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Graduate School of
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Yonsei University

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INTERVIEW

Interview with Soo-jeong Ha:
Head of the Nordic Research Institute and Sustainable
Development Specialist
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Thank you to our editors and authors for another great issue of YJIS. This issue is the last one that I will helm as editor-in-chief, and I feel grateful for all that I've learned during my last three semesters at the journal. In particular, I am so grateful for my editing team who stayed on for two semesters: Aldrin Joseph Aldea (our next editor in chief!), Nazihatul Afifah Hamid, Vanessa Le, Lo Wing Tung Bonnie and Liam Quinn. It's been a pleasure to learn and grow alongside you all, and for those of you who remain on the staff I'm sure you will take the journal to new heights.

To our authors, thank you for sharing your work with us and doing the hard work of editing your papers to prepare them for publication. This issue's papers look mainly at issues of security and history, and highlight the ways that history informs the present. Whether it's by drawing connections between the current president of China with his historical predecessor Mao Zedong, or trying to understand Ukraine's past denuclearization in light of the current conflict, our authors try to make sense of how the past affects the present.

Our first paper is by Kester Abbott, who wrote about "The Role of Non-State Armed Groups in MENA's Development". In this paper, Abbott seeks to categorize the different non-state actors in the Middle East North Africa region, arguing that the blanket categorization of all non-state actors obscures their differences. This lack of nuance can lead to the failure of development initiatives that do not understand how to work with these actors. He categorizes non-state actors broadly into criminal organizations, insurgency groups and warlords, comparing and contrasting their proximity to states, their provision of social services and their goals and methods. By looking at specific cases in countries such as Iraq, Libya, and Lebanon, Abbott adds valuable insight on how these various non-state actors differ from one another, and the implications of such differences.

Continuing along on the theme of security, Lea Eileen Seyfarth writes on "Ukraine's Denuclearization—A Matter of Security". Given the current war in Ukraine, Ukraine's decision to give up its nuclear weapons in 1994 can be seen as puzzling from a realist perspective. Though many scholars consider this decision to be impractical from a security perspective and thus a result of a norms based focus, Seyfarth argues that Ukraine's decision can actually be explained from a realist perspective. Examining whether or not Ukraine's nuclear weapons actually served as

a credible security deterrent as well as the role of the US and the West in this decision, Seyfarth points out that Ukraine was primarily concerned with security and not constructivist norms, as other scholars argue.

The third paper is my own, and also looks to history, examining the eugenics discourse in Japan and colonial Korea. Eugenics as a uniquely modern framework rose to prominence in the early twentieth century and played an extremely influential role in international thought. Each country mediated their understanding of eugenics differently depending on both their historical and social context as well as their national aims. This paper examines how Japan interpreted eugenics as the only Asian colonial power and how this interpretation was then passed on to Korea. Japan and Korea's ethnic and geographical proximity led to similar interpretations of eugenics discourse, particularly when it came to the role of women in service of the nation.

The last paper of this issue by Monica Abrantes Villa Abrille is "Continuities and Breaks in Chinese Socialism: Contrasting Mao and Xi". In this paper, Abrille compares Mao Zedong with Xi Jinping, specifically in terms of how they interpret Chinese socialism. Though Abrille finds many similarities between these two leaders, separated as they are by time, she argues that this does not mean Xi's administration will have the same results as that of Mao's. This paper sheds interesting light on the PCR's history, specifically when it comes to Mao's legacy and how Xi's current administration is similar and different from that of Mao's.

Finally, this issue's interview is with Professor Soojeong Ha. Professor Ha is part of the Nordic Research Institute and works as an expert in the Scandinavian region and sustainable development. In this interview she shares her insights on sustainable development, particularly based on her experiences studying in Northern Europe.

To any and all readers, I hope you can learn something from the scholarship presented here. If you plan on submitting your work in the future, please check the submission guidelines at the end of the journal or on our website. Thank you!

Hannah Kim
Editor-in-Chief

MEET THE CONTRIBUTORS

Kester Abbott

kesterabbott@gmail.com

Kester Abbott is a graduate student in Global Affairs and Policy at the Yonsei Graduate School of International Studies. Before coming to Seoul, Korea, he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from the University College London, where he developed his interest in the Asia-Pacific and the Middle East regions. His research interests at Yonsei focus on the political trajectories and transformations that have occurred in East Asia since the end of the Second World War.

Lea Eileen Seyfarth

lea.seyfarth@yonsei.ac.kr

Lea Eileen Seyfarth is a graduate student at the Yonsei Graduate School of International Studies majoring in International Cooperation. With a background in governance and public policy, she has worked as an accredited parliamentary assistant in the European Parliament in Brussels, Belgium, focusing on European foreign policy.

Hannah Kim

hannahkim885@gmail.com

Hannah Kim is a masters student studying Korean Studies at the Yonsei Graduate School of International Studies. Her research interests include gender, literature, and translation. She is the Editor in Chief of the Yonsei Journal of International Studies as well as the program officer for the Institute for Modern Korean Studies. She received her BA in Public Relations from the University of Southern California.

Monica Abrantes Villa Abrille

mavillaabrille@addu.edu.ph

Monica Abrantes Villa Abrille completed her Bachelor of Arts in International Studies (major in Asia, minor in Sociology) in 2016 from the Ateneo de Davao University and pursued her Masters degree in Asian Studies (Southeast Asia program) from the University of the Philippines-Asian Center from 2017 to 2020. Her research interests include Maritime Southeast Asia, ASEAN, Comparative Institutions, Foreign Policy, Diplomatic Practices, as well as Human Rights and Civil Society. Currently, she is a professor at the International Studies Department of the Ateneo de Davao University. Prior to that, Monica worked at the Human Rights Violations Victims' Memorial Commission (HRVVMC) from August 2019 to April 2020 as a research assistant working on research and educational activities related to the 1972-1986 martial law period in the Philippines.

The Role of Non-State Armed Groups in MENA's Development: A Reassessment

Kester Abbott

(Yonsei Graduate School of International Studies)

Since the end of the Cold War, the international system has witnessed a proliferation in the number of "failed" or "fragile" states. Being cut off from the financial, political, and security support networks previously endowed to them by the two superpowers, a sizable proportion of developing states have revealed the fragility of their governing capacity and their inability to provide even the most basic of services to their populaces. In parts of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), the absence of an efficient administrative bureaucracy has encouraged many armed social groups to emerge to provide such services. However, given the predominance of the "Westphalia" nation-state mindset, such non-state actors are often neglected by international policymakers and labeled as a homogenous group. By overlooking their role as important political actors, regional development strategies do not adequately factor in the political agents potentially impeding their effective implementation. This paper seeks to deconstruct this mindset by firstly, recognizing such groups as possessing notable state-like functions. From this, it will differentiate the different groups into their respective methods of rule and motivations to further break down simplistic definitions. This paper aims to reconsider prevailing attitudes towards such groups so that policymakers can identify which groups can support MENA development initiatives.

Introduction

In the absence of great power rivalry between the United States and the former Soviet Union, the post-Cold War era witnessed a rapid proliferation in the existence of "fragile" and "failed" states. Many developing states

were cut off from the financial, political, and security support systems previously endowed to them by the two superpowers, which laid bare the fragility of many of their governing platforms and in turn, their inability to provide even the most basic of services to their populaces.¹ Lacking a competent government bureaucracy to enact policy, many social groups within these failing states emerged by their own initiative to provide such services, ranging from the provision of community waste management to regional security. Known as “non-state” actors, these groups are commonly defined as political bodies that directly challenge the formal state’s control over the use of violence.² While their support is certainly beneficial to vulnerable populations or governments temporarily unable to fulfil its functions, their existence also presents considerable long-term challenges for state development. Such non-state groups often only provide services to those that are closely linked by ethnicity, religion, and/or political affiliation, etc., and generally seek to forward their own interests. This inadvertently promotes a process of unequal national development that is characterized by regional cleavages or is targeted towards specific populations. In many of these unstable societies where state administration is breaking down or, indeed, has already collapsed, such non-state groups often resort to the use of violent means to promote their agendas. Not only does this increased distribution of violence further the country’s instability, but it also undermines the central state government’s ability to maintain or heighten its domestic legitimacy and coercive powers, thereby making it more difficult for it to initiate nationwide programs of development. Nowhere is this more acute than in the politically contested region of the Middle East and North Africa (hereafter referred to as “MENA”), where non-state armed groups have evolved into powerful forces deeply entrenched in the day-to-day conduct of local politics and national government structures.³

To understand the role that these emerging forces play in such political decision-making processes and, consequentially, the prospects and impediments for national development, it is important to first define the still heavily contested concepts of “state” and “development”. Regarding the former, the most prevailing and foundational definition of a “state” is that of German sociologist Max Weber’s, who categorized it as a territorial space that is ruled by a central administering authority who possesses a monopoly over the legitimate use of violence.⁴ More recent definitions, however, have sought to endorse more expansive characterizations.

According to sociologist Michael Mann, “most historic states have not possessed a monopoly of organized military force and many have not even claimed it.”⁵ As such, Mann identifies the state as not only including Weber’s notion of a militarily “despotic” governing body, but an entity with “infrastructural power”, or a clearly established cooperative relationship between the state and society.⁶ Charles Tilly, by comparison, identifies the state through its, supposedly, expected basic services, including the ability to go to war, remove internal violence amongst its populace in order to protect them, and the ability to collect taxes.⁷ What is common amongst all these varying notions is that they consider the state an empirical entity with self-evident political existence and features. However, such definitions often do not meet the reality of the political functioning of several parts of the world, since many official governing bodies lack the basic state responsibilities mentioned above. For several countries in MENA, the breakdown over the legitimate use of violence and the increasing spread of traditional state responsibilities to non-government-related actors reflects the erosion of the unitary state and, subsequently, the suitability in wholly applying such definitions of statehood to them.

For the latter, “development” originally applied to matters related to bettering economic prosperity, yet it has since been utilized, often in tangent or used interchangeably, with other processes, including modernization, industrialization, or Westernization.⁸ Thus, whether in the realm of economics or social sciences, development has been typically associated with a nationally beneficial or emancipatory process. For this paper, the methods of development will not be differentiated, due to their multifaceted nature and need to continuously adapt to changing environments. Rather, development will be broadly treated as an overarching framework that aims to enhance the political stability and economic growth of a fixed territorial area and its inhabitants. Given the difficulties in defining notions of statehood for parts of MENA, it is only necessary that we treat development fluidly as well.

While international policymakers have certainly recognized the existence of non-state armed groups as considerable impediments to developmental initiatives, they have too often viewed them through an exclusively militaristic lens. This viewpoint has grown since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, with powerful political entities in the MENA region considered outside of the jurisdiction of the “state”, often being labeled as terrorist organizations, requiring in turn, military solutions to

deal with them.⁹ Yet, this mindset reflects a more deep-rooted belief in the predominance of the Westphalia “nation-state” concept in international politics which, as already explored, leaves no room for outside non-state political forces to be present in national decision-making processes.¹⁰ This paper does not seek to criticize the dominance of the Westphalia mindset. On the contrary, as the organizing principle of international politics and internal administration, states remain the most upstanding form of global governance to which all international development efforts should, where possible, continue to work within and strengthen. The limitation of this viewpoint, however, is that it neglects the reality that non-state groups are important political actors in many MENA communities and deploy a range of non-security measures that further their competitiveness and autonomy from the official state government. Moreover, because the state-centric mindset contrasts these groups solely with the state, international policymakers, unfortunately, treat armed non-state actors as an all-encompassing, homogenous grouping, neglecting the fact that substantial differences exist between their nature, motivations, and methods of rule. The term “non-state” is simply too vague to classify all of these diverse armed groups together. This is significant for policymakers and those involved in MENA development because identifying their unique features will better articulate which groups the international community should engage with to support development initiatives, and which groups should be avoided to prevent them from manipulating development efforts or further solidifying their political legitimacy.

By reassessing the role of MENA’s non-state armed groups through examples in Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, and elsewhere, this paper will firstly set out to deconstruct the prevailing security lens towards such groups, by recognizing their political and state-like attributes and behaviors. Secondly, this paper will seek to differentiate them into their respective characteristics and unique features to further break down prevailing simplistic and encompassing definitions so that, thirdly, it can recommend to policymakers which of these groups should be engaged in supporting MENA development initiatives. Ultimately, this paper’s findings aim to contribute to identifying possible pathways in which non-state armed groups can be incorporated into reversing over two decades of non-state proliferation and reasserting the primacy of the “nation-state” as the region’s overarching political unit, a critical condition for national development.

Recognizing Non-State Armed Groups as Political Actors

In order to better articulate and implement development initiatives in MENA, policymakers must first attempt to overcome the limitations imposed by state-centric mindsets and view the region's non-state armed groups as wielding considerable political power. Since the latter are typically *both* spoilers of instability and are themselves governance actors, international observers or those operating within limited functioning state governments are, in their inability to differentiate, quick to resort to the use of force to undermine or ignore them entirely.¹¹ This is severely detrimental to the efficient implementation of development initiatives, as it forces such programs to operate within a narrow framework that does not consider how these groups are continuously evolving to the dynamics of state instability and have, in some cases, politically consolidated themselves to the point of becoming exclusive points of authority for many MENA communities. The use of force, moreover, does not always target the most pressing obstacles to developmental and state leadership and often serves to exacerbate the country's instability, which non-state armed groups subsequently exploit to promote their supposed continuing necessity as legal and political "guardians". As a result, developmental initiatives are often not sufficiently far-reaching nor adequately sustainable in the long term, making it imperative to identify their political underpinnings in order to move away from inadequate security-driven strategies.

