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EXPLORING THE FULL-SPECTRUM GLOBAL STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

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Wren Taylor is an incoming fourth-year undergraduate student at Queen's University. She is currently completing her BAH in Global Development Studies, with a minor in Political Studies. She is originally from Thunder Bay, Ontario, and now resides in Kingston during her studies. Wren hopes to continue her education at the graduate level in Public Policy and International affairs.

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Since switching majors from Biology to International Relations and Management at OTH Regensburg, a programme bringing together politics, economics and cultural studies, Eva Hager's main focus has been security policy. In the last two years, she discovered a previously unknown passion in this area. Besides her required curriculum, Eva enjoys partaking in several voluntary projects, aiming to put theory into practice. Currently, she is in the fourth semester of her bachelor studies, spending a year abroad in Vietnam and Italy, which is a mandatory part of her study programme. After obtaining her bachelor's degree, Eva plans to continue her studies with a master's degree in either security studies or political research.

Jack Mallinson

Jack Mallinson acquired a BA (Hons) in History from Loughborough University in 2022. During this time, his studies mostly focused on Twentieth Century military history, and particularly on Small Wars and the Second World War in East Asia. Currently, he is a Strategic Studies postgraduate student at the University of St Andrews. Jack Mallinson's current research interests are largely thematic, focusing on naval strategy and counterinsurgency theory. It is his ambition to undertake further research in one of these two areas of inquiry in a professional milieu before undertaking DPhil research in this chosen field.

FOREWORD

C . A L E X A N D E R O L T E A N U , E D I T O R - I N - C H I E F

EXPLORING THE FULL-SPECTRUM GLOBAL STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

UNFATHOMABLE COMPLEXITY AND FRAGILITY

This edition of the *Student Strategy and Security Journal* (3SJ) expands our exploration of the evolution and changes marking today's Rules-Based Liberal International Order (RBLIO), founded by the western Allies in the wake of World War II. Spanning almost the entire globe since the dawn of the 21st century, this RBLIO is increasingly contested and controversial both among rising powers and developing countries, as well as within academic and activist communities of its core group of liberal-democratic member states. Whereas our last issue investigated linkages between cooperative and conflictual government strategies in various regions of the globe and on-going contestations of the RBLIO, the authors of the eight articles comprising this issue focus mainly on global, cross-cutting challenges no single nation can address on its own: cyber-networks and energy security, global institutions and pandemics management, strategic decisions with global repercussions. They all combine to provide the reader with what has become known among military experts as the 'full-spectrum global strategic environment' of the 2020s – one that crosses until recently well-established boundaries between national politics and international relations, between the real world of diplomacy, negotiations and compromises and the metaverse of social media, between traditional warfare and its accepted rules of conduct and increasingly asymmetrical, technology- and information driven, quasi-instantaneous strikes and counter-strikes conducted at 5G speeds within a still complex ecosystem where literally everything goes because so little is well-understood.

The exponentially increasing speed and density of the global Multiverse we now inhabit can be envisaged as a pluri-dimensional world of physical and virtual spaces, of real and 'alternate' facts, of actual and imaginary grievances, of overlapping boundaries and fluid borderlands, where individual citizens increasingly question their perspective, purpose and, above all, capacity to bring about meaningful change through their own efforts and actions. With the arrival on the scene of AI (Artificial Intelligence) – no longer just a 2001 movie about a little robot boy in search of its humanity but a significant technological advance engendering pressing moral and ethical concerns and demanding agreement on global rules and boundaries – this Multiverse and the RBLIO that continues to structure it become increasingly complex, unfathomable, contested, fragile and, for some, dangerously devoid of meaning. A 'seizure' in any of its networks or nodes can now easily lead, akin to the famous 'butterfly effect' metaphor generated by modern chaos theory, to debilitating 'strokes' affecting entire continents and humanity as a whole. Far from an exaggeration, this has been proven in spades by massively wide-spread and interlinked 'Metacrises' (the new concept *en vogue* among prized political pundits) ranging from the on-going COVID-19 epidemic to the rising tide of populist contestation movements that morph at great speeds from marginal political manifestations to entrenched governments of nuclear powers – and all the way to the ebbs and flows of the Russo-Ukrainian war that some analysts consider to be a mere prelude to what the author of this edition's final article describes as a more dangerous and lethal 'Taiwan contingency'. This dichotomous leitmotif of 'unfathomable complexity and fragility' is the core thread

conjoining, in one way or another, all eight articles published in this issue, into a full-spectrum tapestry of the global strategic challenges we face as we approach the middle of the 21st century.

THE METAVERSE AND ITS CYBER-NETWORKS: SECURITY, RISKS, THREATS

The first theme explored by three of our authors is that of the use, misuse and attempts to regulate and tame the myriad cybernetworks that constitute the nervous system of the emerging Metaverse. In her timely and well-documented contribution entitled “The United Nations’ contributions to enhance global cybersecurity: an assessment of its regulatory bodies’ successes and challenges”, Lara Guedes Costa provides a much needed overview of the impact two recently-established United Nations bodies, the UN Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) and the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) have had on attempts to apply international law norms and develop common rules of behaviour for all states in the field of cyber affairs in general and cybersecurity in particular. Her focus is firmly set on how these organizations have addressed the challenges posed by emerging and disruptive technologies, as she sets out to answer three critical questions: first, how have these bodies contributed to the UN’s efforts to create a globally accepted and applicable body of norms, principles and rules of conduct by addressing global cybersecurity issues; second, what are the key cybersecurity challenges still needing to be addressed; and finally, which factors constrained these bodies’ efforts to do so. Her conclusion highlights both the successes and the failures of the UN in doing so: on the one hand, she posits that both the GGE and the OEWG made significant contributions in framing and developing a common understanding of cybersecurity and how global regulatory attempts

should be optimally undertaken; on the other, she recognises that all states, and in particular major powers, have adopted a realist approach to these efforts and refused to ratify common principles of action that would limit what they consider to be their sovereign right both to control the flow of information and knowledge within their borders, and their ability to deploy existing and new cyber-tools in pursuit of their national interests. Of particular relevance to the following article is the question of whether major cyber-attacks should be considered a form of warfare entitling targeted states to invoke self-defence under Art. 51 of the UN Charter and to use military force. Unsurprisingly, Lara Guedes Costa explains that whereas NATO allies support such a reading, countries like China, Russia and Cuba vehemently oppose this interpretation without an explicit mandate from the UN Security Council.

The second article, “Strategic digitalization of energy infrastructures: cyber and geo-economic issues”, co-authored by Gianmarco Marchionna and Elio Brando, provides a case-study of the cybersecurity risks and challenges faced by the global energy industry as it engages in a process of strategic transition to digitisation. Its main aim is to give readers a snapshot of state-of-the-art energy cybersecurity developments, concentrating in particular on “cyber attacks on energy infrastructure and how to counter them through a security governance framework”. The authors first discuss the importance of energy systems digitalisation in the context of rapid progress in the AI field, and explore the creation of “cyber-physical systems” (CPS) defined as “co-engineered interacting networks of physical and computational components” that combine physical and virtual space representations to facilitate troubleshooting and problem-solving efforts. They then explore the resulting need to develop cybersecurity tools to protect CPS against easily exploitable vulnerabilities

in sophisticated cyber-attacks carried out by both private and public actors, often with minimal economic resources relative to the potential damage and disruption they cause. They conclude that sustainable protection can only be generated by means of increased cooperation between all stakeholders, allowing free flows of information and best practices benchmarking between them. Marchionna and Brando then present a Critical Infrastructure Protection (CIP) framework capable of minimizing the energy industry's exposure to "the rise of hybrid warfare and the advantages of cyber-attacks", and discuss in detail the implications of this framework for the energy industry's strategy of transition to digitalisation. They argue that in the absence of agreed-upon and enforceable international norms, countries and industries must cooperate to create "power-grid communities" with shared systems of cyber-governance capable of meeting their common security needs and ensure the resilience of their networked energy systems. Only by such joint strategic actions would the members of these communities of states be capable of avoiding increasing cyber-risks, such as, for example, the 'short-board effect' where multinational energy networks and supplies are assailed and damaged by cyber-attacks targeting those countries with the weakest cyber-security construction.

The first article of this issue focuses on the Metaverse and cyber-security issues at the global level of governance; the second zeroes in on national and industry-wide governance levels. Laia Corxet Solé's "Incel terrorism: How women's sexual freedoms put misogynists on the defensive", keys in on 'involuntary celibates' ('incels'), defined as individuals belonging to sub-state, online communities connected across borders who coordinate their violent actions in pursuit of a misogynistic ideology of male entitlement and hatred of women. The central message of this

contribution that adopts a feminist perspective to analyse the uses and abuses of the Metaverse's online networks could well be summed up with the pithy statement 'Online security is women's security'. The author first defines and describes the incel online community and its reactionary ideology comprising three key elements: a deeply rooted grievance, an identifiable culprit, and violence as "morally righteous action" designed to "right this perceived wrong". It then pays particular attention to the radicalization of its members up to the use of what can only be labeled as terrorist actions against women, perpetrated both online and in the physical world. Finally, it switches perspective by examining how incels themselves perceive reality and therefore, what causes them to engage in terrorist activities. The central argument of the paper is that, despite claims to the contrary, incels' ideology is intensely political, because their fundamental objective is the permanent subordination of women to men and the (re)establishment of a hierarchical and patriarchal form of society – and, therefore, their violent psychological and physical actions against women can accurately be described as 'terrorism'. The author explores this theme by means of a discourse analysis of incels' online statements since, according to her, "the incel community is an eminently online phenomenon". As a result, she posits that misogynist discourse is a process whose effect is an ideology of hatred against women's emancipation efforts over the past half-century, ultimately justifying, from the incels' perspective, their 'rational choice' to perpetrate acts of terrorism against them: "Themes of victimhood and aggrieved entitlement, therefore, become the crucial elements that frame terrorism as rational from incels' perspective, because they perceive society to be against them".

**GLOBALIZATION AND GOVERNANCE:
NEOLIBERALISM AND ITS CRITICS**

Whereas the first theme of this issue focuses on the challenges of global governance in the Metaverse posed by emerging technologies grouped around the notion of cyber-security, the second theme zeroes in on cooperative governance within the context of human security and the threats individuals face from global phenomena such as health pandemics, persisting poverty levels, and environmental degradation. The three articles included in this section explore, each by means of a distinct theoretical framework, the nature and consequences of the complex connection between the forces and institutions of modern globalization and the neoliberal ideology that continues to enframe them, albeit not without widespread and effective contestation in both developing and developed states across the globe.

The feminist analytical lens deployed by Laia Corxet Solé in examining incels' terrorist activities against women is also adopted by Giuliana Iacobucci's "Confronting the 'New Normal' with Old Norms: Global Cooperation and Health Challenges from a Critical Feminist Perspective in the COVID-19 Era". The author goes one step further by choosing to employ critical feminism as the prism of her analysis. She explores the many narratives of feminine experience as they intersect with other facets of positionality, such as class, race and belonging –thereby highlighting marginalised experiences in different parts of the world. Echoing Corxet Solé's work, Iacobucci first discusses how globalisation forces create hierarchies of power manifesting themselves, for example, in Canada through hate crimes against Asian Canadians during the COVID-19 pandemic – thus focusing on the intersection of misogyny and racism uniquely affecting Asian women. The claim to 'neutrality' of international organisations whose mission it is to address health crises, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), results, according to her, in the neglect of these feminine experiences and the

adoption of a gendered, masculine view of world politics that veils and silences the voices of those most affected by the crisis – and in particular, intersectional women in the Global South. She concludes that this lack of adequate inclusion of women's voices in international forums of cooperation attempting to address the pandemic reinforces essentialist, masculine practices and therefore limits both their effectiveness and their legitimacy. Iacobucci then deploys the critical feminist lens she elaborated to discuss the entrenched connections between masculinity and neoliberalism in international relations, and their effect on the solutions to the COVID-19 crisis promoted by institutions such as the WHO. She posits that these organizations and their member states routinely place primary emphasis on economic rather than human interests, thereby perpetuating the view of women as 'fungible assets' contributing their services and bodies as easily replaceable frontline workers in the fight against the pandemic. The author thus shows how international cooperation between states and global institutions during this time resulted in the emergence of a "Masculinised Global Health Security Regime" that prioritizes a Western-centered, masculine view of state security over the urgency of equitable vaccine distribution to the individuals and communities most affected in the Global South. The paper concludes with her insights on possible avenues of action aiming to challenge and overcome, before the outbreak of a likely future pandemic, "the barriers constructed by institutions imbued with globalized notions of masculine power, and the impact those barriers have on various positionalities".

Wren Taylor's "Prioritizing Wealth over Health: The Covid-19 Vaccine Strategy" picks up on Iacobucci's critique of the neoliberal logic of market fundamentalism, but does so from an explicitly Marxist perspective that deploys Immanuel

Wallerstein's 'World Systems' approach to expose unequal vaccine distribution between core and periphery countries during the COVID-19 pandemic, which she describes as 'vaccine nationalism' -- a practice that "ultimately prioritized wealth over health". The author elaborates on the nature of the entrenched, hegemonic neoliberal project and the deleterious consequences of its ideology of market superiority and relentless capital accumulation on the forces of globalisation, in particular in the Global South, where vulnerable, low-income states are 'hollowed out' and healthcare is marketised through 'roll-back' neoliberal practices of privatisation and deregulation, thus weakening their healthcare delivery capacities. She also critiques the neoliberal restructuring of international organizations such as the WHO and the World Trade Organization (WTO). This resulted in both destroying constructive cooperative methods between states and blocking the latter from equitably and effectively addressing global crises such as COVID-19. She therefore posits that the only solution to this fusion of the forces of globalisation, its institutional structures and neoliberal market fundamentalism is "to create a framework outside of the neoliberal market system that values social determinants of health and empowers local and national strategies". Wren proceeds to provide two examples of market-related barriers to global health governance in the COVID-19 epidemic. First, she analyses the protection of intellectual property rights by big pharmaceutical multinational corporations in cooperation with the states they originate in, entrenched by the WTO's Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement. She explains how highly developed countries refused to grant a TRIPS waiver to Low Income Countries during the COVID-19 pandemic so as to enable them to manufacture adequate and affordable vaccines for their populations at risk; they thereby supported the global pharmaceuticals industry's

capital interests at the expense of human lives in the impoverished areas of the Global South. Second, she examines donor-funded Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) such as COVAX, created by the WHO to coordinate vaccine distribution during the COVID-19 pandemic, and finds that the private interests of donors play a disproportionate role in the PPPs decision-making and policy development, thereby making them unreliable tools of international cooperation when public interests such as the global management of health crises are involved. Wren concludes that both TRIPS and COVAX constituted effective barriers to equitable and cooperative health governance because of the "embedded inequalities of neoliberal globalization" in which they were rooted.

Iacobucci and Wren develop, each from a different theoretical perspective, a common understanding of globalisation as inextricably connected with the neoliberal ideology of market fundamentalism, which has restructured the ethos, purposes and practices of international organizations such as the WHO. In his article entitled "An Unhealthy Pairing: How Globalization and Neoliberalism Have Impacted Global Health Governance" Fred Simonyi agrees with their analysis of the effects of neoliberalism on global governance efforts. However, he challenges their premise that the 'globalization - neoliberalism - international institutions' nexus is for all intents and purpose the emanation of a single and hegemonic reality that cannot be altered or changed without deconstructing the RBLIO itself and reconstructing it from the ground up on entirely different foundations. Simonyi adopts a liberal institutionalist analytical framework to draw a sharp boundary between the international institutions of the RBLIO and the neoliberal ideology that captured them over the past five decades. He claims that the existing system should be reformed rather than dismantled -- that, in effect, it harbours within its

existing ethos and normative principles the immanent potential of an order-to-come that is more inclusive, more equitable, more focused on achieving the public good of diverse and intersectional individuals across the globe than on obeying the iron rules of fundamentalist market forces. Simonyi's basic premise is that globalisation is not a process dependent on a single ideology – that of neoliberalism, which he defines as “an extreme form of capitalism that emerged in the late 1970s” – long after the foundation of the RBLIO and of its major institutions that engage in global health policy: the WHO, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the WTO. He proceeds to examine the impact of these organizations on international cooperative governance in three critical areas: the eradication of infectious diseases, the mitigation of health risks caused by environmental degradation, and the fight against poverty-related health issues. After examining the balance sheet of the successes and failures of these institutions in addressing the three health-related fields mentioned above, Simonyi remarks that the results are mixed. Although they did have significant success in contributing to cooperative governance efforts in fighting infectious diseases over the past five decades, health risks related to environmental degradation were not effectively addressed and poverty-related health concerns in the Global South remain as acute as ever. Like Iaccobucci and Wren, he concludes that “[t]he ability of international organizations to bring a broad range of actors together in global health policy discussions has been overshadowed by the neoliberal policies pursued by many institutions that are harmful to the state of global health”. Unlike them, however, he remains optimistic that the policies and practices of international organizations can be transformed away from the tenets of a neoliberal ideology, so as to re-discover their original norms and values, to the benefit of all those in need, especially in the Global South.

FROM BEIRUT TO BEIJING: SHIFTING ASIAN DYNAMICS OF CONFLICT AND COOPERATION

The first article in this issue's last section also employs a liberal internationalist framework to show that the ethos of cooperation and partnership that defines the current RBLIO can, given the right circumstances, persuade old foes to become, if not friends, then at least peaceful neighbours. Eva Hager sets out to investigate, in her analysis of “The Israeli-Lebanese Maritime Border Deal for Energy Security: A Liberal Internationalist Perspective on Conflict Resolution in the Eastern Mediterranean”, how two long-standing adversaries, Israel and Lebanon, went from conflict to cooperation and concluded an agreement over a vital shared border in the space of only two years, from 2020 to 2022. This is indeed one of the most fascinating success stories of the decade, and the author does an excellent job in explaining to us how an enduring stalemate between Beirut and Tel Aviv was finally overcome and how the two countries settled into peaceful relations, if not outright (yet) mutual recognition. It starts with the discovery, in the first decade of the century, of a maritime territory of 860 km² containing vast natural hydrocarbon resources, located across the Lebanese-Israeli Lebanese border. In 2009, both countries asked the United Nations to recognize their respective Exclusive Economic Zones over parts of this territory, without however agreeing on a common demarcation line. One year later, an even richer gas field was discovered in close proximity – the aptly named Leviathan field, providing further incentives for Israel and Lebanon to come to an agreement about their shared maritime border. However, it took another decade for them to move from conflict to cooperation, even with the assistance of international mediators like the US and the EU. Negotiations resumed in earnest in 2020, but the

real breakthrough occurred within the space of little more than six months, between February and October 2022. Liberal internationalist principles of interdependence and cooperation, and the intervention of trusted mediators, were necessary but not sufficient conditions to unblock the persisting gridlock between the two. The decisive factor was an external geopolitical earthquake: the start of the Russo-Ukrainian war in 2022 and the EU's urgent quest to achieve energy security by securing energy supplies from countries other than Russia – in this case from the Eastern Mediterranean gas fields controlled by Israel and Lebanon. This real opportunity to export significant quantities of gas to the EU was supplemented, according to Eva Hager, by an urgent need in both these countries to achieve energy security at home and to increase their revenues by exporting hydrocarbons to a trusted partner with virtually unlimited energy needs. The actual prospect for both Beirut and Tel Aviv to become major oil and gas exporters to the EU, coupled with their pressing need to shore up their economies at home, were the critical factors which persuaded political leaders in both capital cities to act on their shared mutual interests and move from long-standing conflictual relations best explained by a realist perspective to a new era of mutual tolerance in line with liberal internationalist principles of cooperation and interdependence.

The last article of this issue, Jack Mallinson's "Following the Principles: Why The Chinese PLAN Should Adhere to Corbett's Strategy Instead of Mahan's Precepts", takes us from Beirut to Beijing, at the other end of the Asian continent. It tells the tale of the strategic choices faced by a rising major power as it seeks to establish itself as the regionally dominant country in the short term, and to challenge in the medium-term the United States' position as the world's leading economy and military force. This is not a brief on how best to

manage the increasingly acrimonious US-Chinese global relationship in the interests of both; it is written primarily from a Chinese perspective. It seeks to outline the most effective grand strategy that would allow China to achieve its key objective to become the premier naval power in the vast expanse of the Indian and Pacific Oceans whilst minimizing the real risk of an armed confrontation with the US. The author explains in detail the two main strategies the People Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has considered over the past decades, done through the prism of the writings of two famous naval strategists who lived more than a century ago: the American Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914) and the UK's Sir Julian Corbett (1854-1922). One can hardly do justice in a few lines to the detailed arguments developed by the author at both strategic and operational levels to support his thesis that the PLAN's pre-existing strategy of 'Active Defence' and its mandate to protect China's vital 'Maritime Silk Road' are better served by adopting Corbett's more defensive, conservative approach so as to achieve maritime control in the Indo-Pacific, rather than Mahan's aggressive, confrontational principles aiming for naval supremacy for which the PLAN remains underequipped – and which could well lead to a devastating war with the US. The key lesson that emerges from this classic analysis of military strategy options aiming to match Chinese military means and political ends to best achieve China's stated long-term national interests is that, in an era of full-spectrum global competition across all dimensions of the Multiverse we now inhabit, Beijing's choice of the correct grand strategy matters now more than ever – not only to China's future prospects as a Great Power, but to the entire global community. This is best illustrated in a section of this article analysing what the author simply denotes as 'the Taiwan contingency', but which refers to the real prospect of a sustained US-Chinese armed conflict over the future of Taiwan.

Here again, Jack Mallinson posits that Chinese means and ends are best served by a more conservative Corbettian operational level strategy of 'anti-access area-denial' (A2/AD) than a more hazardous Mahanian plan to engage in highly offensive, decisive fleet battles that could very well end up with significant setbacks for the PLAN.

THE LAST WORD

The articles published in this issue of *3SJ* are the result of the hard work of nine emerging academics and practitioners hailing from Europe and North America who are taking their first steps in the competitive world of academic publishing. *3SJ*'s team of editors, reviewers and digital management specialists was fortunate to have the opportunity to assist them in publishing their research and findings in our journal. We hope that some of them will eventually join us in our efforts to provide the necessary mentorship and support to future authors to assist them in bringing their work to appear in print – digital for now but soon, we hope, also on paper. At *3SJ*, we are proud to have recently acquired the status of a [Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation \(SCIO\)](#), which clarifies our legal status and opens up for us exciting future opportunities for growth. This calendar year we aim for the very first time to produce three journal issues, with the last planned for publication in December. This will be a significant achievement for *3SJ*, entirely due to the dedication of our all-volunteer team. Thank you to all who have contributed to this success, in whatever capacity you may have acted.

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THE METAVERSE AND ITS CYBER-NETWORKS: SECURITY, RISKS, THREATS



THE UNITED NATIONS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO ENHANCE GLOBAL CYBERSECURITY: AN ASSESSMENT OF ITS REGULATORY BODIES' SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

The United Nations (UN) has played a key role in inter-state discussions on cybersecurity in the past years. The UN Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) and the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) are among the most prominent international regulatory bodies addressing the challenges of emerging and disruptive technologies, calling for state cooperation and a common approach to these issues. This article explores the progress of the GGE and OEWG from their creation to the present and analyses the enduring sources of contention between states in cybersecurity affairs. In particular, it discusses the challenges of applying international law and international humanitarian law to cybersecurity and developing global legal norms. It also analyses the GGE and OEWG reports to evaluate their achievements, shedding light on ongoing cybersecurity efforts and issues at the international level.

Keywords: *United Nations; GGE; OEWG; cybersecurity; international law; international humanitarian law; UN Charter.*

INTRODUCTION

Cybersecurity, defined as the ethical, legal, and safe use of cyberspace by states, has become one of the key priorities of the United Nations (UN). In light of growing concerns over the misuse of information and communications technologies (ICTs), the UN Common Agenda's report addresses major cybersecurity challenges, including cyber attacks and cyber warfare, calling upon states to cooperate for peace and security (United Nations, 2021c). Cyberspace has become a contested environment where countries conduct offensive cyber operations against other states, violating information protection and targeting critical infrastructures (CSIS, 2022). The

cyber attacks suffered by Estonia and Georgia in the early 2000s, and more recently by Ukraine (2014-present), have increased awareness of cybersecurity and the prominence of cyber-related issues (Tiirmaa-Klaar, 2021: 4; Willett, 2022; Levite, 2023). At the same time, different countries' approaches to cybersecurity have highlighted their diverging perspectives and interests, which have been difficult to reconcile.

Amidst such complex divergences, UN efforts have been essential to enhancing cybersecurity. Within the UN system, the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) and the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) play a crucial role in supporting the attempts of the UN to adapt to a changing security environment, bringing together UN member states to discuss norms, regulations, and state behaviour in cyberspace (Digital Watch, 2023). The crux of these GGE and OEWG discussions consists in addressing whether and how international law – particularly the UN Charter – and International Humanitarian Law (IHL) should be applied to the digital environment. Regarding this, countries debate the need for new international norms that could fill potential gaps in current international frameworks (Glen, 2021: 1128-1131). Although IHL is a branch of international law, for the purpose of this article's analysis, the terms will be used with different and specific meanings – as in the GGE and OEWG discussions. Hence, international law is understood as the body of agreements between countries – treaties or conventions, such as the UN Charter –, customary rules considered as legally binding, and general principles. IHL is defined as the set of rules and principles (such as distinction and attribution) which seek, for humanitarian purposes, to limit the effects of armed conflict and protect the affected populations (United Nations, 2022; ICRC, 2022b).

Over the years, the GGE and OEWG have released several reports informing the international community on states' progress in finding common ground in cyber affairs (Digital Watch, 2023). The reading of such reports enables reflections on the challenges posed by countries' diverging interests and views, as well as contrasting interpretations of norms and principles. Although the UN's activities around cybersecurity are fragmented throughout the UN system (Henderson, 2021: 583), the GGE and the OEWG are considered prominent initiatives addressing global cybersecurity. Hence, it is worth analysing their work to shed light on inter-state relations in cyberspace.

This article posits that despite UN efforts to enhance international cooperation and regulate state behaviour in cyberspace in a manner consistent with principles of international law, key participating states have been reluctant to collaborate in achieving concrete and binding results in order to preserve their sovereign control over their national cyber-ecosystem and keep open their options of deploying their own cyber-capabilities according to their national interests in the global arena. To substantiate this assertion, it analyses the role of the UN in facilitating state-level cybersecurity discussions by answering the following questions: 1) How have the GGE and OEWG supported the UN system in responding to global cybersecurity issues?; 2) What cybersecurity challenges do the GGE and OEWG still need to address? and 3) What factors constrained the work of the GGE and OEWG on cybersecurity? To answer these questions, the article first explores the roles of the GGE and OEWG in supporting the UN system's responses to global cybersecurity challenges from 2004 (the year of the GGE foundation) to 2023. It then identifies unsolved issues emerging from the GGE and OEWG, and finally reports and addresses the factors hindering further discussions on cybersecurity within those fora.

This research collected official documents, reports, and statements produced by the GGE and OEWG and their country members from 2004 to 2023. Particular attention has been dedicated to exploring

the countries' divergent views on key cybersecurity issues, focusing especially on the applicability of international law, in particular the UN Charter principles, and international humanitarian law. Emphasis has been placed upon the 2004 and 2015 GGE as they failed to release consensus reports as a result of these divergent standpoints. In addition, as some scholars and policy-makers have reflected upon the contributions of the UN in the field of cybersecurity, the analysis of the work of the GGE and OEWG has been further supported by drawing upon academic sources. These sources have been particularly important to drive attention to the geopolitical contexts of each report of the GGE and OEWG and the turning points of the cybersecurity discussions.

REGULATING THE CYBERSPACE: GGE AND OEWG EFFORTS (2004-PRESENT)

ICTs and cybersecurity have been prominent matters on the UN's global agenda since 1998 when Russia first proposed a draft resolution in the First Committee of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) (Maurer, 2011: 20). In so doing, Russia claimed to be interested in developing "international law regimes for preventing the use of information technologies for purposes incompatible with missions of ensuring international stability and security" (Henderson, 2021: 584). On the other hand, Western countries showed concern that an international treaty could restrict freedom under the guise of enhancing information and telecommunications security (Henderson, 2021: 585), thereby demonstrating the suspicious approach that countries would take towards each other in discussions over cybersecurity. Despite these concerns, Russia introduced similar draft proposals over the years. Prompted by Russia, in 2002 the UNGA requested the Secretary-General to establish the UN GGE on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, marking a turning point in the UN's efforts on cybersecurity and confidence-building among states (Henriksen, 2019: 2).

