This regional effect was the precursor to the eventual country-wide splintering of the PRI's patronage networks. This was compounded with reforms to the Attorney General's Office (PGR) which introduced regular relocation of personnel, fired large swaths of federal employees, and 'unleashed an ongoing process of creation and elimination of offices' (Snyder & Duran-Martinez 2009, p. 263). Each of these processes served to reduce the time horizons of government officials. A decade later, the PRI had far more broadly lost its control over the enforcement—and crucially, the non-enforcement— of the law across the country through the democratic transition (Snyder & Duran-Martinez 2009). Alongside actual leadership turnover and regime change, even more massive amounts of police were fired in an attempt to further dissolve ties between the state and the cartels (Reuter 2009). As a result, pre-existing informal arrangements between the state and the cartels broke down, resulting in cartels' inability to dominate their territory and prevent the power accumulation of rivals (Trejo & Ley 2020).

Without state protection, cartels simultaneously lost hegemonic control of their territories, and competing DTOs—and violence—emerged. Due to the illegality of the drug trade, there is an absence of 'formal mechanisms and systematic rules to deal with disputes and disagreements between organizations' (Rios 2013, p. 142). This makes competition highly unstable, as DTOs are left to resort to violence in the wake of territorial disputes. In response, territory-based violence increased, and it became a necessity for cartels to invest

3   'Time horizon' refers to the foreseeable, predictable future. In this context, it refers to the fact that cartels could rely on their contacts within the state to remain in office for very extended periods of time, given the non-democratic structure of the state. Leadership turnover initiated by political plurality would disrupt these time horizons.
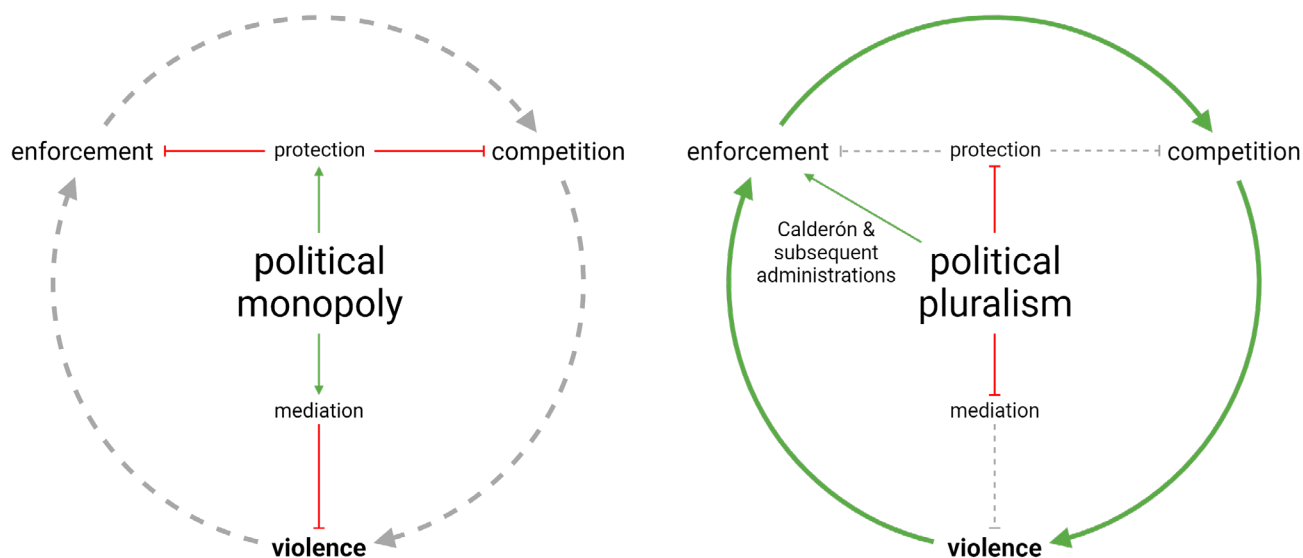
Figure 1 | Comparison between political monopoly and pluralism, and their resultant effects on the self-reinforcing equilibrium formed by relationships between enforcement operations, competition in drug markets and DTO violence.

in private militias and professionalisation of their own independent security forces. (Trejo & Ley 2020, pp. 82–83). This set the conditions for inter-gang clashes to emerge, making increasing drug-related violence a more salient issue in the nascent Mexican electoral sphere.