One way in which non-state armed actors perform political activities is by providing certain services typically held by state authorities, including, at the most basic level, citizen "security". The legitimacy of modern states rests on their monopoly of violence to provide domestic stability and national defense.¹² In MENA, state governments have often found difficulty in providing these services, thereby allowing other non-state political entities to take matters into their own hands. This is a notable phenomenon in Iraq where, in the absence of state protection, armed militia groups, like the Shia-orientated "Popular Mobilization Unit" (PMU), rose to prominence in early 2014 to fight against the then-burgeoning so-called "Islamic State in Iraq and Syria" (Islamic State or ISIS), as state police and military forces were fleeing back to Baghdad.¹³ The organization and administrative efficiency of the PMU was so effective against the radical extremist group that most Iraqi citizens that took up arms against the Islamic State joined the PMU, in violation of Iraq's constitution and rejecting calls from the country's Shia Cleric,

Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, who urged volunteers to join the official Iraqi army.¹⁴ According to Middle East security scholars Vera Mironova and Mohammed Hussein, had it not been for the efforts of non-state armed groups like the PMU, Iraq's territorial sovereignty would have likely collapsed and become engulfed into the Islamic State's caliphate.¹⁵ The PMU's services for many Iraqi citizens' protection against the Islamic State garnered them an overwhelming degree of political legitimacy, with one 2015 poll finding that 99 percent of Shia respondents claimed to support them.¹⁶ Therefore, during Iraq's war against the Islamic State, the PMU upheld the country's national security (and hence political) responsibilities traditionally expected by the "state", which served to further consolidate their political interests. Thus, even after the restoration of state authority, the PMU continued to occupy many of the areas it had liberated from ISIS against the wishes of the Iraqi state and provided policing services and anti-crime efforts there in return for the population's loyalty.

Similarly in Lebanon, with the absence of an effective state authority to provide security for its citizens, the non-state armed group, Hezbollah, has utilized the country's instability since its conception in 1982, to offer an alternative security umbrella. As such, Hezbollah's complex network of intelligence, police, and military boasts a monopoly over the use of armed force within its areas of control.¹⁷ Many within Hezbollah's community are provided with relatively effective protection from threatening rival communities. Organized crime rarely occurs in the more consolidated parts of Hezbollah-controlled territory. Rather, such activities tend to take place on the margins of the group's domain and at its approval. In a bid to counter the powerful clans of the Beqaa Valley or in the districts of South Beirut, Hezbollah tacitly cooperates with criminal leaders by permitting them to certain criminal activities in outskirt areas, so that their attention can be better directed towards these more urgent clan rivals; a seemingly necessary compromise for their larger objective of maintaining geographic control.¹⁸ Externally, the armed group has proven to be an effective deterrent against neighboring Israel, as seen by their relatively stable border since skirmishes in 2006.¹⁹ Thus, as seen in the cases of Hezbollah in Lebanon and the PMU in Iraq, non-state armed groups can perform basic state-like functions such as the provision of citizenry protection. Though these services are grounded in the use of force, they should not be misconceived by policymakers as purely "security" or "military" issues.

Not only do non-state armed groups provide security services to their controlled populaces, but they also provide an array of “non-security” related, political functions that visibly affect day-to-day citizen life. To return to Iraq, the PMU has provided a range of state-like functions in an attempt to rally popular support to justify their continued existence following the collapse of ISIS. In the southern Iraqi city of Basra, for example, the group administers garbage disposal, the maintenance of hospitals and schools, and the rebuilding of industrial facilities, such as its profitable date agricultural exports.²⁰ Moreover, when the city and its surrounding areas experienced a series of deadly floods in the summer of 2018, the PMU was quick to repair the damages inflicted upon its infrastructure and transportation networks to revitalize trade links and better guarantee that the people’s reduced standard of living would not be prolonged, an assurance that the financially stretched government in Baghdad failed to promise.²¹ In Lebanon, those loyal to Hezbollah can rely on a substantial social safety net, which provides a middle-class lifestyle and gives their children the opportunity to attend university.²² Hezbollah also runs schools, hospitals, youth associations (e.g., the Mahdi Scouts), and foundations that provide fiscal support for the surviving relatives of the group’s armed members who were killed during combat.²³

Whilst the use of force remains the source of non-state armed groups’ authority and a decisive means in downgrading the legitimacy of the official state government, the provision of such non-security related services is also instrumental for their political competitiveness vis-à-vis the central state in garnering popular support and the mobilization of resources. Without the presence of non-state armed groups, many populations would find themselves without opportunities for education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. As such, non-state armed groups act as important political actors, as their contributions to civil society set the foundations for their long-term legitimacy and serve to distance these populations’ loyalty from the central state.

We must also be reminded, however, that many armed non-state actors manipulate these services to only further *their* political interests rather than out of any sense of state-like responsibility or benevolence. Of course, such features can also be characteristic of certain official state governments, particularly in the MENA region, where the presence of accountable democratic governments is relatively few against absolute monarchies and nationalist military regimes.²⁴

The point, nevertheless, is to dispel the fabrication that many non-state armed groups' long-term leadership is wholly different and, if only comparatively, "better" than that of their official government counterparts.

Citizens under non-state jurisdiction tend to be restricted to a selection of "mandated" services. The efficiency of such services is secondary to the ideological and political interests of non-state armed groups. They usually do not have access to communication avenues or a political apparatus, moreover, that can better express their concerns or desires for more and/or different services. This can, again, be seen in the case of Basra, where the city's dissatisfaction with the PMU's reconstruction process led to a mass protest that was subsequently suppressed, killing 21 people.²⁵ Lacking the political mechanisms to voice citizen dissatisfaction, non-state armed groups can risk exacerbating instability in their administered territories because of their provision of limited services in a highly unrepresented political system. Therefore, developmental efforts should include state authority over these deprived areas rather than informally accepting non-state sponsorship of services since they will likely promote long-term ruptures in MENA's social cohesion. Nevertheless, while public opinion polls conducted across the region indicate that most of its inhabitants wish to be ruled by a government or state authority rather than a non-state actor, the inability of the former to provide such non-security services often makes the latter a perceived necessity.²⁶

Lastly, the forms in which non-state armed groups can also participate as political actors in MENA societies are demonstrated by their ability to shape and be partially included in "official" political structures and administrative mechanisms. Though non-state actors desire to be wholly autonomous from the state, issues of fiscal resources and political legitimacy often push these groups into state parameters. In Lebanon for example, Hezbollah has developed itself into a political force that operates within the official state apparatus so that it can coopt the state's power and resources towards its interests, while remaining apart from it so that it can continue to function as a private entity and not be held responsible for those state services perceived beyond its capability or interest. Although Lebanon's political system provides constraints on Hezbollah, with a Maronite Christian serving as President, a Sunni Muslim as Prime Minister, a Shia Muslim as Speaker of Parliament, etc., Hezbollah has worked around these structural issues by having official

political representatives in Parliament and forming an array of intimate relationships with others political groups and individuals. Thus, though Hezbollah won only 13 seats in the 2018 parliamentary election, its wider influencing outreach meant it controlled a commanding coalition of 72 out of the total 128 seats, giving it immense sway over Lebanese politics.²⁷ As such, Hezbollah has been able to craft a vast complex network composed of cross-party political officials whose policy orientations are directed by its preferences. Thus, Hezbollah has obtained a “plural” or “hybrid” identity, where the parameters of its political activities and membership are often difficult to differentiate from other political bodies. It is at once, both separate from the official state government while also being integral participants benefiting from its inclusion.

Similarly, in Iraq, the collapse of the so-called Islamic State has pressured the PMU to enter official national politics to maintain some form of legitimacy with the populace. Several PMU groups have run in national elections under the name of the “Fatah Alliance” (or “Conquest Alliance”) to bypass Iraq’s restrictions on armed groups running for office.²⁸ By participating in politics, the PMU has been able to influence government policy, including the allocation of \$2.2 billion of the state budget to the salaries of some 122,000 of its fighters, as well as influencing the appointment of local governors and their councils to be of PMU-orientation and Shia followers, in order to form a supportive coalition to press Baghdad towards the PMU’s interests.²⁹ Thus, for non-state armed groups in many MENA societies, the state provides an efficient forum from which it can extract capital and political patronage to further cement relative autonomy.

In some parts of MENA, the inclusion of non-state armed groups in official political institutions is also often necessary for the official state government in order to maintain or achieve further political stability. For example, in Libya, the dismantling and subsequent dispersion of former police and military forces into the general population following the fall of the Ghaddafi regime left the state with a 70 percent reduction in its law-enforcement personnel.³⁰ Many of these former state armed forces had integrated or created armed groups of their own to protect their neighborhoods from rival groups and entities deemed a threat, thereby heightening the country’s instability and making it more difficult for the fragile, new government to reestablish its authority across the country. To reduce public suspicion of the government, the Libyan central authorities saw the reintroduction of these armed groups into the government as the

only viable means to create a more unified state.³¹ Therefore, whether out of political necessity or not, many states in MENA have found themselves susceptible to the growing influence and direct participation of such non-state armed actors to further their objectives. Such inclusion presents some significant challenges for development efforts, as it runs the risk of being manipulated to further these groups' interests or being directed towards areas and peoples that are the least vulnerable. Moreover, the relatively blurred position that non-state actors hold within the official state government allows them the flexibility to utilize their fiscal and political advantages while being distant enough to criticize state leadership when it has failed to meet its obligations to the public. As such, non-state actors will never be able to be held fully accountable or responsible for the provision of national development projects.

Differentiating Non-State Armed Groups

Because of the state-centric viewpoint held amongst policymakers, current approaches to non-state armed actors in the Middle East and North Africa have tended to dismiss them into a collective basket that obscures identifying which groups provide some degree of stability and statehood, and those that are merely benefiting from the absence of effective state leadership. The inability to decipher such differences can tend to result in developmental initiatives being either not sufficiently far-reaching or not adequately sustainable in the long term. Thus, it is also imperative to differentiate MENA's non-state armed groups to better understand the ways in which they interact with the state and can be incorporated into development programs.

Though there exists an array of subcategories of non-state armed groups in the region, they can be grouped into three main overarching conceptual frameworks: organized criminal networks, insurgency (or terrorist) groups, and warlords. While all these categories emerged from the absence of state institutions that could effectively provide services to their populations, they share little in terms of their motivations and nature. To begin with, organized criminal networks seek to exploit the political vacuum left by an absent or failing state for purely economic reasons. Though they may engage with non-state groups with political interests, this does not mean that they themselves are motivated or guided by political ambition. As such, organized criminal

networks continue to work within weak state structures and do not seek a territory of their own or departure from the state-system architecture, since the state enables their profitable existence. Their use of violence, furthermore, tends to be directly linked with their economic activities, in order to avoid gaining too much attention from state authorities or creating overwhelming opposition from wider civil society.³² This can clearly be seen in Afghanistan, where opium drug cartels were able to operate under both the Taliban regime and the previous U.S.-backed government in Kabul, as their activities were perceived not to directly undermine the political foundations of the two governments and thereby received fewer countermeasures than other armed groups.³³

The other two categories of non-state armed groups differ from criminal organizations in that they are both fundamentally motivated by political ambition, albeit at different scales and visions. Insurgents (sometimes categorized as terrorist groups), typically use violence for political goals, namely by challenging the state's existence and seeking to supplant it with a new legal and political order. Such groups are heavily motivated by ideological considerations delineated along religious, ethnic, and/or political characteristics and seek to transplant these ideals into a population and/or territorial boundary (existing or new) from which they can make such ideals a "reality". This is acquired by assuming the full responsibilities held by states either through overtaking the government or separating from it.³⁴ The case of the so-called Islamic State presents an extreme example of this motivation. The Sunni Jihadist organization's vision to construct a divine state in its interpretation of Islam resulted in the combination of its non-state practices with ideas typically associated with the state system. According to an examination of ISIS documents taken from the group's former capital of Mosul, the insurgency governed its conquered territories in a surprisingly state-like fashion. As well as operating the police, armed forces, and legal courts, ISIS leaders also issued civil-society legislation such as marriage certificates, regulating market prices, registering vehicles, banning trademark infringements, and organizing school exams.³⁵ Insurgency groups, therefore, seek to transition from their non-state actor status to full 'state' status. In doing so, insurgent groups tend to use violence indiscriminately and excessively against the state's populace to weaken the legitimacy of the central state government or any other potential opponents.

In comparison, a closer analysis of warlords reveals that this

branch of armed non-state actors possesses the greatest degree of political power and autonomy from the central state. Warlords occupy what Thanassis Cambanis terms, a blurred “hybrid” space, acquiring some of the responsibilities held by states and rejecting those responsibilities considered beyond their interest or capability to deliver.³⁶ Warlords, therefore, are primarily concerned with occupying a territory to govern according to their vested interest *within* the wider prevailing state architecture. Moreover, despite their autonomy and competitiveness with the central state, they must often continue to cooperate with the state on certain issues or receive financial and/or political support from international clients, thereby making them relatively malleable to the influence of other interest groups. However, though these relationships may appear detrimental to the flexibility of warlords’ exercise of power, it is these very connections that endow them with the most political power of all the non-state armed groups. Warlords’ continued engagement with the official state administration furthers their negotiating power over it. Without favors and support mechanisms, further degradation of the central state government is plausible. Their connection with international powers, furthermore, provides a form of protection for warlords in times of uncertainty or temporary decline, as they are endowed with financial and security-related support, among others, that helps uphold their political existence. According to the historian Niall Ferguson, modern Europe is the product of centuries of conflict in which its “naturally” victorious powers constructed cohesive nation-states from which they can develop.³⁷ The MENA region, in contrast, has been unable to reach this level of cohesion and unity, as foreign intervention has propped up many armed warlords and political players past the point where their fiscal and military apparatuses would have exhausted them. A clear example of this can be seen in the ongoing Syrian Civil War, where Russian and Iranian support for the Syrian dictator, Bashar al-Assad, has protected his rule against his opponents, who are themselves funded by a network of patrons extending from the Gulf to the United States.³⁸ Thus, the MENA region can be considered a patchwork of “unnatural” non-state political entities, whose prevailing ties with weak official states and a network of international relationships have made such warlords some of the most politically dynamic players in the region.