The GGE became a discussion forum among a selected number of experts (15 to 25 members depending on the GGE session) based on equitable geographical distribution, tasked with submitting a consensus report on states' challenges and approaches to the use of ICTs (Ruhl et al., 2020: 4). Initially, the GGE's work was hindered by a lack of consensus among the participating states on key issues, including the applicability of IHL principles, such as the distinction principle, and international law to state behaviour in cyberspace (Schmitt, 2021). Moreover, as cyber attacks in the early 2000s were sporadic, decision- and policy-makers had a low awareness of cyber threats. Cyber operations also tended to stay out of the public eye and cybersecurity was generally seen as a technical issue to be addressed by IT departments and information security personnel (Tiirmaa-Klaar, 2021: 3).

However, the perception of the digital domain has significantly changed after the cyberattacks suffered by Estonia and Georgia in 2007 and 2008, respectively, which targeted critical infrastructures and created large-scale political and economic turmoil (Buckland, Schreier and Winkler, 2015: 24-28). This experience was crucial to raising global awareness about cybersecurity, and specifically to the role of the UN in leading discussions on this topic. Indeed, those cyber sieges "marked a starting point for cyber issues becoming increasingly mainstreamed to a more strategic level, both nationally and internationally" (Tiirmaa-Klaar, 2021: 4). Accordingly, the second UN GGE successfully issued, in July 2010, a report acknowledging that "[e]xisting and potential threats in the sphere of information security are among the most serious challenges of the twenty-first century" (United Nations, 2010).

Also essential to the success of the GGE was the new US administration under President Barack Obama (2009-2017), which changed the direction of the US cyber policy and pursued a cooperative approach with regard to Russia and the UN itself. This significant de-escalation between the US and Russia facilitated the reaching of the GGE goals and culminated in the US co-sponsoring, for the

first time, a Russian draft resolution (Tiirmaa-Klaar, 2021: 9; Maurer, 2011: 23-24). Among the report's recommendations was a call for cooperation among states to develop confidence-building and capacity-building measures and further dialogue on norms pertaining to states' use of ICTs. Additionally, the risks associated with the employment of disruptive cyberattacks by non-state actors were addressed, albeit briefly, in the report (United Nations, 2010). The latter did not, however, clarify a number of outstanding legal issues (Henriksen, 2019: 2).

The UNGA set up a third GGE in December 2011 to discuss "norms, rules or principles of responsible behaviour of States" in cyberspace (Henriksen, 2019: 3). Its final report was issued in 2013 and recognised the applicability of international law, in particular the UN Charter, to cyberspace. Notably, the report highlighted state governance of ICTs-related activities and states' sovereignty over ICTs infrastructure located inside their borders (United Nations, 2013). Moreover, it stated the need for respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the digital space and highlighted the leading role the UN should play in promoting dialogue among countries, supporting confidence-building and capacity-building measures and regional efforts (United Nations, 2013).

Nevertheless, although the report acknowledged international law norms, participant states did not agree on how they should be applied to cyberspace in practical terms. For example, key international players such as China emphasised that applying IHL to ICTs would be very challenging as civilian and military targets are hardly discriminated against in cyberspace (Henderson, 2021: 603). In addition, some countries were more interested in discussing the creation of regulations for cybersecurity than the application of existing international law. In 2011, China, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan formed a backdrop to the meeting of the GGE and presented a draft of an International Code of Conduct for Information Security to the UNGA, attempting to provide further regulation to cyber-norms and governance. The draft, however, was not welcomed by countries like the US, who perceived its guidelines

as a justification for government control over internet resources. While there was little support for the draft, the GGE report acknowledged that additional norms could be developed over time (Henderson, 2021: 593-594).

The fourth GGE adopted a consensus report in July 2015. Although it did not clarify the applicability of international law to cybersecurity — like previous reports —, the fourth GGE addressed several important issues. Pawlak and Barmpalidou (2017: 128) highlight that the 2015 GGE report proposes voluntary and non-binding norms to prevent states from potentially using ICTs for illegal activities; forbids actions such as cyberattacks on critical infrastructures; and incentivise cooperation, for instance by assisting each other in the event of an attack. They also pointed to the progress in the discussions around capacity building, as the report introduced several measures to strengthen collaborative mechanisms (Pawlak and Barmpalidou, 2017: 128). Furthermore, although there is no explicit mention of the IHL in the report, it did make reference to the principles of “humanity, necessity, proportionality, and distinction” (United Nations, 2014), which are the key principles of this branch of international law.

The optimism characterising the 2015 GGE did not last long. The fifth GGE did not agree on a draft for a consensus report in 2017. The main challenge for the discussions was the main mission of the 2016-2017 GGE: establishing how international law should apply to the use of ICTs by states (Henderson, 2021: 598). While the US pushed for explicit statements on the issue, references to the right to self-defence, international law and IHL principles caused deep dissatisfaction among countries like Cuba (Glen, 2021: 1130). The Cuban representative emphasised his concern that states could intentionally legitimise punitive actions such as sanctions and the use of military force in the name of self-defence, thus disapproving the report's mentions of the law of armed conflict (Henderson, 2021: 3). As a result, the 2016-2017 UN GGE did not fulfil its mandate due to definitional disputes and further fundamental

disagreements over interests and values (Glen, 2021: 1113).

In December 2018, the UNGA established two separate processes to discuss cybersecurity issues and norms in the period 2019-2021. Besides continuing with the work of the GGE, the UN also created the OEWG, following a Russia-sponsored resolution. Differently from the GGE, the OEWG has been open to all member States to discuss developments in ICTs (Henderson, 20221: 601). Both groups are mandated to work on the basis of international law, particularly the UN Charter, and “norms, rules and principles for the responsible behaviour of States” from the 2015 GGE report. Nonetheless, the OEWG's mandate is slightly broader and also examines whether possible changes to the regulations and additional rules of state behaviour are necessary. As aforementioned, this issue is a crucial source of contention between states in the cybersecurity dialogue. Whereas countries like Russia and China have sought to revise current norms and establish binding agreements that better serve their interests, the US and like-minded countries have ruled out any legal changes in previous discussions and argue this falls beyond the OEWG's mandate (Henderson, 2021: 602). Adding to the challenge of addressing the topic are some developing countries like India, Indonesia, and South Africa, which have not been active in the cyber norms debates (Basu, Poetranto and Lau, 2021). Therefore, the discussions on cybersecurity have been held back by both a lack of consensus and political will to resolve relevant issues.

The sixth and last GGE released its final report in 2021. The consensus on this report was commemorated by the international community especially because no agreement had been reached at the previous GGE. The Estonian Ambassador for Cyber Diplomacy, Heli Tiirmaa-Klaar (2021: 8) stated that “the report of the 2019-2021 GGE could be characterised as a rare victory of multilateral diplomacy.” She explained that significant mentions of international law and attribution and explanations

of critical infrastructure protection norms satisfied Western countries. At the same time, the report addressed prominent issues raised by China, for example, creating a section on the ICTs supply chain (Tiirmaa-Klaar, 2021: 8). However, scholars also noted that debates over state sovereignty in cyberspace and the right to self-defence remained unsettled (Schmitt, 2021).

From 2019 to 2021, the OEWG worked in parallel with the last GGE. Its substantive sessions were considered a significant precedent for more inclusive debates on international cybersecurity because, besides the 193 countries involved, over 100 NGOs contributed to the discussions as observers (Hurel, 2022). The report issued in March 2021 reaffirmed the results of the previous GGE reports, including the applicability of international law, especially the UN Charter, to cyberspace. Regarding norms, the OEWG stated that they do not replace or modify states' compliance with international law but rather provide further guidance on responsible state behaviour in using ICTs (United Nations, 2021b). Moreover, as noted by Collett (2021), the report significantly advanced the development of principles and measures of ICTs capacity building.

In 2020 the UNGA renewed the OEWG's mandate for a five-year period (2021-2025). The mission of the OEWG remained unchanged, and its work has been divided into eleven substantive sessions, with a final report to be provided in 2025 (United Nations, 2021a). However, a turning point to this new mandate since 2022 has been the increasing geopolitical tension between the US and Russia in the context of the Russian war against Ukraine. Indeed, Ukraine has been suffering massive cyber intelligence operations and attacks by Russia, which have called the attention of policymakers and researchers concerned with the use of cyber capabilities to target critical infrastructures, including telecommunications, banking, transport, water supply and energy supplies (Willett, 2022; Levite, 2023).

Consequently, the war has also highlighted the debate on when cyber attacks cross the threshold to

be legitimately considered acts of war, which the OEWG has found difficult to reach an international consensus on (Levite, 2023: 4). The increasing geopolitical tensions between Russia and Ukraine have also influenced the OEWG structure and participation. For instance, despite the OEWG's agreement on NGOs' involvement in the discussions, the participation of twenty-seven NGOs was opposed by Russia (Hurel, 2022). Similarly, Ukraine opposed the participation of Russian-based groups believed to have a relationship with the government (Pytlak and Acheson, 2022: 1). Moreover, opinions on the Annual Progress Report on the OEWG 2021-2025 drive attention to the little progress on critical issues also left unsolved by the GGE negotiations (Diplo Foundation, 2022).

Indeed, the OEWG has not reached an agreement on the applicability of international law principles such as the right to self-defence and IHL and on whether sovereignty is a principle or a rule in international law and whether new norms under an international cyber convention are necessary (Basu, Poetranto and Lau, 2021). Furthermore, the OEWG has not agreed, not even among Western countries, on whether sovereignty is a principle or a rule in international law. For example, in an analysis of the OEWG meeting in February 2020, Roguski (2020) explains that certain countries like the United Kingdom believe that sovereignty is merely an established principle of international law and does not in itself create independent legal obligations. Rather, sovereignty is protected by other well-established principles of international law, such as the prohibition of using force or the principle of non-intervention. Other nations, such as France, Germany, and the Netherlands, however, support the sovereignty-as-a-rule principle and argue that, under certain circumstances, a cyber operation may also breach the sovereignty of a targeted country (Roguski, 2020). Hence, despite the intense efforts of the UN since 2004, the progress on cybersecurity has been hindered by fundamental disagreements between states and difficulties in norms interpretations and applicability.

THE UN CHARTER IN CYBERSPACE

The GGE's and OEWG's reports and the related UNGA resolutions acknowledge that the UN Charter applies in its entirety to cyberspace. However, there has not been a consensus on procedures and modalities. In particular, its applicability is challenging regarding specific articles (Glen, 2021: 1128-1131). One of the core principles of the UN Charter is self-determination and the equality of states (Article 2), which, therefore, entails states' jurisdiction over ICTs within their territory. As shown in the GGE's and OEWG's reports, states have an obligation to respect the sovereignty of other countries and refrain from activities that could violate this principle. Nevertheless, states like Russia and China have used the sovereignty principle to justify their intense control over internal cyber activities, claiming to be fighting against external threats (Glen, 2021: 1132).

As aforementioned, in the context of the third meeting of the GGE in 2011, China, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan submitted to the UNGA an International Code of Conduct for Information Security to provide further regulations concerning cyber-norms and governance. The Code suggested that "policy authority for Internet-related public issues is the sovereign right of States, which have rights and responsibilities for international Internet-related public policy issues" (United Nations, 2011), attempting to legitimise limitations of the freedom of expression in the digital space. Over the years, China has widely advocated for the acceptance of the 'information sovereignty' concept, thus concentrating on information security – i.e. protecting state authority over information – rather than cyber security (Kiyan, 2021). Notably, during the 2015 World Internet Conference in China, Chinese President Xi Jinping spoke out against "internet hegemony" and "foreign interference in [China's] internal affairs through the Internet" (Basu, Poetranto and Lau, 2021).

Whereas states like China interpret the UN principle of sovereignty as countries' non-interference in

other states' cyber activities, others emphasise it as a responsibility to prevent actors from using their territory to conduct malicious digital activities. This aspect, promoted primarily by Western countries, has resulted in norms on GGE and OEWG reports to address the use of proxies in cyber operations (Digital Watch, 2023). Nonetheless, even among Western countries, there are diverging interpretations as to whether sovereignty should be addressed as a principle of international law or a rule (Roguski, 2020), as explained previously. Besides the different understanding of sovereignty in cyberspace, the violation of this principle has also become more complex to verify in the cyber-ecosystem. In this regard, it is important to note that cyberattacks targeting extraterritorial data storage, for instance, frequently include proxy servers or other tools that make the attackers undetectable. Hence, determining whether they are involved in a cross-border activity that would violate a state's sovereignty can be quite challenging (Digital Watch, 2023).

The non-interference principle, which stems from the UN principle of sovereignty, is also challenged in cyberspace. Emerging and disruptive technologies allow states to interfere in others' affairs without the (physical) use of force. For instance, a cyberattack can severely damage a country by attacking its financial industry without the need to target a military or governmental asset (Buckland, Schreier and Winkler, 2015: 25). Accordingly, it is incredibly challenging for UN members to agree on what cyber operations should be considered coercion, use of force, or an armed attack (Digital Watch, 2023). Moreover, international law does not clearly define the use of force and coercion in Art. 2(4) of the UN Charter — for example, coercion as economic, diplomatic, and political pressure is not defined in the article (Digital Watch, 2023). Such clarifications and consensus among UN members are particularly important due to potential extensive cyberattacks against critical infrastructure, like the ones suffered by Estonia, Georgia, and Ukraine. Yet, applying the non-interference principle in cyberspace and

agreeing on common criteria for forms of aggression between states highly depends on the political will of states. As noted by Levite (2023: 4-5), this lack of common criteria also originates from the latitude that some states want to have to interpret their adversaries' offensive cyber operations on a case-by-case and to undertake such actions themselves. For instance, the US and Israel's cyber operations against the Iranian nuclear programme were considered legitimate and legal in non-war settings by the US and Israel, although they were both intended to cause damage and were in violation of the non-interference principle (Levite, 2023: 5). Therefore, this attitude has hindered the progress of UN discussions around state-responsible behaviour and confidence-building measures.

The applicability of Article 51 of the UN Charter in cyberspace is also still being determined. The right to self-defence is difficult to assess in cyber operations because the origin of the threat is often hard to identify. Hence, traditional deterrence and response policies are undermined. In current discussions on cybersecurity, it is also unclear how a state could use its right to self-defence even if an attacker is identified correctly (Buckland, Schreier and Winkler, 2015: 24-25). Indeed, the disagreement over the means a country could employ to respond to major cyberattacks was one of the main reasons why the GGE 2017 failed to issue a consensus report. Whereas NATO confirms that under its Art. 5, member countries can respond to a cyberattack by any means, including conventional means of warfare (Stoltenberg, 2019), this is not a resolved issue within the UN discussions on cybersecurity. OEWG members like Russia, Cuba, and China do not acknowledge the use of force as a legitimate reaction to cyberattacks, at least not without the approval of the UNSC and in accordance with the UN Charter (Glen, 2021: 1130-1131). While these countries' position also reflects their national interests, the risk of states justifying armed attacks as a response to cyberattacks is indeed a risk to international peace. Hence, the applicability of the UN Charter further needs clarification, as do

mechanisms to support the identification of threats and attackers efficiently.

INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW AND CYBERSPACE

The issue of whether IHL should apply to cyberspace has been particularly challenging in UN discussions. In OEWG negotiations, Cuba argued that incorporating IHL would normalise the militarisation of cyberspace and legitimise cyber wars (Basu, Poetranto and Lau, 2021) and that the group should focus on the prevention of armed conflict rather than the applicability of such a particular principle (Achten, 2019). As previously mentioned, China also raised concerns about the applicability of IHL, especially the principle of distinction, emphasising the challenges to distinguish between civilian and military targets in cyberspace. Although the bulk of the observers does not find a direct connection between the militarisation of cyberspace and the recognition of IHL applicability, this has been a long-standing point made by Chinese experts and has further hindered discussions of international law in many GGEs (Tiirmaa-Klaar, 2021: 6). Western countries, on the other hand, have argued that IHL – and the right to self-defence – should be applied to cyberspace (Henderson, 2021: 603).

The applicability of IHL is a prominent issue in light of the growing capacity of states to develop offensive cyber capabilities with high potential human costs, such as attacks on critical infrastructures. For instance, just a few months after the 2015 GGE report was adopted, hackers tied to Russia utilised technology to take out the Ukrainian power grid, leaving residents without electricity for about seven hours (Basu, Poetranto and Lau, 2021). It is worth noting, however, that there is consensus, at least among Western countries, on the applicability of IHL to cyber operations in the context of armed conflicts. The International Committee of the Red Cross also acknowledges that IHL applies to all cyber operations occurring within an armed conflict (ICRCa, 2022). Therefore, more attention should be given to

“how IHL governs cyber operations during an armed conflict, whether international or non-international” (Schmitt, 2021). In this regard, the lack of a clear definition of what constitutes an armed attack or merely an attack is a significant issue in international law, which also compromises the applicability of IHL in the digital space. Currently, there is no consensus as to whether an attack entails injury, death, damage or destruction or a loss of functionality in critical infrastructures (Khawaja, 2022). Similarly, the international system has not yet agreed on what would constitute the start of an armed conflict, especially when cyberattacks are employed in isolation — without the use of kinetic force (Ramluckan, 2020: 103). What would represent an act of war also remains contentious. For example, while the 2014 attacks on Ukrainian energy systems were a cyber operation targeted at critical infrastructure with negative effects on the population, at the time this was not considered to cross the threshold of war (Levite, 2023: 4). This event shows that despite the UN's efforts to make states agree on these key definitions and consequently the applicability of the IHL to protect civilians, some states are reluctant to cooperate as they benefit from the blurred lines between legitimate and illegitimate peacetime operations.

Besides the diverging ideas of countries concerning IHL in cyberspace, it is also important to mention the practical challenges of the law's application. As pointed out by China, it can indeed be difficult to apply the distinction principle. Moreover, the so-called attribution problem in cyberspace also prevents the successful applicability of IHL. As noted by Hollis (2021), identifying the origins of malicious behaviour is difficult and time-consuming. The reliance of states upon proxies is a further challenge to attribution and accountability as there is a need to prove states' control over the proxy actors and the attackers can use plausible deniability as a defence. Also, deception may be employed, such as redirecting the assault so that it appears to have originated from an incorrect location (Ramluckan, 2020: 3). Consequently, holding states accountable

for IHL violations, that is, fully applying the IHL cardinal principles in cyberspace, is a complex issue, still to be adequately addressed by OEWG countries (Khawaja, 2022).

NEXT STEPS IN REGULATING CYBERSPACE

The debate on international law applicability to cyberspace and the implementation of new norms constitute key issues for the international community of states. They are, ultimately, an attempt to reconcile divergent strategic interests and opposing worldviews. The outcomes of such debates, as argued by Henriksen (2019: 4), will determine how countries use ICTs to pursue their foreign policy objectives. Indeed, the challenges previously addressed have paved the way for states like Russia to argue that current international norms are insufficient to regulate cyber activities and propose, over the years, the creation of a cyber convention (Maurer, 2011: 21). Scholars have suggested that Russia and China have strategically pushed for the creation of new norms that could further control prospects of a 'cyber arms race' and counter the US dominance over ICTs (Henriksen, 2019: 4). However, such proposals have been received by the US and like-minded countries with strong scepticism as a treaty on cybersecurity could be used to limit the freedom of information under the guise of increasing ICT's security (Maurer, 2011: 21). Instead, most OEWG representatives have shown interest in further exploring legal regulations and norms for the cyber environment and their implementation to achieve cybersecurity (Henderson, 2021: 603-604). Notably, the US has stood against any norm proposal that could limit its cyber capabilities, relying on international law to maintain its superior position and to prevent other states from engaging in what the country perceives as disruptive activities (Henriksen, 2019: 4).

The debate on the implementation of new cyber norms has been revived recently. In March 2023, Russia submitted its vision for a Convention of the

UN on Ensuring International Information Security to the OEWG. This document illustrates Russia's resistance to engage in discussions on the international law principles in cyberspace. Instead, it proposes new norms to better shape the international system according to Russian values and interests.

On top of the "Main threats to international information security," a section written with contributions from China and Iran, Russia calls for sovereign equality, the territorial integrity of states and non-interference in the internal affairs of others through any cyber operation (Russian Federation, 2023). Moreover, Weber (2023) has noted that the document merely mentions freedom of expression without further expanding on human rights and calls for the possibility of it being restricted if necessary. Another proposal that further reveals Russia's interests is the establishment of institutional mechanisms to ensure de-anonymisation in cyberspace, potentially to legitimise domestic surveillance (Weber, 2023). Although this has been a consistent position of Russia throughout the years, due to its ongoing war against Ukraine, the attitude can also be interpreted as a policy strategy to keep control over Russia's domestic cyberspace and prevent any external reaction to the war. Indeed, since the beginning of the aggression, Russia has weaponised cyber governance by blocking several news websites and social media platforms, for example, to constrain access to information about the war (Meinel and Hageböling, 2023). This attitude, therefore, will likely hinder progress on ongoing cybersecurity discussions at the UN level. The reactions to the Convention, however, are expected to be clarified in July 2023 during the OEWG's third substantive session (United Nations, 2021).

CONCLUSIONS

This article shows that the UN's efforts to regulate cyberspace in accordance with international law and promote ethical and responsible state behaviour have been challenged by key participating states, which have rather focused on protecting their

national interests. It uses official documentation, reports, and statements produced by the GGE and OEWG and their member countries from 2004 to 2023 to explore those bodies' contributions to cybersecurity discussions and their remaining challenges. As the OEWG's mandate is ongoing, this article provides an analysis of the UN efforts in cybersecurity until June 2023 only. Moreover, as the UN's involvement in cybersecurity is still an under-explored topic by academia, this article is limited by a scarce number of scholarly sources.

The analysis of the discussions and reports from the GGE and OEWG reveals that great powers such as Russia, China, and the US, have not agreed on international regulations as they aim to constrain each other's cyber capabilities, while also preserving their sovereign control over their domestic cyber-ecosystem. In particular, Russia has widely advocated for a cyber convention that would better align with its goals of control over information within its borders, posing a great challenge to freedom of expression and human rights. Furthermore, great powers have tried to keep benefiting from the blurred lines between war and peace to deploy their cyber capabilities when convenient to their national interests. Diverging standpoints of states have also hindered the UN's efforts, leading to different interpretations of the UN Charter principles, thus holding states back from agreeing on a common approach to cyber activities. As argued, applying these principles to cyberspace is also difficult due to unclear definitions of key terms such as what would constitute coercion, use of force, and armed attack. Consequently, the application of IHL has become a challenge for states to address since attribution and accountability in the cyber-ecosystem are even more difficult to verify.

Yet, this article also acknowledges that the GGE and OEWG have made significant contributions to cybersecurity and, therefore, can be considered a success in UN efforts to shape state behaviour in cyberspace, as well as confidence and capacity-building measures among its member states.

Especially because the OEWG involves all the UN member states, its discussions fora have been an opportunity for countries to express their concerns to the international community. Therefore, further research on the UN's involvement in cybersecurity, particularly the OEWG's current mandate, is essential to deepen academics' and policymakers' understanding of states' behaviour in this emerging field, which includes complex elements of competition and cooperation based on states' national interests. Especially due to Russia's approach to cyberspace amidst its war against Ukraine, the discussions on cybersecurity at the UN level should be watched attentively by the international community in the years to come.

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STRATEGIC DIGITALIZATION OF ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURES: CYBER AND GEO-ECONOMIC ISSUES

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ABSTRACT

Digitisation is a broad concept that includes implementation approaches such as the Internet of Things (IoT), sectoral application such as Industry 4.0 and systemic abstraction such as the System of Systems (SoS). The implementation of advanced technologies in the digitalization of energy infrastructure is likely to lead to a rapid development of high-tech facilities. However, these advances will also lead to an increase in geo-economic, geopolitical and cyber risks. This paper addresses the importance of new energy infrastructure and technological advances, focusing on the exposure to risks arising from the cyber domain and its geo-economic and digital implications. The paper provides an overview of the geo-economics of energy transition in the context of strategic digitisation, with a governance perspective. Significant features of the energy systems transition are described and a conceptualisation of digital technologies is provided. The state-of-the-art of cybersecurity developments in the context of energy security is assessed, focusing on cyber attacks on energy infrastructure and how to counter them through a security governance framework. Finally, the paper outlines the main risk scenarios for building energy governance, highlighting the challenges and issues in addressing the strategic digitisation of energy systems.

Keywords: *Energy transition; cybersecurity; digitalization; cyber-attack; infrastructure; geopolitics; geoeconomics*

GEOECONOMICS OF ENERGY TRANSITION AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

Geoeconomics does not have a uniform definition and is mistakenly used interchangeably with geopolitics. In fact, they are terms that can be used

together to describe the complex interaction between economic and political factors in international relations. In some cases, economic power can be used as a tool of geopolitical strategy, and in others, political power can be used to promote economic interests. According to Wigell (2016: 135), geoeconomics is defined as "the geostrategic use of political power by economic means," while Blackwill and Harris (2016: 9) describe it as "the use of economic instruments to promote and defend national interests, and to produce beneficial geopolitical results; and the effects of other nations' economic actions on a country's geopolitical goals." Geoeconomics involves pursuing influence in the global economy or a given region while also strengthening one's economic resilience. Diesen (2019: 568) furtherly deepens the concept of "asymmetrical dependence," which refers to the ability of a more powerful and less dependent state to set favorable conditions for economic cooperation and to extract political concessions from a more dependent state.

The study of digital energy transition in this context holds significant importance, due to the intricate economic connections formed by global value chains which subsequently influence power dynamics. Within this framework, regions abundant in renewable resources could emerge as desirable destinations for industries aiming to reduce carbon emissions. Moreover, the thesis that dependence on imported hydrocarbons will soon be supplanted by the import of renewable energy, crucial materials such as lithium for batteries, rare earth elements for wind turbines, or sustainable biofuels for transport, paves the way for new strategic alliances.

Despite the more even distribution of renewable energy sources compared to oil and gas, resources will remain essential in a net-zero world. For

example, sites with high renewable energy endowments will be critical for decarbonizing industrial production. Manufacturing clean energy technologies will require increasing volumes of critical minerals, such as lithium, silicon and rare earth elements, whose supply is even more geographically concentrated than that of hydrocarbons. Moreover, natural gas is likely to retain its strategic significance for a considerable period.

Energy infrastructure will also remain essential, including pipelines for transporting clean hydrogen or hydrogen-methane blends, seaports for handling sustainable liquid fuels and hydrogen, and tube trailers for road transportation. With the electrification of new sectors, such as transport and industrial processes, there will be a need for better-quality grid infrastructure and more regional interconnections. Grid infrastructure can also be used as a means of projecting political power and authority beyond territorial space.

Drawing on Diesen and Wigell's theoretical foundations, this paper examines the geoeconomics of energy transition in terms of resources, energy infrastructure, strategic industries and clean energy technologies, and the rules of international economic interaction. Foundational factors such as economic considerations, political will and public perceptions are likely to shape the direction of energy policy and, consequently, the implementation of cybersecurity and digital measures. Addressing the risks' exposure in the context of the digital domain and its implications in geoeconomics, this work focuses on the challenges of energy system digitalization, building on the current composition of energy infrastructure and the role of cybersecurity in this context. Finally, it highlights the resulting governance challenges with a cutting-edge approach.

DIGITALIZATION OF ENERGY SYSTEMS

The advancement of data science and artificial intelligence (AI) has led to digitalization being viewed as a critical solution for addressing

sustainability issues in energy systems (Huang et al., 2017; Gouvea et al., 2018). Digitalization provides a new norm for the systemization of knowledge from the physical phenomenon, particularly for energy systems that involve various energy conversion, transmission, and consumption processes, by utilizing improved sensor technology, AI algorithms, cloud computing, remote control, and more .

As the energy system transitions to net-zero and variable renewable energy supply becomes more dominant, the importance of digital technology will become even more significant (Bertoli, 2022). Digitalization implies access to more granular data and advanced analytics capabilities, which allows net-zero emission energy systems to accurately quantify the benefits brought by their operations. Despite the successful digital transformation cases, the design principles and operation regimes of energy systems remain largely unchanged in practice (IEA, 2017). The integration of digital technologies and energy systems is still largely inarticulate. In order to fully unleash the power of numeric modeling and optimization in the energy sector, the digital artifacts of different components of energy systems need to be well linked to each other. The concept and the development of cyber-physical systems for future energy systems have been proposed and intensively investigated in recent years (NIST, 2018). The concept of Cyber-Physical Systems (CPS) is defined as "co-engineered interacting networks of physical and computational components" (NIST, 2018), and it aims to create a virtual representation or digital twin of real entities in physical space and seek optimal solutions to real-world problems by exploring the cyberspace. The digital assistance ability provided by such CPS has largely transformed many traditional industries, but the energy industry has not been sufficiently engaged (Hold et al., 2017). In terms of computational framework, there are three basic elements for such energy system digital assistance: data,

analysis, and connectivity. Information provided by data serves as the basis for digital assistance, while analysis extracts valuable insights from incoming data. Connectivity, on the other hand, helps bridge communication gaps between humans, devices and machines, enabling the efficient collection, analysis and implementation of data and models. These three components, briefly described, explain the high added value of CPS in terms of continuous improvement.