CALDERÓN ADMINISTRATION

After his victory in the 2006 general election, Calderón embarked on a bold hard-line approach towards the drug trade. His tenure marked a militarisation of the newly multipolar drug trafficking landscape, which led to a further exacerbation of violence (Reuter 2009). A massive state military force of 6,500 was deployed into the state of Michoacán, and 45,000 would be involved there by 2011 (Calderón et al. 2015, p. 1456). The deployment of the military rather than police forces was particularly detrimental in that it forced cartels to acquire more advanced weaponry and professionalised militias—producing cartel-owned non-state armies (Trejo & Ley 2020). The result was a staggering increase in drug-related homicides, increasing each year onwards from 2006: surging 142% from 2007–2008, another 40% from 2008–2009, and another 59% from 2009–2010 (Rios 2013, p. 140). Since democratisation, the ongoing drug war has resulted in 180,000 homicides and 70,000 disappearances (Schedler 2022, p. 483).

A crucial effect of this period is that it produced record numbers of arrests, interdictions, and extraditions to the United States (O'Neil 2009, p. 67). The focus of Calderón's approach was the specific targeting of high-profile leaders in cartels and DTOs, otherwise referred to as the 'kingpin strategy' (Trejo & Ley 2020, p. 144). A list of the thirty-seven most-wanted drug lords was released by the government in 2009, and by 2011, the state had 'had captured or killed twenty of the thirty-seven, twice the number of kingpins captured during the two previous administrations' (Calderón et al. 2015, p. 1456).

CYCLES OF VIOLENCE AT THE SUBNATIONAL LEVEL

In essence, the increase in Mexico's drug violence is rooted in its democratisation (see **Figure 2**). Political plurality resulted in a fragmentation of political power, causing the breakdown of long-upheld state-sponsored rackets which had effectively governed the dominant drug cartels. This created a more competitive drug market, leading to increased violence between the cartels. In response, state enforcement operations intensified under Calderón's administration. This hard-line approach produced a high degree of leadership neutralisation, which in turn fragmented the cartels into smaller, local DTOs—further increasing competition between traffickers, and restarting the cycle.

CRIMINAL FRAGMENTATION

The classic adage 'cut the head off the snake, and the body will die' could not be less true in the case of Mexico. Quantitative analysis has found that leadership neutralisation (capturing or killing) led to increases of 31.2% in drug-related homicides and 33.9% in non-drug-related homicides within a given municipality (Calderón et al. 2015, pp. 1471–1472). Thus, leadership neutralisation also leads to increased inter-gang violence, which has an even stronger spill over effect onto the rest of the population.

Decapitation of the Mexican cartels has led to increased violence in a few ways. First, it created internal succession struggles within DTOs where potential heirs engaged their loyal forces to eliminate potential competition for total leadership (Rios 2013). Second, it obstructed command chains from leaders to local 'cells' (Calderón et al. 2015). Local cells are responsible for smaller-scale criminal activities within their respective municipalities, and a lack of enforcement or connection to a larger cartel network can lead cells to pursue revenue instead through activities like extortion or robbery, explaining the spill over effect. Third, and

most importantly, it led to an outright fracturing of cartels (Calderón et al. 2015; Trejo & Ley 2020). The elimination of a leader can reduce ties between disparate factions within a cartel, which may not be so supportive of a new leader or may back their own leader against another entirely. Additionally, leaders of smaller factions may work independently to 'gain control of fragmented markets' (O'Neil 2009, p. 68). This occurs when existing fragments of a larger DTO may vie for particularly valuable territories and trafficking routes, as a means of further increasing market share and security against the other fragments.

As a result, many smaller DTOs emerged as independent trafficking groups while the larger organisations splintered into pieces. Thus, elimination of leadership has not dismantled the cartel system, 'but broken it into smaller fragments that fight each other for turf' (Esberg 2020). The number of active DTOs in Mexico is estimated to have more than doubled since 2009, and a large proportion of these are smaller cells that have broken off from their larger organisation in the wake of leadership neutralisation (Esberg 2020). Further, their recession into smaller, more local organisations has made their tracking much harder, making it likely that there are far more than can be documented.