The prevailing conditions have seen warlords come to rule large swathes of the MENA region’s populations and in turn, acquire more

experience in territorial governance. Thus, warlords possess more resources and an accessible taxable population from which they can mobilize to expand or adapt their interests towards political arrangements that heighten their powers, including a transition to statehood. Therefore, while warlords hold a hybrid space that does not seek to possess all the functions of the “state”, the most successful of them hold the potential to shift their political interests and motivations (see Figure 1). As such, warlords’ use of violence is generally dependent on their political aims but is usually deployed more selectively than that of insurgency groups.

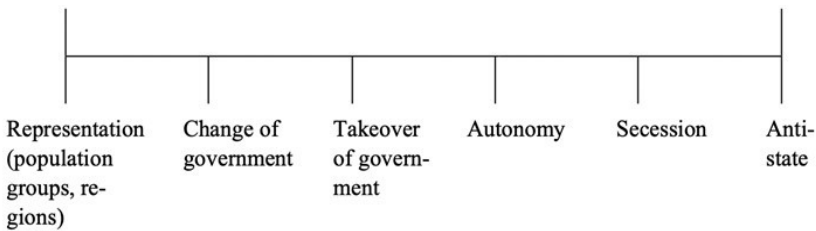


Figure 1: Motivations of the most successful warlords

By examining the three categories of non-state armed groups via their differences in motivation and deployment of violence to further their respective interests, it is easier to articulate who is shaping the political contours of the MENA region and influencing development initiatives the most. To recount, criminal organizations are primarily focused on financial considerations and do not seek a change in the “status quo” of the weakened state administration and wider state system. Insurgency groups, by contrast, seek a total transformation of prevailing conditions, primarily through violent means that seek to either take over the official state or separate from it. Lastly, warlords occupy a political space between these two groups. Though they are politically motivated, such activities take place within state architecture and they remain considerably tied to other domestic and international political actors to maintain such an arrangement. The possibility, nevertheless, remains for them to expand their political ambitions further if they choose and, crucially, have the capacity to do so.

Conclusion

For many developmental-related policymakers, the Middle East and North Africa are largely conceptualized by their “official” and internationally recognized boundaries and governing bodies. Though not oblivious to the influence of non-state armed groups in these polities, they have overwhelmingly treated them through a primarily ‘militarist’ or security-driven lens, thereby neglecting the reality that such groups play important political functions, whose power and responsibilities often cross with their official state government counterparts or displace them entirely. It is evident in the cases of Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, and elsewhere, the dangers of not sufficiently addressing such a reality. While the re-establishment of an official central government as the sole legitimate authority should remain a long-term goal, development initiatives must first recognize and accept the current distribution of power within many parts of MENA and attempt to work through such channels of leadership in making developmental programs more far-reaching and long-lasting. This is not to suggest that development programs work with all non-state armed groups. Criminal organizations and extremist insurgent groups cannot be expected to work for the general well-being of MENA populations, since they are self-interested, utilize extreme methods and/or represent the interests of only a minority of society, respectively. Such engagement would most likely be used to only strengthen their fiscal well-being and ideological interests. As such, certain warlords appear to be a relatively more acceptable avenue to work through. Their hybrid interaction with the official state government provides the best opportunity to further integrate them under the latter’s authority. Regardless, such efforts must be carefully chosen on a case-by-case basis, looking to these non-state armed groups’ conduct of authority, their motivations, and sources of domestic and international power in navigating the implementation of development initiatives. Given the changing nature of such conditions, this paper has not offered concrete policy suggestions, but rather urged policymakers to first consider the *full* extent that such non-state armed groups play politically in many MENA communities. By merely categorizing them into an encompassing, homogenous grouping, development initiatives risk missing the nuances that separate such groups and potentially overlook sources of cooperation that would further the reach and effectiveness of development projects and, crucially, the quality of life for those currently under non-state political jurisdiction.

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Ukraine's Denuclearization— A Matter of Security?

Lea Eileen Seyfarth

(Yonsei Graduate School of International Studies)

In light of the recent Russian invasion of Ukraine and the looming threat of a nuclear war, this paper aims to revisit the reason that Ukraine gave up its nuclear weapons in 1994, which at the time was the world's third-largest nuclear arsenal. In contrast to the argument of liberal scholars who consider international norms a crucial factor in Ukraine's decision to denuclearize, this paper presents an alternative interpretation of the events and seeks to explain Ukraine's decision from a realist perspective. This approach, which is based on the theoretical framework of Scott Sagan's Security Model, analyzes Ukraine's decision based on the hypothesis that giving up its inherited nuclear weapons boosted Ukraine's security. Contrary to the common view of realist scholars who argue that Ukraine should have kept its nuclear weapons as a deterrent, this paper argues that Ukraine's inherited nuclear weapons did not provide credible deterrence and that the security threat from Russia at that time could have easily escalated if Ukraine had kept the weapons. Moreover, the findings suggest that the security assurances from the Budapest Memorandum enhanced Ukraine's security by allowing Kyiv to forge security cooperation with Western powers and NATO.

Introduction

On February 24, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine in an effort to bring Ukraine's territory under its control. This marked the beginning of the largest armed conflict in Europe since World War II, leading to mass displacement of Ukrainians and an ongoing humanitarian crisis. Moreover, on September 30, 2022, Russia annexed four oblasts (administrative divisions) of Ukraine that it had partially captured during the invasion. This annexation was condemned by the vast majority of

143 states in a UN General Assembly resolution on October 12, 2022.¹ Eight years prior, Russia also defied Ukraine's sovereignty by illegally annexing the Crimean peninsula.² Considering Ukraine's inability to deter Russia from launching such attacks, it is striking that Ukraine used to have the world's third-largest nuclear arsenal.³ In this regard, realist scholars like John Mearsheimer have argued that the Russian attacks would not have occurred if Ukraine had kept its nuclear weapons.⁴

Given these developments, questions regarding Ukraine's decision to give up its nuclear weapons in 1994 have resurfaced. To explain the reasoning behind the decision, this research adopts the theoretical framework of Sagan's Security Model. It aims to analyze Ukraine's decision based on the hypothesis that denuclearization boosted Ukraine's security. Sagan argues that Ukraine's decision is "puzzling" from a security perspective, referring to realist arguments that Russia's expansive behavior and the ongoing conflict over Crimea seriously threatened Ukraine's independence and that nuclear weapons were the only rational response.⁵ In fact, the common view of realist scholars is that Ukraine should have kept its nuclear weapons for deterrence.⁶ However, this paper aims to present an alternative interpretation of the events and to prove that it is possible to explain Ukraine's decision using the Security Model.

The first part of this paper includes a brief historical background and a review of the related literature. The succeeding part introduces the theoretical framework based on Sagan's Security Model, which will then be applied to the Ukrainian case in the subsequent analysis. Ukraine's decision to give up its nuclear weapons will be evaluated based on three factors derived from the theoretical model: credibility of deterrence, security threat reduction, and security through cooperation. Finally, the conclusion offers an answer to the question of why Ukraine gave up its nuclear weapons, given the arguments posited in the paper.

Historical Background

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus had Soviet strategic nuclear weapons located on their territory.⁷ Russia quickly reached bilateral agreements with Kazakhstan and Belarus on the dismantlement or elimination of the strategic nuclear weapons system. However, negotiations with Ukraine turned out to be more difficult, as Ukraine wanted to reach certain security goals before abandoning its nuclear arsenal.⁸ In total, Ukraine had a nuclear

legacy of 176 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), 44 strategic bombers, about 2,200 nuclear warheads to arm these strategic delivery vehicles, and more than 2,600 tactical nuclear weapons.⁹ Ukraine's denuclearization process can be divided into two different phases. In the first phase, bilateral discussions between Russia and Ukraine took place but ended unsuccessfully due to Ukraine's security concerns. However, Ukraine signed the Lisbon Protocol on May 23, 1992, agreeing to take on the same obligations as the former Soviet Union under the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I).¹⁰ These obligations include preventing nuclear proliferation, refraining from building strategic missile defense systems, reducing potentially threatening conventional weapons, and reducing long-range missiles and bombers for nuclear weapons.¹¹

In the second phase, the US joined the negotiations in August 1993 and helped the parties reach an agreement on Ukraine's denuclearization by promoting nuclear non-proliferation and providing security assurances and economic benefits.¹² The trilateral negotiations resulted in a declaration signed by Ukrainian President Kravchuk, Russian President Yeltsin, and US President Clinton in Moscow on January 14, 1994. Finally, the Budapest Memorandum was signed on December 5, 1994, providing security assurances to Ukraine.¹³ On the same day, Ukraine joined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as a non-nuclear weapon state and the START I Treaty entered into force. By May 31, 1996, Ukraine had transferred the last of the nuclear warheads on its territory to Russia for elimination and has not developed nuclear weapons on its own since.¹⁴

Literature Review

Because of the special case of Ukraine being "born nuclear," several scholars have conducted research on Ukraine's decision to denuclearize, and most of them have focused on the idea of norms, Western integration, and the image of Ukraine. A well-known analysis is provided by Scott Sagan, who developed three models to understand why states build and give up nuclear weapons. He came up with the "Security Model," "Domestic Politics Model," and "Norms Model." For the Ukrainian case, Sagan applied the Norms Model. This is because he believed that international norms, like those set forth in the NPT, and the image of a good international citizen who is capable of integrating into the Western economic and security system were most important factors in Ukraine's decision.¹⁵ He argues that the strength of the NPT has led to new or

potential nuclear states—such as Iraq, Iran, and North Korea—being viewed as “rogue states,” and that there is “hardly a nuclear club whose new members would receive international prestige.”¹⁶ Ukrainian researcher Alina Shymanska agrees with Sagan and states that by joining the NPT, Ukraine could “show the world its commitment to democracy and peace.”¹⁷ Moreover, Lesya Gak, who worked in the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in, argues that Western integration was seen by the Ukrainian leadership as the best way to strengthen Ukraine’s independence.¹⁸

However, the majority of realist scholars argue that Ukraine made the wrong decision to denuclearize. One of the founders of Neorealism, Kenneth Waltz, believes that with more nuclear-armed states, war is less likely to erupt due to deterrence and a more stable balance of power. He argues that in the anarchic international environment, self-help is the main principle of action and states should provide for their own security by acquiring nuclear weapons.¹⁹ Neorealist scholar Mearsheimer elaborates that Ukraine’s nuclear weapons would have been the only reliable deterrence to Russian aggression. He argued back in 1993 that “Ukraine cannot defend itself against a nuclear-armed Russia with conventional weapons, and no state (...) is going to extend to it a meaningful security guarantee.”²⁰ He even stated that the “West foolishly made Ukraine give up its nuclear weapons.”²¹ Moreover, realist scholar Barry Posen contended in 1993 that the balance of power between Ukraine and Russia would be more stable if Ukraine kept nuclear weapons on its territory to prevent aggression from Russian nationalists.²² Ted G. Carpenter, senior fellow for defense and foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute, argued in light of the Crimea annexation in 2014 that it is highly improbable that Russia would have adopted such a risky course against a nuclear-armed country and that the disarmed Ukraine was made “vulnerable to coercion by its much stronger neighbor.”²³

Sagan follows the realist line of reasoning to contend that his Security Model is inappropriate to explain Ukraine’s denuclearization. According to him, Russia’s expansionist behavior, the ongoing tensions over Crimea, and the treatment of Russian minorities in Ukraine presented a substantial security threat to Ukraine that makes their decision to denuclearize “puzzling from the realist perspective.”^{24 25} In contrast, this paper utilizes his Security Model to provide an alternative to the Norms Model’s explanation and examine Ukraine’s denuclearization from a realist, security perspective. Before applying it to the Ukrainian case, a brief

discussion of Sagan's Security Model is presented in the following section.

Sagan's Security Model

Sagan's Security Model adheres to the neorealist perspective and therefore adopts the common security threat argument that in an anarchic international world, states must provide their own security.²⁶ This is reflected by strong states developing their own nuclear weapons and weaker states forging an alliance with a nuclear power. The latter is always tied to the question of the credibility of the extended deterrence guarantees, since the nuclear power would also fear retaliation if it were to respond to an attack on its ally.²⁷ Sagan argues that nuclear weapons can serve either as a deterrent against strong conventional military threats or as a means of coercion. However, he suggests that response to new nuclear threats is the most prevalent and plausible explanation for nuclear proliferation.²⁸ According to Sagan's Security Model, states denuclearize if they face a significant reduction in security threats or forge an alliance with a nuclear weapon state that offers extended deterrence, as illustrated by Figure 1.²⁹

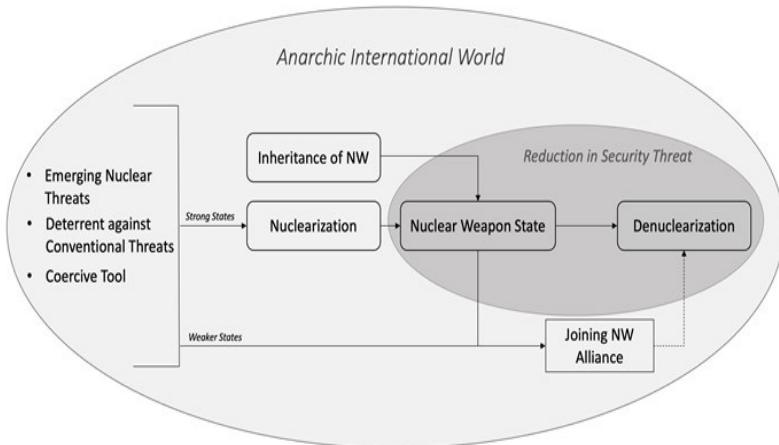


Figure 1: Sagan's Security Model

Sagan, who outlines the implications of each his models for the US nonproliferation policy in his article, recommends, based on the Security Model, that the US upholds its nuclear commitments to its allies. These should include a form of “first-use policy,” a commitment to also use nuclear weapons first against the common enemy and not only as a second strike in retaliation to an attack.³⁰ Moreover, he argues that it could be helpful, at least in the short-term, to enhance the security of potential proliferators through confidence-building measures or “negative security assurances”—the commitment that nuclear states will not use their weapons against non-nuclear states.³¹ However, the prerequisite of the Security Model implies that Ukraine would have been successful in terms of deterrence before its denuclearization. Therefore, it must first be examined whether or not the inherited weapons were a credible deterrent.