The history of digitalization can be traced back to the 1940s when Norbert Wiener introduced cybernetics as control of any system using technology (Ashby, 1961). Since then, cyberspace has been widely used to describe the artificial world where humans navigate in information-based space (Benedikt, 1991). Digitalization is an inclusive concept that refers to implementation approaches (e.g. IoT), sectoral application (e.g. Industry 4.0), and systematic abstraction (e.g. SoS) (Geisberge and Broy, 2015). The definition of cyber-physical systems (CPS) by NIST (2018), highlights the iterative interaction between physical space and cyberspace rather than pure numerical simulation and optimization. This definition of digitalization aligns with the future trends of the net-zero energy system transition, which will evolve into a decentralized and interconnected network rather than isolated dots: in other words, the way digitalization is defined here fits with the idea that in the future, energy systems will be more connected and decentralized, compared to the current model where energy sources are often located in isolation from one another. Therefore, the interpretation of digitalization from the perspective of interacting networks holds more significance. Other digitalization conceptions that are similar to CPS include the Internet of Things (IoT), Embedded Systems, System of Systems (SoS), Industry 4.0, and Machine-to-Machine (M2M) communication (Törngren et al. 2014; Geisberge, Broy, 2015). All these concepts have in common the coordination of interconnected digital and physical systems, echoing the meaning expressed above by NIST.

The innovation of digitalization depends on various hardware and software technologies. While the German Academy of Science and Engineering (Acatech) lists six aspects, including physical awareness, prediction ability, coordination, human-machine interaction, learning ability, and adaptation flexibility (Geisberge and Broy, 2015), the European Parliamentary Research Service (2021) recognizes the following key enabling technologies: advanced manufacturing, advanced materials and nanomaterials, life-science technologies, micro/nano-electronics and photonics, artificial intelligence, and security and connectivity technologies. Simultaneously, in the context of energy system digitalization, the key enabling technologies include data acquisition, data fusion, data analytics, decision-making, and decision implementation (Cao et al., 2023).

The first step towards future data manipulation in the energy system is 'data acquisition', obtaining state-of-the-art data from different sectors, including generation, storage, transmission, and consumption. However, the high penetration of variable renewable energy has changed the operation regime of the power system, making data acquisition more challenging. Similarly, data from other energy domains, like natural gas networks, is monitored on different time scales and faces new challenges such as increasing variability and regional coordination.

'Data fusion' is the process of merging data from different sources and dealing with possible heterogeneity and inconsistency. Data integration is essential for many digitalization applications, particularly when using cloud computing. For example, district-scale energy systems have control centers where sub-system-level information is exchanged. In such cases, it is essential to have a standard platform to handle heterogeneity from different data sources.

Most literature on energy system digitalization focuses on 'data analytics'. However, most studies on power plant optimization or district-scale

energy system planning use handcrafted data and tailored algorithms, making the solutions less reusable. The challenges for large-scale energy system digitalization require high adaptability to solve the Nth-of-a-kind (NOAK) problem as long as it has already solved the First-of-a-kind (FOAK) problem.

Coordinated 'decision-making' ability is another essential feature of energy system digitalization. Energy systems have physical entities at different levels of detail, and different interacting agents exist in the energy system. Digital assistance should provide a multi-agent simulation platform that can mimic the interactions between various entities in the energy realm. The coordinated problem-solving strategy is crucial for future energy system digitalization, particularly as distributed energy resource utilization becomes a key feature of future energy systems. Digital assistance can integrate external information to improve the entire energy system supply chain, achieving enterprise optimization.

Finally, 'decision implementation': Digitalization can enable closed-loop control of energy systems by coupling cyber and physical spaces, ideally automatically. Successful examples include scheduling appliances in smart homes through embedded optimization algorithms in different appliances. However, fully optimal operations of energy systems enabled by digitalization are limited to specific scenarios and conditions.

All these conceptions share the common feature of linking computers and physical systems horizontally and vertically. There are still several significant gaps in the implementation of solutions that address these needs. However, the goal of cross-sector coordination through the digitalization of energy infrastructure is not that far off with CPS.

The importance of cross-sector collaboration to fully realize the potential of digitalization in the context of energy system digitalization cannot be overstated. The rapid pace of digitalization and its reliance on

key enabling technologies make it essential to bridge the significant gaps that exist in the implementation of solutions that address these needs. In this regard, Cyber-Physical Systems (CPS) offer a promising solution by linking computers and physical systems horizontally and vertically. To achieve this goal, stakeholders must collaborate to develop a comprehensive strategy for integrating CPS into energy infrastructure. This will require a deep understanding of the technical aspects of CPS, as well as the economic and regulatory frameworks that govern the energy sector. It is also crucial to prioritize cybersecurity as an integral part of the implementation of CPS to protect against emerging vulnerabilities that can be exploited by malicious actors with different and sophisticated cyber-attacks.

DEFENDING THE GRID: CYBER-ATTACKS ON ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

In modern times, companies and enterprises providing social or private services in every country have a security team responsible for the physical and cyber safety of their site (Reshmi, 2021). Cyberterrorism is a complex and modern phenomenon that affects all developed countries with access to computers and the Internet (Dargahi et al., 2019). Cyber-attacks pose a direct threat to the security of citizens as well as the functioning of the state, economy, society, science, and education. These attacks can be carried out remotely using simple mechanisms and with minimal economic resources (Yingmo, 2019). Additionally, it is important to examine the types of cyber-attacks, their goals, the associated risks, and the principles and methods of protection. Among others, ransomware, man-in-the-middle (MITM), denial-of-service (DoS), cross-site scripting (XSS), and phishing attacks are common cybersecurity threats that can impact both computer and cyber-physical systems. To understand them better, Chobanov V. and Doychev I. (2022: 1-5) explained ransomware as a cyber-attack where attackers capture files and demand payment in exchange for encrypted data. Attackers can execute these attacks through various

methods such as malicious advertisements, spamming, social engineering, and compromised sites. Ransomware can affect both locally and remotely stored files or memory and cause memory infections that are not detectable by static or dynamic analysis of malware; on the other hand, **Man-in-the-middle (MITM)** attacks aim to steal personal information and login credentials by interfering with user and application communication. MITM attacks are prevalent in both computer systems and cyber-physical systems (CPS). However, MITM attacks are insufficient in CPS since CPS information sources are real-time dynamic systems. To prevent MITM attacks, communication between the user's device and the main server should be encrypted using an SSL service; **Denial-of-service (DoS)** attacks aim to shut down a machine or network by flooding the target with traffic, making it inaccessible to all users. Attackers can execute DoS attacks by sending information that could cause a crash. Linear structured system models for cyber-physical systems (CPSs) can be used to identify the conditions under which attacks may compromise the controllability of the system. During a DoS attack, attackers block access to a subnet, and a load balancer can be used to support the server until there is a large volume of requests that cannot be handled. A distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attack is an extended form of this attack where many hosts send requests to the target server, with each host sending enough requests to crash the target. Moreover, **cross-site scripting (XSS)** attacks are a common threat that can have catastrophic impacts. Most web applications use JavaScript code to support dynamic client-side behavior. To prevent XSS attacks, it is recommended to develop an application that always checks the values submitted by the user before processing them; **phishing** attacks are a significant security threat that takes place in social engineering. Attackers use fake emails with links that contain false information and keywords similar to the name of the company the employees

work for to extract the necessary information, usually credentials. Users must be careful before sending their credentials anywhere.

These types of attacks require, as reported, the use of different methodologies, prior knowledge of the identified targets and, above all, in-depth expertise. This is why stakeholders and all those involved must work together and share knowledge to develop sustainable solutions for energy systems in a context of many different risks. Building a solid foundation and achieving maximum project results in industry and science requires a two-way flow of information and best practices that can only be applied through cooperative best practices.

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION

According to Vevera (2022), infrastructures are socio-technical systems that consist of facilities, distributed technical assets, organizations, and legislative and administrative frameworks for governance. They are critical because their destruction and disruption can result in significant human losses, material damage, and loss of confidence in authorities by citizens, partners, allies, investors, and other stakeholders. Competent authorities identify and designate critical infrastructures based on critical thresholds to concentrate security resources where they are most necessary (Gheorghe et al., 2018). Globalization has led to critical infrastructures aggregating into conglomerations that function at regional and global levels (Helbing, 2013). The digitalization of critical infrastructures has contributed to this trend, introducing new risks related to exposure to an increasingly dangerous cyber environment (Georgescu et al., 2020).

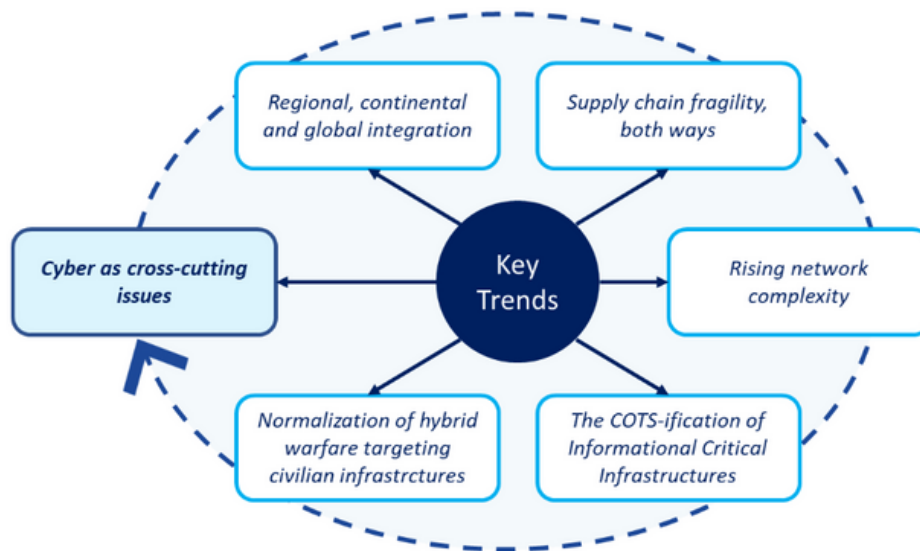


Figure 1. Key trends in the evolution of the Critical Infrastructure system-of-systems. Source: author's elaboration based on data drawn from Vevera (2022).

The Critical Infrastructure Protection (CIP) framework provides two concepts to understand how disruptions occur and spread through geographical space and sectoral boundaries. Firstly, the **interdependencies**, where infrastructures have bi-directional interrelationships that facilitate the transmission of a change in the state of one infrastructure to another. These interrelationships can lead to common-cause failures, escalating failures, and cascading disruptions. Secondly, **cascading disruptions**, where the fortuitous alignment of breakages can ensure the rapid transmission of disruptions throughout an entire system-of-systems, prolonging a crisis and amplifying damages beyond what could be predicted by decision-makers (Vevera, 2022).

The complexity of infrastructure systems leads to emergent behaviors and uncertainty in ascertaining system reactions to decisions and events. Vevera (2022) titles as parts of the "*Critical Infrastructure Protection Diplomacy*" (CIPD) system, practitioners who utilize specialized knowledge and engage in specific activities to counter the risks, vulnerabilities, and threats posed by the complex and emergent behaviors of the critical infrastructure (CI) system-of-systems. Sousa-Poza

et al. (2008) describe this system as operating in a dynamic and challenging security environment, highlighting in Figure 1 (below) the main key trends on a systemic level.

As explained by Vevera (2022), the shown key trends represent the likely future evolution of critical infrastructures. **Ongoing regional, continental, and global integration** has resulted in the transborder interconnection of critical infrastructures, driven by the desire for greater efficiency and economies of scale. However, not all infrastructures are interconnected equally or at the same rate due to various factors such as differences in technology, regulation, or investment priorities. For example, regions may have varying levels of interconnectivity in their energy systems, with some having more developed transmission networks for efficient transfer of electricity across long distances, while others rely more on local generation. Additionally, differences in renewable energy infrastructure, such as wind or solar power, require more sophisticated energy storage and management systems. Recent events, such as the pandemic and the Ukraine crisis, have underscored the **fragility of supply chains** and how easily they can be destabilized by demand and supply

shocks. Moreover, **infrastructure networks are becoming more complex** due to the exponential increase in the number of possible interactions, which leads to the emergence of new behaviors, system ambiguity, and uncertainty. The trend of using "commercial off-the-shelf" hardware and software in critical infrastructure systems - the so-called **COTS-ification of informational critical infrastructures** by Georgescu (2018) - has resulted in an increased surface area of contact with the cyber environment, which poses significant challenges and threats. At the same time, civilian infrastructures have become principal targets of **hybrid warfare**, as they are critical to the functioning of society. Cyber-attacks, coupled with attribution issues and the importance of critical infrastructures, have led to the normalization of hybrid attacks against them, with multiple potential purposes. The ongoing digitalization of critical infrastructures has interconnected them across sectors and geographical regions through the **cyber domain**, exposing them to the global cyber environment.

These trends indicate an increase in exposure to various deliberate risks, including: the rise of hybrid warfare and the advantages of cyber-attacks; the effects of transnational organized crime, which can undermine public institutions and support terrorist groups, state proxies, or even state actors (Georgescu, 2018); the increasing presence of cyber in every critical infrastructure system, as evidenced by the convergence of European regulatory frameworks (Georgescu, 2018); the commodification of malware, which allows inexperienced attackers to cause significant damage to an unprepared victim organization; the innovative and dangerous rise of off-the-shelf commercial system components; the blurring of boundaries between physical and virtual infrastructure; the proliferation and diversification of threats, which surpass improvements in security culture and regulatory frameworks; the proliferation of cyber weapons and the

competence of non-state actors in employing them for strategic, financial, or ideological reasons; the initial application of new technologies, such as blockchain and AI, which create new advantages but also risks; the divide between territorialized state agencies and institutions and cyberspace, which has no boundaries except for the physical infrastructure that supports it. The increasing exposure to deliberate cyber risks requires a cross-dimensional and multi-dimensional approach to cyber security, which goes beyond mere regulatory compliance and includes understanding the specific risks that organisations and institutions may face. Furthermore, it is important for organisations and institutions to invest in training and awareness-raising of their employees on cyber security so that everyone can contribute to mitigating the risks. Finally, organisations and institutions need to collaborate nationally and internationally to share information and best practices on cyber security and develop new solutions to protect their critical infrastructure from evolving cyber threats.

RISKS AND IMPLICATIONS

The energy sector is a critical infrastructure that relies heavily on information systems and technology to ensure efficient and reliable operations. However, this dependence also exposes the sector to various potential cybersecurity risks that could have severe consequences, including cyber, physical, geo-economic, and geopolitical risks.

Cybersecurity risk is a critical concern for the energy sector, particularly the renewable energy systems branch, which depends heavily on information systems and technology for efficient and reliable operations. Nonetheless, relying on this interdependence also makes the industry vulnerable to numerous cybersecurity threats that may have significant ramifications. These risks may include non-compliance with cybersecurity regulations, which could lead to legal liabilities and

financial losses. Security threats to employees and assets could result in physical safety risks and equipment damage. The actors involved in these risks could range from insiders to activists/hackers, criminal organizations, and hackers, who may execute cyber attacks to compromise the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of information systems. In the renewable energy systems branch, cyber risks may involve attacks targeting the control systems of wind turbines, solar panels, and other renewable energy devices, leading to disruptions in energy production or equipment damage. The energy sector's increasing reliance on digital technologies and interconnected systems has heightened the risk of cybersecurity breaches. The impacts are likely to be significant due to damage to critical infrastructures, resulting in risks to national cyber security, economic fallout, reputational damage, and significant disruptions to the functioning of the sector.

Geo-economic risks in the energy sector are significant and multifaceted, with potential implications for State, non-state actors, and private companies. State actors can engage in cyber activities to promote their national interests and gain a competitive advantage in the energy sector. For example, state-sponsored cyber attacks could affect critical infrastructure, such as oil refineries, gas pipelines, and power grids, to disrupt operations, and cause physical damage or steal sensitive data. Such attacks could have serious consequences for the companies concerned, with repercussions for the entire energy sector and the national economy. Non-state actors, such as hackers, could also pose a significant threat to the energy sector. They can target the sector to expose vulnerabilities or promote a particular agenda, as mentioned in relation to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. These attacks could impact energy operations, cause significant damage to reputation, and even cause physical and economic damage. In addition, one of the most pressing risks is cybersecurity breaches,

which could cause reputational damage, loss of consumer confidence, and possible impacts on industry financial performance and future investments. Private companies in the energy sector are particularly vulnerable to cyber risks and any cyber security breach could cause significant economic and reputational impacts, especially in the long run.

The potential for economic espionage, theft of intellectual property, and other cyber-related activities could contribute to international competition in the energy sector, with Geopolitical risks playing a significant role. Major geopolitical threats in the energy sector concern the potential impact of trade tensions, sanctions, and conflicts among different countries or regions. For instance, changes in trade policies, such as the imposition of tariffs on energy imports or exports, could impact the demand and supply of energy resources, leading to significant fluctuations in prices. Similarly, sanctions imposed by one country or group of countries on another may affect the energy sector by limiting access to key resources like oil or gas. In this context, it is very important for the private sector to consider cyber risk as part of geopolitical and geo-economic ones. This is the case of investments and capital allocation strategies in countries such as China, the United States of America, or - as demonstrated in current events - Russia, where the digital infrastructure of the financial sector has approached the splinternet phenomenon (or internet balkanization) following the removal of some Russian banking assets from the SWIFT system as part of Western war sanctions. Moreover, political instability or conflicts in energy-rich regions could also impact the supply and demand of energy resources, leading to price fluctuations, supply disruptions, and the weaponization of global supply chains. In support of these goals, cyber attacks often serve as a 'battle ram' for kinetic attacks, significantly weakening target infrastructures and facilitating the perpetuation of physical damage with regional conflict implications and geopolitical tensions.

Finally, physical risks in the energy sector encompass a range of potential threats to the physical safety of personnel and critical infrastructure, and there is a growing concern that cyber attacks could support or precede physical attacks. These risks could include physical attacks on critical infrastructure, insider threats, and external security events such as natural disasters or terrorist attacks. Physical attacks on critical infrastructure could involve the use of explosives, sabotage, or other destructive means to damage or destroy facilities, equipment, or systems. Such attacks could be supported by cyber-attacks that compromise the security of critical systems or provide reconnaissance information to attackers. Insider threats could include intentional acts of sabotage or negligence by employees or contractors, which could lead to the compromise of critical systems or data. Cyber-attacks may also support insider threats by providing access to sensitive data or compromising authentication mechanisms.

Considering these prospects, it is crucial for energy sector stakeholders to develop a comprehensive understanding of the challenges facing the sector and take proactive measures to mitigate them. This includes investing in cybersecurity measures to protect against potential cyber threats, diversifying energy sources and markets to reduce the impact of supply disruptions, and building resilient supply chains that are less vulnerable to geopolitical and cyber threats. Thus, constructing a comprehensive governance framework will require a joint effort to develop policies and regulation, aimed at a stable and secure energy market.

ENERGY GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

As countries continue to develop new sources of energy and establish more extensive regional energy transport channels, new interdependence, and trade patterns are likely to emerge. However, the cybersecurity issue related to infrastructure has become a frontier issue in geopolitical research on energy transition. Studies by Qi et al.

(2017), Dignum (2018), and Handke (2018) have shown that cybersecurity risks in energy infrastructure have attracted significant research attention.

Miao et al. (2020) have pointed out that the energy geopolitical game still exists in the new energy era, but its focus has shifted to the field of Global Energy Internet closely related to power use. The innovative application of information technologies, such as smart grids, energy storage technologies, and ultra-high-voltage electricity transmission, can effectively meet the demand for new energy power transmission flexibility, making it more intelligent, efficient, interconnected, and sustainable. However, this also makes the new energy grid more vulnerable to network attacks. Network attackers may try to disrupt the management and power distribution of the power grid, and interrupt and destroy industrial infrastructure.

On the other hand, in the absence of international norms, the development of digital technology in the energy field may bring security concerns. Most new energy equipment and power grid systems rely heavily on computers to manage the production, distribution, and output of new energy, prompting high requirements for cybersecurity. Facilities highly dependent on complex and large-scale power grids have high cybersecurity vulnerability risks and may suffer serious security impacts due to network attacks. The global energy network transmission will produce a short-board effect where countries with the weakest cybersecurity construction will easily become the target of attacks, which may even destroy the energy supply of all countries connected over the internet and thereby seriously aggravate geopolitical risks.

However, some scholars have pointed out that decentralized small-scale power generation can reduce cybersecurity risks. Studies by Liu *et al.* (2012) and Månsson (2015) have supported this claim. Scholten D. and Bosman R. (2016: 273-283)

have introduced the concept of "power grid community" believing that the grid can ensure community energy security and lay a foundation for regional peace and stability.

For decades, digital technologies have been contributing to the improvement of energy systems (IEA, 2017). Since the 1970s, the adoption of large IT systems to facilitate the management and operation of the grid has made energy companies true pioneers of digitalization. Today, electricity markets are monitored and controlled in real-time across vast geographical areas to offer services to a wide range of users. The astonishing progress in digitalization and its rapid spread throughout the energy sector raises the fundamental question of a new digital energy era, starting with applications already widely used in upstream activities. Technically recoverable oil and gas resources could be increased, thus increasing profits. In the total energy sector, the IEA (2017) estimates that digitalization could save around USD 80 billion per year, or about 5% of the total annual energy production costs, through monitoring and reducing unplanned interruptions, downtime, and prolonging the operational life of resources.

Furthermore, it is relevant to observe how digital systems can radically transform electricity markets. The greatest potential for transformation through digitalization is its ability to break down boundaries between energy sectors, increasing flexibility and enabling integration across entire systems. Electricity is at the center of this transformation, where digitalization is blurring the distinction between generation and consumption, and offering four interconnected opportunities (IEA, 2017):

- **"Smart demand response"**, increasing system flexibility, saving resources invested in new electrical infrastructure. In the residential sector alone, households and appliances could "plug in" to an interconnected electrical system, allowing devices to change the time

they draw electricity from the grid, thus improving consumption efficiency and reducing costs for families.

- Integration of renewable energy into the grid, addressing demand fluctuations due to adverse weather conditions by the use of demand response programs and energy storage technologies. These can be used to store energy produced from renewable sources during peak production periods and then deploy it when energy demand is high;
- Introduction of intelligent charging technologies for electric vehicles that would shift charging to periods when electricity demand is low and supply is abundant, providing further flexibility to the grid and saving on additional infrastructure costs; and finally,
- Development of distributed energy resources, such as home photovoltaic solar panels and storage, creating better incentives for producers, facilitating storage and sale of excess electricity on the grid: new tools such as blockchain could support the trade of electricity within local energy communities.

In the long term, this overview projects direct energy use for digital devices into a battle between growing data demand and continuous efficiency improvement (IEA, 2017). The use of digitally interconnected systems brings several benefits to the energy system, but also makes it more vulnerable to possible cyberattacks. If interruptions caused to energy systems by this threat were quite limited in the past, today attacks are increasingly frequent because they are cheap and easy to organize. Thus, the collaboration between public institutional actors and private actors, such as companies, corporations, and research centers, becomes a fundamental step in the energy governance framework.

The so-called "resilience" capacity at the systemic level depends precisely on the awareness that public and private actors have of vulnerabilities and related cyber risks. For this reason, international efforts in defense policies for energy infrastructure can help or support governments, companies, and organizations to build a margin of digital resilience (IEA, 2017), improving customary practices for reacting and preventing attacks, defense plans, and digital integration policies in the energy agenda.

At the same time, governance must also deal with privacy and data ownership, fundamental especially for consumers from whom this data is collected in detail. Intelligent devices, such as those mentioned earlier, can collect and aggregate data on family habits based on home energy demand, by time slot in relation to different devices. Despite the risk, monitoring aggregated and anonymized data allows for a better understanding of energy systems. The greatest benefit is in reducing costs for individual consumers. Together with concerns about privacy, digitalization also impacts employment models. In other words, the application of such technologies requires a variety of skills that inevitably translates into an increase in jobs in some sectors of the energy industry and a reduction in others.

Governance is therefore called upon to try to balance the mitigation of the negative impacts just described, as well as to promote innovation in response to the operational needs of public services. Similarly, if policy and market design are vital for a less risky digital transition, it is also true that the same transition is essential in response to the need for an energy transition. Digital technologies play a pivotal role in bolstering the sustainability agenda by facilitating the monitoring of greenhouse gas emissions and tracking instances of environmental pollution globally, regionally, and even locally. In addition, such technologies support decision-making processes by providing, for example, a detailed overview of

consumption through online records, thus ensuring quick, targeted, and responsive responses even at the political level beyond the operational.

CONCLUSION

The strategic digitalization of energy systems plays an important role in the geoeconomics of energy transition, as stated by Diesen (2019) and Wigell (2016). This paper studied the geoeconomic and digital implications of new energy infrastructures and emerging technologies, paying attention to the advancement of energy systems digitalization. Additionally, this work addressed the state-of-the-art of cybersecurity evolution in the context of energy security, as well as geo-economic and digital risks in relation to the renewed attention to this issue.

The war in Ukraine and the rise in energy prices have led to a rethinking of national and international energy strategies and how to cope with a more fragmented global supply chain. The development of new technologies and infrastructures, such as the ones mentioned above, could involve security and cyber risks not to be underestimated. Moreover, the geopolitical and geoeconomic scenario requires a reflection on the development of globalization and the relationship between the digital transition and the social system. To fully understand how these interconnected forces shape our societies, economies, and global dynamics, we must undertake a deeper exploration of their implications and potential consequences. This calls for a comprehensive approach that takes into account the complex and multifaceted nature of these phenomena. Moving forward, it will be crucial to develop a comprehensive governance framework that can provide and maintain energy supplies while also safeguarding strategic interests from cyberattacks. This will require the construction of a robust capacity

framework that can ensure the security and reliability of energy infrastructure. At the same time, it will be necessary to build a cybersecurity perimeter that can protect against emerging threats and vulnerabilities.

Furthermore, the definition of digitalization cited above aligns with the future trends of net-zero energy system transition, which will evolve into a decentralized and interconnected network rather than isolated dots. Therefore, the interpretation of digitalization from the perspective of "interacting networks" holds more significance. Although digital development is taking place at exponential speed, the cyber strategy on energy infrastructures continues to cover little of the current developments in this field. In particular, the growth of renewable energy is happening simultaneously with the development of digitalization, which can help in balancing power grids, as renewable energy producers increase their activity and lower production based on weather conditions. Nevertheless, while some concerns might be exaggerated, there exist legitimate apprehensions regarding the vulnerability of utilities and grids to cyberattacks, orchestrated by terrorists or hostile nations. The notable case of a successful cyberattack on energy distribution companies in Ukraine back in 2015 serves as a poignant reminder, prompting the potential for such attacks to inflict significant damage on energy systems at a large scale.

The increased utilization of renewable energy and the resulting decentralization of energy systems have significant implications for cybersecurity. While decentralization can make the system more resilient to cyberattacks, it also presents new challenges and vulnerabilities that must be addressed. To address these challenges, it is crucial to implement a comprehensive cybersecurity governance framework for these new renewable energy plants, which is still an underdeveloped area. To ensure the security and

reliability of energy infrastructure, it is crucial to establish a comprehensive cybersecurity governance framework. This framework should include several key aspects that work together to make the organization more resilient. One vital aspect is the development of strong governance structures that promote accountability, transparency, and effective decision-making. This involves clearly defining roles and responsibilities for cybersecurity management and regularly assessing cyber risks and vulnerabilities. Another critical aspect is the implementation of robust cybersecurity measures that are capable of protecting against emerging threats and vulnerabilities. This includes developing effective incident response plans and leveraging advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence and machine learning to detect and respond to cyber threats. Moreover, it is essential to fully integrate the cybersecurity governance framework into the overall business strategy. By doing so, senior management can prioritize cybersecurity as a strategic imperative and allocate the necessary resources and capabilities to ensure long-term survival and growth, even in the face of adversity. Lastly, building a culture of cybersecurity awareness and training among all employees is crucial. This helps mitigate the risk of human error and ensures that staff are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to identify and respond to cyber threats. Discussions about the development of renewable energy and cybersecurity together can lead to important policy recommendations that consider the interdependencies between these two areas. However, it is important to recognize that predictions about the future energy system may be influenced by the social context in which they are made. Factors such as public perception, political will, and economic considerations can all play a role in shaping the direction of energy policy and the implementation of cybersecurity measures.

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INCEL TERRORISM: HOW WOMEN'S SEXUAL FREEDOMS PUT MISOGYNISTS ON THE DEFENSIVE

LAIA CORXET-SOLÉ

ABSTRACT

Misogyny has been increasingly identified as a driving force for terrorism due to recent instances of political violence associated with the involuntary celibate (incel) community. Incel discourses are embedded in an extreme misogynist ideology that provides a framework for understanding the incel experiences and their reality. The present paper explores how this ideology serves as a driver for incel terrorism by identifying the ideological elements present in incel discourse that justify the use of terrorism through a narrative that positions misogynists in a defensive position. It argues that such a misogynist framework allows incels to articulate an unjust grievance against which to struggle by identifying women's sexual liberation as an attack on the patriarchal system which renders incels unable to perform successful masculinity due to a lack of access to women's bodies. Additionally, misogynist ideology positions incels as victims of a system that is perceived as unjust, and therefore rationalises a reactionary political struggle through terrorism. While the incel worldview might be unique to the community, identifying the ideological elements of incel discourses positions incels as part of a wider extreme misogynistic ideological milieu, which should be regarded as the source of incel terrorism.