Without a strong centralised state apparatus to provide protection to DTOs, collusion has been transposed to the subnational level. In an increasingly competitive environment, state protection is one of the most valuable advantages that a DTO can have against those who impede on its turf, making it a necessity to compete and survive (International Crisis Group 2021). The DTOs recognise this: 'If there's one rule all of them know, it's that only those who have the protection of the state can grow' (Ernst 2021). The smaller, newly emerged DTOs operate primarily in specific local territories, and do not have the capacity to pay the high cost that comes with bribing high-level officials. The focus has then shifted from the national level to the local level—'the weakest layer of government' (Trejo & Ley 2020, p. 252). Out of 357 Mexican officials arrested in 2009 for aiding DTOs, 90% were from municipal police forces (Morris 2012, p. 31). In discussing attempts to gain territory from other DTOs, a high-ranking lieutenant in a criminal organisation remarked that '[t]hey have the state government on their side … and when we try to attack, they send helicopters and launch operations' (Ernst 2021). Other benefits include regular exchanges of intelligence about the activities of rival groups and acting against enemy groups together—protection deals with local authorities 'can tilt the balance of power in favour of one crime ring or another' (International Crisis Group 2021, p. 11). The current distribution of protection therefore more closely resembles structure 'B' found in **Figure 1** (p. 100)—more (smaller) organisations, more protection sources, more competition: more prone to violence (Snyder & Duran-Martinez 2009).

Public Terrorism and Trauma

Alongside pure rates of violence, the form of the violence has also changed. The transition to the local level has brought with it the incentive for DTOs to weaponise terror. Generating a reputation as a feared and violent group is a form of credible commitment of retaliation in the case of local security forces defecting from protection agreements. As well, pure extortion and funnelling of tax dollars has also become an important source of revenue, making the narrative of a threatening presence more important. It can also make protection cheaper, as state officials can be forced to cooperate with DTOs through fear rather than bribes (Chalk 2011). In some cases, multiple DTOs compete for control of the same local officials—those with a reputation for higher levels of violence, and especially 'theatrical violence',[4] are more likely to game deals with local authorities, through this fear factor. In one case, a newly elected mayor received offers from two different rival DTOs within days of entering office—the safest option is to side with the group that has a greater capacity for violence (Felbab-Brown 2021a).

As a result, DTOs are competing for both territory as well as image. Theatrical violence is a key tool for DTOs to curate the image of a barbaric and ruthless organisation (Felbab-Brown 2021a). For example, it has become commonplace for DTO victims to be skinned, dismembered, or boiled in lye, and put on display (Chalk 2011). Many groups that were produced out of the fragmentation of the cartels, like Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) and Los Zetas, have resorted specifically to acts of public terrorism and theatrical violence. The CJNG emerged from the fracturing of a section of the Sinaloa cartel, notably ignited by the killing of drug lord Ignacio Coronel by Mexican security forces (InSight Crime 2020). The Zetas, meanwhile, were originally the armed wing of the Gulf Cartel—gaining their autonomy with the arrest of the Gulf Cartel's leader, Osiel Cárdenas Guillén (Corcoran 2017). The CJNG has used rocket launchers to shoot down state helicopters and launched military-style sieges on towns controlled by rivals, while sending audio messages of death threats to local citizens (Felbab-Brown 2021a; Arrieta 2021). They have begun using drone-mounted IEDs to bomb and terrorise civilians from above, in one case dropping a barrage of explosives directly on a police station (Janowitz 2022). CJNG recruits are coerced into engaging in cannibalism in order to desensitise recruits to violence (Meza 2019). In 2008, the Zetas tossed fragmentation grenades into a packed plaza celebrating Mexican Independence Day, killing eight civilians and injuring over a hundred (Chalk 2011, pp. 42–43). In the summer of 2011, they set fire to a casino, killing fifty-two civilians (Dudley 2017). Later in the year, they massacred seventy-two bound civilians and poured their bodies into a mass grave (Moore 2011). In another case, the Zetas abducted several buses of travellers and forced them to fight each other to the death for their survival (Corcoran 2017). These are only specific examples from two groups— more broadly, DTO members are increasingly rewarded on the basis of engaging in the most creative, sadistic, and theatrical acts of violence possible (Chalk 2011). Brutal violent activities like these produce generational trauma and insecurity, which induces further instability.