Analysis of Ukraine’s Denuclearization

Credibility of Deterrence

After inheriting Soviet nuclear weapons in 1991, Ukraine was faced with the fact that the strategic nuclear missiles were of little military value. The weapons that might have provided Ukraine with some real security against Russia were shorter-range tactical nuclear weapons.³² However, even before the Soviet Union collapsed, the Soviet military began to withdraw these tactical nuclear weapons from non-Russian republics and all tactical weapons were withdrawn from Ukraine by May 1992.³³ The missiles on Ukrainian territory were designed to strike the US rather than Russia and while they could have been modified to fulfill Ukraine’s security needs to deter Russia, this would have been a major challenge given the high economic costs.³⁴ Moreover, there was a lack of operational control and technical expertise. The inherited weapons were formally under the control of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the regional intergovernmental organization formed after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which was de facto under the operational control of Russia.³⁵ German political scientist Andreas Umland points out that the launch codes of most of the nuclear weapons remained in Moscow,³⁶ while US scholar William C. Martel argues that Ukrainian government officials were aware of the technical challenges associated with establishing operational control.³⁷ Moreover, Ukraine’s Foreign Minister Anatoliy Zlenko pointed out that in 1992, because of technology

and control systems, Ukraine could not inherit nuclear forces that were not linked to the nuclear forces of Russia: “by being a nuclear power we would not have full independence.”³⁸ Thus, if Ukraine had decided to keep the Soviet nuclear weapons, their locations, capabilities, and vulnerabilities would have been known by Russia.³⁹ Furthermore, even if Ukraine had succeeded in bringing the weapons under control, it did not have the technical know-how or the necessary facilities to maintain the systems. Former senior Soviet defense official Vitaly Katayev has well documented that the Soviet nuclear components of the missiles were in fragile condition. Most of them needed to be replaced and were close to the limit of their operational lifetime. The inherited warheads had already reached a lifetime of eight of the generally permissible 12 years.⁴⁰ Overall, it would have likely taken some time before Ukraine had developed an operational nuclear capability. Through all these constraints in trying to build a survivable deterrent force, Ukraine would have gone through an initial period of substantial nuclear vulnerability and US political scientist Stephen E. Miller argues that this would have potentially raised “a preventive war temptation for Russia.”⁴¹ Furthermore, Ukraine could not have kept the nuclear weapons without damaging its relations with the US and other Western states. Both the US and the EU made the development of good relations with Ukraine conditional on its willingness to give up its inherited nuclear weapons.⁴² Based on this analysis, it can be determined that Ukraine had no credible deterrence against Russia before denuclearization. Moreover, keeping the nuclear weapons would have increased the security threat during the initial period of vulnerability, without the backing of a possible ally.

Security Threat Reduction

Besides the potential increased security threat resulting from keeping the nuclear weapons, it is also important to examine if there was a significant reduction in security threats at the time Ukraine agreed to denuclearize. If we look into the negotiation rounds, it is apparent that Ukraine’s utmost concern was its security—and not its image, as Sagan’s Norms Model suggests. In the failed bilateral negotiations with Russia, the problem was Moscow’s unwillingness to provide legitimate security guarantees for Ukraine.⁴³ International security scholar David S. Yost reports that Ukraine aimed for an international mechanism,

ideally a binding treaty that would enable Ukraine to enforce the agreed rules with Russia in the future.⁴⁴ On the other hand, Russia insisted on a formulation that would have guaranteed Ukraine's borders solely within the framework of the CIS which was unacceptable to Ukraine.⁴⁵

By the late 1990s, Ukraine and other CIS states had grown weary and suspicious of Russia acting as a hegemonic power within the CIS and began to challenge the power imbalance in the region.⁴⁶ It was at this point in the negotiations when the US joined the discussions and aimed to influence the Russian Foreign Ministry to agree to a formulation acceptable to the Ukrainians. Throughout the negotiations, the US offered Ukraine "security assurances" rather than "security guarantees", which would entail military commitment in case of attack—a commitment similar to what the US extends to members of the NATO alliance.⁴⁷

In the final version of the signed Budapest Memorandum, the US, the UK, and Russia committed to respecting Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and existing borders, in conformity with the principles of the Helsinki Final Act, implemented by the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE⁴⁸) in 1975.⁴⁹ Moreover, the three states agreed to "refrain from threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine,"⁵⁰ and to use none of their weapons against Ukraine except in self-defense or in accordance with the UN Charter. The signatory states agreed to "refrain from economic coercion designed to subordinate the exercise by Ukraine of the rights inherent in its sovereignty, in accordance with the principles of the CSCE Final Act."⁵¹ Additionally, the positive and negative security assurances provided to all non-nuclear weapon states parties to the NPT were restated.⁵² It is important to note that the Budapest Memorandum is not legally binding; rather, it is a political commitment.⁵³ Given the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the Russian invasion, which began on February 24, 2022, many argue that the Budapest Memorandum has failed, since it is apparent that Russia undermined the assurances of the memorandum. However, while Ukraine does not enjoy the guarantee of military support extended to a NATO member, the US and the UK's military expertise and financial support has turned the country into a modern fighting force, as will be elaborated in the next section, which deals with another element of Sagan's Security Model—that states denuclearize if they join an alliance with a nuclear-weapon state.

Security through Cooperation

At first glance, it seems that the prospect of joining an alliance with a nuclear-weapon state was not a huge factor in Ukraine's decision to denuclearize, since it did not join NATO or any other military alliance before it made the decision to give up its inherited nuclear weapons. However, from a security perspective, the prospect of closer ties with the US and the West post-denuclearization clearly played a crucial role in the decision. While Sagan argues that the international norms and the image of a good international citizen were important factors for closer ties with the West, it is more likely that security was the driving factor for both sides. The independence of Ukraine transformed Europe's geopolitics and Ukraine's reintegration into Russia or a Russian-dominated security system would have had a significant impact on Europe.⁵⁴ Therefore, Ukraine's effort to regulate its relations with Russia was welcomed by the Western powers. US political scientist F. Stephen Larrabee argues that the core of "Kyiv's Westpolitik has been an effort to develop close ties to the United States"⁵⁵ because the US was deemed powerful enough to counter Russia's political and military weight. Ukraine's denuclearization process was tightly linked to the emergence of an independent conventional defense apparatus and the emergence of extensive US-Ukraine military and defense contacts that improved Ukraine's security.

Of the former Soviet republics, Ukraine had developed the most extensive program of defense contacts. Since signing the Budapest Memorandum in 1994, the US and Ukraine have taken important steps to expand and institutionalize their relations.⁵⁶ Although the memorandum did not include legally binding security guarantees, the US has spent money and expertise on training Ukrainian armed forces. For instance, the US Department of Defense assisted Ukraine in implementing defense and security reforms and promoted the development and implementation of defense policy and strategy.⁵⁷ Among other things, the US has sent Ukrainian officers to US military schools under the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, which provides advanced training and professional development in military arts and sciences.⁵⁸ Similarly, the EU made the development of relations with Ukraine conditional on its willingness to sign the NPT. The EU's primary concern was nuclear safety, and Ukraine's initial refusal to give up its nuclear weapons slowed the development of ties, which were mostly frozen until 1994.⁵⁹ Security policy expert Gary Espinas from

the US argues that “European stability and prosperity are best served by a Ukraine that is democratic, secure in its borders, and integrated into both European and Euro-Atlantic institutions.”⁶⁰ Similarly, the US believed that Ukraine can contribute to the security of Europe.⁶¹

Since 1994, Ukraine has increasingly favored membership in NATO in the belief that the alliance will strengthen the country’s security and that Ukraine-NATO cooperation has significantly increased.⁶² In 1994, Ukraine signed NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PfP) agreement, which aims to promote reforms, increase stability, and enhance security relationships among NATO and partner countries.⁶³ Ukraine was among the most active participants in the PfP exercises and the first CIS state to join the partnership.⁶⁴ Moreover, NATO and Ukraine agreed on a “distinctive Partnership” in 1997 and established the NATO-Ukraine Council.⁶⁵ A NATO information office opened in Kyiv in May 1997, and a Ukraine liaison officer was deployed at the headquarters of NATO’s Allied Command Operations (SHAPE).⁶⁶

Overall, Ukraine’s security cooperation with NATO, the US, and the EU immediately after it gave up its nuclear weapons shows that security considerations were a driving factor in the decision to denuclearize. Western countries made cooperation conditional on Ukraine’s denuclearization, and the military and defense contacts with them improved Ukraine’s security. In particular, the US, as Russia’s powerful counterpart, was seen as an important partner that provided Ukraine with financial support and military expertise.

Conclusion

The objective of this paper was to explain why Ukraine gave up its nuclear weapons in 1994 based on the hypothesis that enhanced security was the driving factor in Kyiv’s decision. In the first part of the paper, the historical background was outlined, followed by a literature review. The latter part was devoted to introducing Sagan’s Security Model and its application to Ukraine’s decision to denuclearize.

In Sagan’s Security Model, states denuclearize if they are faced with a significant reduction in security threats or join an alliance with an extended deterrence. The analysis shows that the inherited nuclear weapons did not actually provide Ukraine with a credible deterrence. In fact, the security threat of Russia may even have increased if Ukraine had kept the weapons during the initial period of vulnerability, without

being backed by a potential ally. Furthermore, despite not being legally binding, the security assurances included in the Budapest Memorandum increased the security of Ukraine and opened doors to security cooperation with the Western powers and NATO. Moreover, the alternative explanation—that states denuclearize if they join an alliance—also does not fittingly apply to the Ukrainian case. Despite increased military cooperation, these partnerships were not strong enough to build a credible extended deterrence and therefore were not a sufficient reason to give up nuclear weapons under Sagan's model. For this to be the case, Ukraine would have had to join an alliance that guaranteed extended deterrence and a "first-use policy" such as NATO.

Based on the above analysis, this paper proves the stated hypothesis that Ukraine's decision to give up its inherited nuclear weapons in 1994 increased the country's security, and answers the question of how Ukraine arrived at the decision to denuclearize. Since this paper only focuses on the realist security perspective and views states as black boxes, some potentially important dimensions relevant to the decision (e.g., economic factors) were not elaborated upon.

In summary, the analysis provides an alternative interpretation of Ukraine's decision to denuclearize. By using Scott Sagan's Security Model, which he himself calls "puzzling" to describe Ukraine's decision, this analysis shows that the negotiations on the denuclearization were motivated by Ukraine's security concerns. Given Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and Russia's invasion in February 2022, one should be cautious about blaming Ukraine for being naïve by giving up the inherited nuclear weapons in the past. An analysis of past decisions with knowledge of current events should be applied judiciously.

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Intermarriage and Motherhood: The Eugenics Movements in Japan and Korea

Hannah Kim

(Yonsei Graduate School of International Studies)

Eugenics is a uniquely modern framework that achieved popularity in the international community during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This paper explores how Japan's position as the only Asian colonial power affected its interpretation of eugenics, and how this view was then applied to Korea, one of its colonies in the early and mid-twentieth century. This paper highlights the unique colonial relationship between Japan and Korea in terms of geographic and ethnic proximity to explain the particular brand of eugenics that Japan espoused. Additionally, the paper examines colonial Korea's appropriation of eugenics and how it both differs and resembles that of the Japanese model. In particular, the role of women as mothers was central to this discourse since women were appropriated by both Japan and colonial Korea for their respective nation-building endeavors.

Introduction

Though mention of eugenics tends to bring to mind the harrowing experiments of the Holocaust, eugenics is not a concept limited to Nazi Germany or any one nation-state. In fact, it is a modern framework that permeated the international community, particularly during the period between the two World Wars.¹ Coming into existence and prominence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, eugenics was one of the most influential “ideologies of the body” at this time.² Eugenics is the concept of “selective breeding” in humans, wherein the human race is improved by controlling reproduction and the hereditary traits that are passed on to future generations.³ Eugenics is an inherently modern concept because its rise is inextricably tied to modern development. For

instance, the formation of the nation-state and the rise of nationalism, the dominance of science and use of statistics, and the concept of populations are all modern developments that enabled the emergence of eugenicist thought.⁴ Moreover, technological developments such as the propagation of contraceptive devices as well as the acceptance of ideologies such as Social Darwinism also contributed to new questions surrounding reproduction and eugenics. According to Dutch historian, Frank Dikötter, it is not so much that eugenics is a set of scientific principles, but rather a modern method of discussing social issues in a “biologizing terms.”⁵

In the case of Asia, Japan mediated Korea’s understanding of modernity by dint of being the sole colonizer from this region. Though the eugenics movement was largely concerned with issues of reproduction and heredity, there were nuances and differences in focus from country to country. Japanese eugenicists adopted eugenics in order to emulate Western colonial powers and further cement their role as an imperial power in Asia during the early twentieth century.⁶ This paper will first explore Japan’s application of eugenics, particularly concerning blood purity, and how this thinking was applied to colonial Korea. Different from how Western colonial powers handled their colonies, Japan sought assimilation with Korea at times throughout the colonial period. This unique colonial relationship is marked by both ethnic and geographical proximity, which is in turn reflected in Japan’s eugenicist policies. Next, this paper will discuss eugenic thought within Korea during the colonial period and how it was influenced and mediated by Japan. Finally, the paper will explore the ways that the Japanese colonial state’s aims in the eugenics movement intersected and overlapped with that of Korean nationalists.