Keywords: *terrorism, incel, misogyny, feminism, sexual liberation*

INTRODUCTION

Misogyny, dominant and hegemonic, had never needed terrorism before. Due to its ideological dominance in Western societies, misogyny has had access to a wide range of violences, other than terrorisms, through which to maintain a patriarchal social system. While a central element of violent ideologies such as jihadism or the far right, and a

motivator for their terrorism, misogyny on its own has not been regarded as a source for terrorism (Roose and Cook, 2022: 7; DeCook et al., 2022: 707). However, as a result of the growing challenges to patriarchy and male dominance put forward by the claims for women's liberation on multiple spheres, misogyny has increasingly been situated by scholars as one of the key drivers of certain forms of terrorist violence in the West, manifesting especially through the frame of incel or incel-inspired terrorism (Barcellona, 2022: 180). Embodying a reactionary misogynist ideology, incel terrorism has come to the attention of academics and security professionals as a result of several attacks that have taken place throughout the last decade in Western Europe and North America, such as the Isla Vista attack in 2014 - considered to be the first attack linked to incels (Barcellona, 2022: 176) - or the 2018 van attack in Toronto.

The present paper adds to a growing body of literature that examines incel terrorism, by exploring the direct causes of this form of misogynist political violence through the incels' own ideological understanding of the world and their grievances. It argues that incel terrorism represents a violent and political expression of a reactionary misogynist ideology that has emerged as a reaction to the growing salience of gender issues in Western societies. Incel terrorism represents a rational choice by misogynist extremists. This choice is based on how they understand society, themselves, and their political grievances, all of which are informed by a misogynist ideological framework. It embodies a political reaction to the progress of women's freedoms that has taken place over the last few decades, especially those related to sexual rights. It does so by framing feminism as the political discourse that has allowed women to subvert what misogynists understand to be the natural

hierarchical order of society, built along gender and sexual lines. Through a traditionally misogynist lens, incels understand men's sexual and social domination over women as natural, and therefore experience their involuntary celibacy as an unjust deprivation caused by the advancement of women's sexual freedom (Baele et al., 2021: 1679). Moreover, by portraying the patriarchal political project and the masculine subject as being threatened by women's sexual liberation, incel discourses feed on misogyny to justify and incite terrorism. Consequently, incels, as part of a wider misogynist milieu, see themselves in a context of struggle against women and what they consider a new gender order, which not only justifies terrorism, but even portrays it as necessary.

It is important to note that only a small portion of the members of incel communities online have taken the step to engage in terrorism. However, as Baele *et al.* (2021: 1668) state, incel discourses display the necessary elements to incite terrorist violence by radicalising those who identify with their worldview. Moreover, the widespread positive regard that perpetrators of terrorism enjoy within incel spaces points towards the acceptance of terrorism and violence among community members (O'Donnell and Shor, 2022: 346; Witt, 2020: 683). Consequently, it is relevant to examine the ideological nature of incel discourses to better understand why incel terrorism has emerged, why it must be regarded as an emerging terrorist threat, and how to address extreme misogynist radicalization.

This paper first develops a contextual and theoretical framework to introduce both the object and the theory that structure the present analysis. It then provides a brief illustration of the incel community and its association with terrorism, followed by an overview of the theory on the causes of terrorism, the concept of ideology, and misogyny as a reactionary ideology. After a brief exposition of the methodology that will guide the subsequent analysis, a third section discusses the ideological components present in incel discourses that indicate how incels understand reality and, therefore, what causes incel terrorism.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Incels and terrorism

Involuntary celibates (incels) are a predominantly online sub-community of individuals "who define themselves by their inability to have sexual or romantic relationships" (Preston et al., 2021: 824). Most users who participate in incel forums are under the age of 30, men, and live in North America or Europe (Beauchamp, 2019). The term 'incel' was coined by a Canadian bisexual woman in the late 1990s (DeCook and Kelly, 2022: 708). However, soon after it came to be associated with a predominantly masculine and heterosexual community characterised by extremely misogynistic narratives, male entitlement, and the dehumanisation of women (Kelly et al., 2021: 4).

The incel community is part of a wider set of male-centric and misogynist online groups often referred to as the 'manosphere' (Ging, 2019: 638). The manosphere's sub-communities are united by their hatred of women and their adherence to the Red Pill framework which, in turn, connects it to broader alt-right and supremacist communities who have also adopted the terminology (Barcellona, 2022: 175). In incel ideology, 'Taking the Red Pill', or 'redpilling' represents becoming aware and accepting that "men are the true victims of the current gender order" (DeCook and Kelly, 2022: 709). Incels stand out due to their adherence to a nihilistic version of this framework, called the 'Black Pill', which advocates for the acknowledgement that the system is genetically determined, and self-improvement is impossible (DeCook and Kelly, 2022: 709). Such an approach can facilitate the normalisation of violence, since the nihilistic undertones of the 'Black Pill' narrative foster feelings of resentment and exasperation among community members (Cottee, 2021: 95).

The incel community has come under the intense attention of mainstream media, as well as security academics and professionals, because of the several violent attacks perpetrated by persons associated

with it (Brzuszkiewicz, 2020: 3). As is well known, terrorism remains a contested concept (Schmid, 2023: 2). However, acts of violence committed by incels present certain characteristics that coincide with several working definitions of terrorism. Highlighting its political nature, Crenshaw (1987: 13) defines terrorism as “a means to a political end”, emphasising, as does Richards (2014: 213), terrorism as a method that can be used by a variety of actors with political ends. Despite historically being linked to structured organisations and distinct political ideologies, terrorism can, and it increasingly is, a tool used by unstructured and idiosyncratic communities such as incels (Norris, 2020: 4).

Additionally, Crenshaw (1981: 379) distinguishes between the direct targets of the violence and the wider audience for whom the message is intended, to highlight the communicative and symbolic nature of terrorist violence. This emphasises the psychological effects of terrorism, which generates fear and terror while conveying a political message to society as a whole (Schmid, 2023: 7). The recurrent use of online posts of varied forms by perpetrators of incel attacks in order to claim the violence and frame it through their political message illustrates how incel attacks are intended as communicative and symbolic to convey the incels' hatred of women and society (O'Donnell and Shor, 2022: 342).

It is important to note that there remains academic disagreement regarding the terrorist nature of incel attacks. Some scholars argue that no distinctive politics can be identified within incel discourses (Gursky, 2020; Hoffman et al., 2020; Cottee, 2021). They argue that since incels do not have a clear political project, nor do they promote and seek a coherent idea of a desired form of state, they do not possess a political agenda (Cottee, 2021: 96). Since terrorism is a form of political violence, if incels do not possess a political agenda, their violence cannot be terrorism. Consequently, these scholars regard incel narratives as reproducing emotional frustration, rather than as “a political call to action” (Ging, 2019: 648).

However, as multiple scholars have argued, the core idea in incel ideology is one concerned with the subordination of a part of the population and the establishment of a hierarchical and patriarchal form of society, which is deeply political (DeCook and Kelly, 2022; O'Donnell and Shor, 2022; Brzuszkiewicz, 2020). Incels discuss and formulate political proposals, such as the (re)distribution of sex, the limitation of women's rights, enforced monogamy, or the legalization of rape (Baele et al, 2021: 1679; De Cook and Kelly, 2022: 711; O'Donnell and Shor, 2022: 341). A failure to identify a politics within incel discourses stems from a failure to regard misogyny as political, and a narrow understanding of politics as concerned only with state affairs. Nevertheless, following such scholars, this paper sustains that misogyny is a political ideology that seeks to control and subjugate women, which it sees as inferior, through the imposition of social and political limitations to their freedoms (De Cook and Kelly, 2022: 710; O'Donnell and Shor, 2022: 341). Consequently, considering the political nature of the violence associated with the incel community, as well as its use as a tool for communication, the present paper frames incel violence as terrorism.

Drivers of terrorism

Terrorism has long constituted a topic of concern for academics, who have sought to provide explanations for why groups and individuals perpetrate terrorist attacks. Scholars have identified a multiplicity of variables that come into play when considering what provokes terrorism, which can be approached from different levels (Lia and Skjølberg, 2000: 8).

Crenshaw (1981: 380) suggests to “approach terrorism as a form of political behaviour resulting from the deliberate choice of a basically rational actor”, which is informed by the environment said rational actor is embedded in. Similarly, Wilkinson (1987: ix) argues that explaining terrorism must focus on the context that frames the terrorist's ideologies and beliefs. These approaches, which lean towards psychological explanations, are based on the idea that “[the] way in which people comprehend and

make sense of the social world has consequences for the direction and character of their action and inaction" (Purvis and Hunt, 1993: 474).

For Crenshaw (1981: 383), the direct causes of terrorism are the reasons that lead a group or an individual to engage in terrorism, which are based on the terrorist's perception of an unjust grievance or deprivation. Gurr (1970) approaches political violence through a similar lens, calling the frustration that emerges from a disparity between expectations and reality 'relative deprivation'. Human frustration has, in fact, been identified as a leading cause of political violence for centuries, and is present, for example, in studies of revolutions from Aristotle and Tocqueville, all the way to Sloterdijk (Lia and Skjølberg, 2000: 11; Sloterdijk, 2006).

According to Crenshaw (1981: 387), terrorism is a decision made from a position of relative weakness. The decision to employ terrorism highlights one's self-perceived position of inferiority regarding the object identified as the source of grievance or deprivation. An individual or group that decides to perpetrate terrorist violence understands themselves as occupying a position of inferiority in society, and therefore see themselves as lacking other means through which to achieve their political goals (Crenshaw, 1981: 387). Consequently, the way an individual regards their own positioning in social hierarchies becomes central in causing terrorism, because it serves as a rational justification for the strategic value of terrorist violence.

Following both Crenshaw's (1981: 383) understanding of terrorism as a "rational political choice", and the theory of relative deprivation, the terrorist's perception of reality and their position within it emerges as a key element in comprehending why terrorism occurs. The rationality of terrorism has been called into question due to the empirical ineffectiveness of the method in achieving its goals or the apparent absence of "objective utility calculations" in the decision to engage in terrorism (Fortna, 2015: 549;

Nalbandov, 2013: 94). However, this paper understands rationality through the lens of 'procedural rationality' as defined by Herbert Simon (1976: 67), which concerns itself with the process of deliberation, rather than the outcome itself. The interpretation the individual makes of their environment is what drives the use of political violence, for it is this perception that informs the grievances and the self-perceived defensive position that renders terrorism a rational choice (Crenshaw, 1981: 383). Through the lens of procedural rationality, terrorism is regarded as rational because it emerges as a conscious decision informed by an actor's "subjectively constructed assessment of the objective reality", and it is this subjective assessment that guides the intellectual process that leads to the decision to engage in terrorism (Nalbandov, 2013: 94). Terrorism is, therefore, rational, within the incels' misogynist interpretation of reality and their personal experiences.

Ideology

Ideology is crucial in understanding the occurrence of terrorism for it represents the political narrative that informs an individual's perceived position in social hierarchies and the grievances that drive the choice to engage in political violence. It can be understood as a representation of reality that shapes a group's political identity through a set of shared beliefs "about its fundamental conditions and ways of existence and reproductions" (van Dijk, 2006: 116). Deeply connected to the Marxist history of thought, ideology is concerned with the forms of consciousness that condition the way people comprehend their "conflicting interests and struggles over them" (Lichtheim, 1965: 175; Purvis and Hunt, 1993: 476).

The concept becomes crucial for the present analysis because ideology provides the frame through which the incel grievances are articulated, by bringing forward a narrative that explains the incel experience and lived reality. Althusser's concept of 'interpellation' illustrates such a mechanism, for he argues that ideology constitutes people as subjects by speaking

to and explaining their experiences as social subjects, embedding them within a group's identity (Althusser, 1971). Therefore, an ideology serves as a group's self-definition (van Dijk, 1993: 248). It has an important hermeneutic dimension, in so far as it constitutes a model by which individuals interpret their reality and experiences; but it is also inherently socio-cognitive because it is a shared belief system constructed through social discursive practices (van Dijk, 1993: 245).

The connection between terrorism and ideology becomes evident in the way individuals and groups situate themselves within their social realities which in turn, provides the rationale behind the choice to engage in terrorist violence. Particular ideologies and beliefs articulate the political motivations behind terrorism and, therefore, are among the most powerful tools to understand why terrorism occurs (Wilkinson, 1987: ix). Roose and Cook (2022: 4) argue that three key components of ideology emerge as relevant for terrorism: a grievance, a culprit to whom the grievance is attributed, and the understanding of terrorism as morally righteous to "right this perceived wrong". The presence of these elements within incel discourses exemplifies the facilitation of political violence within their ideology.

MISOGYNY AS A REACTIONARY IDEOLOGY

Kate Manne (2018: 33) defines misogyny as "the system that operates within a patriarchal social order to police and enforce women's subordination and to uphold male dominance". Following her definition, this paper defines misogyny as an ideology because it 'interpellates' individuals, and particularly men, by providing a framework through which to interpret their experiences as members of a group in order to uphold a patriarchal social model.

Historically, women have occupied a position of subordination under a patriarchal system. Radical feminists such as Firestone and Jeffreys argue that relations of reproduction lie at the core of the patriarchal system of oppression, in which men

exercise power over women by controlling and owning their reproductive powers (Beechey, 1979: 69). Reproduction and sexuality are cornerstones of the domination exercised in traditional patriarchy, and the limitation of women's sexual freedoms constitutes a primary articulation of masculine power (Siapera, 2019: 33). Following a misogynist understanding of gender relations, which incels perpetrate and reproduce, a man is entitled to a woman's sexual and reproductive functions due to men's natural ownership of women's bodies (Beechey, 1979: 69).

Patriarchy is the political and social system structured around the subjugation of women to male power, and it constitutes a cornerstone of misogyny in so far as it represents the hierarchical understanding through which individuals interpret their positions in society (Roose and Cook, 2022: 4). While the patriarchal system remains pervasive, the gradual successes of the feminist movement and the sexual liberation movement from the 1960s have challenged the hegemonical status of misogyny in Western societies by presenting a struggle against the power exercised over women through sexual control in the forms of sexual violence, morality, and gender roles. According to Kimmel (2015: 28), the traditional ideal of masculinity has been increasingly questioned over the last few decades, which has led to the emergence of feelings of emasculation and humiliation among Western men, who often place the blame on women as the source of their aggrieved deprivation since they can no longer practise their masculinity through domination. This has led to the emergence of what Siapera (2019: 24) calls a "regressive and reactionary gender ideology", which is another manifestation of misogyny and which incels embody.

Misogyny is what we could call an 'implicit' ideology, in so far as it is so embedded in everyday practices and language that it becomes almost invisible. However, as van Dijk (2006: 134) argues, implicit ideologies become explicit in contexts of struggle and resistance. Misogyny perceives women's advancements as a threat to the patriarchal system, which, subsequently, causes the ideology to assert

itself in order to regain the dominance it considers to have lost (Roose and Cook, 2022: 2; Dahl et al., 2015: 251).

Violence, physical and symbolic, is a way in which misogynist ideology can make its resistance explicit. While misogyny has historically used violence as a tool to subordinate women, such violence has not been regarded as political because, being usually perpetrated against particular women within the private sphere, it is considered as not being a public or political affair (Gentry, 2022: 211; Beechey, 1979: 71). Misogyny is not regarded as a source of political violence because misogyny is often not identified as political, despite being a constitutive element of jihadist and far right ideologies, both of whom are widely linked to terrorism and other forms of political violence (Roose and Cook, 2022: 7). The failure to identify the politics of misogyny has, in fact, been central in denying the terrorist nature of incel violence (Gentry, 2022: 210).

Nevertheless, the present paper sustains that misogyny is a political ideology that has become reactionary due to the challenges it faces as a result of the growing emancipation of women, especially in sexual and reproductive terms. Consequently, as misogyny is political, misogynist violence can be regarded as terrorism.

It is also worth noting that incels are not alone in their misogyny (Kelly et al., 2021: 4). Their discourses present certain particular elements that facilitate the rational process of deciding to engage in terrorism, but their understanding of society remains deeply embedded in extreme misogyny. While incel discourses might contain a higher potential for terrorist radicalization (Baele et al., 2021: 1686), it would be a mistake to pathologize the incels' misogyny as unique, rather than as the structural problem it is, because while more outlandish and reactionary than before, "the beliefs [they] espouse are merely repetitions of long-standing misogynistic and patriarchal beliefs" (DeCook and Kelly, 2022: 710).

IDEOLOGICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: AN APPROACH TO DISCOURSE

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an approach concerned with the social implications of language that seeks to uncover the power relations and discriminations embedded in discourse (Wodak, 2001: 2). Consequently, it constitutes an ideal framework to uncover the ideological implications of discourse through an approach van Dijk (2006: 127) calls Ideological Discourse Analysis. The present paper will follow said approach in order to uncover the ideology present in incel discourse, which will allow for a better understanding of the causes of incel terrorism. It will reveal how the community perceives reality and defines itself in a way that leads to engagement in terrorist violence.

The relationship between ideology and discourse is complex, not so much because it is difficult, but rather because the lines between both concepts are blurred (Purvis and Hunt, 1993: 474). Both relate to the way humans understand social realities and how they are conscious of the relations and practises they participate in, and therefore they have sometimes been used interchangeably (Purvis and Hunt, 1993: 474).

However, a way to distinguish them is by differentiating "discourse as process and ideology as effect" (Purvis and Hunt, 1993: 496). Following this understanding, ideology is the meaning conveyed through discourse, and it is through interpellation by ideological narratives that subjects are placed within a specific discursive context (Althusser, 1971). Consequently, it is possible to uncover ideological implications through analysing discourse, because "[...] ideologies are preferably produced and reproduced in societies through forms of text and talk of social actors as group members" (van Dijk, 1995: 245).

This paper builds upon the growing literature that collects and examines incel discourse, which illustrates the metanarratives that dominate

interactions and practices within the community that convey meaning. These metanarratives are examined through the lens of ideology, based on the Ideological Discourse Analysis approach, in order to uncover the elements of discourse that indicate the construction of group identity by defining this group's position within social hierarchies and the grievances that articulate its political project and interests.

DISCUSSION: THE MISOGYNY EMBEDDED IN INCEL DISCOURSE

Since the incel community is an eminently online phenomenon, interactions between its members take place through language, whether it be in posts, forums, videos, or manifestos. This has allowed scholars to identify the main elements that compose incel discourse and the meanings they convey by studying and observing how members of the incel community communicate on online platforms. Building from this existing literature, the following discussion identifies the ideological elements within discourse that inform how incels understand the world. This, in turn, allows for a better understanding of the drivers of incel terrorism.

Kelly et al. (2021: 8) state that the incel worldview is "shaped by the sexual entitlement and dehumanisation towards women endemic in society", which places incel discourses within a broader set of misogynist views. The way the term 'incel' itself is used conveys significant meaning with regard to the group's self-definition. Both words that make up the term 'involuntary celibate' are telling of the problem that incites incel terrorism. 'Celibacy' indicates the centrality of sex as a core masculine identifier; incels want to assert themselves as men (Sharkey, 2022: 43). However, they believe the way to do so is through sexual relationships. Being unable to have such relationships excludes incels from identifying as real men, according to a hegemonic understanding of masculinity.

On the other hand, 'involuntary' denotes the perceived injustice of said celibacy. Incels believe they

are entitled to sex, but women's sexual liberation has led to the establishment of a system in which they believe women hold all the power to exclusively choose successful and attractive partners, leading to a state of hypergamy for some, and celibacy for others (Kelly et al., 2021: 10; Baele et al., 2021: 1679). Involuntary celibacy is, therefore, the lived experience that community members seek to understand. Misogynist ideology present in incel discourses provides an explanation that rationalises and explains the individual's 'inceldom', thus informing a specific understanding that acts as the lens through which to articulate specific discourses that define the group's identity and its conditions of existence in reality. This ideology, therefore, provides violent incels with the reasons directly behind their decision to engage in terrorist violence.

One of the main components in incel discourses that exemplified the dominance of misogynist ideology is the belief in a clearly structured system that classifies individuals and establishes subgroups not only along gender lines, but also through the performance of different forms of masculinity (DeCook and Kelly, 2022: 713). Said system manifests in a hierarchical structure based on sexual achievement and physical attractiveness as a means of success. Incels believe that society is organised according to a 'mating market', dominated by women and attractive men and in which incels are marginalised due to their lack of physical attractiveness (Brzuszkiewicz, 2020: 15). The term 'mating market' denotes the centrality that relationships of reproduction have within the incel ideology, as it indicates how incels believe social interactions with women are almost exclusively directed at establishing sex(affective) relationships, through which an individual's measure of personal success is established (Brzuszkiewicz, 2020: 15).

Here, the use of specific language also becomes crucial in portraying how incels establish a classification that allows them to explain their lived experiences through a common ideological lens. Neologisms and jargon are extremely present in

incel spaces which are used to classify individuals according to how they perceive that the world is organised (Brzuszkiewicz, 2020: 7-8). The term 'Chad', for example, refers to the ideal man, whom women are attracted to and whom incels regard with both jealousy and admiration (Preston et al., 2021: 832-833). Similarly, the term 'Stacy' refers to women who allegedly have multiple relationships with men (Brzuszkiewicz, 2020: 7). They, like all women – who are often referred to as 'foids' or 'female humanoids' – are dehumanised and villainized, yet at the same time desired as an object through which to achieve sexual gratification and social recognition (Barcellona, 2022: 174). Such an understanding provides incels with a framework to articulate their experience, as well as their belonging to the group, by establishing rigid and impermeable lines of division among individuals. In turn, this facilitates the articulation of grievances and political narratives reproducing in-group/out-group dynamics (Baele et al., 2021: 1674).

Within this social structure, incels perceive themselves as occupying the lowest position in the masculine hierarchy because of their inability to perform masculinity successfully (O'Donnell and Shor, 2022: 344). Successful masculinity is measured by means of sexual activity, reproducing the patriarchal instrumentalization of sex which, as Sharkey (2022: 43) states, becomes a marker of the change from boyhood to adulthood. For incels, sexual relationships are important not for the sexual experience itself, but rather as markers of identity and social recognition as men. In fact, in incel discourses, women are objectified and valued only through the sexual and emotional labour they can perform in the service of men (Bratich and Banet-Weiser, 2019: 5012). This denotes an element of extreme misogynist ideology, in which women's subjugation in society is justified due to their biological reproductive functions, and echoes a clear feature of the traditional patriarchal system in which women exist as subordinate and men assert their masculinity through domination (Siapera, 2019: 31; Bratich and Banet-Weiser, 2019: 5008). Through the

use of denigrating and sexual language (such as the terms 'roasties', 'holes', 'foids'), incels dehumanise and villainize women, which allows them to justify violence in their defence of patriarchy, thus normalising violence as a means to an end (Kelly et al., 2021: 15). Through the nihilistic approach of the Black Pill framework, the incels' involuntary celibacy is explained by a narrative of genetic determinism (Brzuszkiewicz, 2020: 13). Incels believe "people's attractiveness depends exclusively on how genetically gifted they are, and this is not in their hands" (Brzuszkiewicz, 2020: 6). Consequently, since they perceive themselves as unattractive, through the common use of self-deprecating labels incels can discursively place themselves in a position of weakness with respect to the broader system (O'Donnell and Shor, 2022: 338). This allows the incels to frame their own experiences in a way that exteriorizes any form of blame, and it provides an explanation for their marginalisation and for their failure to perform ideal hegemonic masculinity (Brzuszkiewicz, 2020: 12). This discursive move also allows incels to position themselves at a disadvantage regarding the rest of society, additionally rationalising the choice to engage in terrorism as a way to convey their political message.

Incels represent a complex performance of "hybrid masculinity" because while they do not frame themselves as successfully masculine, they still express entitlement to the domination of women and access to their bodies (Ging, 2019: 651; O'Donnell and Shor, 2022: 338). This duality denotes the contradictory relationship that incels have with masculinity. In the diagnosis incels make of society, masculinity is an unattainable reality that contributes to the exclusion and humiliation of the men who self-identify as incels. However, incels strive to challenge and subvert the system and the object that denies them access to masculinity. Masculinity becomes both wholly unattainable and the ultimate goal. While positioning themselves as unable to perform hegemonic masculinity, of which they are, in fact, critical, they are still deeply embedded in an extreme misogynist framework (Vito et al., 2018: 91).

This tension that exists in the incel subject is resolved through the already mentioned hatred and villainization of women. Since the incels' conception of success is based on sexual activity, by denying them access to their bodies, women are perceived as the cause of incels' failure as men. If successful masculinity is unattainable, it is only because women have made it so (Sharkey, 2022: 44).

This can be exemplified by the use of specific language which is indicative of misogynist ideology. Incels use the term 'gynocentrism' to refer to the female-dominated system they believe the advancement of women's sexual freedoms has led to (O'Donnell and Shor, 2020: 345). This term allows incel discourses to do three things: (1) identify women as a systemic enemy, (2) present themselves in a position of weakness, and (3) articulate a political project of resistance. The term illustrates how, as Preston et al. (2021: 824) state, "incels situate their experiences as emblematic of the growing social problems facing men." They believe in a feature that is common throughout the manosphere; that Western societies are currently dominated by a system where men are emasculated and subjected to the power women wield in social, economic, and political terms (Ging, 2019: 640).

Consequently, misogyny provides the ideological framework through which incels can explain their lived experiences in a way that does not challenge their gender expectations, but rather identifies the social system, and specifically women, as the source of their unmet life and masculine expectations. The use of economic language such as the term 'sexual market' or the dominance of discussions regarding the right and (re)distribution of sex or the role of men as household providers, according to Shaw (2018: 193), denotes an undercurrent of economic concerns. Articulated through a misogynist lens, these social and economic frustrations are channelled into desires for sexual domination as a way of asserting masculinity. For these men who find themselves ostracised in a society where success and social expectations are increasingly unattainable to

the average person, misogyny provides an ideological narrative that disregards all other sources of social and structural inequality by using women and feminism as scapegoats. Extreme misogyny weaponizes the lived experience of inceldom in order to promote a narrative of gender struggle that emerges from women having increasing control and autonomy over their sexuality. Embedded in the neoliberal culture of self-improvement and individual effort as a path to success that dominates Western societies, incels are experiencing the consequences of economic precarity and the loss of control that comes with an increasingly unstable socioeconomic context during the last couple of decades (Shaw, 2018: 188; Brzuszkiewicz, 2020: 12). This frustration, coupled with the erosion of the traditional patriarchal subjugation of women through sex, creates the ideal breeding ground for misogynist ideology to foster resentment and entitlement, which can then be mobilised in an active defence of patriarchy.

As Baele et al. (2021: 1679) point out, incel narratives identify the sexual revolution of the 1960s as the turning point that eroded the norms and rules of the patriarchal "golden age". These authors identify themes within incel discourse that frame masculinity as having been "feminised and gradually eroded", a development for which women are to blame (Baele et al., 2021: 1680). Incels believe they can no longer become men (Sharkey, 2022: 45), because women have emasculated them through the establishment of a system in which women deny unattractive men access to their bodies. This creates a sense of aggrieved entitlement expressed by members of the community, who feel they are being deprived of their natural privilege (Kimmel, 2015: 35; Brzuszkiewicz, 2020: 13). Misogynist ideology tells men that they have a right to sexual relations with women as a way of asserting their dominance and gaining social recognition through the performance of heterosexual masculinity, which they are now being unjustly denied (Vito et al., 2018: 89). Said aggrieved entitlement, also identified by Kimmel (2015: 35) and Vito et al. (2018: 90), and reminiscent of Gurr's (1970) concept of

relative deprivation', illustrates the central grievance that articulates the sense of injustice that incels place at the core of the current system against which incel terrorism is directed.