Insecurity and Political Stability

DTOs are destroying the prospects of a functioning Mexican state, and democratic consolidation. On the most basic level, a democratic state is conceived as being one that holds regular free and fair elections. However, more holistic views of democracy recognise that there is a necessity for more than just elections—it requires economic, social, and personal security. When political freedom is not combined with amelioration

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[4] The term 'theatrical violence' refers to violent acts that serve a purpose aside from the violence itself. In the case of Mexican DTOs, it often manifests as excessively violent acts that seek to produce a terror-inducing image of the group which can be used as leverage against local officials, or to intimidate rivals.

of social conditions or proper protections of civilians, democracy itself is undermined (Gills & Rocamora 1992, p. 502). Therefore, democratic consolidation represents entrenchment of these rights and freedoms. If a more holistic criterion of democracy is not adopted or executed, backsliding can occur. In the case of Mexico, violence threatens consolidation through the 'delegitimization of state institutions; the public's growing willingness to turn to heavy-handed or antidemocratic "solutions"; and the degenerative effects on civil society' (Prillaman 2003, p. 8).

Political Functioning

DTOs engage in high levels of electoral violence and corruption, undermining the functioning of basic democratic institutions. Having control over a local mayor or governor is a key advantage for DTOs in competition with other criminal groups. Specifically, DTOs have sought to produce 'subnational criminal governance regimes in regions experiencing fierce turf wars' (Trejo & Ley 2020, p. 253) as a means of attaining total control over their territory. Under this system, 'local politics, economics, and much of people's everyday life is arbitrated by the narcos ... all life really, is totally managed by the narcos' (Felbab-Brown 2022). When a DTO's favoured candidate wins an election, they can take advantage of impunity, extort rent, embezzle taxes, and control regional businesses (Felbab-Brown 2021a). Candidates understand the inevitability of pressure from criminal organisations and will often proactively approach them for their support (International Crisis Group 2021). Local populations are coerced into voting for the preferred candidates of DTOs, while illicit campaign funding is delivered to candidates, and rival candidates are killed, or intimidated not to run for election (Felbab-Brown 2021a; International Crisis Group 2021). Over 80% of murders, attempted murders, death threats, kidnappings, and disappearances against state officials or candidates are perpetrated at the municipal level (Trejo and Ley 2020, p. 217). In the 2018 campaign period, '371 officials and 152 politicians, including 48 candidates, were murdered' (International Crisis Group 2021, p. i). Meanwhile, the first 6 months of campaigning in the most recent election period saw '69 politicians, including 22 candidates', (Ernst 2021) murdered across the country.

The Mexican judicial system is also heavily distorted by the presence of DTOs. This is caused both by corruption, intimidation, and outright violence. The prosecution rate for homicides in Mexico is around 2%, largely because of impunity drawn from cooperation between state authorities and criminal groups (Felbab-Brown 2022). In other cases, witnesses or others involved in legal cases are intimidated or killed. For example, in 2010, a DTO attacked a party predominantly populated by teenagers, killing fourteen—one of the attendees was set to testify as a witness in a trafficking-related homicide (Chalk 2011 p. 43). The most blatant case has perhaps been the justice system's dismissal of corruption and criminal collusion allegations against Mexico's former Defense Minister, Salvador Cienfuegos (Felbab-Brown 2021a, pp. 3–4).