Eugenics in Japan: Competing with the West and Blood Purity

Japan was exposed to eugenics through Francis Galton’s *Hereditary Genius*, which was translated into Japanese shortly following its publication in 1869 in England.⁷ Contraceptive technology entered Japan in the early 1920s, and with this technological advancement came new paradigms for human reproduction. Rather than viewing human reproduction as merely a force of nature, it became something that could be controlled.⁸ This reflects Michel Foucault’s claim that biopolitics can produce “discourses about sex, sexuality and the body.”⁹ In 1922, the famous American birth control advocate, Margaret Sanger, visited

Japan for the first time to give 13 lectures on birth control at a conference on “Western Thought.”¹⁰ Her ideas were already circulating in Japan beforehand, and her talks sparked widespread discussions on birth control and eugenics.¹¹ From the 1920s onward, eugenic concepts were commonplace in both Japanese popular media and academic literature.¹² There were several eugenics journals, such as *Jinsei-Der Mensch*, and eugenicists also regularly contributed to other publications.¹³ Moreover, starting in 1930, the Education Ministry and two Japanese newspaper companies began to host a yearly contest to find the healthiest and most “eugenically fit children” in the country.¹⁴ Women who were particularly fertile were praised by the mass media as being part of a “fertile womb battalion”.¹⁵ Many different groups of Japanese society seized on the discourse of eugenics for their respective aims. For instance, some Japanese feminists proposed a law that would make it more difficult for men with venereal disease to get married, which would have been Japan’s first eugenic law.¹⁶ Additionally, many doctors and intellectuals considered eugenics as a way to improve Japan’s superiority and competitiveness.¹⁷

For many Japanese eugenicists, eugenics was seen as a way to strengthen and purify the nation-state specifically so that Japan could compete with Western nations. Japanese eugenicists envisioned a “racially pure” nation-state of “New Japanese” people who possessed “anthropometrically ideal” bodies.¹⁸ It was believed that only these “New Japanese” would be able to compete with people of Western nation-states in the realm of international affairs, particularly in regards to imperial “expansion and colonization.”¹⁹ In this way, eugenics was closely tied to matters of nationalism, with eugenicists being either nationalists or ultranationalists.²⁰ This underscores how the inception of the nation-state contributed to the framework needed for eugenics to emerge and take hold as an ideology. Although the need for a uniform and powerful nation-state was not a concept unique to Japan, the emphasis on the purity of blood was a particular aspect that distinguished the Japanese brand of eugenicist thought.

There were two schools of thought surrounding eugenics and blood in Japan. The first camp was the “pure-blood” (or *junketsu*) position that believed mixing with other races would lead to the degeneration and corruption of the Japanese race. These people sought to preserve the “eugenic integrity” of the Japanese original race, namely the “Yamato stem-race.”²¹ Whereas this position presumed the superiority of the

Japanese race or “blood”, the “mixed-blood” (or *konketsu*) position started from the assumption that the Japanese race was less civilized than Western races. As a result, proponents of the *konketsu* position believed that mixing races would actually strengthen the Japanese race. For instance, some proponents of this position claimed that mixing with the white race would lead to a physically superior Japanese populace that was better equipped to compete with Western powers. This was understood as part of the process during which Japan transitioned from being semi-civilized to becoming fully civilized.²² The pure-blood position ultimately became more dominant, but instances where Japanese people mixed with other races still existed.²³

The idea of mixing blood was not limited to only with white races, but also applied to colonized Koreans. Some colonial administrators thought that intermarriage and mixing blood with Koreans would aid in the assimilation process, under the idea of “people of the same culture and race.”²⁴ For instance, Governor General Saitō Makoto, Vice Governor Mizuno Rentarō, and Japanese Prime Minister Hara Takashi expressed in 1919 that promoting intermarriage between Koreans and Japanese would “improve communication and build harmony.”²⁵ Koreans were considered to be racially and culturally similar to the Japanese, with some even subscribing to the theory that they were descended from a common ancestor.²⁶ As a result, this mixing of similar races was conjectured to be even more beneficial to the Japanese race than mixing with white races, which were considered radically different.²⁷ On the other hand, others such as colonial administrator Togo Minoru believed that intermarriage between Japanese people and non-Japanese Asians would “dissolve the soul” and taint the purity of the Japanese race.²⁸ When it came to the reality of intermarriage, Koreans’ animosity toward their colonizers dampened this enthusiasm for assimilation. Ultimately, the few public “mixed marriages” that took place were between members of the Japanese and Korean royal families,²⁹ such as the highly publicized marriage between Prince Yi Un and Princess Masako in 1920.³⁰

Moreover, the debate around intermarriage with colonized Koreans reflects the uniqueness of their colonial relationship with Japan in terms of ethnic and geographical proximity. Western colonial powers did not tend to propose intermarriage as a tool of assimilation. Rather, the colonized people were labeled as “savage” populations who were racially distinct from the white colonizers.³¹ These binary distinctions were then

translated into eugenic discourses of fit and unfit populations. Of course, Japanese still considered Korea to be inferior in certain respects, namely *mindō*, or cultural level. They justified this opinion by citing statistics on crime, disease, and illiteracy.³² The low *mindō* of Koreans was used to justify Japan's colonial rule and its repressive nature. However, this discrimination differs from that of Western colonial powers that did not share the same degree of ethnic or geographic proximity with their respective colonies. For one, it is difficult to imagine British colonizers recommending intermarriage with Indians in order to strengthen their white race. This particularity of the Japanese and Korean colonial relationship had repercussions for the application of eugenicist ideas. Racial dynamics of power were more prominent with white settler colonial contexts, such as in the case of racially stratified states like South Africa due to apartheid, as well as with countries like Australia. The eugenics organizations of these nations were focused on bettering the "mental and physical health of the white population."³³ On the other hand, as mentioned above, the Japanese colonizers seriously considered assimilation with the colonized Koreans to the point of intermarrying and becoming one race with Koreans. The low *mindō* of Koreans was seen as something that could be improved and reformed under the tutelage of the Japanese, rather than a fundamental racial inferiority that was irreconcilable.

In some sense, Japan's colonization efforts were informed by eugenic concerns to begin with, such as a fear of overpopulation. Prominent Neo-Malthusian thinker and birth control advocate, Abe Isoo, linked overpopulation to Japan's imperialist aggression.³⁴ Since overpopulation resulted in the need for more land to house the surplus population, he believed that overpopulation directly contributed to Japan's imperialist expansion.³⁵ As a result, he opposed Japanese invasion of Manchuria because he thought it would not solve the problem of Japan's overpopulation. Japanese' outward migration to colonies like Korea was not as successful as originally anticipated because the colonial administration had difficulty convincing Japanese farmers to migrate to Korea due to a lower standard of living and a lack of understanding about life in Korea.³⁶

However, Japan ended up invading Manchuria in 1931, leading to a 14-year period of warfare with China until the end of World War II in 1945.³⁷ This wartime period shifted Japan's priorities from preventing overpopulation to a "give birth and multiply" policy to provide more manpower to the empire.³⁸ This led to an environment that was no longer

possible for birth control advocates to be straightforward about their support of limiting births. Moreover, two laws were passed in 1940 in Japan that reflected this new priority of multiplying the population: the National Physical Fitness Law and the National Eugenics Law. The National Eugenics Law restricted abortion while the National Physical Fitness Law examined minors for diseases and physical capabilities.³⁹ By limiting abortion, the National Eugenics Law attempted to keep the birthrate high, while the National Physical Fitness Law brought the health of minors under surveillance of the government. If minors had venereal disease or tuberculosis, they were monitored closely to make sure that they healed.⁴⁰ These laws reflect the institutionalization of eugenicist thought and attempts by the government to enact biopower over its populations.

Eugenics in Korea: Japanese Influence and Nationalism

Similar to Japan, eugenics discourse began to propagate in Korean media starting from the early 1920s. This is when the first mention of the Korean term for eugenics, *usaeng*, can be found in Korean print media.⁴¹ In 1933, the Korean Eugenics Association was founded by prominent figures in the movement such as doctor and well-known social reformer Yi Kapsu.⁴²

Similar to many other modern and Western concepts introduced during the colonial period, Korea's understanding of eugenics was mediated through the Japanese colonial state. For instance, overpopulation began to be discussed in Korean media because of Japanese discourse on the topic, as can be seen by the 1921 *Tonga Ilbo* article, "A New Understanding of the Population Problem."⁴³ Moreover, Koreans' cognizance of Japan's increased interest in birth control led to more discussions on the topic within Korea.⁴⁴ At this time, many Japanese books were being translated into Korean, such as sexologist Sawada Junjio's *Actual Contraception and Possibilities of Limiting Births*.⁴⁵ This kind of unidirectional knowledge sharing contributed to similarities in the discourse on birth control between Japan and Korea, specifically in terms of the presence of eugenic arguments and neo-Malthusian ideas in both countries' print media.⁴⁶

As is the case for many colonies, issues of nation and nationalism were pressing in colonial Korea. For instance, prominent nationalist thinker Yi Kwang-su criticized the use of birth control by young women because he believed that "mother-based modernizing" should be the priority of all women. He went so far as to state that if the time comes

when women do not like to “nurse and raise children, a major disaster will result.”⁴⁷ Rather than supporting women’s individual freedom to choose their marriage partners and have children, the focus was on strengthening the nation by helping mothers birth “robust children for the nation.”⁴⁸ Women’s bodies functioned as sites for “regulation and control” and were mobilized to support a strong and healthy nation.⁴⁹ The healthy body of a mother was seen as a reflection of a healthy nation, and clearly her reproductive function was expected to be in service of the nation.

Korean women’s burden in this regard was twofold, since they had two nations to serve during the colonial period, namely Korea and Japan. Japan’s aforementioned period of wartime mobilization intensified the discourse on motherhood and nation. Though in the early 1930s, Korean women had been vocal about eugenics and birth control as a path to achieve liberation, their voices were ultimately supplanted by male intellectuals and doctors. Rather than focusing on women’s liberation and control over reproduction, the emphasis was placed on overpopulation during the wartime mobilization period, “state-sponsored protections of maternal and children’s health”, as well as “medicalized eugenics.”⁵⁰ Moreover, similar to Japan, birth control activities became more limited at this time as well.

The wartime emphasis on “give birth and multiply” lent itself to a pro-motherhood eugenics both in Japan and Korea. In Japan, a 1942 national health campaign sought to protect mothers and children and required every pregnant woman to register with the state so that they could receive “proper care and attention.”⁵¹ Japan also implemented programs on maternal health in Korea starting from the late 1920s. For instance, the government pushed a modern midwifery system in order to prevent infanticides and abortions and taught domestic science in girls’ schools to spread knowledge on pregnancy and child rearing.⁵² Moreover, the traditional custom of early marriage was condemned, and medical research was conducted on women’s reproductive systems. All of these were in an effort to improve the fertility of Korean women.⁵³ These attempts to protect women’s fertility and keep infants healthy were strategically deployed to maintain a healthy population for “industrial and military goals of imperial expansion.”⁵⁴

Physical fitness was also emphasized for women, particularly mothers, to ensure the birth of healthy children. This followed a Lamarckian train of logic that physical and mental education for women would affect the quality of their children, and thus lead to healthier future

generations.⁵⁵ Western women's bodies were considered healthier and superior childbearing bodies that Korean women should aspire to attain.⁵⁶ In order to accomplish this, Korean women's bodies were expected to be subjected to discipline and exercise.⁵⁷ Similar to the *konketsu* view mentioned above, Korean women's bodies were assumed to be comparatively inferior to that of Western women. In both Japan and Korea, there was a sense of needing to "catch up" with Western powers through the use of eugenics. Especially among the Korean elites, there was a belief that Korea had been colonized due to its own weakness. As a result, there was an emphasis on self-strengthening in order to prove that Korea was capable of being an independent nation.

Korean social reformers attempted to modernize Korea through the eugenics movement. Attempting to avoid censure for being collaborators with the colonial state, they aligned themselves with the West but not Japan when it came to ideas surrounding health and eugenics.⁵⁸ However, their views were generally in agreement with those of the Japanese colonial authority.⁵⁹ These reformers were often scientists and physicians who sought to use their expertise in order to merge the scientific with the social in service of the nation.⁶⁰ Particularly when it came to their thoughts on women's duties to the nation, their views neatly dovetailed with that of the colonial state's. Eventually, women in Korea were defined by their maternal roles, and their reproduction was seen as manipulable in order to meet the needs of the "family, society, nation and empire."⁶¹

Conclusion

As a uniquely modern ideology, eugenics has close ties to colonialism and imperialism. In extreme cases, eugenics was wielded as tool to perpetuate and exacerbate racial tensions and oppress other ethnic groups. While Korea as a colony was considered inferior to Japan, Korea's ethnic and geographical proximity allowed for a distinct dynamic with its colonizer. In particular, the pure blood versus mixed blood debate in the Japanese eugenics movement revealed contrasting tensions in this colonial relationship. Rather than expressing fear over proximity to the "savage" colonized locals, which was the case for white colonizers in Asian and African countries,⁶² Japanese colonizers considered bringing up Korea's *mindō* through intermarriage. The ultimate goal of this kind of approach was to assimilate Koreans into the Japanese empire.