Subsequently, incels perceive masculinity to be in crisis, because the ideal patriarchal model for a man is no longer achievable for them in a society where women are increasingly liberated (Sharkey, 2022: 37). This is perfectly exemplified in an article written by an incel sympathiser under the pseudonym Dr. Castle, in which he states: "Centuries ago, a man's primary role was to provide and protect. Now? We weren't quite sure" (2019, in Brzuszkiewicz, 2020: 4). The previous patriarchal model was one when masculinity was asserted through the subordination of women, and masculine success was expressed through the ability of a man to exercise dominance over the inferior other. Now? A process of increasing sexual and reproductive rights for women, together with a gradual deconstruction of gender roles and patriarchal ideals in Western societies, have dislodged the masculine expectations of success. More sexual rights for women means more power to decide over their sexual experiences, which incels perceive as an attack to their capacity to perform traditional masculinity (Sharkey, 2022: 45). Women's sexual liberation has positioned misogyny in a defensive position, for its old methods to subjugate women are losing their effectiveness. This, subsequently, requires misogyny to make itself explicit, for it needs to defend itself from the erosion caused by the gradual dismantling of the patriarchal system of masculine dominance. One of the many ways it does this is through the instrumentalization of the incels' lived experiences and the exploitation of their frustrations, which can potentially lead to be expressed through political violence. Moreover, by positioning sex and gender relations as political issues, feminism puts misogynists in a defensive position of resistance. Incels, in a clear reflection of misogynist ideology, villainize feminism as the vehicle that has enabled women's empowerment in sex relations, and, in their diagnosis of reality, frame it as a sole culprit of their failed expectations to perform

hegemonic masculinity.

Consequently, incel discourses are dominated by themes of victimhood, which fit into the way Crenshaw (1981: 387) links terrorism with a self-perceived position of weakness (Zimmerman, 2022: 6). Violence comes to be framed as a tool by which to subvert the unjust social order at the bottom of which incels perceive themselves to be, and fear and intimidation are "often promoted as the only means of achieving change for inceldom" (O'Donnell and Shor, 2022: 346; Kelly et al., 2021: 16). Consequently, terrorism comes to be understood as a rational choice to make explicit the resistance of the misogynist ideology incels subscribe to, because they perceive terrorism to be the 'tool of the weak' that they can use in a society in which they are at the mercy of women's power. Ultimately, this would re-establish a system of patriarchal domination of men over women. Themes of victimhood and aggrieved entitlement, therefore, become the crucial elements that frame terrorism as rational from incels' perspective, because they perceive society to be against them.

As has been illustrated throughout this section, an extreme and reactionary misogynist ideology can be identified throughout incel discourses. Misogyny provides the belief system that articulates a specific understanding of the world that contains all the elements necessary to possibly lead incels to engage in terrorism. Moreover, incel discourses are embedded within an extreme misogynist ideology based on a reactionary defence of a patriarchal system through the demonization of women for withholding sexual relationships. The centrality of sex throughout incel discourse, additionally, highlights what the core issue incels' political grievance is: women's sexual liberation.

CONCLUSION

Women are increasingly making strides for gender equality, especially in terms of sexual liberation. This is allowing them to become empowered and free themselves from the subordination that

characterises the patriarchal system. Misogyny, as the ideology that upholds this system, has come to see women's sexual freedoms as a threat to its survival and has become reactionary.

The present paper has identified how incel discourses are embedded in misogynist ideology. This ideological frame defends a patriarchal system which is believed to be under threat by the advancement of women's sexual freedoms. Extreme misogyny, therefore, positions the misogynist individual in a defensive and weak position in regards to the changes that have been taking place in Western societies in the last few decades, by framing the current reality as a woman-dominated environment where men are oppressed. Incel discourse clearly reproduces this narrative, constructing a worldview that justifies, and even deems necessary, to engage in terrorist violence.

Terrorism emerges as a rational political choice when an individual or a group perceive themselves to suffer an unjust grievance in a system where they occupy a position of weakness (Crenshaw, 1981: 383). As this paper has argued, incel discourses reproduce such a framework through the construction of a highly hierarchical understanding of society based on sexual achievements and genetic determinism. By positioning themselves at the bottom of said hierarchy, incels understand their status as one of victimhood created by a system which they believe to be unjust. Here, misogynist ideology provides incels with an explanation of their experiences and a justification for their sense of anger.

As has been argued, misogyny can no longer afford to be invisible, for the victories of feminism and the sexual liberation movement have been slowly eroding its power. Consequently, it has instrumentalized the lived experiences of incels by providing an ideological framework that articulates their social ostracization as a grievance for which women and their sexual liberation is deemed responsible. By upholding a hegemonic model of masculinity in which manhood is asserted through domination and sexual conquest, the misogynist

ideology perfectly positions incels in a situation that renders terrorism rational and necessary as the only way in which misogyny can defend itself from the threat of women's sexual freedoms.

Further research on incel discourses can shed additional light on the nature and the dynamics of incel terrorism. A better understanding of the ideological mechanisms that sustain and promote incel violence is crucial in order to properly tackle the phenomenon. Further examinations of incel discourses can promote a greater understanding of the grievances and experiences that foster resentment and hate among community members. This should provide a basis from which to address and challenge the spread of incel narratives and misogynist ideology among young men, subsequently tackling the potential for political violence within extreme misogynist ideology.

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GLOBALIZATION AND GOVERNANCE: NEOLIBERALISM AND ITS CRITICS



CONFRONTING THE 'NEW NORMAL' WITH OLD NORMS: GLOBAL COOPERATION AND HEALTH CHALLENGES FROM A CRITICAL FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE IN THE COVID-19 ERA

GIULIANA T. IACOBUCCI

ABSTRACT

The objective of this essay is to delve into the impacts of globalization on cooperative governance structures during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using the ontological critical feminist method, this paper addresses that cooperative governance was hindered by the forces of globalization because of the international governance regime's emphasis on masculine notions of global structures; this emphasis is seen through entrenched hierarchies, neoliberalism, and security in the international system. Critical feminism along with its understanding of globalization are highlighted. Entrenched hierarchies hindered governance during the pandemic, seen through intersectional experiences of racism, upscaling 'universal' health solutions applied to the Global South, and the underrepresentation of women. Neoliberalism illuminates a lack of power sharing and voluntary commitment creating a minimal social safety net. Further, neoliberalism creates a 'fungibility' of women's bodies. Issues in the global security regime during COVID-19 minimized the saliency of cooperative governance through masculine structures of state and security in migration, state-centric security within international institutions creating isolationism, and self-sufficiency reinforcing the Global North and South divide. Throughout this paper, the COVID-19 pandemic from the critical feminist lens is viewed as a demonstration of the inherently masculine assumptions and practices in international politics, illuminating perspectives relegated to the sidelines. By delving into the nuances of global governance from the critical feminist perspective, viewpoints that are hidden because of the intersections of power within the global system will allow the field of international relations to better understand how crises are weathered differently. This allows for the diagnosis of divergences in the global hierarchy, which can create equitable solutions for future crises.

Keywords: *COVID-19, critical feminism, intersectionality, neoliberalism, Global North /South divide.*

THE MYTH OF THE 'NEW NORMAL' IN THE COVID-19 ERA

During the COVID-19 pandemic, common rhetoric echoed throughout the world of having to face a 'new normal'. Addressing this 'new normal' was attempted by cooperative governance structures to confront global health challenges in an increasingly globalized world, leading many to question the efficacy of international governance efforts' ability to combat health crises. This paper argues that COVID-19 demonstrated that the active practices of globalization hindered cooperative governance in the international arena, exemplified through entrenched hierarchies, the expansion of neoliberal governance, and emphases on security, illuminating inequalities from a critical feminist lens. The pandemic exemplified the reinforcement of unequal and highly masculinized structures in the current world order, further disadvantaging and ignoring the feminine view of international politics. First, an explanation of the critical feminist paradigm is provided, followed by an understanding of the forces of globalization from this perspective. Next, globalization's effects on governance efforts hindered by entrenched hierarchies is highlighted. This is exemplified through intersectional stigmatization of COVID-19, 'universal' health solutions applied to the Global South, and women's representation in governance structures. The paper then discusses the effects of expansive neoliberalism enmeshed with globalization and its effects on international institutions, through their voluntary social safety nets and emphasis on economics. The global security regime is then examined concerning international health governance about women's migration in the Global South, state-centric security contradicting cooperation, and protection of state security with vaccine distribution. Each respective section clearly

shows that ongoing international cooperative governance efforts are hindered by the masculinized understandings of global structures, ultimately relegating the feminine view of international politics to the sidelines.

Of the many gendered paradigms present in international relations, specifically those in international political economy, the critical feminist theory stands to identify the shortcomings of cooperative governance efforts in a way that captures the different experiences of global health crises. Critical feminist theories illuminate the importance of intersectionality rather than essentialism, refuting the idea that there is one feminine experience; instead, critical feminist theories underscore the importance of gender's interactions with other facets of positionality such as class, drawing from socialist ideas for example (Kinsella et al., 2020: 153, 154). This strand of the feminist paradigm highlights the importance of marginalized experiences, which can allow for a well-rounded understanding of how world politics operates in different parts of the world (154). Critical feminism views gender as a social construct, which is imbued in social practices, institutions, and positionalities, empowering and oppressing individuals based on how these mediums interpret social constructions of gender (152). Intersectionality as a concept in critical feminism is important, wherein the experiences of world politics is shaped not only by gender, but race, class, or position in the Global North and South hierarchy (Smith, 2018: 2). The critical feminist perspective combines understanding of constructions of identity with the real-world experiences of these constructions, emphasizing the importance of how masculinity and femininity are perceived.

Globalization is broadly defined as "... a historical process involving a fundamental shift or transformation in the spatial scale of human social organization that links distant communities and expands the reach of power relations across regions and continents..." (Baylis et al., 2020: 539). From a critical feminist perspective, the forces of

globalization that impact international connections dictated by structures and organizations include states, citizens, international organizations, migration, the Global North and South divide, and any accompanying hierarchies of gender existing in these institutions related to the construction of gender (Goldstein and Pevehouse, 2020a). Ultimately, the feminist paradigm generally aims to look at the role of gender within the international system, whether it is implicit or explicit.

THE EFFECTS OF ENTRENCHED HIERARCHIES OF POWER ON EFFORTS TO COMBAT THE PANDEMIC

The creation of widespread entrenched hierarchies through globalization are exposed by the COVID-19 crisis, especially the stigmatization of COVID-19 related to intersectionality. Gender is an important aspect of how women experience global politics that is compounded with racialization and culture, despite the mainstream discourse positing ideas of gender blindness (Flores Sanchez and Kai 2022: 380; Waylen 2004: 572). A resurgence in anti-Asian racism during the COVID-19 pandemic echoed similar sentiments as both the SARS epidemic and historic anti-immigration sentiment, escalating the public's fear and scrutiny towards Asian people (Balintec 2022; Zhou and Coleman 2016: 293). This rhetoric manifests itself in hate crimes globally, as seen in Canada in 2021 where racist hate crimes against Asian Canadians increased by 47% from 2020; the majority of complaints in this data were submitted by women (Balintec 2022). This shows the inextricable link between race and gender for Asian women, as their race and gender makes them more susceptible to hate crimes because of the marginality they face as Asian women; misogyny and racism come together to create a risk factor that is unique to Asian women. The hierarchies within international politics made pervasive by globalization hinder global governance's ability to protect the most marginalized because of the value placed on their livelihoods. Institutions like the World Health Organization (WHO) contain

neutrality to them because of the nature of their mandates as a result of globalization, wherein action cannot be taken to combat issues like intersectional struggles. All member states in the WHO for example must conform to the same goals made pervasive by globalization as the international 'standard', which results in institutional cooperation falling victim to pressure from member states with minimal transparency (Vilbert, 2021: 16). The compounding of both race and gender for Asian women puts them at an increased risk of susceptibility to hateful rhetoric that is not stopped or condemned by international organizations, as they have a neutrality to them that does not account for dimensions of positionality. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were felt differently socially by Asian women, and cooperative governance efforts like the WHO were not used to mitigate some of the adverse effects of hateful rhetoric; instead, the problem was allowed to develop and manifest itself in domestic politics, relegating the problem to low politics. The hierarchy of race and gender displays a masculine view of international politics, only considering the masculine experience for the sake of 'neutrality', despite hierarchies reinforced by globalization not viewing everyone as such.

Within institutions as an agent of globalization, COVID-19 expresses the shortcomings of 'universal' solutions to health challenges exemplified by women's experiences in the Global South. As a force of globalization, the WHO and the UN both fail to provide equitable health governance through entrenched hierarchies of class, gender, race, and status in the Global South. For example, policy at the global level focusing on minimal social services greatly affects access to healthcare, making it accessible almost exclusively for upper-class women (Waylen 2004: 566). However, the UN has stated the importance of equitable resource distribution for the virus through upscaling of governance efforts to aid remote communities in combating COVID-19, especially for women who have less access to knowledge regarding healthcare; despite this claim, upscaling efforts do not happen in practice (UN

2022). Through the intersection of inequitable resource distribution and positionality, access to crucial health services administered by cooperative governance is limited for women in the Global South. This is because of their status, according to 'importance' in the global system. Ideals for universal solutions do not translate for women in the Global South. This ideology is imbued in international organizations of cooperation only when it is beneficial or when a member state has the resources to contribute. Masculinity is seen in voluntary contributions through the idea that donations to the collective good are only important if they do not impact the strength or prowess of the state itself, ultimately showing the "protective" nature of constructions of masculinity in the international system. The masculine structure here is exemplified by a lack of consideration of an intersectional approach and the attempts to universalize the experiences of health challenges instead of a critical analysis of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Generalization of the different experiences regarding global shocks exemplifies a gendered idea of power because women's intersectional experiences are levelled with men, despite not possessing as much power as men in the international system.

The underrepresentation of women in international institutions in an increasingly globalized world represents the lack of communication of women's needs in international governance, especially significant during the COVID-19 pandemic. International politics mimics the private and public distinction present in domestic politics, ignoring the presence of women in the international arena (Goldstein and Pevehouse, 2020b). Representation of women's interests is not equitable with men (2020b). Further, 11 out of 31 members and advisers for the WHO's Emergency Committee on COVID-19 were women (Bourgeal, 2021). On a disaggregated level, women migrants were not part of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) decision-making processes related to COVID-19 and were the first demographic group to be abandoned by the emergency response support system (Ansar, 2022:

40). In both a general and intersectional sense - breaking down by just gender and a facet of positionality such as migrant status - supranational structures fail to include women on a level that is conducive to their needs. This lack of representation in major decision-making reflects entrenched ideas of women's place in society. This displays the distinction between private and public spheres, as well as women's perceived place within those spheres. In other words, women's voices are relegated to the private sphere because that is where society places them. Global governance reinforces and reproduces this narrative. With this distinction, a masculine view of structures is reinforced twofold, by way of the value placed on women's contributions and the exclusion of women from important decision-making processes. Hierarchies are further exposed by the positionality of women whose voices are partially included, as women as an aggregate are supported in the WHO, but migrant women who deal with the compounded effects of race and gender are not included at all. The lack of inclusion of women reinforces the idea that their positionality is not valued as an important aspect of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, and as such are abysmally included or not at all.

NEOLIBERAL INSTITUTIONS' FAILURE TO CONSTRUCT AN EQUITABLE COVID-19 SOCIAL SAFETY NET

Institutions as agents of globalization are imbued with neoliberal logic due to the accelerated flow of ideas, resulting in a disjunction between the goals of a global safety net and neoliberal foundations of international institutions as exemplified by COVID-19. Neoliberal logic within institutions is the inherent favouring of market fundamentalism, where the market is the driver and source of all collective good, placing large emphasis on economic outputs and growth (Chorev, 2013: 629). A shift occurred in the structure of the WHO during the advent of neoliberalism, where the WHO became dependent on member states through voluntary monetary support (637).

As such, the WHO must conform to the needs of its donors (637). This shift is displayed by the minimal amount of global cooperation during the COVID-19 pandemic in international clinical trials, important tools to combat virus spread like Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and vaccine distribution, leading to a minimal framework of global cooperation despite the promise to create and reinforce it when a crisis occurs (Fraundorfer and Winn, 2021: 6; Papamichail, 2021: 474). The reliance on voluntary instead of mandatory donations to global health government institutions like the WHO as a force of globalization shows an international commitment to a limited social safety net, reflecting neoliberal principles of a limited state. The neoliberal shift resulted in a very disjointed global response to COVID-19, and the lack of resource pooling reflects the neoliberal idea of limited governmental help at the international level. Each state instead of cooperating in an institutional framework that is supposed to benefit all will contribute what is seen as necessary to keep the institution running, creating a very limited version of an international social safety net. In this case, neoliberalism is expanded to the global level in international institutions which are supposed to create an equitable playing field. Connecting masculinity and neoliberalism in international relations, feminism views the traditional understanding of international relations as that of men, empowering the masculine through constructions of it being rational, powerful, and associated with the public sphere (Ali, 2023: 6; Smith, 2018: 2). Neoliberal ideas contribute to a lack of care, demonstrating a very masculine global governance effort of reserving wealth and power only within state borders, instead of a cooperative effort to aid others in need. As such, the creation of international cooperative institutions is hindered by expanding neoliberalism because ideas of neoliberalism directly contradict cooperation; instead, everyone - or in the international case, every country - must fend for itself. The unequal structure of states attempting to cooperate and aid each other with limited resources and money cannot address inequalities between countries, as some need global governance

structures for resources. The lack of power-sharing reflects a masculinized view of world politics because of the restrictive view of aid to the public sphere in a 'rational' manner by only giving what is deemed appropriate or projects the greatest image for a state. This reinforcement of neoliberal ideas is imbued in international institutions as an agent of globalization despite the promise of an institutionalized global safety net.

Looking inwardly at international institutions, the emphasis on economic interests within the global network of policies that are widespread as a result of institutional mandates is shown to have adverse effects on women, displayed by the fungibility of women in the COVID-19 healthcare workforce around the world. One of neoliberalism's focuses is market fundamentalism, and as such global policy created by international institutions focuses on minimal governance, ultimately affecting women's access to healthcare and social services (Waylen, 2004: 566). Women are not protected by policy and were especially affected at the height of the pandemic, making up almost 70% of the healthcare frontlines resulting in higher exposure rates to the virus (OECD, 2020). Essential workers in this sense have a 'fungibility' to them, only contributing their services and bodies to service the larger capitalist system and eventually being replaced by others due to the high risk incurred as frontline workers (Flores Sanchez and Kai, 2022: 385). This disposability of women's bodies through fungibility in a workforce highly saturated by racialized and gendered people commodifies their bodies through deaths and infections (385). The force of globalization in neoliberal international governance reinforces hierarchies of inequality, creating higher risks for marginalized women, mostly low-income racialized women. The feminine view of international politics is ignored by governance ignoring women's needs, and instead treating their work and bodies as commodities that can be disposed of and used for the benefit of the greater good. Instead of protecting women as valuable assets, neoliberal governance at the international level ignores the high risk incurred

by racialized, low-income women working to fight the pandemic. By treating women in the healthcare workforce as expendable, neoliberal ideas within the hierarchy of intersections of identity became more apparent during the pandemic, as expendability for the sake of power and state survival presents a uniquely masculine view of global governance. The lack of policy protection on a global level ignores the unique and intersectional needs- being the high risk nature of work being done by racialized women - on the frontline of the pandemic, instead focusing on workers as inputs in a larger system of capitalism.

THE EMERGENCE OF A MASCULINISED GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY REGIME

Women's migration as a force of globalization exemplifies the masculine structure of both the state and security, ignoring women's needs on an intersectional level during the COVID-19 pandemic. Migration on the international level is an important force of globalization which has often been ignored, focusing solely on the flow of finance and goods instead of people (Ansar, 2022: 34; Waylen, 2004: 563). Women are a large portion of migrants, and were significantly impacted by measures instituted by host countries for the sake of security; for example, women migrants were excluded from the pandemic response in GCC countries, effectively disqualifying them from protection against COVID-19 (Ansar, 2022: 37). Countries also attempted to place blame on migrants, and in the case of Bangladesh in March 2020 returnee women migrants were blamed for the first reported COVID-19 case (38). The emphasis on security by states in the international system against a force of globalization, migration, hinders the ability of women disadvantaged in multiple forms- being racialized women disadvantaged within their own country tied because of class and Global South migrant status - to self-determine in a highly masculine view of the world. The securitization efforts against women migrants shows a certain view of self-sufficiency that states conduct their affairs with, leaving women to fend for themselves in a system that values protection against the unknown instead

of cooperation. Despite the opening of borders through globalization, the empathy towards those who are most marginalized is shirked away, and instead, protection against the unknown is reinforced through scapegoating migrants who are already at a disadvantage in the pandemic. The value structures within the migration regime emphasize 'desirable' migrants, leaving those that are deemed 'undesirable' to face global health challenges without the assistance needed to survive. By only choosing migrants that are desirable to the social conditions of the state and that reinforce the security of it, rejection of women migrants is inherently masculine; choosing people based on their conformity to essentializing and hegemonic ideals of what it is to be a 'good' citizen contributing to the strength of a state reinforces masculinity within ideas of security.

State-centric security within international organizations' foundations contradicts the very idea of cooperation on the global level, revealing the masculinized nature of self-sufficiency and isolation during the COVID-19 crisis. The WHO and the European Union (EU) both approach governance based on the securitization of health, viewing health challenges as threats to the state's national security (Fraundorfer and Winn, 2021: 8; Zhou and Coleman, 2016: 295). The dominant approach to pandemic response and preparation is intragovernmental and state-centric, serving as a disjunction between global health challenges and the response catered to state needs only (Fraundorfer and Winn, 2021: 10). For example, as of late March 2020, restrictions on the flow of people between and within the majority of EU states had been established in Europe, dividing member states from one another (12). Within international organizations as a force of globalization, such as the EU and the WHO, cooperative governance fails because of masculinized understandings of security, reinforcing isolationist ideas in times of crisis. In the discipline of international relations, the very definition of security is not broadened to include gendered concepts for fear of a lack of theoretical saliency or creating 'utopian' ideals of security that cannot be translated

into policy (Hoogensen and Rottom, 2004: 158). Positive connotations associated with security and femininity, such as 'freedom from fear', are predominantly not used, and instead phrases like 'absence of threat' make up foundations of security. (156). Without a well-rounded understanding of what security actually means from an inclusive standpoint, international institutions will always default to the masculine practice of security because of their theoretical underpinnings. The idea of negative connotations, an 'absence of threat', shows how cooperation is not a priority in dominant definitions of security. In turn, this narrow understanding of security prevents attempts to come together by having a masculine understanding of how personnel and ideas flow within supranational institutions, and instead the entrenched ideas of state-centricity hinders member states' ability to cooperate. Effectively, this leads to a disjointed response to crises as seen in the EU during COVID-19, leaving each state to fend for itself because of theory reinforcing entrenched masculine practices. The closing of borders displays that EU member states did not want to attempt to cooperate because of the understandings of security imbued in institutions, despite the mandate of the institution being at ease regarding the flows of commerce and people. By allowing dominant ideas of security to persist instead of integrating other perspectives, the only security that exists is one that has inherently masculine assumptions, inhibiting cooperation.

The protection of state security related to vaccine distribution reveals a lack of cooperation in an increasingly globalized world related to ease of transportation of ideas and resources, displaying masculine ideas of self-sufficiency negatively impacting the most marginalized women. The securitization of global health security policy does not address how gender is implicated in disease surveillance and responses (Papamichail, 2021: 471). Views of securitization were evident in the response to COVID, as the urgency in vaccine rollout was displayed in the billions of euros and US dollars used to create vaccines for individual countries

(Fraundorfer and Winn, 2021: 9). Countries that experience insecurity, for example, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, ran the risk of falling behind on vaccine equity due to conflict within the country, creating inequities tied to postcolonialism when it comes to vaccine distribution (Papamichail, 2021: 477; UN, 2022). Women in countries in conflict generally are at a greater risk of falling behind, as healthcare services are less accessible in conflict hotspots (UN, 2022). The emphasis on security reinforces existing systems of Global North and South divides, especially relating to conflict and the people implicated in it. Security for states interferes with the ability of international institutions like the WHO and UN to provide necessary combatants against the coronavirus because countries are unwilling to share resources and knowledge with other states, let alone states in conflict. Ultimately, this masculinized version of security affects women in areas of conflict, as other states in international bodies are unwilling to intervene and cooperate, affecting the most marginalized. Gender is an important factor that is not often considered in vaccine distribution, especially related to women in areas of conflict, ultimately reinforcing masculine ideas of self-sufficiency in times of crisis. This appeals only to those who fit within the global hierarchy of security, the Global North, and states with the ability to fund vaccine creation; the unwillingness to share resources in times of need compounded with conflict exemplifies the isolationist ideas present in cooperative structures.

CHALLENGING IN PRACTICE THE 'REAL NORMAL' PARADIGM OF POWER, PRIVILEGE, AND PANDEMICS

The COVID-19 pandemic displayed the obstacles created by globalization impacting global health governance, demonstrated through entrenched hierarchies, the expansion of neoliberal governance, and emphasis on security, revealing inequalities at the global level from a gendered lens. The pandemic reinforced enduring unequal and highly masculinized

structures in the current world order, further discounting the feminine view of international politics. Forces of globalization affected governance through entrenched hierarchies, displayed through intersectional stigmatization of COVID-19, 'universal' health solutions applied to the global South, and representation of women in governance structures. Expansive neoliberalism implicated with globalization affected international institutions through neoliberal emphases on global safety nets and economics, impeding cooperative governance. Migration in the global South, state-centric security as a contradiction to cooperation, and vaccine distribution regarding the protection of state interests all encompass ideas of the failings of health governance in a globalized world that prioritizes an imagined global security crisis over the real health needs of millions of human beings. Within all of the component forces of globalization such as international institutions, states, migration, citizens, and the Global North and South divide, masculinized structures are revealed to impact the expression of the feminine view of international politics, instead reifying the importance of the masculine view over the female experience. Despite claims throughout and near the end of the pandemic, the 'new' normal is not a phenomenon occurring at all; in fact, the 'new' normal is simply a view of the world further clarified for those who are the most marginalized, and illuminated for those who had the luxury of never experiencing the 'real normal' that those at the bottom of the global hierarchy are forced to go on living with on a daily basis.

This paper aims to be a tipping point for further research into the barriers constructed by institutions imbued with globalized notions of masculine power, and the impact those barriers have on various positionalities. The critical feminist approach in this paper emphasizes intersectionality, and although much of the research included scholarship from the Global North and South, further steps should be taken to create parity between different scholarly works, and in turn highlight the experiences stemming from those positionalities generating that

work. The global system is complex, and with that comes complex identities, ultimately creating space for research into intersectional experiences of migrant, racialized, and impoverished women in the Global North and South. Further research should be done to shed light on these various positionalities, not only in isolation, but how they work in tandem with one another in real time rather than in scholarship only, displaying how privileging one group and marginalizing another impacts how challenges like health pandemics are faced. Marginality and privilege are bound together frequently, and should emphasize above all how experience matters to constructions of power. Critical feminism exists within the confines of the labels the constructed world exists in, and should not be taken as the end analysis of the feminine experience. Using various feminisms as a gateway to acquiring the best knowledge of how power and privilege interact can help create equitable solutions for the future. Ultimately, critical feminism is a starting point to feminist analysis, and true equitable analysis and solutions can only be reached through the interconnections of feminisms and other critical paradigms.

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PRIORITIZING WEALTH OVER HEALTH: THE COVID-19 VACCINE STRATEGY

WREN TAYLOR

ABSTRACT

This article demonstrates the link between inadequate international cooperation and global health inequalities in COVID-19 vaccine distribution within the context of neoliberal globalization. This is accomplished using Immanuel Wallerstein's World Systems Approach as a framework to critique unequal vaccine distribution between the periphery and core states of historical capitalism as the units of analysis. The paper claims that the embedded market interests within globalization have furthered inequality within the already vulnerable states of the Global South by hindering cooperative international governance on vaccine strategy. First, neoliberal globalization is defined in relation to the vulnerabilities it has created in the Global South, both within and above the level of the state. Next, the examples of intellectual property rights (TRIPS) and public-private partnerships (COVAX) are highlighted as examples of institutional barriers to global cooperation on vaccine strategy. Instead of globalization providing a means for international cooperation, the pandemic facilitated opportunities for megacorporations, marketization, and high-income countries (HICs) to economically exploit the disadvantaged populations in the underdeveloped world by withholding essential biotechnology through international policies that prioritize wealth over health. Finally, the paper explores how these barriers have instead upheld the polarizing processes of vaccine nationalism in the developed Western societies.

Keywords: *COVID-19, World-Systems Approach, vaccine strategy, TRIPS, COVAX, vaccine nationalism*

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted and exacerbated global inequalities, especially regarding global health governance. The forces of neoliberal marketisation within global governance structures have left the Global South vulnerable to health crises

and enshrined the nationalistic methods of the Global North, hindering equitable cooperation methods. Rather, the pandemic provided increased opportunity for mega-corporations and high-income countries (HICs) to economically exploit the poor by withholding necessary technology through international policies that prioritize wealth over health. This paper draws on the works of Immanuel Wallerstein and deploys a World Systems approach to critique the unequal distribution of vaccines between periphery and core countries (Shen, 2021). It posits, by means of a neo-Marxist theoretical lens, that the embedded market-interests within neoliberal globalization have furthered inequality within the already vulnerable states of the Global South by hindering international cooperative governance on vaccine strategy during the COVID-19 pandemic. It then explores how these barriers have upheld the polarizing processes of vaccine nationalism. This central thesis is illustrated through the examples of intellectual property rights (TRIPS) and public-private-partnerships (COVAX) as barriers to global cooperation.