The Mexican population endures high degrees of insecurity, and harbours high levels of distrust for state institutions. This is the result of drug-related violence, theatrical violence, electoral violence, lack of state protection for citizens, and corruption. Civil society is strangled by DTOs—when the state itself is run by the traffickers, organising is near-suicidal. Over 35% of the population reported that they limit the spaces they visit, including shopping and recreation, because of drug-related violence—meanwhile, 46% of the population reported that they have been the victim of either assault or robbery, while only 40% reported feeling safe in their neighbourhood at all (Muggah & Tobón 2018, pp. 9–11). Consequently, nearly 72% of the population does not trust the police (Baek, Han & Gordon 2021, p. 408). In fact, over half of people 'say they do not even bother reporting crimes to police because such efforts would be "pointless" or a "waste of time"' (Prillaman 2003, p. 9). On top of this, there is a strong correlation between experiences of violence in children, 'and later adolescent roles as victims or perpetrators of violence' (Pearce 2010, p. 288). Constant terror, fear of engaging in normal life, exposure to violence—all these things create a lasting imprint of collective trauma on a country that is struggling to consolidate. Mexico continues to bleed, and breaking cycles of violence are essential to its long-term healing.

Democratic Stability

Finally, experiences of violence have a high degree of power in shaping political attitudes and perceptions of political activities. Support for democratic institutions reduces sharply for those that have been subject to violence, and victims of crimes are much more likely to support non-legal or non-democratic institutions or candidates that claim to represent 'law and order' (Muggah 2019). Widespread violence and impunity cause citizens to 'feel unprotected or even further victimized by the system that is meant to protect them' (Pérez 2003, p. 628). As a family member of a victim of the war on drugs states, 'I don't know where the state ends and organized crime begins' (Morris 2012, p. 29). In Mexico, a National Institute of Statistics and Geography survey found that 76.4% of Mexicans had minimal or non-existent trust in political parties, 77.5% desired a government with a 'strong leader'—and even more telling—40.1% said they would favour a military government (International Crisis Group 2021, p. 6). Unfortunately, as predicted by political scientist Jenny Pearce, high levels of violence will lead democracy to become securitised—and as a result, democracy itself is sacrificed (2010, p. 286; p. 301).

Currently, the incumbent president and 'firebrand populist' Andrés Manuel López Obrador has been taking steps to continuously consolidate power (Muggah 2019). Obrador has both challenged democratic conventions and norms, while working to weaken electoral checks and balances, strengthening his party (Sánchez-Talanquer & Greene 2021). Obrador has also engaged in a 'systematic weakening of Mexico's institutions' by gutting budgets, and reducing regulatory power, also weakening the capacities of local security forces (Felbab-Brown 2022). At the same time, he has sought to reduce judicial independence, and reversed judicial reforms (Felbab-Brown 2021b, pp. 3–4). In 2020, Mexico became the most dangerous country for journalists in the world, with the highest rate of homicides against journalists in the world—topping war zones (Lakhani 2020). Obrador has 'weakened protection for journalists under threat and cut funds for investigations'—two of the journalists

killed in 2020 were under federal 'protection' due to receiving death threats ([Lakhani 2020](#)). Obrador makes use of polarising rhetoric and antagonises the press and the media in his speeches—in a similar fashion to other recent populist presidents ([Flannery 2021](#)) . Despite all these issues, Obrador's approval rating is between 60 and 80 percent ([International Crisis Group 2021](#), p. i; [Sheridan 2019](#)).

Conclusion

In conclusion, Mexico's transition to a democracy began a chain of events that resulted in a double-fragmentation—of political power, and of criminal power. The advent of political pluralism in the country fragmented political power, disrupting long-standing agreements between the original major cartels and the PRI. These state-sponsored protection rackets broke down, leading to increased inter-cartel competition and violence. As a result, Felipe Calderón embarked on a hard-line, militarised approach to dealing with the cartels, focusing primarily on targeting high-profile leaders. As many cartel leaders were arrested and killed, their criminal organisations fragmented into many smaller, more localised DTOs with newfound autonomy. At the same time, the hard-line approach had forced many cartels to militarise themselves for protection. Increasingly localised and militarised DTOs created even further competition, forcing high degrees of pressure onto local subnational political systems. This has led to further increases in violence and corruption—producing high levels of insecurity and eventually distrust of democratic institutions across the country. Now, the incumbent president has been accused of centralising power, yet his approval ratings remain high—will Mexico be able to avoid democratic backsliding?

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