Though this strategy never came to fruition, the existence of this debate reflects the unique colonial relationship between these two countries and how it affects their discourse on eugenics. When it comes to Korea's interpretation of the eugenics movement, it closely mirrored that of Japan's because the Westernization and modernization of Korea were mediated through the Japanese during the colonial period. However, this is also due to the fact that in some cases, the colonial state's aims and that of the Korean domestic nationalists overlapped. Both sought to appropriate women's reproductive functions for the nation: the Japanese state for their wartime mobilization efforts and imperialist expansion, and the Korean nationalists for self-strengthening purposes. In essence, both Korean and Japanese eugenics movements accepted the relative inferiority of their own people and sought to resemble Western powers via eugenic policies and efforts. Since eugenics is closely tied to reproduction, women's bodies, especially those of mothers, became important sites of discourse for both Japanese and Korean eugenicists during the colonial period.

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Continuities and Breaks in Chinese Socialism: Contrasting Mao and Xi

Monica Abrantes Villa Abrille

(University of the Philippines)

Recent events in China illustrate similarities between Mao Zedong's and Xi Jinping's construction of socialist ideology specifically when it comes to class struggle, economic legitimacy, solidarity, as well as cooperation elicited by propaganda efforts and the construction of common enemy. These similarities in construction have led to concern that Xi's governance will lead to a catastrophic outcome, similar to that of Mao's administration. However, this paper argues that, based on current data and scholarship, Xi is different from Mao in that Xi's policies are proactive and grounded in actual realities. Moreover, his recognition that political and social stability are conducive to a country's economic growth indicates that his administration will not lead to Mao's level of political, economic, and social disaster.

Introduction

The paramount leaders of China are those who are hailed as the most prominent and influential leaders of both party and state.¹ In the course of Chinese contemporary history, there have only been five leaders that have been considered as paramount leaders—Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao, and Xi Jinping. The foundation of any paramount leadership's governance is the ideology, “socialism with Chinese characteristics” or simply Chinese socialism.² While there are arguments that highlight variations in how each paramount leader understands and enforces this ideology, political commentary in recent years has mentioned a high degree of similarity in idea and practice between Mao Zedong and Xi Jinping.^{3 4 5} In this regard, the goal of this paper is to determine the similarities and differences between Mao and

Xi's construction of Chinese Socialism. In doing so, the paper will also examine what these similarities and differences might indicate about the outcome of Xi's administration. While Xi does face resistance to his authoritarian rule, the paper argues that this will not lead to a disastrous end similar as to what happened under Mao. This is because Xi's ruling has led to the maintenance of economic legitimacy which has enabled him to provide for the needs of the majority of Chinese population.

Mao Zedong is the founder of the People's Republic of China (PRC). As the founder, he was also responsible for institutionalizing governance anchored upon Chinese socialism. He served as China's president from the establishment of the country in 1949 until his death in 1976.⁶ While Mao's greatest success was unifying China, his administration ended in a political, economic, and social disaster that succeeding leaders sought to reform. Due to his unrealistic and disruptive policies, there was a long period of economic recession in the country starting from the massive famine in 1959 caused by the Great Leap Forward (1958-1962) and lasting until after the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Following the Cultural Revolution, Chinese society also suffered from trauma as a result of Mao inflicting inhumane physical and psychological cruelty, humiliation, torture, and punishment against those who were deemed as being against his left-wing utopian ideas. An estimated 2 million people died during this period.⁷

Xi Jinping is the current president of China. He began his administration in 2012 and recently revoked the two-term limit on his presidency, thus extending his rule of China past the previously expected end of his term in 2023.⁸ During his administration, there has been an emphasis on returning to a strong adherence to Chinese socialism especially with the "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" being enshrined in the Constitution of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), together with Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Thought, during the 19th Party Congress in 2017.⁹ This is significant given that such an intense dedication to ideology has not been observed since the time of Mao.

What sets Mao Zedong and Xi Jinping apart from the other paramount leaders—Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, and Hu Jintao—are the reforms instituted and maintained by the latter three in terms of governance, policy, and ideology.¹⁰ The latter three did not have a personality cult around their leadership. Instead, they had "collective

leadership” and “consensual decision-making”, as well as “bottom-up intra-party democracy” in contrast to a “top-down dictatorship”. The administrations of Deng, Jiang, and Hu also had effective mechanisms that relayed the concerns of the society directly to the CCP and the state, and they had relatively higher tolerance for intellectual and other freedoms. Moreover, there were some checks and balances on CCP power in effect as well as terms and retirement limits for government and party officials. However, since Xi has secured an unprecedented third presidential term, it is now possible that he will become China’s second leader for life after Mao. Additionally, the three aforementioned leaders also adopted a cautious foreign policy. For instance, they established normal and friendly relations with other countries not only for their own development but also to change the view that China is an untrustworthy, subversive, and disruptive power.¹¹ Finally and more importantly, while all three observed the importance of “socialism with Chinese characteristics”, they created policies based on empirical and pragmatic merits rather than determining policy from an ideological basis. All these reforms were rolled back during Xi Jinping’s administration, which arguably marks a return to the Maoist period.

Given this reversal of reforms, scholars and political experts have debated whether a return to Maoist policies would also mean disastrous outcomes for Xi Jinping’s administration. Those who expect a pessimistic outcome argue that Xi has overreached and this will eventually lead to the reversal of his revolution.¹² His repressive policies have caused discontent in many of China’s business and intellectual communities. Democracy advocates such as influential activists, journalists, previous officials, academics, and business owners have expressed their disapproval of Xi’s policies in the past. Additionally, labor protests have doubled in the course of his administration.¹³ Some Chinese officials have indicated to the press that there have even been attempted coups and assassinations against Xi Jinping.

Even those who have a pragmatic view of Xi’s governance agree that he has been aggressively autocratic in that he has crushed critics and potential rivals, scrapped presidential term limits, enforced digital censorship, engaged in ethnic repression, and enforced a crackdown on democracy in Hong Kong.¹⁴ Yet, they believe that even though his administration will undergo a turbulent period, Xi is more than capable of managing it and will remain in office for a long time. This is also the view

that the paper takes and it will be elaborated on in the rest of the paper.

Comparison between Mao Zedong and Xi Jinping

As Chinese society has evolved, the construction of “socialism with Chinese characteristics” has been modified depending on the present environment as well as how it is perceived by the current paramount leader. However, despite the continuous evolution of Chinese socialism, some features in the ideology have remained consistent across the PRC’s history: class struggle, economic legitimacy, solidarity, as well as cooperation incited by propaganda efforts and a common enemy. Primarily, the CCP and the Chinese state encourages class struggle which takes the form of mass participation in critiquing leaders and policies.¹⁵ With the goal of providing equal opportunities for all, the CCP and the state derive their power from economic legitimacy by offering everyone access to education, employment, healthcare, housing, and other basic needs.¹⁶ This is made possible by the state through mass mobilization of people for economic development. Additionally, a common enemy is often used to bring the people together. This includes domestic enemies such as revisionists and capitalists as well as foreign enemies such as Western imperialists such as the US.^{17 18} Finally, to instill and maintain a transformative or revolutionary orientation among the people that are aligned with the CCP’s agenda, the CCP has consistently invested time, money, and effort in a robust propaganda movement. These four features will be used to categorize and understand the similarities and differences between Mao and Xi’s construction of Chinese socialism.

Class Struggle

“People”, specifically those who are the most oppressed and vulnerable in the society, are at the core of Mao Zedong and Xi Jinping’s construction of Chinese socialism. In line with this, the CCP, which is in essence, the state, is expected to represent and act on behalf of the interests of the people. To support this idea, Mao and Xi respectively coined the concepts “people’s democratic dictatorship”¹⁹ and “people-centered philosophy of development”.²⁰ Both concepts mean that the CCP is a “hierarchical vertical institution with horizontal mechanisms” that infiltrates all levels of the Chinese society.²¹ As a result, people are expected to follow the orders and directives issued by the CCP since they are deemed to be

for the interests of the people. Failure to do so will result in punishment.

Mao and Xi are also firm believers of the idea that revolutionary spirit must be sustained in order for a society to continue to advance. In this regard, people's participation is vital to Chinese socialism. Therefore, the CCP encourages the people to engage in class struggle in which policies and even its leaders are critiqued by the masses. Yet, in both Mao and Xi's governance, class struggle is seen to be only possible and acceptable if done under the parameters set by the state. In Mao's period, those who went over these implicit parameters were violently dealt with; whereas in Xi's administration, the parameters are so explicitly restrictive that people rarely attempt to bypass them.

During Mao's era, the people were given the opportunity to engage in class struggle through the Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Anti-Rightist Campaign. On May 2, 1956, Mao called for "a hundred flowers to bloom and a hundred schools of thought to contend" that intellectuals were asked to evaluate the work of the CCP and provide recommendations for the future.²² Most of the criticism from the intellectuals had to do with how socialism was the front and center of Chinese politics, economy, society, and culture.²³ While Mao welcomed the criticism from the people, he responded by clearly delineating between those who were antagonistic and non-antagonistic to his policies. This led to the 1957 Anti-Rightist Campaign in which there were several large-scale arrests, detentions under duress, acts of torture, public condemnations, home invasions, and other coercive measures against those who were antagonistic towards Mao's Chinese socialism.²⁴

On the other hand, in 2014, Xi's launched class struggle through his call for the construction of "think tanks with Chinese characteristics".²⁵ This has given rise to Chinese policy research institutions and an expansion of their projects, international engagements, as well as public profiles. In a state without a formal mechanism for receiving people's demands or interests, think tanks provide Xi and the CCP with informed and rational views. However, these think tanks are torn between their responsibility as critical policy analysts and as loyalists of the state.²⁶ In fact, they are under close scrutiny by the government and are overseen by the Propaganda Department which means that most of their works entail explaining and justifying previously made decisions. In this regard, their genuine function is to not only provide Xi and the CCP with information about what is happening

on the ground but also, more importantly, to serve as platforms that disseminate Chinese views of the world.²⁷ Going against these functions would result in the end of government funding to these think tanks.

Economic Legitimacy

Economic legitimacy is the ability of the leader to provide the needs of the people in exchange for their loyalty to the leader and the party. These needs include, but are not limited to, shelter, food, clothing, education, and opportunities for social mobility. To provide these needs, continuous economic growth of China is important and only the CCP and its leaders can ensure this.²⁸ Mao and Xi are similar in their ultimate goal of the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” through strong adherence to Chinese socialism.^{29 30} While this is the goal of every Chinese paramount leader, steps and projects undertaken by both Mao and Xi are remarkably similar in their aggressiveness and scale. The only difference is that Xi’s economic project is grounded on scientific knowledge and research unlike Mao’s, which resulted in the latter’s failure to secure economic legitimacy.

Mao carried out the Great Leap Forward from 1958 to 1962, which was a large-scale national effort of rural industrialization, collectivization, and manual labor.³¹ The objectives of the Great Leap Forward were to triple production of steel and other major industrial products as well as agricultural outputs for the next 15 years. Mao did not reach out to Chinese intellectuals and economic experts when formulating this policy after what happened during the Hundred Flowers Campaign and Anti-Rightist campaign.³² It was because he believed that Chinese intellectuals would have proposed alternative policies that contradicted his Chinese socialism as mentioned in the previous section. As a result, his economic policy targets were unrealistic, and his policy methods lacked scientific backing. For example, the widespread rural effort to forge steel by smelting metal objects in backyard furnaces failed because the steel was of poor quality.³³ Another instance was Mao launched a national campaign to kill pests like sparrows without the scientific knowledge that sparrows were integral to eating insects that preyed on crops.³⁴ Due to measures like this, there was massive insect infestations in the summers of 1959 and 1960. Additionally, the rural population was asked to engage in many forms of mass digging and construction projects like building dams, irrigation canals, reservoirs,

and roads.³⁵ All of this infrastructure was dug and made by hand, which diverted the rural population away from agricultural activities. This, together with the massive insect infestation, eventually led to the Great Famine of 1959 to 1961 which took an estimated 15 to 46 million lives.³⁶

In Xi's case, he introduced the concept of the "Chinese Dream" which has been enshrined in the wide-ranging and ambitious Third Plenum economic reform plan of November 2013.³⁷ The plan's primary aim is to invest in technological innovation, which has already made into a reality through the "Made in China 2025" program. The plan also aims to retrain workers from production to service and other value-added industries to avoid the middle-income trap. Lastly, a very important initiative is China's heavy investment in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) which has been identified to be crucial to its economic expansion.³⁸ The ultimate goal of the BRI is the development of infrastructure that connects Asia to Europe such as commercial and financial centers, deep-water ports, electric grids, highways, pipelines, rail lines, residential housing, telecommunication networks etc. This large undertaking will allow Xi to provide jobs for Chinese people and even extract resources to be shipped back to China. All these policy initiatives were formulated in consortium with a group of 25 high-level Chinese think tanks covering economics, ideology, international affairs, law, military, science and technology, and politics.³⁹ While many Chinese think tanks are restricted in various ways, their scientific contributions are still recognized by Xi as playing a crucial role in policymaking, especially since his plans that grant him economic legitimacy require special knowledge and expertise.

Solidarity

The maintenance of solidarity is crucial to the Chinese socialist society. Mao and Xi fostered unity within the party and government through practices which strengthened and consolidated their rule mainly through the use of a one-man dictatorship with no term limits to limit or even block resistance to their ideas and policies. Mao was not only the chair of the PRC but also the chair of the CCP and the Military Affairs Commission.⁴⁰ All these positions ensured that he remained in power for as long as he deemed necessary and as long as his capabilities allowed. Similarly, Xi has recently secured his third term in October 2022 as the paramount leader of China, the CCP's general secretary and the

Central Military Commission's chairman.⁴¹ Essentially, Chinese politics under Xi has again become a one-man dictatorship consolidated through the organs of the CCP, just like Mao's era.⁴² While all five paramount leaders have occupied multiple positions within the party and the state, Deng, Jiang, and Hu were not micromanagers like Mao and Xi. Though they provided broad directives, they delegated the task of turning these broad directives into specific policies to other leaders in the party and the state.⁴³ Xi Jinping has systematically consolidated and strengthened his power on three levels: the nation, the party, and in Xi himself.⁴⁴ ⁴⁵ This has been done by the aforementioned abolishment of the presidential term limits and his holding of all key positions in the party, as well as the purge of his adversaries, which will be discussed in the next section.