THE GOALS OF NEOLIBERALISM ACHIEVED THROUGH ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION

Globalization is the process of the increase and deepening of human connection across time and space (Al-Rodhan and Stoudmann, 2006: 3). Globalization is at its core an economic process, through which increased connection seeks to reduce market barriers and expand the socio-political influence of integration globally (Al-Rodhan and Stoudmann, 2006: 3). The current form of economic globalization is inherently linked to neoliberalism as it is the process by which the tenets of neoliberal ideology are spread within state and society (Rapley, 2004: 8). There are two core values that influence this process of economic globalization: market

fundamentalism and anti-statism (Chorev, 2013). These are supported and disseminated within the state and society through neoliberal policymaking; thus neoliberalism has played a significant role in shaping the process of economic globalization over the past five decades. The core belief of neoliberalism is that the market is the most efficient means of economic allocation, and thus narrow government oversight is necessary so as to not distort this process (Chorev, 2013). Its principles and policies have been influential in guiding the liberalization of trade and investment, the removal of barriers to cross-border flows of goods, services, and capital, and the expansion of the global supply chain. This is advanced through policies that support privatization, marketization, deregulation and the entrenchment of private property rights (Chorev, 2013). This aligns closely with the anti-state sentiments mechanisms of economic globalization. Therefore, the current form of economic globalization and neoliberalism are interconnected concepts, with neoliberal policies and ideologies providing the framework and rationale for promoting and shaping the process of economic globalization.

In addition, according to neoliberalism, collective wellbeing is guaranteed through economic growth, achieved through market expansion. In this way, the goal of neoliberalism is to liberate and strengthen the international economy, by reaching new markets and deregulating existing markets to create the most wealth possible. High income countries (HICs), particularly the United States and major Western European nations, have exerted significant influence in international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and World Trade Organization (WTO) (Chorev, 2013: 628-631). These institutions have been instrumental in spreading neoliberal policies and practices globally. HICs have used their economic and political power to shape the policies and conditions attached to loans, aid, and trade agreements, often requiring recipient countries to adopt neoliberal reforms (Chorev, 2013: 628-631). Through international institutions, HICs have promoted trade liberalization, financial

deregulation, and structural adjustment programs in many countries (Chorev, 2013). Often this was achieved by coercive means, orchestrating a global project of neoliberalism which disproportionately benefits HICs (Chorev, 2013). This interconnection between states and the increasingly free market is a goal of neoliberalism achieved through economic globalization. The neoliberal project is all encompassing, hegemonic and united in achieving its goals of market superiority and thus entrenches its values throughout organizations and governments above and below the level of the state (Chorev, 2013). The polarized benefits of neoliberalism however, are reflected in the great disparity in the global division of wealth and resources.

ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION MAKES THE GLOBAL SOUTH VULNERABLE

Despite its claims of providing universal benefits, economic globalization has created vulnerabilities for the Global South (Zhou, 2023). This has become more apparent than ever during the COVID-19 pandemic, by weakening resilient non-marketized methods within and between societies; such as socialized healthcare and community-led reciprocity. This was done through various policy methods. First, neoliberalism has created health vulnerabilities for LICs by forcing open markets through structural adjustment policies (SAPs). This effect was two-fold. For one, market expansion has increased movement within and between states, making them more vulnerable to diseases, such as COVID-19 (Zhou, 2016: 286). Another important area of SAP restructuring has been health governance within the state, which has been especially destabilizing in the Global South. By hollowing out the state and marketizing healthcare through privatization and deregulation, neoliberal institutions have weakened state healthcare capacity. Specifically, *roll-back* neoliberalism, namely via privatization of state health facilities and tax cuts, has empowered the highly marketized roll-out form of neoliberalism, which

encourages competition, incentivizes investment and individualizes the responsibility of healthcare (Zhou, 2022: 18). These have destabilized state response capacities, specifically in LICs. According to Zhou (2022), the resulting funding gap in the crisis response mechanisms of LICs has evolved alongside the charity model of addressing global health insecurity. By utilizing market-mediated health delivery as a quick-fix for the systemic damage caused by the failure of market oriented health systems, HICs need not turn their attention to the failures of the current model (Zhou, 2022: 19). This, coupled with the systemic underdevelopment of LICs, already suffering from poverty and limited access to resources, has created vulnerable states with restricted response capacities (Godwell and al, 2021; Sparke and Williams, 2022; Peters and al, 2022: 709). The exploitation of economic inequality by globalization forces in the name of private profit has created extreme precarity in the developing world, and this was magnified in the pandemic. Marketized health services that commodify necessary technology and healthcare are found to be systematically inadequate in providing health at a public level, ultimately incapacitating health systems in the developing world when faced with a crisis like COVID-19 (Sparke and Williams, 2022: 22-25).

Similarly, global health governance has been impacted by the neoliberal project as well. For example, supra-national organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) have undergone neoliberal restructuring. Specifically, the WHO's mandate of equitable access to healthcare has been watered down by market superiority, which has destroyed cooperative methods between states to tackle common goals (Chorev, 2013; Sparke and Williams, 2022). Consequently, due to the co-opting of global health governance structures by neoliberal policies, these organizations have not been able to provide adequate support to LICs. Instead, HICs and the pharmaceutical industry have been allowed to exploit poor states through these very institutions (Spake and Williams, 2022: 24).

Ultimately, Global North states and multinational corporations (MNCs) have pursued their own interests of capital accumulation and the protection of market interest. In this way, neoliberal market interests have magnified existing vulnerabilities in the healthcare systems of the Global South allowing private interests, such as pharmaceutical companies to capitalize on a global health crisis.

WORLD SYSTEMS THEORY AND VACCINE DISTRIBUTION

Immanuel Wallerstein's World Systems Theory, outlined in his book *Historical Capitalism* (1983), lends a useful lens through which to contextualize this complex system of inter-state exploitation. This theory dictates that within the whole of global capitalism, the historic core states have instilled a system of exploitation on the periphery by which the core is able to profit (Wallerstein, 1983). This is made possible through the embedded political economic systems and norms created by the cores of historical capitalism; which has allowed for the economic and social dominance of the core over the periphery. This form of domination encourages the exploitation and unequal distribution of resources between regions. As in the case of neoliberal globalization, exploitation has been entrenched in the economic processes exported by the core through intra-governmental organizations, such as the WTO and WHO, to the Global South (Peters et al., 2022: 707-710). This immiseration and exploitation is exhibited in the global governance responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, organized by these very institutions, notably through the complex barriers created by intellectual property law (TRIPS) and public-private partnerships (COVAX). It is apparent through these examples, that the coordinated vaccine response to the pandemic benefitted wealthy multinational corporations rather than promoted global wellbeing during a worldwide health crisis: it ultimately prioritized wealth over health. This is further exemplified in the economically domineering behaviour of HICs during the pandemic. Utilizing the globalized market-oriented system they have

orchestrated, HICs ensured the unequal distribution of biotechnology to their benefit.

VACCINE NATIONALISM AS A RESULT OF NEOLIBERALIZATION

Vaccine nationalism is the process of states hindering global cooperation in pursuit of access to newly developed vaccines for themselves (Zhou, 2022: 451). This was commonplace during the COVID-19 pandemic. Early on in vaccine development, before vaccines had even been approved, the world's richest countries had already secured more than half of projected early supply (Zhou, 2022). This amounted to enough to vaccinate their entire populations with multiple doses, while LICs were left scrambling due to limited manufacturing and economic capacities (Zhou, 2022). Instead of creating broad mechanisms that sought to fix this unequal division of resources in a global health crisis, many states refused to cooperate. The United States even pulled out of the World Health Organization under President Trump (Zhou, 2022). This individualist state behaviour is apparent in the actions of the cores within the frameworks of the TRIPS agreement and COVAX. States did not cooperate because they were pursuing a strategy of vaccine nationalism. But, at the same time, vaccine nationalism is a result of the failure of global structures that should have protected cooperative mechanisms between the developing world and HICs. In this way, recent globalization forces have affected structures within and above the state, thus destroying resilient and broad mechanisms of cooperation in the name of an ideology of market superiority. The prioritizing of wealth over health has directly translated into the issue of vaccine nationalism. It begs the question, have we learned anything about global governance strategies from COVID-19?

To pursue equitable cooperation, states must create a framework outside of the neoliberal market system that values social determinants of health and empowers local and national strategies. For

example, Van De Pas et al. utilize 'shortfall equality' to examine the equality of global COVID vaccination, namely how vaccines are allocated within and between states, and vulnerable populations utilizing a 'standard years of life lost' averted per dose (2022; 27). To effectively tackle a global issue such as a pandemic, it is futile to pursue nationalist policies, as these do not address the spreading and mutating of the virus in the developing world (Zhou, 2022). New systems of governance must be established to provide broad and equitable frameworks for global cooperation on vaccine research and development, distribution and inoculation that benefit all affected individuals and communities. This must happen outside of profit-maximizing private interests to be sustainable.

TRIPS AS A MARKET-ORIENTED BARRIER TO GLOBAL HEALTH GOVERNANCE

There are many examples of limited cooperation in global vaccine strategy. One such mechanism of the limited cooperation through neoliberal framework was the failure of the TRIPS agreement. Here, the core prioritized wealth over health during the pandemic by upholding the intellectual property rights (IPR), entrenched by the WTO, in the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement. This agreement was a hindrance to global governance as it was a barrier to a multifaceted and equitable vaccine strategy. The TRIPS agreement inhibited the equitable distribution of pandemic resources, further entrenching global inequalities. TRIPS kept countries in the Global South from accessing COVID-19 vaccine technology protected by intellectual property rights laws (Sparke and Williams, 2022; Zhou, 2022; Godwell and al, 2021). The TRIPS agreement, to which all WTO member states are bound, blocks access to LICs by limiting access to needed technology transfer and health capacities hindering research and manufacturing of COVID vaccines, particularly for low and middle income countries (Van De Pas et al., 2022: 26-28). The TRIPS agreement kept much needed vaccine research and development (R&D)

patents behind the paywall of big pharmaceutical companies, creating an artificial barrier to vaccine availability and affordability in the developing world. The market-oriented nature of the intellectual property regime disincentivizes equitable R&D in innovative medicines and vaccinations for LICs (Van De Pas et al., 2022: 28). This was an unsurpassable barrier to accessing freely available generic vaccines through an equitable process that valued the superiority of public health and recognized the vulnerabilities of the developing world as a reason for increased vaccine aid. This has deepened existing disparities between countries and exacerbated global health inequalities.

According to research, the most vulnerable populations are overwhelmingly located in the developing world (Zhou, 2022). The developing world is more densely populated, racialized, and poor, making the region more vulnerable to the spread of COVID and the likelihood of severe cases higher (Zhou, 2022: 453-457). This population is more likely to reside in close quarters, have employment outside of the home and have limited access to sanitation and necessary precautions such as PPE; all of which increase risk of infection (Zhou, 2022: 453-457). In addition, the Global South has weak health systems as a result of neoliberal restructuring, such as the privatization of state healthcare facilities and the underfunding of public health programming (Zhou, 2022: 453-457). These disparities are clear indications of the link between economic power and vulnerability to public health crises. Yet, TRIPS and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries disregarded this fact. The WTO and OECD countries instead protected vaccine monopolies and their bilateral ties to pharmaceutical firms by upholding the TRIPS agreement. TRIPS created inaccessible paywalls for LIC through patent protected monopoly pricing (Sparke and Williams, 2022: 26). This created a two tier-system wherein the Global South could not compete for vaccines at such high prices and could not access the technology to create their own.

Ultimately, these actors have chosen to pursue their own interest in capital accumulation, despite the obvious immiseration caused by this barrier. This is proof of the pervasive disparity in economic barriers between the core and periphery in accessing necessary biotechnology during the pandemic. In this way, existing inequalities in global governance structures, such as the WTO, have been beneficial to the multi-billion dollar pharmaceutical companies of the core, as wealthier nations drove prices up while keeping the monopoly intact.

This point is further proven by the failure of collaboration on a TRIPS waiver. To address the issue of global governance during times of crisis there is a mechanism built into TRIPS called a TRIPS waiver. This allows states to waive the agreement and force firms to provide pharmaceutical patents during times of crisis to protect public health (Chorev, 2013). In October 2020, key countries of the Global South, India and South Africa, presented a request for a TRIPS waiver to the WTO. This was a request to temporarily suspend intellectual property law pertaining to vaccine technology so that it could be accessible to low-income countries during the course of the pandemic (Zhou, 2022). This was not well received, as key counties in the OECD, such as the EU, Switzerland and the UK refused to commit to technology transfers (Sparke and Williams, 2022: 24-27). High-income countries claimed that intellectual property rights (IPRs) are necessary incentives for vaccine research and development, and that equitable vaccine access should be pursued through other means such as COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) (Zhou, 2022: 455-59). This is a blatant example of market-interests creating barriers to cooperation within the pandemic response. According to Sparke and Williams (2022), by shooting down the TRIPS waiver HICs chose to empower the IPR model and support the pharmaceutical industry's capital interests. Technology transfer during this crucial second wave of the pandemic could have saved thousands of lives, but instead these multinational corporations have heavier pockets.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS AS A FAILED MEANS OF VACCINE STRATEGY

Another method of cooperation that failed to produce equitable results is the donor-funded public-private partnerships system. With the rise of austerity policy, public-private partnerships (PPPs) have become a common tool in global health governance. Used as a mechanism of cooperation between donors, states and NGOs, PPPs are created to achieve a common goal. According to the article *Public-private partnerships in global health: the good, the bad and the ugly*, private interests play a disproportionate role in the decision making and the policy development process of PPPs, making them unreliable forms of cooperation (Ruckert and Labonte, 2014: 1606). PPPs erase the barriers between private and public interest, often co-opting resources for their own agendas. This is because market oriented agendas often appeal to both public and private actors but tend to benefit corporate private interests over those of less powerful public actors, such as LICs (Ruckert and Labonte, 2014: 1606). This is apparent in global health governance, as private partners rely on the assumptions of neoliberalism in their policy making. Neoliberalism assumes that a small state presence and the superiority of market mechanisms creates the most efficient environment for effective crisis responses. But by entrenching systems that do not adequately address existing inequalities within the interstate system, PPPs cannot adequately address their mandates as a whole. Additionally, PPPs also favour technical approaches and marketized programs, another assumption of neoliberalism. These methods often omit more equitable approaches from being even considered during decision-making processes. Instead of tackling mandates as an interconnected whole, PPPs often work from within the capitalist system based on allegedly 'objective' empirical determinants such as GDP and deaths per capita (Ruckert and Labonte, 2014: 1609). Vaccine strategy is one such mandate with complex and interconnected issues. Due to the narrow and

market based perspective of PPPs, vaccine equity could not be achieved through this framework. This rings true for the public-private partnership, COVAX, set up by the WHO to address vaccine strategy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVAX was established to ensure equitable access to vaccines for poor countries; though this did not happen due to its market oriented nature and rather enshrined inequalities and hindered cooperation. COVAX is administered by the Global Alliance for Vaccine and Immunizations on behalf of a variety of private donors, corporations, states and non-governmental organizations (Sparke and Williams, 2022: 26). The COVAX partnership sought to pool resources thereby offering larger orders to pharmaceutical companies in hope of securing lower prices on behalf of LICs (Zhou, 2022: 457). Despite this diversity of financial backers, COVAX faced a 19 billion USD funding gap in 2021 alone (Zhou, 2022: 457). This is largely due to the voluntary nature of its funding, resulting in a fragmented approach, wherein some members sought bilateral agreements with vaccine producers. As a result, vaccine distribution has been influenced by individual states' economic power and willingness to participate, rather than strictly focusing on equitable allocation based on social need (Zhou, 2022: 457). Therefore, rather than resulting in the optimal goal of vaccine equality through fair and equitable access to pandemic technology, COVAX sustained and deepened pre-existed inequalities.

COVAX also undermined the case for technology transfers, a TRIPS waiver and compulsory licensing, by presenting the illusion that equity could be achieved through the existing polarized system if a corporate-private-coalition was formed (Sparke and Williams, 2022: 26). This is because COVAX was designed to work within the market-oriented constraints of neoliberalism. By establishing a larger purchasing body, using funds from all partners, COVAX was able to compete with HICs to secure vaccines from manufacturers. But by working within this model rather than empowering a multi-level

challenge to the inequalities of this method of allocation, COVAX undermined the struggle for a more equitable process (Sparke and Williams, 2022: 26). According to the article, Neoliberal disease: COVID-19, co-pathogenesis and global health insecurities, COVAX was constructed to work within the framework of the current pharmaceutical market, where firms hold monopolies on patents to negotiate high profit margins, making the sector heavily profit motivated (Sparke and Williams, 2022: 26). Therefore, COVAX drastically underperformed. Using a World Systems analysis, COVAX is an example of the interconnected nature of economic, political and social motivations, as the social and political response to vaccine allocation is deeply rooted in the framework of global capitalism, despite its obvious and inherent inequalities. This was demonstrated by the creation of COVAX as a PPP race horse to compete on the global market for finite resources in a global health crisis. Ultimately, it is clear that the market interests embedded in PPPs as a result of transnational neoliberalism have hindered cooperation by failing to challenge the pharmaceutical industry and by failing to facilitate equitable cooperation as to not 'rock the boat'.

Furthermore, COVAX's system offers more opportunities to HICs for accessing vaccines and does not require that they donate extra vaccines, while maintaining strict protocol for LICs within COVAX (Zhou, 2022: 457). According to Zhou (2022), the separation between states based on economic purchasing power suggests the unfair influence of monetary metrics over public-good considerations and risks further polarizing LICs and HICs -thus further hindering the global vaccine distribution framework. In this way, cores and peripheries are unequal players on a neoliberal global market due to the frameworks created by the interstate system.

The examples of TRIPS and COVAX as barriers to equitable and effective global health governance exemplify the embedded inequalities of neoliberal globalization. Both mechanisms were created by and for the interests of major Global North public and

private actors and systemically disempower the developing world. The interests of these Global North actors are inseparable from this system of exploitation and can be summarized as the pursuit of capital accumulation and economic growth in the Global North. This comes at the expense and immiseration of the developing world. During the pandemic these interests took the form of increased wealth for the pharmaceutical mega-firms involved in vaccine research and development; and the acquisition of as many vaccines as possible so that Western economies could open swiftly (Shen, 2021). The pursuit of these interests came at the cost of the Global South. The pursuit of these interests was not compatible with equitable international cooperation; instead HICs resorted to vaccine nationalism to maintain control of pandemic resources and ensure the accumulation of capital in their hands.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, embedded market interests within neoliberal globalization networks have systematically rendered the developing world vulnerable to global health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. States in the developing world were weakened by the increase in movement enabled by the opening of markets and the hollowing out of state and supranational organizations. Therefore low income countries were already more vulnerable to the pandemic. This paper argues that the mechanisms put in place in the name of international cooperation by neoliberal globalization forces have in fact hindered cooperative governance efforts between states. Using the examples of TRIPS and COVAX, this paper has demonstrated that market interests have created barriers to global cooperation on vaccine strategy. Vaccine research, development and rollout processes were extremely unequal and polarized throughout the pandemic as a result of corporate greed. Instead of pursuing a strategy of inclusive development and cooperation at a time of crisis, states in the Global North used the strategy of vaccine nationalism to pursue their own goals of wealth accumulation and vaccine contacts. This

paper has compared the drastically unequal relationship between the core and periphery of historical capitalism through the example of the COVID-19 pandemic and specifically vaccine distribution.

Although this paper has analyzed the failures of market-oriented responses and barriers to equitable vaccine allocation and the nationalist domestic policy of HICs and international institutions based on market incentives, there has been little discussion of alternative non-market-based models of pandemic response. New studies are needed investigating possible alternatives to the current hegemonic model promoted by the cores of historical capitalism. Academic researchers will find fruitful avenues of expanding our field of understanding of how to effectively limit the effects of a pandemic by compiling and analysing both quantitative and qualitative data regarding successful COVID-19 responses originating in the developing world - such as, for example, the Cuban state's centrally coordinated strategic approach to healthcare provision, which achieved its core aim of protecting Cuba's population from the pandemic's effects by adopting solutions rejecting the free market principles of the Washington Consensus model (Wylie, 2020).

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AN UNHEALTHY PAIRING: HOW GLOBALIZATION AND NEOLIBERALISM HAVE IMPACTED GLOBAL HEALTH GOVERNANCE

FRED SIMONYI

ABSTRACT

In recent decades, globalization and neoliberalism have worked in tandem to utterly change the landscape of global health governance. Nations worldwide have engaged in unprecedented levels of cooperation on healthcare issues, with a new neoliberal focus on improving health for the sake of the global economy. However, an examination of the state of global health reveals the diverse, enduring problems with the current neoliberal lens of globalization. This paper finds that while increased levels of globalization have allowed international organizations to positively impact the state of global health, the dominance of neoliberalism in these organizations has limited their positive effects, sometimes causing explicit harm. Organizational efforts to tackle health-related challenges regarding infectious disease control, environmental degradation, and poverty have failed to see major success on a global scale due to the neoliberal policies promoted by international organizations. This paper contends that the state of global health could see major improvements if international organizations shifted away from their strict neoliberal policies in favour of a more inclusive and equity-driven approach. This would allow for a greater emphasis on long-neglected goals of global health governance such as sustainability, reduced inequality, and global fairness.

Keywords: *health, neoliberalism, globalization, World Health Organization, poverty, environment, infectious disease*

Globalization has utterly changed the dynamics of the international political economy. As once remote areas of the world have become increasingly connected, this has created both new opportunities and new challenges for policymakers.

This is notable in a broad range of fields, including that of global health. As globalization has made health policy a global issue, it created the need for an international approach to health policy and governance. This paper examines how forces of globalization have affected different aspects of this international health governance. Specifically, it analyzes how globalization has given various international organizations the power to change the state of global health. This investigation finds that while globalization has allowed these institutions to have some success in addressing global health challenges, a great number of their efforts in this field have been hampered by the neoliberal ideals they endorse. However, despite the fact that globalization has not significantly improved the effectiveness of global health governance, this paper argues that it does have the potential to do so. If international organizations move away from promoting exclusively neoliberal health policies, these globalizing bodies could take on a positive, leading role in global health governance.

The existing literature on globalization struggles to define the scope and extent of globalization, making its impact on global health difficult to comprehend. In fact, perhaps the only scholarly consensus on globalization is that there is no singular, agreed-upon definition (Lee, 2003: 4). While a universal scope of globalization may be impossible to achieve, what is clear is that the effects of globalization are far-reaching. The KOF Globalization Index, one of the many measures created as an attempt to measure this phenomenon, includes forty-three different variables ranging across cultural, political, and economic disciplines (ETH Zurich, 2022). This not only shows the pervasiveness of globalization but

also reveals the various and often conflicting impacts it has on all segments of society. For instance, the widespread international travel made possible by globalization has contributed to the rapid spread of disease across continents, while new global communication channels like the Internet have allowed for broad access to medical knowledge (Zhou and Coleman, 2016: 287, 289). This example reflects how complex it is to accurately evaluate the various widespread impacts that globalization has on initiatives to improve global health.

As a result, this paper will limit its investigation to the role of international organizations that engage in global health policy. Examples of these institutions include the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO), and represent the international health governance framework that globalization has made possible. Within these organizations, globalization allows for international actors to come together through institutions to discuss and implement multinational policies and strategies to address health issues. While the work of international organizations is certainly not the only aspect of globalization relevant to health, these organizations are able to have a major global impact on their initiatives of choice through the aid and exposure these institutions can provide through their high levels of global influence (MacKenzie, 2010: 141). This gives them the power and resources to work toward addressing challenges in three primary aspects of global health, which are discussed in detail in this paper's three following sections: infectious diseases, the impact of environmental degradation, and poverty-related health issues. Thus, as the last section of this paper will show, the study of international organizations can provide particularly relevant insights both into the impact of globalization on the successes and failures of cooperative global health governance and on more effective and equitable strategies that could be devised and deployed in the future.

Although international organizations are a product of globalization, it must be noted that globalization is merely the means that allows for these organizations to exist, not something that dictates their actions and policy decisions. Globalization itself is not restricted to one particular ideology and is to be clearly distinguished from concepts like colonialism, Westernization, or most notably, neoliberalism (Lee, 2003: 12). Neoliberalism is an extreme form of capitalism that emerged in the late 1970s. It promotes a broad range of economic ideals, most notably free markets, free trade, and limited state economic intervention (Mooney, 2012: 34). It is particularly important to distinguish neoliberalism from globalization, as international organizations are often closely associated with the neoliberal ideology they subscribe to and promote (Mooney, 2012: 55). However, while globalization and neoliberalism are two separate concepts, international organizations have brought the two together by using their global reach to spread neoliberal ideals to various new nations. International organizations have done this by making neoliberal reforms like tariff reductions and the opening of markets requirements for countries to receive aid from these institutions (MacKenzie, 2010: 136). This helped encourage many low-income countries in need of international aid to adopt many neoliberal policies, thereby massively contributing to the ideology's prominence around the world. Despite this close relationship, it is important to note that globalization and international organizations can exist independently from neoliberalism. This is apparent in the case of the WHO, which only reluctantly adapted its policy initiatives to the neoliberal model after the ideology had become dominant in other international organizations (Chorev, 2013: 638). The WHO initiated several global health projects both before and after this ideological shift, showing that specific institutions, as well as globalization as a whole, exist outside of any dominant ideology (Chorev, 2013: 636). Therefore, while globalization and neoliberalism have worked in tandem for the past several decades, they are in fact separate,

independent concepts. To emphasize the distinction between international organizations and neoliberalism, this paper adopts a liberal institutionalist perspective to critique the still-dominant, albeit increasingly challenged neoliberal ideology that continues to shape the interactions of international institutions and of their member states, and suggests various improvements to the quality of health governance provided by international organizations. The following sections aim therefore not only to analyze the key successes that liberal institutions have had in global health governance, but also to argue that preserving existing liberal international organizations and the Rules-Based Liberal International Order (RBLIO) that they are an integral part of is important to continue these efforts. This paper further argues that these institutions should simultaneously engage in significant reforms to shift away from neoliberal policies that have damaged their efficiency, their effectiveness and, ultimately, their legitimacy with their constituents around the world. With these considerations in mind, this paper can now examine how globalization has impacted governance efforts in key aspects of the global system of healthcare provision.

INFECTIOUS AND TRANSMISSIBLE DISEASES

In their fight to tackle global health challenges, international organizations like the WHO, World Bank, and United Nations have had considerable success combatting the prevalence of infectious and transmissible diseases across the world. Through their mandates, international health organizations encourage countries to set consistent health standards, which helps limit the international spread of diseases (Nadjib et al., 2022: 477). Global vaccination rates for diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis have risen from 20% in 1980 to 85% in 2019, demonstrating the substantial positive effect these initiatives can have (World Health Organization, 2020: 6). Such drastic progress has been possible in large part due to international

vaccine drives, which are now able to access most of the world's population. Recent examples of these are efforts by the World Bank, WHO, and UNICEF to use their global reach and influence to aid Covid-19 vaccine distribution efforts (UNICEF, 2022: 5). Without the work of international organizations, these efforts might not have been as successful. Their key role could also be seen in a similar way during the SARS epidemic. The WHO issued travel advisories in many affected areas and negotiated the installation of temperature screening devices in the airports of some cities hit hardest by the disease (Zhou and Coleman, 2016: 291-292). These tracking measures helped health officials manage and contain the scope of the pandemic and incentivized local health agencies to take action. On the other hand, the WHO was given a report by Chinese officials warning about the early outbreak of SARS, but it was not able to be translated before the disease spread internationally (Zhou and Coleman, 2016: 292). This shows that if the health organizations had been more globally connected at the time, they may have been able to mitigate some of the harm that SARS caused.

Although international cooperation has increased over time, there is evidence that some health policies advanced by international organizations may not have a truly global scope. This is largely due to the prevalence of neoliberal practices within these institutions, which results in anti-disease campaigns being driven more by market forces than a desire for increasing global access to quality health care. During the era of neoliberalism, the WHO has become increasingly reliant on voluntary donations, which some argue gives the organization a bias toward prioritizing the causes important to these wealthy donors (Chorev, 2013: 655). Many international diseases receive little attention from international organizations, such as the several neglected tropical diseases which are often overlooked and underfunded due to their concentration in low-income areas (Alqassim and El-Setouhy, 2022). As a result, some argue that the

global eradication of diseases is not emphasized or achieved, as international organizations neglect these tropical diseases and instead focus on campaigns that are more popular with donors (Molyneux, 2008: 510). While this may be beneficial to these institutions from a financial aspect, from a humanitarian perspective there are concerns that the most vulnerable groups are not getting an adequate share of attention from international health organizations.

This inequality is promoted by the neoliberal, market-centric ideology that has been adopted by a majority of international institutions. When there is not a sufficient economic incentive to combat a disease, it may be ignored by a neoliberal-driven policy. This is where a neoliberal, capitalist system falls short of a universal, equity-driven approach to fighting international diseases, as it values economic factors more than human lives (Baru and Mohan, 2018: 5). While the eradication of every single illness appears as an unrealistic goal, international organizations have a bias toward prioritizing disease prevention in Western countries. To achieve a fair and efficient global health governance system, these institutions should reconsider their emphasis on market-driven health outcomes and focus on equitable healthcare research and distribution practices. As demonstrated above, these organizations do have effective disease prevention strategies available; it is the application and distribution of these programs that could benefit from change. Through internal organizational reform in these areas, the fight against neglected diseases could see major improvements while maintaining the well-established health strategies and networks that these institutions provide. Such a reform toward a liberal institutional model could also give these organizations increased legitimacy in currently neglected areas, potentially fostering better cooperation between global citizens and liberal institutions. These proposed reforms will require significant organizational changes, such as decreasing the ability of private donors to dictate

where funds are spent, and ensuring that all nations have equitable decision-making power in these institutions. These changes could allow liberal health organizations to increase their effectiveness by making the fight against transmissible diseases truly global.

While globalization has allowed for substantial progress in tackling infectious diseases, the prevalence of neoliberal practices in the international organizations that constitute the existing RBIO has rendered cooperative health governance unequal and Western-dominated. Opportunities provided by globalization would be most effective in the fight against disease if international health organizations reconsidered their neoliberal biases and advanced an approach that truly focuses on and prioritizes increasing global healthcare access for all those in need across the globe.

HEALTH EFFECTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

Environmental issues are an often-overlooked determinant of human health; however, their impact on this field is considerable. The WHO defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (World Health Organization, 1946: 1). Therefore, issues like the environment are within the mandate of international health organizations. Environmental degradation contributes to unclear air and water, exposes humans to toxic chemicals, and increases the risk of extreme, dangerous weather conditions (Lee, 2003: 92-93). Considered together, a healthier environment could prevent nearly one-quarter of global human diseases (World Health Organization, n.d.). This makes introducing effective environmental policies an essential step toward improving global health.

Globalization has provided international organizations with many tools to help combat

climate change, allowing them to share climate research and policy recommendations, as well as record the progress of individual nations on climate issues (World Health Organization, n.d.). This contributes to the movement for an international consensus on climate and provides transparency that can help hold countries accountable for the environmental damage they cause. Additionally, international organizations create a space to bring nations together and open a dialogue on international solutions to tackle climate change.

While international institutions do show an ability to induce positive change on climate policies, they also support several policies that have perpetuated more environmental harm than good. Global neoliberal institutions like the World Bank and IMF are large proponents of economic development, and encourage nations to industrialize to achieve their economic goals (Shih, 2000: 635). These policies of economic expansion and resource extraction have a negative impact on the environment, and by extension harm human health (Mooney, 2012: 115). While these initiatives may be beneficial to the economic goals of these organizations, they come at the expense of the global health initiatives they also claim to support. If international organizations wish to prioritize the reduction of health risks caused by this environmental degradation, they must pursue a transition away from their current neoliberal economic practices and toward a sustainable form of globalization. This is a necessary change if these organizations wish to improve their contributions to the state of global health. As this evidence shows, an environmentally conscious approach to international economic development could also be an effective health policy.

International organizations have the potential to help mitigate health risks caused by climate change; however, in practice, their neoliberal ideology has hindered the formation of this international consensus. For real improvements to occur in the global health provision field, policies prioritizing the

environment must take precedence over purely economic concerns. This would require significant government coordination and regulation of market forces and networks, thereby reversing dominant neoliberal norms and policies. If international institutions shifted away from neoliberal ideologies to prioritize sustainable programs and practices, they could lead global efforts to create an international structure capable of developing and implementing effective environmental agendas and frameworks of accountability. This would also be beneficial to global human health.

POVERTY-RELATED HEALTH ISSUES

Poverty is often referred to as a disease, and it certainly does have a negative effect on human health. Poverty contributes to a variety of health concerns, including malnutrition, unsafe living environments, and the inability to afford healthcare (Alqassim and El-Setouhy, 2022). Overall, it is estimated that one-third of global deaths are due to poverty-related causes (Mooney, 2012: 3). Even in relation to the two aspects of health previously covered, poverty makes living a healthy life much more difficult. In terms of infectious diseases, when people living below the poverty line become ill, they are less likely to be able to afford the necessary healthcare to treat their illnesses. This is a systemic problem, as low-income countries are less likely to have publicly funded healthcare systems, meaning structurally disadvantaged individuals in the global south might need to pay out-of-pocket for most treatments (Mooney, 2012: 4). Regarding environmental concerns, individuals below the poverty line are less likely to be able to find proper shelter from environmental disasters and would suffer first if food production were to be affected. Additionally, low-income countries in the global south are among the most affected by climate change, making the environment a major health concern for many of the world's disadvantaged communities (Mooney, 2012: 112). As these

examples show, the persistence of poverty creates a wide variety of health challenges for economically disadvantaged people worldwide. International organizations have placed considerable emphasis on their efforts to reduce global poverty. The first of the United Nations' Sustainable development goals is the elimination of poverty, demonstrating the importance placed on this issue (United Nations General Assembly, 2015: 14). As a result, international organizations have engaged in many efforts around poverty reduction. Studies have found that a highly globalized economy is strongly related to a high GDP per capita, with international economic integration specifically being a key variable (Dreher, 2006: 1100). Many international organizations are strong advocates and facilitators of this economic globalization, suggesting that they are central contributors to economic growth. The World Bank and IMF recommend policies to countries in the global South that emphasize economic integration and generating growth through the expansion of markets, while providing loans to help realize these goals (Nadjib et al., 2022: 473). These neoliberal economic policies promoted by international organizations aim to advance the goal of economic growth and to subsequently reduce poverty and improve global health.

As suggested by Dreher (2006), it may very well be true that global neoliberal policies have led to economic growth. However, this growth does not necessarily translate to reduced levels of global poverty or a significant improvement in global health (Schrecker, 2016: 956). The major flaw of global neoliberal institutions is that they focus on national economic growth but neglect the economic inequality that this growth creates, both between countries as well as within them (Chorev, 2013: 645). While economic growth is generally good for the citizens of a country, if its effects benefit only a small minority of the population, then it will largely be ineffective at reducing poverty. This can be considered a primary concern, as the world has seen growing disparities of wealth on both the national

and international levels, all while poverty has remained a persisting issue (Mooney, 2012: 37).

This inequality of both income and health is not merely a coincidence or an unrelated phenomenon; it is, at least in part, furthered by the neoliberal policies of international organizations (Schrecker, 2016: 954-955). Policies such as lowering taxes on corporations and the wealthy are central to neoliberalism, and a large number of countries have seen a reduction in these taxation levels in recent decades (Mooney, 2012: 38). This lowering of tax revenue removes a primary way in which governments can redistribute income and help raise low-income citizens out of poverty. The World Bank, IMF, and other Western-led international organizations have also promoted policies that increase barriers for low-income people to access healthcare. The World Bank has explicitly called for the privatization of healthcare in countries, recommending that medical fees be charged to users (World Bank Group, 1986: 38). These kinds of policies make healthcare unaffordable for the most vulnerable people, further amplifying health inequalities. Therefore, despite claims by several Western-led international organizations that they are working towards the elimination of poverty, neoliberalism's prevalence on the international stage causes these organizations to prioritize unequal economic growth over poverty reduction, thereby allowing poverty-related health issues to persist.

Overall, globalization does not appear to have helped cooperative governance efforts to reduce poverty-related health concerns. However, this failure is largely attributed to neoliberal policies, not the existence of global institutions themselves. International organizations have the potential to reduce global poverty if they prioritized the adoption of policy measures that diminish inequality and benefit the worst-off, over the promotion of neoliberal economic policies. If economically driven institutions like the World Bank would match their policies to the social goals of organizations like the

United Nations, progress could be made toward ending poverty and its negative impacts on health. Even though their effectiveness in achieving this goal has been limited until now, globalization forces and the RBLIO that coordinates them have the potential to improve this aspect of global health through the cooperative governance system created by international organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

After examining these three aspects of global health, it appears that globalization has had mixed success in addressing global health challenges. The ability of international organizations to bring a broad range of actors together in global health policy discussions has been overshadowed by the neoliberal policies pursued by many institutions that are harmful to the state of global health. However, this is not to signify that globalization can only be a hindrance in discussions of global health. Instead, this paper argues that globalization can be a positive force if the cooperative governance it brings to global health challenges – as manifested through international organizations – shifts away from neoliberalism and neoliberal policies. If such transformations were to be implemented, there are several other perspectives that could replace the dominant neoliberal ideology in health governance. For this shift to materialise, some may argue that a complete restructuring of the global financial system is needed, with the abolition of capitalism and its accompanying institutions. This paper opts for a more moderate approach, perhaps best aligned with a liberal institutionalist view that advocates for an ideological reformation of existing institutions and of the RBLIO they constitute. It should not be forgotten that international organizations, despite their flaws, have made significant progress in improving many aspects of global health. Therefore, the focus should be on reforming these institutions to better work toward these strengths, instead of opting for an abolition of the system itself. The RBLIO does not

need to be abolished for neoliberal policies to be replaced on the global stage. Instead, the structure of international organizations could be used to transform the state of global health governance into a more collaborative and equity-driven field.

The history of the WHO provides an excellent example of how such a change can be possible. When neoliberalism became the dominant global economic ideology, the WHO had to shift away from some of its core principles in order to stay relevant and assimilate into this new ideological landscape (Chorev, 2013: 655). Originally, it supported ideals like equity and universality in health care which lost favour in this neoliberal transition (Chorev, 2013: 638, 640). For organizations like the WHO, transitioning away from neoliberalism would largely involve reverting to former principles like these which are critical for good health governance. It must be noted that simply reverting to pre-neoliberal policies could not represent the entire transition, as new, forward-thinking changes would be required as well. However, it is important to note that for organizations like the WHO that existed before the rise of neoliberalism, a tested non-neoliberal method of operation already exists. This serves as evidence that international organizations can function successfully without a large neoliberal presence.

Despite this, there are a wide variety of practical concerns about how such a fundamental change can be initiated. Scholars and advocacy groups must carefully consider any major changes to institutional policies. However, this paper has specifically intended to demonstrate that this is a task worth pursuing. A neoliberal-centric health philosophy has played a key role in preventing some significant improvements to the state of global health. Such an alternative would need to prioritize health equity over economic concerns, emphasize the health needs of the world's most vulnerable populations, and embrace sustainability in all initiatives. Globalization presents many opportunities for

progress in the governance of global health, and even more opportunities for failure. If a strong ethical framework is maintained, the forces of globalization can be harnessed to create an effective, equitable system of global governance centered around the international organizations of a reformed and revitalized RBLIO.

Globalization has been a force of change in the field of global health governance, as well as in the international political economy as a whole. International organizations – which coordinate globalization forces and contribute to international governance efforts – have had many successes in addressing global health challenges, but also significant failures. Indeed, this paper examined the efforts these organizations have deployed to tackle the effects of infectious diseases, environmental degradation, and poverty on human health. A common theme among these topics though, is that the neoliberal policies that have been associated with globalization over the past decades have caused considerable harm to the development of global health governance. As a result, this paper also argues that if international organizations could be less guided by neoliberalism, then they could harness globalization forces to advance relevant health governance initiatives by creating international dialogues, upholding global accountability, and promoting equitable and sustainable health policies.

This is certainly not a conclusive study of international health organizations, as there is a broad range of literature and perspectives on the topic. Particularly, future studies should consider the more recent trends in global health governance, such as the rise of many new non-governmental organizations which may grow to challenge some of the established health institutions covered in this paper. Additionally, liberal institutionalists must continue to develop measured alternatives to neoliberal health governance should they wish to

remain a viable alternative to the status quo. Ongoing globalization forces bring forth unprecedented opportunities to achieve substantial improvements to the state of global health. For these efforts to be effective and legitimate across the globe, international actors and scholars must instill in the current RBLIO equitable and sustainable norms, principles and practices of global cooperative governance.

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FROM BEIRUT TO BEIJING: SHIFTING ASIAN DYNAMICS OF CONFLICT AND COOPERATION



THE ISRAELI-LEBANESE MARITIME BORDER DEAL FOR ENERGY SECURITY: A LIBERAL INTERNATIONALIST PERSPECTIVE ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

BY EVA HAGER

ABSTRACT

Over the past decades, the relationship between the State of Israel and the Republic of Lebanon has been far from peaceful, with occasional disputes, and even wars, between the two nations. Most recently, the disagreement about the location of their common maritime border in the Eastern Mediterranean has been the centre of conflict between the neighbouring countries. The disputed territory of 860 km² contains natural hydrocarbon resources in the form of gas and oil, which both countries hope to make use of to improve their respective economic situations. In the present paper, the international relations theory of liberal internationalism is applied to further examine Lebanon's and Israel's motives in the matter. The signing of their maritime border deal on October 27th, 2022, is an example of conflict resolution in the spirit of liberalism: conflict resolution through negotiation, cooperation and interdependence, without the use of military force. Furthermore, the paper explains that a critical additional factor surfaced, making the agreement possible. In a quickly changing geo-strategic environment for both countries, achieving increased energy security and exporting natural gas suddenly became not only possible, but progressively probable. The results are, among other benefits, mutual economic advantage, a better basis for long-lasting peace and prosperity, as well as stability in the region. The agreement, brokered by third-party negotiators, represents a significant breakthrough in the shared history between the two countries, which might pave the way towards a stronger relationship in the years to come.

Keywords: *liberal internationalism, energy security, conflict resolution, Israel, Lebanon*

INTRODUCTION

Since the deteriorating relations with Russia, the Eastern Mediterranean region has become vital for the European Union's (EU) energy security, which certainly affects its political and strategic decisions (Tutar et al., 2021: 126). In 2007, the EU saw a disruption in its energy access caused by Russia, which showed the dangers of energy dependence (Koktsidis et al., 2021: 122) on only one supplier. The EU thus hopes to prevent such an energy crisis by encouraging the establishment of the so-called Eastern Mediterranean (EastMed) pipeline, running through Cyprus, Greece and Italy, and connecting Israel's hydrocarbon exports directly with the EU (Koktsidis et al., 2021: 126). However, Israel's neighbour state, the Republic of Lebanon, has never formally recognised the State of Israel since its founding in 1948 (Gebeily & Lubell, 2022), and their relationship can be considered unstable and unpredictable (Abadi, 2020: 90). The liberal internationalist perspective on international relations holds that peace and cooperation between neighbouring states are not only achievable but desirable (McGlinchey & Gold, 2022), as they provide stability. However, over the past eight decades, there have been no long-lasting periods of peace between these two countries (Omar, 2022), which complicates the issue of energy security in the region.

The signing of the maritime border agreement by the Prime Minister of Israel, Yair Lapid, and the then-President of Lebanon, Michael Aoun, is an important step toward improving the relations between Israel and Lebanon (Gebeily & Lubell, 2022). The act was presented to the United States of America (US) and the United Nations (UN) mediators on October 27,

2022, at the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) headquarters in the Lebanese town of Naqoura (Guterres, 2022). Some have claimed the deal can be interpreted as Lebanon's de-facto recognition of Israel. However, President Aoun dismissed this, stating the agreement does not equal a peace agreement, as Lebanon still sees itself at war with Israel (Gebeily & Lubell, 2022).

Even though the details of the agreement have not been released (Gritten, 2022), it was announced that the disputed area of 860 square kilometres in the Eastern Mediterranean, containing the Karish and Qana gas fields (Sabaghi, 2022), is now divided by the so-called Line 23 (Mizrahi, 2022), allowing both countries to take advantage of the oil and gas resources in the region (Hussain, 2022). This compromise sets an example for peaceful conflict resolution in the form of cooperation, which, according to liberal internationalism, can be achieved when the interests of two or more countries overlap (Tuschhoff, 2015: 40).

Hence, liberal ideals, such as mutual interest in energy, proved to be a valuable source for peaceful negotiation between the Republic of Lebanon and the State of Israel. In other words, the increasing urgency to secure oil and gas from the Eastern Mediterranean is a significant contributor to the success of the maritime border deal. This paper will examine the shift from conflict to cooperation between Israel and Lebanon by analysing how mutual interest in preserving energy security led to the maritime border agreement. To do so, it will discuss the role of cooperation and interdependence in conflict resolution, as well as the importance of the UN and EU involvement in effectively negotiating the maritime deal after years of tensions between the two states on the coast of the Eastern Mediterranean.

US AND UN NAVIGATING THE ENERGY SECURITY ISSUE IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

With a long history of conflict, and the dire need for the hydrocarbon resources in the disputed area on both sides, the disagreement over Israel's and Lebanon's common maritime border in the Eastern Mediterranean had the potential to escalate quickly. In order to reach long-lasting peace and resolve the issue of the maritime border, interdependence, cooperation and third-party negotiators are of utmost importance. In this case, increased interdependence and cooperation through mutual dependence on natural hydrogen resources in the Eastern Mediterranean are hoped to bring stability to the region, as well as economic stability and prospects of exporting said resources to the EU. However, third-party negotiators like the UN and US had to step in: After the submission of the coordinates of their respective maritime exclusive economic zones (EEZ), in which a country possesses sovereign rights to make use of the resources found there (Koktsidis et al., 2021: 126), to the UN in 2009, Israel and Lebanon were not able to find a consensus on the issue. As a result, the UN stepped in to help mediate the disagreement (LOGI Energy, 2021). In 2010, the Leviathan gas field was discovered (Aboultaif, 2016: 289), complicating the political and security landscape in the region (Aoudé, 2019: 95). The exploitation of hydrocarbon resources in the Eastern Mediterranean now increasingly grew into a crucial geopolitical issue (Salameh & Chedid, 2020: 1). In the same year, Israel signed an EEZ agreement with Cyprus; in this proposal, Israel's northern maritime border overlapped with Lebanon's southern one – an act which Lebanon considered an attack on its sovereign rights over the affected territory, and the conflict was in danger of escalating once again. The EU and US, in a rapidly changing security environment, wanted to avoid military escalation in the already fragile region of the Eastern Mediterranean.

The first two separate proposals of Israel and Lebanon concerning their maritime borders were submitted in 2011, with Line 1 and Line 23 (for a geographic overview of the area, see Nakhle, 2023), being declared by Israel and Lebanon, respectively. While Line 1 was situated further to the north, guaranteeing more territory to Israel, Line 23, located more southwards, provided territorial advantages to Lebanon (Sabaghi, 2022). Both lines were rejected by the parties, which now prompted US diplomats to offer to step in to mediate the dispute and avoid conflict cooperation with the UN (LOGI Energy, 2021). In 2012, Lebanon changed its proposed maritime border from Line 23 to 29, claiming more territory than before, with the new suggested Lebanese EEZ including large parts of the Qana and Karish gas fields.

In the liberal internationalist view of international relations, international organisations and third-party negotiators are of utmost importance in world politics, as they can help to build confidence and trust and provide security among nations (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013:112). In 1949, the UN had also intervened, to settle a conflict between Israel and Lebanon (MEMO, 2022). After receiving the respective border proposals from both states in the second half of 2010, the UN stepped in early in the maritime border dispute, as there were hopes that a possible agreement would serve as a security-building measure that could promote stability in the region (Gebeily & Lubell, 2022). Being the first international actor entering the negotiations, the UN had a crucial role in the further development of the issue. On the basis of the UN involvement, US negotiators also played an important role in resolving the conflict: Amos Hochstein, US diplomat, was involved in negotiations that resulted in Lebanon withdrawing its claim to Line 29 and returning to its original demand, Line 23 (Sabaghi, 2022). The return to the claim of Line 23 was the cornerstone of the maritime border deal, made possible by third-party negotiators: the US and the UN held key roles in the negotiation process

(Mizrahi, 2022), and the final deal was also encouraged by the EU. However, in this case, diplomacy was based on the UN's involvement, which enabled EU and US foreign policies concerning the issue in the first place, making the deal possible.

Lebanon recognized that the US delegation played a major role in finding a solution allowing both sides to benefit from the natural resources in the Eastern Mediterranean (Abadi, 2020: 107). Lowering tensions by means of diplomacy was seen as a primary objective in the region (Ellinas, 2022: 12). New issues, like Covid-19 and Lebanon's crippling energy crisis, created an urgent need to proceed with negotiations, which were launched into a new round when Amos Hochstein, a US diplomat, was appointed to the maritime border dispute. Hochstein came to Lebanon in February 2022, around the same time as Russia invaded Ukraine. This war emphasised once again the global need for natural gas resources from the Eastern Mediterranean (Sobelman, 2023: 5), with the EU now desperately looking for gas suppliers other than Russia. Brussels failed to take immediate and credible action against Moscow's transgressions of international law following its Ukrainian invasion due to the EU Member states's energy dependence on Russia (Toraman, 2022:17), which now used its energy resources as leverage against the EU (Tutar et al., 2022: 388). The EU and US now had an urgent interest in finalising the maritime border deal between Israel and Lebanon in order to start exporting gas resources to Europe from the Eastern Mediterranean and decrease European dependence on Russian gas, which, however backed by different motives, was supported by the UN.

Furthermore, with Israel starting to send drilling vessels to its section of the gas fields and pressing forward on gas exports (El Chami, 2022: 1) in June of 2022, Hezbollah, a Lebanese militia supported by Iran (Humud, 2023: 1), saw these actions as a threat to resources that rightfully belonged to Lebanon.

Contrary to the precepts of liberal internationalism, Hezbollah now threatened to escalate the Israeli-Lebanese conflict with military means. In recognising that the current geopolitical situation had made the US, EU and Israel vulnerable to pressure, the militant group, through the threat of violence, pushed diplomacy forward (Sobelman, 2023: 16), as to avoid conflict by the use of diplomatic means.

With all parties being aware of the immediate urgency of reaching a deal, Lebanon abandoned its claim to Line 29. Negotiations concluded in October 2022 with the signing of the maritime border deal, in which the two neighbours agreed on Line 23 as their official demarcation line. However, in the years to come, US and UN involvement may still be crucial in maintaining peace in the region and normalising the relations between Israel and Lebanon, which, from Lebanon's perspective, are technically still at war with each other (Gebeily & Lubell, 2022).

INTERDEPENDENCE AND COOPERATION FOR STABILITY?

The desire to make use of hydrocarbon resources in the disputed area was certainly present in both countries (Abadi, 2020: 107), and also of crucial interest for the EU. However, with no normalised diplomatic relations between Israel and Lebanon, an increasingly dangerous geopolitical situation (Silverman, 2023: 1) and Lebanon refusing to officially recognise Israel by means of an agreement (Aoudé, 2019: 104), the negotiations came to a halt, resulting in a stalemate. With no ongoing diplomatic talks about the maritime demarcation line, the issue threatened to attract third parties trying to exploit the situation (Aboultaif, 2016, : 300).

As the pressure to resolve the situation increased with each passing year, Israel finally decided to take action in January 2020 by signing an agreement with Cyprus and Greece, concerning the construction of the EastMed pipeline (Koktsidis et al., 2021: 129), trying to use cooperation, as seen in liberal

internationalism, with partners other than Lebanon. The goal of this agreement was to increase Israel's energy security and enable gas exports to the EU without the need to cooperate with Lebanon. The pipeline was seen as a way for Israel to directly export hydrocarbon resources to the EU (Koktsidis et al., 2021: 126); however, it could also easily be politicised and become the target of military confrontations in the troubled region around the Eastern Mediterranean (Badarin & Schumacher, 2022: 122). Meanwhile, when the Covid-19 pandemic began spreading across the globe in early 2020, Lebanon's energy sector saw a rapid deterioration which, due to the unresolved demarcation line, could not be remedied by new oil drilling ventures (Ellinas, 2022: 10). In June of the same year, Israel approved the decision to drill for oil next to Block 9 (Ellinas, 2022: 15), part of an oil field in the disputed area, which was already one of the main points of contention in previous years (Al-Kassim, 2019).

According to liberal internationalism, state power should be, amongst other factors, measured by the strength of its economy, which was threatened in both countries due to Covid-19, with Lebanon being hit especially hard by an energy crisis. Furthermore, countries can and do cooperate to achieve mutual benefits (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013: 106). In the case of the Israeli-Lebanese maritime deal, both countries stood to gain important economic opportunities through the new possibility of exploiting the Karish and Qana gas fields in the Eastern Mediterranean (Gebeily & Lubell, 2022), which is part of Israel's plan to increase its hydrocarbon exports (Zaken, 2022). Lebanon, currently facing a severe economic and energy crisis (Gebeily & Lubell, 2022) and political instability, hoped to improve its overall situation through the agreement (Hussain, 2022). Cooperating and agreeing on Line 23 enabled both countries to make use of the natural resources in the region and to rally their respective economies, thus confirming the theorem of international cooperation in liberal internationalism, according to which one of the key goals of countries engaging in diplomatic relations is

to benefit economically from such cooperation (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013: 117).

Furthermore, the deal also strengthens the interdependence between Lebanon and Israel, tying the two countries closer together, and providing stability through mutual dependence on natural gas resources. In international relations, interdependence, for instance, through economic ties, is essential to avoid conflict and maintain peace (Tanious, 2018: 43). By dividing the Qana gas field through Line 23, Israel and Lebanon now share the privilege of exploiting the natural hydrocarbon resources in the territory (Hussain, 2022). The agreement allows both countries to jointly develop and profit from the gas and oil deposits in the Eastern Mediterranean rather than turning them into a source of conflict. Besides the gas fields no longer being a source of dispute between the two countries, an increased economic interdependence between these neighbours also reduces the chances of future conflicts taking place (Tanious, 2018: 52).

THE CRITICAL FACTOR: INCREASING IMPORTANCE OF ENERGY SECURITY FOR BOTH PARTIES

After the Leviathan gas field was discovered in 2010, it was certain that the resulting financial and energy security benefits for both Israel and Lebanon could be extensive (Waehlich, 2011: 2). However, the urgent need for gas in both states made negotiations and finding a compromise challenging (Aboultaif, 2016: 300). States generally seek to increase their energy security and achieve uninterrupted energy access (Koktsidis et al., 2021: 121) by reducing their dependency on one single supplier and increasing the number of their sources. Energy is a vital tool in foreign policy (Koktsidis et al., 2021: 122). This became apparent when the global events from 2020 to 2022, such as Covid-19, Lebanon's energy crisis and most recently Russia's unprecedented attack on Ukraine, were reflected in

the increasingly tense situation in the Eastern Mediterranean. With the new geopolitical situation in place, the EU urgently needed to move forward on natural gas suppliers other than Russia - such as the countries on the coast of the Eastern Mediterranean.

Lebanon, still an importer of gas and currently possessing very limited economic resources, hoped to follow Israel's example and export energy to the EU in the near future (Salameh & Chadid, 2020: 2-3). Furthermore, Lebanon's main strategic goal was to find a way out of its severe economic crisis by increasing its energy security and exploiting hydrocarbon resources (El Chami, 2022: 2). For Israel, on the other hand, natural gas exploitation was important for its domestic as well as export market, with export currently being difficult due to the ongoing tensions with its neighbouring states (Dietl, 2020: 377). Nevertheless, in light of the EU's desire to diversify its energy suppliers, the prospects of supplying EU markets with its hydrocarbon resources encouraged Israel to pursue its role as an international energy exporter (Koktsidis et al., 2021: 124). Connecting the pursuit of increased energy security in Israel and Lebanon is the EU's dependence on other countries, as its energy resources are very limited given the size of its demand (Tutar et al., 2021: 339).

The EU member states, who saw a threat to their own energy security in early 2022 when Russia, the EU's most significant energy supplier (Toraman, 2022:16), attacked Ukraine, now urgently had to find other energy sources to avoid an imminent energy crisis. This led to an unprecedented interest in the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean on the part of the EU, which was now hoping to import natural gas from this region, and was eager to see a quick resolution of the conflict over the maritime border between Israel and Lebanon, so exports could start as soon as possible.

Those two factors, firstly the urgency to achieve energy security and an improved economic situation in Lebanon and Israel, and secondly, the EU's pressing requirement to secure energy suppliers other than Russia, coming together for the first time from 2020 to 2022, unblocked the prevailing stalemate and enabled all parties to move forward with the maritime border deal. The factors demonstrated the need to effectively coordinate oil and gas supply for Lebanon, Israel and the EU, and to overcome the conflictual relationship between Beirut and Tel Aviv, which ultimately resulted in the resolution of the maritime border dispute between the two neighbours. The countries on the coast of the Eastern Mediterranean now aimed to collaborate with the EU to develop joint energy strategies from which they could all benefit financially and achieve increased energy security (Koktsidis et al., 2021: 122-123).