Meanwhile, cohesion in society has also been preserved by Mao and Xi through the practice of a cult of personality and systematic censorship. During Mao's rule, he was revered by his people as if he were some sort of god.⁴⁶ Mao held public assemblies that were attended by millions of people clamoring "Long Live Chairman Mao". Twice a day, no matter where the people were, they were expected to face in the direction of Beijing. At 10AM, they were supposed to "ask Chairman Mao for instructions" and in the afternoon the people were to "report back" to him. This was a widespread demonstration of blind obedience that later sparked a surge of violence and destruction. Just like Mao, Xi has also constructed a massive cult of personality around himself. Titles such as the Chairman and the Great Helmsman, which were only applied to Mao in the past, are now used in reference to Xi. Moreover, similar to the "Mao Zedong thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics", the "Xi Jinping thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" is also enshrined in both the CCP and state constitutions.⁴⁷ While Mao Thought was made available to the people through printing millions of copies of the Little Red Book or the "Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong", Xi Thought is accessible through the Little Red App "Study the Great Nation". Merchandise that show veneration to Xi are also available in shops all over China, which are similar to the pins and posters with Mao's face available during his rule.⁴⁸ Additionally, many forms of media follow Xi's activities and celebrate his governance of China, which is reminiscent of the adulation Mao received during his public assemblies.

With regard to systematic censorship, books and other items that ran counter to Mao's Chinese socialism or even ones that contained

Western and liberal ideas were confiscated and burned from 1961 to 1965 as a response to the emergence of moderates and pragmatists who called for reforms that aimed to address Mao's failed Great Leap Forward.⁴⁹ Currently, Xi, similar to Mao, has also banned all forms of Western paraphernalia and online platforms that he deems may spark resistance against his leadership and his brand of Chinese socialism.⁵⁰

⁵¹ Technological advancements have been utilized by the Chinese government to make it nearly impossible for the people to conceal anything from the state. These advancements include “facial and voice recognition, GPS tracking, supercomputer databases, intercepted cell phone conversations, the monitoring of app use, and millions of high-resolution security cameras”.⁵² Chinese online social media platforms such as Weibo are also regulated by banning words found on the list sent by Xi and the CCP.⁵³ These information and communication technologies (ICT) have allowed Xi and the CCP to suppress anyone who is opposed to the way China is being governed.

Cooperation incited by Propaganda efforts and a Common Enemy

With both Mao and Xi, the concept of the People's War is central to eliciting cooperation from the people.⁵⁴ Propaganda efforts as well as designating a common enemy that the people can all rally against are ways by which this cooperation is elicited. To reinforce people's cooperation, propaganda efforts that aimed at ideological mobilization and indoctrination of the masses were undertaken by both Mao and Xi through the Little Red Book and the Little Red App respectively. The book and the app are collections of speeches and writings relevant to Mao and Xi's construction of Chinese socialism and their plans for China.⁵⁵ Whereas Mao's Little Red Book was inward-looking, espousing the need to protect China from foreign influence, Xi's Little Red App shows his commitment to Chinese socialism while at the same time revealing his aspiration to make China a modern nation that connects with the world.

In eliciting effective cooperation from the people, designating a common enemy is the key. Mao brought the Chinese masses together through a sweeping political and physical attack on revisionist and capitalist roaders during the Cultural Revolution.⁵⁶ Usually revisionist and capitalist roaders were former bourgeoisie as well as intellectuals and technical experts who were subjected by a group of vigilante youth—known as

Mao's Red Guards—to public humiliation, mass denunciation sessions, and physical torture. Some of them were killed, and many also committed suicide. Apart from civilian intellectuals and elites, disgraced government officials as well as moderate CCP leaders were sent to labor camps called the May 7 Cadre Schools. Estimates indicate that 3 million people were sent to these labor camps, but some were even either imprisoned or put to death. During the Cultural Revolution, the cooperation of the people was forced through a wholesale purge of those that were deemed as against Mao's views, and this effort resulted in as many as two million deaths.

Just like Mao during the Cultural Revolution, Xi has set up a cohesive party and government through his anti-corruption purge campaign which ensures the ideas that the party, the government, and the state adheres to is the Chinese socialism he conceptualized. By 2018, more than 2.7 million officials had been subjected to investigations by the Chinese authorities and more than 1.5 million had been given punishment. This purge led to 42 Central Committee members, 71 military generals, 4,000 military officers, and a former member of the Politburo Standing Committee being imprisoned. Under Xi's administration, strengthening the nation entails preventing China from being swallowed up by the US-led international order especially in regard to issues such as Taiwan independence, China's claim in the South China sea, and US-China economic relations.⁵⁷ This rhetoric has elicited the support of cybernationalists such as the 50 Cent Army and the Little Pink. The "50 Cent Army" or "Wumao" is mostly comprised of government officials who work part-time outside of their full-time jobs.⁵⁸ They are considered as an enormous workforce given that they produce an estimated number of 448 million posts per year. These posts, and their other cyber activities in general, are devoted to supporting the Chinese state and regime, as well as the revolutionary history of the Communist party. The content of their posts are usually favorable comparisons of China vis-a-vis other countries and praise for China. The 50 Cent Army can be seen as the Xi regime's effort to strategically distract Chinese people from collective action, grievances, or negativity towards China. Meanwhile, the "Little Pink" or the "Xiao Fenhong" are a collective of young netizens who proudly proclaim their nationalism by posting about China's successes while being outspoken against any anti-Chinese sentiment.⁵⁹ They strongly criticize individuals who post negative content about China or make comments that glorify Western countries.⁶⁰ Although they are

not organized by the Chinese state authorities, the Little Pink has been highly lauded by the CCP's state-run media including the People's Daily and the Global Times. They have also been praised by the Communist Youth League. In fact, they are considered similar to Mao's Red Guards. While cybernationalism is a modern development, it shares common characteristics with the purges that occurred during the Mao's period given that those who do not espouse the same ideals of Xi are cancelled online. While cancelling in the cyberspace is a virtual phenomenon, it can be argued that the online mass denunciations recreate the purges during Mao's Cultural Revolution. Even if those who have been cancelled online are not sent to labor camps or prisons similar to the Mao's era, there are cases where targeted individuals have either voluntarily left or been forcibly banned from social media as well as other cases where this has led to a loss of employment or social status.^{61 62}

Is Xi Jinping going to turn out like Mao Zedong?

As elaborated on in the previous sections, the construction of Xi Jinping's Chinese socialism in terms of class struggle, economic legitimacy, solidary, as well as cooperation incited by propaganda efforts and a common enemy are very similar in nature with Mao Zedong's conception of Chinese socialism. Essentially, Xi's administration can be seen to be as repressive and illiberal as Mao's. Moreover, Xi has become entirely closed off to ideas that contradict his own regardless of whether they are from other officials in the CCP or the Chinese masses at large, which is reminiscent of Mao's behavior during the course of his governance. This has raised concerns on whether these similarities mean Xi's rule will culminate as disastrously as that of Mao's. This paper argues that Xi's administration will not reach the level of catastrophic outcomes that occurred during Mao's rule since Xi's policies are proactive and grounded in actual realities. More importantly, Xi also recognizes that political and social stability are needed for China's economic growth.

First, Xi's policies are proactive. He envisions China achieving the material characteristics of a great international power and earning the esteem of its peers.⁶³ To do so, he has provided wide-ranging and long-term policies and mechanisms that people are expected to follow. In this regard, people have advance warning of the level of repressiveness of policies that seek to regulate them so they are able to adjust their behavior

accordingly. Most Chinese people understand that they must either follow along with Xi's program or suffer the consequences. Many who have the capacity, such as wealthy elites, have already left China.⁶⁴ This indicates that the Chinese people under Xi prefers a less confrontational resolution rather than being subjected to humiliation and violence. On the other hand, given that Mao's policies were reactive,⁶⁵ people at that time had no prior indication as to how Mao would react and respond. Moreover, Mao's reactions arose as a result of the intellectual critique of his ideas. Mao expected that the Chinese people would be agreeable and supportive of his policies so when the opposite occurred, he overreacted.

Second, while Xi is illiberal like Mao, he is not ignorant of other ideas. He expects oppositions to his vision and policies. That is precisely why he called for the creation of think tanks with Chinese characteristics.⁶⁶ He needs access to information vital to his policymaking that is grounded in reality. While these think tanks are expected to be loyal to Xi, he also expects them to provide research on opposing views. This allows Xi to be one step ahead of any opponents and reduces his need to be aggressive against dissent. He does not change his mind with regard to his vision and policies but at least these think tanks are able to provide Xi the most effective and efficient ways by which he can enact his policies. This indicates Xi's acknowledgement that scientific and other expert research is crucial to policymaking. Again, this is completely different from Mao whose distrust of intellectuals resulted in catastrophes like famine.

Finally, Xi recognizes that the way to maintain political and social stability in China is to sustain his and the CCP's economic legitimacy. Unlike the economic recession and disruptions that occurred during Mao's implementation of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, China under Xi has continued to manifest positive economic development.^{67 68} Moreover, despite high levels of repression in terms of China being a surveillance state and having punitive measures for insubordination, the majority of the Chinese population has continued to benefit from this development.⁶⁹ Between 2012-2019, before the start of COVID-19, China's annual GDP growth rate was approximately 7%. The state was actively investing in building domestic infrastructure, and the unemployment rate was relatively low as Xi launched programs that aimed to eliminate "absolute poverty". There was also increased innovation and high-tech manufacturing under the "Made in China 2025" program. Coverage of social services

also expanded. All of these have factored into Xi's economic legitimacy before the COVID-19 pandemic. The key to Xi's continuous legitimacy in the future will be his ability to effectively respond to the economic, political, and social issues that emerge in the post-pandemic world.

Conclusion

"Socialism with Chinese characteristics" is the ideology that guides the governance of every paramount leader in the PRC. In the case of Mao and Xi, they have manifested similarities and differences in terms of the ideology's elements which include class struggle, economic legitimacy, solidarity, and cooperation by propaganda efforts and a common enemy. Primarily, in terms of class struggle, Mao and Xi coined the concepts "people's democratic dictatorship" and "people-centered philosophy of development" respectively. These concepts reflect the idea that people should follow the CCP since it stands for the interests of the people. Additionally, people are given the opportunity to critique CCP's policies within the parameters set by the party as a form of class struggle, such as during Mao's Hundred Flowers campaign and Xi's call for "Think Tanks with Chinese characteristics". The main difference is that the former resulted in a state-incited violence against Mao's critics, while the evaluation of policies in the latter were taken into account in the formulation and implementation of Xi's policies. Second, in relation to economic legitimacy, Xi's domestic and international economic endeavors are similar in terms of aggressiveness and scale as Mao's Great Leap Forward. However, unlike Xi's current success, Mao's economic project was not based on scientific knowledge and thus resulted in a disastrous failure that led to millions of people dying due to massive starvation as well as political and social instability. Third, with regard to solidarity, both Mao and Xi have ensured this through a one-man dictatorship with no term limits as well as a large-scale cult of personality through the Little Red Book and Little Red App. Systematic censorship through the confiscation and burning of adversarial paraphernalia was initiated under Mao and censorship using ICT occurs under Xi. Modern developments have enabled Xi to be less violent in his methods of suppressing dissent. Lastly, in eliciting cooperation through propaganda efforts and a common enemy, Mao found support from the Red Guards while Xi has his cybernationalists. Although the nature of cooperation that Mao has incited

from the Red Guards was physical, violent, and public, whereas Xi's cybernationalists attack virtually, they both inflict similar trauma to their targets such as loss of employment and social status. These differences indicate that Xi's governance will generate different results from that of Mao's. It is likely that a political, economic, and social disaster will be avoided given that Xi acknowledges that political and social instability are not conducive to economic growth and sustainability. Given that Xi's methods have yielded success for his economic legitimacy thus far, it is deemed that Chinese people are willing to endure living in a repressed society as long as they can continue to receive economic benefits.

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INTERVIEW

**Interview with Soo-jeong Ha:
Head of the Nordic Research Institute and Sustainable
Development Specialist**

Interview with Soo-jeong Ha: Head of the Nordic Research Institute and Sustainable Development Specialist

Soo-jeong Ha is a writer, journalist, and Policy Communications expert specializing in Sustainable Development and Public Policy analysis. She was previously a speech writer for the Mayor's Office of the Seoul Metropolitan Government as well as the Communications Officer for the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education. Soo-jeong is currently the Head of the Nordic Research Institute, where she heads various research projects and writes on public policy, sustainability, welfare state, social integration, as well as other topics related to Nordic issues. She has written two books, A Biography of Olof Palme (2012) and A Walk to Nordic Business (2017). Prior to that, she worked as a project manager, researcher, and the Chief of Staff to the CEO at The Hankyoreh, a South Korean independent daily newspaper where she was an official stringer covering Scandinavia and managed several projects in partnership with international media outlets and research institutions. Soo-jeong obtained a Master of Science in Sustainability Studies from Uppsala University in Sweden. In this interview, Soo-jeong shares her experiences living and studying in Northern Europe, her insights on sustainable development policies in the Scandinavian region, particularly Sweden, and her opinion on current sustainability efforts and practices in South Korea.

YJIS: For our readers who are not familiar with you, could you briefly introduce yourself?

SH: To put it simply, I'm a writer. For me, it is not just a job. Rather, it's something that I do because I truly enjoy it. Previously, I was working as a speechwriter for the mayor of Seoul, and now I am working on communications solutions projects at the C-level of corporations in the private sector. Before that, my work included writing books and carrying out individual research.