CONCLUSION

From a liberal internationalist perspective, the Israeli-Lebanese maritime border deal can be rationalised by the overall goal of promoting peace and stability between these two states and resolving the conflict opposing them by means other than physical confrontation via military force. Interdependence, cooperation and third-party negotiators in times of conflict are necessary to reach those goals – which Israel and Lebanon came one step closer to by signing their maritime border deal in October 2022. The energy resources discovered in the Eastern Mediterranean could thus represent a turning point in the global energy supply chain (Tutar et al., 2021: 334), with energy security now becoming a critical issue in countries' strategic security considerations (Koktsidis et al., 2021: 121). The EU hopes to diversify its energy portfolio by importing gas from Israel via the EastMed pipeline.

This paper has demonstrated that the crucial factor for overcoming the reservations and concluding a deal between these two states, regarding their

maritime border, was their shared desire for increased energy security. The discovery of offshore gas fields gave both Israel and Lebanon the possibility not only to achieve energy self-sufficiency but to become exporters of gas to major international partners like the European Union. The critical importance of achieving energy security persuaded the two countries to overcome their long standing objections and go ahead with the signature of an agreement acceptable to both.

Overall, the Israeli-Lebanese maritime deal constitutes a pivotal factor in the relationship between these two neighbouring states, which has been difficult, to say the least, over the past decades. The negotiations concerning the maritime demarcation line may lead to an overall improved understanding between the two states (Abadi, 2020: 108), and mutual dependence on the natural resources found in the region might be able to provide stability. From the perspective of liberal internationalism, contrary to critics in both nations, peace is desirable. It can be achieved through various means – perhaps also through the deal now in effect. However, it remains to be seen whether the advent of energy security as a strategic aim for both parties will effectively contribute to actual peace between Israel and Lebanon. The need for multilateral energy trade, interdependence and cooperation persists (Tutar et al., 2021: 339), contributing to increasing global peace and reducing conflict in line with liberal internationalism. Further research may well seek to highlight how this emerging bilateral strategic relationship aims to achieve energy security for both through cooperation, by investigating whether the emergence of relative peace between these old adversaries is simply circumstantial, or actually causal, and also exploring in more depth the critical influence of third parties intervening as mediators in the conclusion of this agreement.

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FOLLOWING THE *PRINCIPLES*: WHY THE CHINESE PLAN SHOULD ADHERE TO CORBETT'S STRATEGY INSTEAD OF MAHAN'S PRECEPTS

JACK MALLINSON

ABSTRACT

Many scholars in the field of Chinese security assert that the People's Liberation Army Navy's (PLAN) adheres to the offensive, expansionist naval strategy of Alfred Thayer Mahan. However, by analysing the current strategic and operational capacities of the PLAN, this essay argues that the PLAN ought to adhere instead to the teachings of Mahan's intellectual opposite, Sir Julian Corbett. By critiquing Corbett's *Principles of Maritime Strategy*, this essay will illustrate that Corbettian strategic thought would better serve the PLAN at both the strategic and operational levels. Strategically, adherence to Corbett aligns with the pre-existing 'Active Defence' doctrine of the PLAN and would better protect the Maritime Silk Road (MSR) project than would a Mahanist approach. Moreover, at an operational level, the teachings of Corbett align significantly with the PLAN's A2/AD capacity in the China Sea. Corbettian principles would prove vital in the event of a Taiwan contingency, an avowed goal of the Chinese Communist Party for accomplishment within the next two decades.

Keywords: *Corbett, Mahan, Indo-Pacific, Naval Strategy, Active Defence, PLAN, SLOC, A2/AD.*

"For China, as for Mahan, control of key points on the map is indispensable to sea power" (Holmes and Yoshihara, 2005: 26). Holmes and Yoshihara are but two academics to note the influence that Alfred Thayer Mahan has had within the PLA Academy of Military Sciences on Chinese naval strategic thought (Ibid). Nevertheless, this essay argues that the PLAN should instead adhere to the tenets of Sir Julian Corbett, in lieu of Mahan's – and more specifically, to a Corbettian approach at both strategic and operational levels. At the strategic level, the naval strategy theories of the latter align significantly with

the well-established, pre-existing PLAN strategy of 'Active Defence'. Moreover, a more defensive, conservative approach such as that of Corbett's 'fleet-in-being' thesis would better protect and consolidate the Chinese ports and critical sea lines of communication (SLOCs) that are integral to the security of the Belt and Road Initiative's (BRI) Maritime Silk Road (MSR). This paper posits that due to comparative geographical and quantitative inventory weaknesses to states aligned against the PRC, namely the United States, India, Japan, and ASEAN, adopting the notions of Corbett would produce a more comprehensive defence of the PRC's strategic aims within the Indo-Pacific. Furthermore, utilising a Mahanian approach exposes the PLAN's weaknesses, rather than playing to its strengths.

This is compounded by the need for a Corbettian approach at an operational level. In a Taiwan contingency, Corbett's dictums surrounding 'Exercising Command' as a means of integrating naval power with an expeditionary force already corresponds with the PLA's pre-existing Anti-access area-denial (A2/AD) doctrine. Moreover, this would be in lieu of the need for the PLAN to conduct a 'decisive battle' vis-à-vis a potential US-led coalition fleet, as championed by Mahan. Furthermore, the PLAN ought to utilise Corbett's notion of 'offence by counterattacks' in such a scenario, given the comparative strength of Western and Western aligned fleets in the South China Sea, reinforced after the signing of the AUKUS agreement. Thus, due to the vast scope of approaches that Corbett allows in scenarios of strength or weakness, the PLAN would benefit significantly from adopting his strategic thought.

OVERVIEW OF THEORETICAL LITERATURE AND MAHAN'S ROLE IN PLAN STRATEGIC THOUGHT

Sir Julian Corbett (1854-1922) and Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914) are two theorists of great import in the field of naval strategy. In no small measure their importance stems from fundamental divergences between their theoretical tenets. For Mahan, an American naval officer who sought to challenge British naval dominance in the late Nineteenth Century, the primary tenet of naval strategy was 'the possession of that overbearing power on the sea which drives the enemy's flag from it' (Mahan, 1941: 98). Thus, for Mahan, the central aim must be to defeat the enemy in a decisive fleet-on-fleet action (Mahan, 1941: 85). Furthermore, this is compounded by Mahan's thesis that, even after this 'decisive action', one must pursue the remnants of the enemy in an unrelenting attempt to completely annihilate its fleet (Mahan, 1941: 80). It is clear to see, then, why an emerging power like the PRC challenging US dominance in the Indo-Pacific would be influenced by Mahanian rhetoric for total command of the seas. Comparatively, this Clausewitzian 'total victory' dictum differs greatly from Corbett's more attrition-oriented doctrine. For the latter, a British naval historian, the objective of naval warfare was to "directly or indirectly either to secure the command of the sea or to prevent the enemy from securing it" (Corbett, 1911: 87). More specifically, Corbett theorised that command of the sea meant control of communications, which may be partial or total depending on the strength of one's fleet (Corbett, 1911: 100). Furthermore, Corbett was more detailed vis-à-vis operational methods than Mahan, with the former providing a wider amalgamation of methods than the latter. By dividing naval operations into three core tenets; securing command, disputing command, and exercising command, (Corbett, 1911: 168) Corbett provides an adaptability to naval operations that Mahan in his more singular, 'decisive action' approach negates. This is the fundamental factor as to why the PLAN

should adopt Corbett's sophisticated strategic vision in lieu of Mahan's 'total victory' perspective.

Despite this, it is important to note that Mahan's writings have maintained an important role within PLAN strategic thought, especially throughout the Twentieth Century. During this period PLAN strategists, led by Admiral Liu Huaqing, leaned towards Mahan's view of absolute control of the sea established by major fleet engagements (Yoshihara and Holmes, 2005: 682). Furthermore, Mahan's notion for economic expansion via naval power resonated within the PLAN, especially given China's global economic development, and its increasing reliance on seaborne commerce for oil and liquified natural gas (Holmes and Yoshihara, 2005: 25). It is for this reason that the chief moderniser of the PLAN in the late Twentieth Century, Admiral Liu, drew on Mahan's axiom for the need for total control of the seas, particularly SLOCs (Lim, 2011: 105-120 and Li, 2009: 155). Thus, one can see that China tied Mahan's emphasis of 'decisive action' and economic development with its own economic expansion, especially beyond the confines of East and Southeast Asia. Nevertheless, the more defence-oriented, conservative approach proclaimed by Corbett better protects and unifies the PRC's security interests throughout the Indo-Pacific, as opposed to the Mahanian thought of driving 'the enemy out of every foothold in the whole theatre' (Mahan, 1941: 85).

STRATEGIC LEVEL: CORBETT WITHIN THE 'ACTIVE DEFENCE' AND MARITIME SILK ROAD FRAMEWORKS

Active Defence

One of the most significant factors that the current PLAN must utilise is the PLA's pre-existing Active Defence strategy. The PLA defines Active Defence as an "adherence to the unity of strategic defence and operational and tactical offence; adherence to the

principles of defence" (State Council Information Office of the PRC, 2015). For the PLAN specifically, this revolves around a symbiotic relationship between "offshore waters defence" with "open seas protection" (State Council Information Office of the PRC, 2015).

Two things are of critical importance for the purposes of this essay. Firstly, Active Defence is inherently a defensive – not offensive – strategy. This is vividly illustrated by the PLA's published strategy in 2015 stating that the PLAN will primarily focus not only on comprehensive support, but on both deterrence and counterattacks (State Council Information Office of the PRC, 2015). Moreover, this document illustrates that a defensive strategy is adopted by China for offensive ends. President Xi Jinping's 'China Dream' – the national rejuvenation and restoration of PRC global power – places the PLAN in direct support of the PRC's expansionist foreign policy (Fanell, 2019: 14). It is due to this that, over seven years after the reiteration of the centrality of Active Defence and the core role of the PLAN within this framework, the US Department of Defence (DoD) stated in 2021 its view that the maintenance of Active Defence remains the PRC's military strategy (US DoD, 2021: v). Thus, it is evident that Active Defence is a core facet of the PLAN's overall strategy.

Not only is Active Defence one of the single most important considerations for the PLAN, but it is also Corbettian, and should be conducted in-line with Corbett's strategic thought. The defensive nature of the PLAN's primary role, the deterrence of foreign states from Chinese interests (Martinson, 2021: 265), in the form of Active Defence is inherently defensive and thus aligns with a Corbettian approach. Corbett's axiom of securing command by obtaining a decision through 'offensive defence' i.e., waiting deliberately to implement counterattacks (Corbett, 1911: 33) aligns significantly with the core Active Defence tenet of defence through deterrence and counterattacks (State Council Information Office of

the PRC, 2015). Therefore, this clearly correlates more with Corbett's notion of negating the 'seeking out' a decisive decision (Corbett, 1911: 176). Moreover, the 'far-seas protection' tenet of Active Defence relies on a reactive posture to protect SLOCs rather than securing demand through decisive fleet engagements (Fravel, 2019: 232). Thus, it is clear that Active Defence not only aligns with Corbett's notion regarding the securing of command through counter offensives to obtain a decision, but actively goes against the Mahanian approach of singular, purely offensive fleet engagements (Mahan, 1941: 98). It is this, and the centrality of Active Defence in the PLAN's strategy, that should cause the PRC to gravitate towards Corbett's strategic thought instead of a Mahanian approach.

Maritime Silk Road (MSR)

The MSR is of critical importance to the PRC not only now, but throughout the foreseeable future. As a means of diversifying Chinese trade across land and sea, the MSR forms part of the BRI by placing seaports strategically throughout 2122 km of the Indo-Pacific (Singh and Pradhan, 2019: 22). These ports allow for greater connection between China and its chief oil supplier, the Middle East, by allowing the PLAN to better protect the SLOCs (Ji, 2016: 12). Chinese-lease ports, such as Gwadar in Pakistan near the Strait of Hormuz, and others in Cambodia and Myanmar will provide strategic locations for the PLAN to help the MSR overcome the 'Malacca Dilemma'- the primary goal of the MSR (Mobley, 2019: 55). The significance of this cannot be overstated. In 2019, 89 percent of Chinese crude oil imports came via maritime shipping, with 75 percent of this trade passing through the Strait of Malacca (Wang and Su, 2021: 1). Thus, the 'string of pearls' ports from Djibouti, Pakistan, Hambantota Sri Lanka, Chittagong in Bangladesh, through to Cambodia and Myanmar allow for enhanced maritime security along the PRC's core trade routes (Lin, 2008: 1). In doing so, the PLAN has firmly established a symbiotic relationship between the PLAN and MSR.

Adopting Corbett's approach within the Active Defence framework would undoubtedly best protect the PRC's SLOC security in the vicinity of these ports. SLOC protection requires the ability to sustain a prolonged maritime presence in strategic locations under hostile conditions (ONI, 2015: 11). The PLAN can achieve this by utilising two core factors. Firstly, the maintenance of ports such as Gwadar (Pakistan) and Doraleh (Djibouti) increases the PLAN's ability to exercise control of crucial SLOCs (DIA, 2019: 29). In doing so, the ports allow the PLAN to adhere to Corbett's notion of obtaining a decision via major counterattacks or blockade (Corbett, 1911: 168). Significantly, this can be achieved within the PLAN's Active Defence framework; Corbettian counterattacks through the prism of Active Defence can be done so due a utilisation of these ports. Not only will the PLAN's increased blue-water capabilities allow for this (DIA, 2019: 36), but the symbiotic relationship between Corbett's strategy and Active Defence would be the means by which SLOC protection could be best conducted. Moreover, this would further tie-in with the PLAN's primary aim in 'open-seas protection' to protect the PRC's strategic maritime interests, such as the Straits of Malacca and Hormuz (ONI, 2015: 11). Thus, defensive aims require defensive means, which is the fundamental rationale for the PLAN adopting Corbett's dictum of obtaining a decision via counterattacks or by a blockade.

A critical factor explaining why the PLAN significantly enhances its credibility by adopting a Corbettian 'fleet-in-being' in order to protect SLOCs and MSR ports is the size of its fleet as compared with Western or de facto Western navies. Fig.1 illustrates that the PLAN has expanded significantly into one of the largest naval fleets globally (Fanell, 2019: 43). Despite this projected inventory growth, the PLAN will comparatively be no greater in size than a potential coalition led by the US Navy's 7th and 5th Fleets (Paszek, 2021: 177).

Furthermore, Chinese expansion in the region has solidified security partnerships between the US and its allies, with the Biden administration committing itself to a 'free and open' Indo-Pacific with Japan (White House, 2021). Compounding this issue is India's 'Act East' policy, which has seen a dramatic increase in its naval inventory and has pushed India into closer cooperation with the US in SLOC security in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore (Collin, 2019: 7-8). More recently, the signing of the AUKUS nuclear-powered attack submarine (SSN) deal that will result in Australia acquiring potentially five Virginia class SSNs, multiple Anglo-Australian SSNs and the increased presence of US and British SSNs in the Indo-Pacific are also directly aimed against the PLAN (AUKUS, 2023: 4-8). Thus, China will have to challenge a de facto US-led naval coalition for control of SLOCs.

Vessel Type	2022 Total	2030 Total (Projected)
Destroyers	36	34
Frigates	45	68
Corvettes	50	26
Amphibious Ships	57	73
Diesel Attack Submarines	56	75
Nuclear Attack Submarines	9	12
Fleet Ballistic Missile Submarines	6	12

Fig. 1 PLAN Inventory, 2022. (Source: US DoD, 2022: 166) and Projected PLAN Inventory Estimate for 2030 (Source: Fanell, 2019: 43)

Ultimately, these factors weigh in favour of adopting Corbett's 'fleet-in-being' dictum in lieu of Mahan's 'decisive action' precept. The PLAN, in 2020, outnumbered the US Navy by 360 battle force ships to 297 (Sweeney, 2020: 2). This, however, fails to consider the amalgamation of security agreements and pacts in the region. The US and Japan recommitted closer ties to Quad nations, including

Australia and, significantly, India, in 2021 (White House, 2021). The AUKUS agreement compounds this further by creating a new SSN fleet in the Indo-Pacific, the Royal Australian Navy, and committing Anglo-American security priorities to the region throughout the next several decades (AUKUS, 2023: 4). Here again, a Corbettian approach better serves the PLAN's SLOC protection ability. Corbett's dictum of keeping the "fleet in being till the situation develops in our favour" (Corbett, 1911: 213) would be a highly suitable means to adhere to Active Defence's protection of SLOCs against what would be a greater naval coalition by size. Moreover, this, and the mere presence of PLAN combatants around PRC leased ports, also allows for counterattacks in a favourable situation. This can only be achieved by actively keeping the fleet in being (Corbett, 1911: 214). Compounding this further is that, given the comparative PLAN fleet size vis-à-vis the amalgamation of US-aligned fleets, the PLAN would be unlikely to successfully conduct a Mahanian 'decisive action', fleet-on-fleet battle.

Furthermore, a Corbettian approach also better consolidates and protects other, land-based aspects of the BRI than a Mahanist approach would, compounded by the issues of the MSR and comparative fleet inventories. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) utilises the Gwadar-Kashgar gas pipeline to connect Yunnan Province with the Bay of Bengal (Mobley, 2019: 63). In doing so, CPEC allows the PRC to better contend with US-Indian security cooperation efforts in the region, meaning better protection of vital SLOCs (Lloyd, Gul and Ahmed, 2021: 3). This project is not only a means to diversify energy imports, but also helps mitigate the fact that the PLAN does not, and will not in the foreseeable future, be capable of upending US naval supremacy in the Indo-Pacific (Gordon, Tong, and Anderson, 2020: 14). The project integrates military support from ports such as Gwadar and Hambantota into the PRC's wider economic strategy (Wang and Su, 2021: 2). Due to this, adopting Corbett's tenet of defence via counterattacks would

best protect these land-based aspects of the BRI. Moreover, this is even more the case given the significant degree of alignment between Corbettian strategy and Active Defence, which in itself is a means to protect the PRC's global economic projects, primarily the BRI (State Council Information Office of the PRC, 2015).

Compounding this further is the comparative inventory issue that the PLAN has between the naval fleets Quad, AUKUS, and ASEAN states. This issue does not only make adopting a more defensive strategic thought such as Corbett's desirable, but means that a more aggressive strategy, such as Mahan's, may be a highly unsuccessful venture for the PLAN. Thus, wider BRI factors also illustrate why the PRC ought to adhere to Corbett's strategy of obtaining a decision in a more conservative manner via counterattacks instead of Mahan's more assertive precepts.

OPERATIONAL LEVEL AND TAIWAN CONTINGENCY

At a lower, operational level, Corbett's strategic thought correlates significantly with the PLAN's pre-existing dictum of anti-access area-denial (A2/AD). Importantly, the PLAN's A2/AD capacity is directed at the island of Taiwan itself, given that Taiwan remains the PRC's primary operational target (Wuthnow and Fravel, 2022: 7). As an operational means of conducting the 'offshore defence' tenet of Active Defence, A2/AD is the PLAN's primary means of deterring the US Navy away from any cross-Straits contingency vis-à-vis Taiwan (Morton, 2016: 933). This is a maintained operational dictum within the PLAN as it is the only means by which the PLAN can secure the area within the first island chain due to the superiority of the US Navy (Horta, 2012: 395). Due to A2/AD inherently being a defensive mode of operations against an opponent of potentially greater military power (Tangredi, 2019: 8) this correlates strongly with Corbett. Foremost, it adheres to Corbett's notion that if a navy is not

sufficiently strong to have total control of SLOCs, then a more localised degree of control denies the enemy total dominance (Corbett, 1911: 100). Not only that, but A2/AD inherently incorporates Corbett's use of blockades (anti-access) and counterattacks (area-denial) as methods of securing command (Corbett, 1911: 168). The fact that A2/AD is a core tenet of the PLAN's established 'offshore defence' doctrine, which in itself is a facet of Active Defence, means that the overall PLAN strategy inherently adheres to Corbett's methods of securing maritime command.

The substantial number of submarines that the PLAN boasts in its inventory would be best utilised by adhering to Corbett over Mahan within this pre-existing A2/AD framework. In particular, the build-up of diesel-electric submarines has been done so as to better conduct anti-access operations around Taiwan in the East China Sea (Lim, 2017: 156). By conducting a blockade of Taiwan within this A2/AD framework, the diesel-electric submarine fleet would play an integral role in laying mines at Taiwanese ports (Wuthnow, 2020: 17). Moreover, the fact that the PLAN submarine fleet is equipped with anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs) in order to conduct anti-surface warfare (ASUW) demonstrates that this fleet is designed for A2/AD operations (ONI, 2015: 19). Due to this, adopting Corbett's dictums in lieu of Mahan's precepts would better utilise the strengths of the pre-existing PLAN submarine fleet. The mode of operations the PLAN are geared towards aligns with two Corbettian notions: firstly, that in a blockade, one denies the enemy access to lines of communication, as a means of denying opposing forces control of this passage; (Corbett, 1911: 89) and as a method of exercising command via counterattacks (Corbett, 1911: 29). Conversely, an approach that adheres to Mahan's dictums would demand that this submarine fleet, that is inherently geared towards defensive operations, be used in highly offensive, decisive fleet battles that contradicts how these vessels already operate within an A2/AD framework. Thus, the PLAN ought to adhere to

Corbett's inherent conservatism in naval operations planning to better utilise the pre-existing orientation of its submarine fleet within an A2/AD context.

Furthermore, adopting Corbett's precepts at an operational level also better integrates the PLA's Rocket Force (PLARF) within this A2/AD framework. The PLARF is a key platform that allows the PLA to develop the capacity to defy and deter a US-led coalition in a Taiwan contingency situation (Gill and Ni, 2019: 174). The placement of anti-ship ballistic-missiles (ASBMs) such as the Dongfeng-21D adjacent to Taiwan allows the PRC to enhance its A2/AD capabilities to the extent that the PLA has the ability to deter a US aircraft carrier group away from the Taiwan vicinity (Yevtodyeva, 2022: 536). Thus, for this facet of area-denial within A2/AD to be effective, coordination and integration between the PLAN and PLARF is required (Cunningham, 2020: 763). Adhering to Corbett's strategic thought would allow for this integration. Foremost, in support of military operations, Corbett argues that naval forces are a means to their own ends – they should be part of a 'combined expedition' (Corbett, 1911: 289).

Moreover, Corbett himself argues that when the theatre of combat is within a defended area, a port defence squadron is able to sufficiently defend operations, rather than giving the expedition its own covering squadron (Corbett, 1911: 293). Importantly, adopting this operational theory would allow PLAN combatants, that are already geared towards A2/AD operations, to not overstretch their concentration of force by allowing the PLARF to play a critical role in area-denial, thus better protecting the PLA's amphibious assault on Taiwan proper. An adherence to Corbett's notions on the integration of naval fleets with military expeditions by the PRC within the mode of A2/AD would therefore allow for a more cohesive combined assault vis-à-vis Taiwan.

The pre-existing operational structure of the PLAN makes a Mahanian approach significantly ill-suited, further compounding the degree of credibility of the Corbettian approach. Given that the reclamation of Taiwan remains a core focus of the PRC's 'New Era' (DoD, 2021: v), and that an integrated, combined expeditionary force would be required, Mahanian thought does not allow for such an operational dictum. For Mahan, one ought to acquire total control of SLOCs, such as the Taiwan Strait, through unrelenting fleet-on-fleet action (Mahan, 1941: 98). The primary aim, therefore, must be destruction of the enemy fleet (Mahan, 1941: 85). Within the context of a Taiwan contingency, this does not suit the PLAN due to two crucial factors; comparative fleet size, and the pre-existing focus of the PLAN's operational focus in the region being defensive not offensive. Regarding the former, it is highly unlikely that the PLAN would be able to comprehensively defeat the United States Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM), consisting of 2000 aircraft and 200 ships and submarines (DoD, 2019: 19). Such an overtly aggressive approach would be rendered even more unwise, given that this USINDOPACOM force would be supported by an amalgamation of allies in the region, namely Japan, India, and ASEAN countries (DoD, 2022: 14-15). Seeking decisive action against such a coalition would most likely be highly risky. Moreover, Mahan's precepts do not align well with the PRC's A2/AD operational dictum, which is its primary operational thought for a war with Taiwan so as to deter other belligerents (Wuthnow, 2020: 17). Thus, the stark differences between Mahan's strategy and the PLAN capacity vis-à-vis Taiwan lends further credence to Corbett's dictums operationally.

In fact, if the PRC were to adopt Corbettian thought at an operational level, it would also better consolidate and protect important Chinese sovereignty interests in the South China Sea. The PRC uses maritime law enforcement vessels to expand its control of disputed features, namely the Spratly Islands (DIA, 2019: 28). This is a means to significantly increase the overall strength of the PRC's

A2/AD capabilities, by expanding the scope of the 'offshore waters defence' facet of the PLAN's anti-access tenet due to an expanded ability to deter by military force and sustain foreign operations (DIA, 2019: 29). This is the operational method most suited to expand Chinese influence by pushing "ASEAN claimants to recognise Chinese sovereignty" (Buszynski, 2012: 19). Adhering to Corbett's notion that "command of the sea, therefore, means nothing but the control of maritime communications" (Corbett, 1911: 90) would allow the PRC to successfully consolidate its territorial claims within the region. Crucially, because this expansion is a facet of the PRC's 'offshore waters defence', it inherently aligns with Corbettian thought regarding the protection of SLOCs and dispute of maritime command via providing the PLAN with the ability to conduct counterattacks and blockades in adherence to its A2/AD doctrine.

Proponents of a Combined 'Anti-Mahan, Pro-Corbett' Approach

There are some that are proponents of merging specific concepts that Mahan criticised with a purely Corbettian concept. Ultimately, the PRC would be better advised to focus on Corbett's operational thought than on Mahan's dislike of a 'fortress fleet'. Holmes, the sole academic to advocate such an approach, puts forth the notion that the PLAN ought to utilise what Mahan called a fortress fleet, one that operates under the cover of shore-based fire (Holmes, 2010: 115). From this perspective, not only would this strategy allow for the PLAN to operate safely in a Taiwan contingency, but it should be fully integrated with Corbett's dictum of a fleet-in-being in the region (Holmes, 2010: 124). Any validity to this notion resides in the fact that it connotes the need for PLAN to maintain a defensive operational posture, especially around the East and South China Seas.

Nevertheless, Holmes fails to exploit the full potential of Corbett's strategy for the PLAN. Holmes

spends too much time critiquing Mahan's disregard for fortress fleets, when a better approach would have been to advise the PLAN to adhere to Corbett's notion of concentrating naval combatants around protection of the expeditionary fleet within a defended area, away from terminal protection as to utilise a better concentration of forces (Corbett, 1911: 293). Whilst this does inherently align with fortress fleets in theory, pragmatically Corbett's dictum provides greater operational flexibility, given that a 'defended area' does not necessarily have to be one provided by land-based firepower as with a fortress fleet. Thus, whilst there is a degree of validity to Holmes' argument, the PLAN ought to adopt a more purely Corbettian approach for enhanced operational flexibility.

CONCLUSION

This paper makes a strong argument in favour of the PRC's need to adopt the strategic and operational thought of Corbett for the PLAN over Mahan's precepts of naval warfare. Corbett's strategic thought aligns significantly not only with the PLAN's pre-existing strategic and operational dictums but also with likely future strengths and constraints at these levels of warfare. Strategically, it is highly compatible with the PLAN's Active Defence strategy, given that this emphasises defence rather than offence. Corbett's notions regarding the use of counterattacks via a fleet-in-being would provide the PLAN with greater SLOC protection by utilising the 'string of pearls' across the MSR. Thus, adhering to Corbettian principles within the Active Defence framework would protect and maintain the PRC's MSR, compounded by the fact that adopting a Mahanian approach would be counter-productive, given that the PRC is, and will likely continue to, compete with a de facto US-led coalition throughout the Indo-Pacific. At a more operational level, Corbettian thought allows the PLAN to be more effective in the PRC's chief operational aims: a Taiwan contingency and increasing expansion in the South China Sea. Corbett's notions regarding his

fleet-in-being dictum and the exercise of command again align significantly with the PLAN's A2/AD dictum.

Nevertheless, it ought to be noted that more research within this particular area of contemporary naval strategy is required. For instance, further research is required on the extent to which a Corbettian approach to PLAN strategy conforms with the political aspect of any future attempts by the PRC to reintegrate Taiwan with the mainland. This is of real import, as any lack of alignment of Corbett's strategic thought with the political facet of Taiwanese integration with the mainland PRC would undermine the extent to which Corbett's dictum enhances the operational level of a potential Taiwan contingency.

Furthermore, it is of equal importance to undertake future research on a US or Western policy maker's perspective, specifically, an analysis of whether US deployments to the Indo-Pacific would, theoretically, be suitable against the PLAN adhering to Corbett's. Incorporating the AUKUS Agreement into such a response would be of equal importance: achieving credible deterrence without exacerbating geopolitical tensions to a point where they snap. Given the significance of this topic, future research on how deterrence is achievable without increasing geopolitical tensions with the PRC is particularly advisable.

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