YJIS: We were intrigued to hear that you have spent a lot of time in Northern Europe, in countries such as Sweden and Norway. What would you say is your favorite thing about Northern European society? Has living there influenced you, such as your personality and/or career in any way?

SH: To give you some context, when I was deciding where to study for my media license, I had two options—one was England and the other was Norway. I had a feeling that I would have other opportunities in the future to go to London, so I chose Norway. Looking back, it was definitely the right decision. Norwegian society fits me really well because of its beautiful nature and the laid-back attitude of people. Later on I studied in Uppsala in Sweden and I had a similar feeling about Swedish society. As I grew up in Korea, I was able to make a lot of comparisons and contrasts between Korean society and Northern European society.

I think there are a lot of things that Korean society can learn from Northern European societies. For example, in Korean society during the Joseon dynasty, there was a class system. While this sort of system no longer exists now, division based on social status in Korea is still very much visible. In contrast, in Nordic society, everyone is equal. You don't see so many extremely poor or extremely rich people. But in Korea, it's more polarized. When I first began my studies in Sweden, I was surprised by how we don't use the formality, "professor." I asked the professor, "Why don't we call you 'professor', but by your first name?" and they said that if you call somebody by their occupation or job, it could create some kind of inequality between people. I began to learn that everyone should be referred to by their first name, including professors, seniors, and even the Prime Minister. I would like Korea to have more of a focus on equality and perhaps adopt some of these less-hierarchical attitudes between people.

Another big distinction between Korean and Nordic society relates to education. Korean students scored very well on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) test. So several years ago, a group of Swedish politicians came and visited a lot of schools in Korea to learn the secret of the high performance of Koreans on the PISA test. However, they decided that they shouldn't follow Korean education because students in Korea didn't look happy at all. My Swedish friend told

me that when he was here in Korea to work for SK (a telecommunications company), he discovered that Korean people are too focused on work. In Sweden, work-life balance is really important, but in Korea, people are very devoted to their work. If they set a goal, they keep going until they reach it. I think this competitive mindset of Koreans made Korea develop and grow in a very short period. But in Nordic countries, according to him, everything is provided. So people do not need to work very hard to sacrifice their personal life and health, but here in Korea, you have to. However, in the case of my Swedish friend, Korean society fits him better as it provides him with many opportunities to fulfill his aspirations, goals, and future desires. In contrast, Swedish society is kind of boring to him. So I would definitely say there are things each society can learn from each other. Overall, I'd say both Swedish and Korean societies have pros and cons.

YJIS: What made you decide to pursue a Master's degree in sustainable development in Sweden in particular?

SH: When I was in Norway, I traveled to Sweden for fun. I went to Uppsala by chance and discovered that Uppsala University is the oldest university in all Northern countries and they have a tradition where Nobel Prize winners give lectures there. I was so impressed by that kind of academic atmosphere, so I told myself I should come back to this school. After I returned to Korea, I looked at the master's programs there and discovered that this university offers a program on sustainable development—something that I am really passionate about—and it is taught in English. Also, I was aware that Sweden is a very advanced country when it comes to sustainability. Environmental protection and sustainability is something I'm very passionate about. For example, I've never used conditioner for my hair because when I was young, I heard that it's not good for the environment since it takes a lot of water to purify them. So I avoid chemicals and use a lot of natural hair treatments. I was interested in the area of environmental protection, even if there were no such words like "sustainable development" back then and I saw Sweden as a leader in this area. I thought that I could gain useful knowledge there that could give me an edge in my professional background. That's why I chose to study in Sweden.

YJIS: What would you say were some of the biggest challenges you faced while studying abroad in a Nordic country like Sweden and how did you overcome them?

SH: Of course, coldness, the long winter, and darkness. It's so beautiful in August, when the first semester starts, but this doesn't last long. The winter starts in November and lasts until April, so more than half of the year is winter. But summer is so rewarding because it is so beautiful. Food was also a challenge for me initially, but it actually ended up creating a good opportunity for me to improve my cooking skills. I took advantage of the low price of items that tend to be more expensive in Korea, such as cheese and bread.

In terms of overcoming these challenges, I was able to do so through the friendships I built. Our program consisted of 60 students across 16 nationalities and the students were like a family. The program was very intensive so we met up every weekday to study and met every weekend for parties. We remain very close up to this day. When any one of us gets married, we send an invitation one year in advance so we can plan our vacations, and so far I've been to Turkey, Japan, and Belgium to visit my friends.

YJIS: Can you tell us more about your work at the Nordic Research Institute?

SH: Well, I became interested in working at the Nordic Research Institute because I really like studying Nordic society. My work includes articles, contributing to the newspaper, making YouTube videos, writing posts for the blog, getting featured on the radio—those sorts of things. It's truly fun for me. In Korea, not so many people are interested in delivering information about Nordic society in a non-academic way. I am a writer, and I am good at expressing ideas in pure, easy, and simple language, so working for the Nordic Research Institute enables me to use my skills to share information related to Northern Europe. In fact, yesterday, I submitted an academic paper to the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs. It is a government agency that asked me to write a paper about how Sweden is dealing with young carers. Young carers are people under 18 who are living with sick parents. We had a huge issue last year

in Korea where a 21-year-old man literally let his father die because his father had a serious brain disease and he could not take care of him. He ended up getting sentenced for murdering his father just because he did not have the means to save his life. This provoked the question, “can we blame him?” If society took care of his father, then he might not have committed this kind of crime. The Korean government is trying to introduce legislation to help avoid this problem, which is why the institute asked me to submit a paper on the topic.

YJIS: Can you briefly introduce your book *The Biography of Olof Palme*?

SH: Olof Palme was the Prime Minister of Sweden from 1968 to 1986. He is actually a huge figure that made Sweden known to the world. The reason I decided to write a book on him is that, first, his son was our professor in Uppsala. Second, as I have mentioned, I believe Swedish and Nordic societies are the ones we should follow in many ways. If we can implement some of the practices in these societies in Korean society, it would be very beneficial for everyone. I asked two of my friends what they think are the main differences between these two societies, and they said education and politics. They also said that Olof Palme was the person who set the basis for the current education and political models of Sweden. I then started to research him and discovered that his achievements as a politician are awe-inspiring and that he set the foundation for the modern welfare society in Sweden. His concept of a welfare state also influenced neighboring Nordic countries like Finland, Norway, and Denmark. Unfortunately, he is still not well-known in Korea due to language barriers. A few Koreans might know that he is the former Prime Minister of Sweden and was assassinated, but I want him to be known for his life more than his death. So I wrote this book to introduce him to Korean society.

YJIS: What are your plans or hopes for your career and future in general? Also, for those interested in working in a field related to sustainability, what sort of advice might you have?

SH: My ultimate goal is to be a novelist. I love crime novels and would love to write a crime novel. I also want to portray society in my writings

and include themes such as friendship and goodwill, then share my stories to the people I meet and motivate them. That's my personal goal.

Regarding sustainability issues, I believe that everyone should care about sustainability on an individual level. We depend on corporations, society, and government for a better environment, but as individuals, we should also be aware of the environment. We are the customers and the taxpayers, so if we choose a certain direction, corporations and governments will follow us. So it is important to care about sustainability issues as an individual, and I believe everyone can do that.

About working in the field of sustainability, I can see that there are many companies hiring more people with a sustainability background. Many companies have created new positions such as 'chief sustainability officer', which they didn't have before. So more opportunities are opening up. You might have more opportunities if you are studying engineering, science, or some environmental-related field. There are a lot of opportunities related to sustainability in startups. These days, many large corporations are finding ideas and merging these startups, as well as investing in sustainability-related startups.

YJIS: Let's move on to talk more about your views on sustainable development. How would you say Northern Europe has been working on promoting sustainable development? Which methods do you see as the most important?

SH: While in Korea, we don't view sustainable development as a national goal, in Nordic countries, it is set as a national goal. These countries have the kind of target where, by 2050 or 2030, they will use 100% renewable energies. Everyone—from the civil society to the government level—has the same goal. So, that's something different from other societies. From Greta Thunberg to the Prime Minister, it's everyone's mission.

Having said that, I think every society has room to improve, including Nordic countries. I mean, when you say sustainable development, it is not only about the environment, but also social equality, social stability, and how you run the society. These kinds of methodological ways also need to be sustainable. In Nordic countries such as Sweden, there are

social issues related to immigration and inequality, and recently right-wing parties have been rising. The Swedish government has been trying to solve their issues, but there are always new problems to tackle.

YJIS: Sweden held the general election in September this year, and the right-wing Sweden Democrats (SD) won a collective majority in the parliament. In other neighboring countries, right-wing populist parties are also gaining more support in recent years. What do you think are the reasons leading to this trend and how do you think the rise of populism affects the sustainable development in Northern Europe in the future?

SH: In Sweden, the right-wing party is the second largest party. The populist parties are gaining more power than ever. Yet they are not invited to the Nobel banquet nor are they a part of the cabinet. Sweden Democrats represent racism and nationalism that are not accepted in Swedish society. On the other hand, they represent the disadvantaged class in Sweden. Poor and less educated people tend to support the Swedish Democrats. It's very similar to Trump supporters in the United States. If the Social Democratic party, the oldest and largest party in Sweden, is not representing the poor or lower classes, then this would be problematic because, after all, they are the labor party. So hopefully, there's a way to resolve the current social problems in Sweden because those people need to be heard, and in a way the Swedish Democrats are doing that. So, it's a complex question. Regarding how the rise of right-wing parties is going to influence sustainable development policy in Sweden, I think they are more like pro-nuclear parties. Sweden has declared they were going with 100% renewable energy by 2030. But due to the Putin invasion of Ukraine, energy prices are also high in Sweden. So they are trying to reopen nuclear power plants. So it's going to have an impact on the whole of Europe, not just Sweden.

YJIS: Scandinavian countries are generally known for having high-quality education systems, where students can attain high academic results without going to cram schools, studying 24/7, and having so much academic pressure. What is the main reason for these countries to be labeled as having a high-quality education system compared to Korea?

SH: The focus of education in Sweden and other Nordic countries is the happiness of children. Children need to be happy, play, and enjoy outdoor activities all the time. They do sports and team building activities. In Korea, you don't see kids in the playground—they are in *hakwon*. From my experience, in Korea, we need to compete with our peers to be the first or the best. But in Sweden, the education system trains people to be good teammates and citizens. Students learn how to take care of or wait for the people who are late or people with disabilities. At school, they mingle together and learn how to live together. One of my teachers also told me that, in Sweden, it's better to be second together than being first alone. Swedish people excel in many aspects because they know that everything is complex and you can't solve a problem alone. Even if you're a genius, you need somebody. Everyone is unique, has inputs from different backgrounds, and is ready to work in a diverse team. On the other hand, in Korea, one can be a genius or excel in every aspect, but not work well with others. This is something that I worry about in the Korean education system.

YJIS: Moving back to Korea, what do you think about the current progress of sustainable development here, and which aspects of sustainable development should Korea focus more on in the future?

SH: I think the Korean companies we have, in a way, are doing well. This is because of the structure of the economy. As you know, Korea has big corporations that run a lot of things like Samsung, LG, SK, and Hyundai. They must meet the sustainability requirements because their major markets are North America and Europe. Would Korean companies still be sustainable without the market's sustainable needs? We should be aware that the world is finite. So we have to really care about the environment. Also, sustainability is not something to decorate your company with, but it should be the reason for the company's existence.

YJIS: Suppose Korea did take inspiration from Northern Europe or adopt some of the sustainable development practices there. What challenges do you think they would face by adopting such practices?

SH: In fact some Korean companies are doing really well. One example is Maeil, the biggest milk provider in Korea. They halted normal factory operations for 10 days to produce special milk powder for kids with protein intolerance. Since the market is small, most retailers do not want to sell this kind of product. Yet Maeil insists on providing this milk powder just for these kids. So it's like a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activity. This is mainly due to the owner, though. Korean companies are listed but still have their owners who are very influential in the company. Therefore, if Korean companies are devoted to certain practices, it is because of the individual, the owner; not the system, direction, or the value that the company set. This is the main thing that we have to change. Also, when it comes to sustainability, I have to mention the methodology. As a person who studies sustainability, we always think that the goal, performance, and research are fundamental. But methodology is important too. Methodologies have to be interdisciplinary—includes lots of disciplines when you make a decision, as well as transdisciplinary—include every stakeholder in the decision-making process. Then, through this process, corporations could eventually make sustainable decisions. In Korea, we are more of a top-down society, so top management makes decisions. However, we must learn to trust interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary methods.

YJIS: So you just mentioned the sustainable practices of Maeil Company. However, in general, what do you think about Korean companies' current corporate sustainable practices apart from your company? Are there any other companies that you think are leading this way within or outside of Korea?

SH: I don't think there is a leading company in Korea per say. It's just that they are meeting the requirement. Most of them are more or less in a similar stage. In terms of overseas companies, I would say Patagonia. Recently, the chairperson donated the whole company to a newly established nonprofit organization, which will now be the recipient of all the company's profits and use the funds to combat climate change.

YJIS: Moving back to the country scale, which country do you say is leading the way in terms of environmental sustainability?

SH: Of course, Sweden and Norway. These countries are doing really well because they are rich countries, so they have a lot of room to invest. They are devoted to transforming all the public transportation to be run by biosphere and renewable energies. As these Nordic countries started implementing sustainable practices, European countries, North America, and Asian countries also started following them. So taking the initiative is really important, which the Nordic countries are doing well t.

YJIS: Do you have any final words for our readers?

SH: I don't know what the readers want to be, but I wish for their aspirations to be great. Not just for themselves or in order to make money, but for the interest of society. We are young, and young people have the power to do that. Young people shape the future of the world. Older people will follow, so you simply have to have aspirations for a better world, society, or community, not just yourself. Finally, I can tell you that money is not the recipe for happiness.

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