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FORBIDDEN FRONTIER: AN ANALYSIS OF THE SOUTHERN KURIL ISLANDS DISPUTE FROM THREE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

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ABSTRACT

The territorial dispute over the Southern Kurils has been one of the most contentious issues for modern Russo-Japanese relations. In 1945, the Soviet Union declared sovereignty over the then-Japanese islands following Japan's surrender in the Second World War. However, Japan argues that Russia, the successor state to the Soviet Union, has illegitimate grounds for claiming the Southern Kurils and demands a handover of the islands. The article applies three analytical lenses to understand why the dispute has yet to be resolved, despite the Russian and Japanese governments' numerous efforts to establish a formal settlement. The article first uses realism to examine the material and structural dimensions of the dispute, and then utilizes constructivism to determine how national identity influences Russia and Japan's positions toward the Southern Kurils. Although realism and constructivism illuminate certain aspects of the case, the article applies two-level games to fill in the gaps that the other theories do not fully account for. The two-level games framework links domestic influences to Russia and Japan's policies at the international level, which helps clarify why Russia and Japan continue to hold bilateral negotiations over the Southern Kurils, even though there are strong domestic disincentives for both countries to resolve the dispute.

Introduction

The territorial dispute over the Southern Kuril Islands, which constitute the four islands of Iturup, Kunashir, Shikotan, and the Habomai Islands, has long served as one of the most critical focal points regarding Russo-Japanese relations. The conflict traces back to the Yalta Conference in 1945. The Allied powers promised the Soviet Union the territorial holdings of the then-Japanese Kuril Islands – which, according to the Allies' definition, included the Southern Kurils – for its participation in the war effort against Japan (Office, n.d.). The Soviet Union agreed to these conditions and claimed full sovereignty over the Kuril Island chain following Japan's surrender a few months later. In 1951, Japan re-established diplomatic relations with the Allied powers in the San Francisco Peace Treaty. As part of the treaty's

conditions, Japan agreed to cede control over the Kuril Islands. However, the San Francisco Peace Treaty did not specify the territorial demarcations of the island chain, and Japan would later use this detail to push forward its argument that the Southern Kurils constituted separate territory from the remainder of the island chain, and thus the Soviet Union had no right to claim these four islands (Ministry, 2011). Furthermore, the treaty did not indicate exactly which country would receive the islands, and the Soviet Union did not sign the treaty (Trenin and Weber, 2012). The Soviet Union and Japan attempted to smooth over this point of contention in the Soviet-Japanese Joint Declaration of 1956. The declaration, which also restored diplomatic relations between the two countries, stated that the Soviet Union would hand over Shikotan and the Habomai Islands once the two countries had brokered an official peace treaty to end the war. As for Kunashir and Iturup, further negotiations would have to be discussed only after the peace treaty was signed (Burrett, 2014, pp.16–17). However, the Cold War atmosphere would halt further progress on the issue, as Japan's alliance with the US limited its ability to engage with the Soviet Union, and thus the issue remained at a standstill for the remainder of the Cold War (Trenin and Weber, 2012).

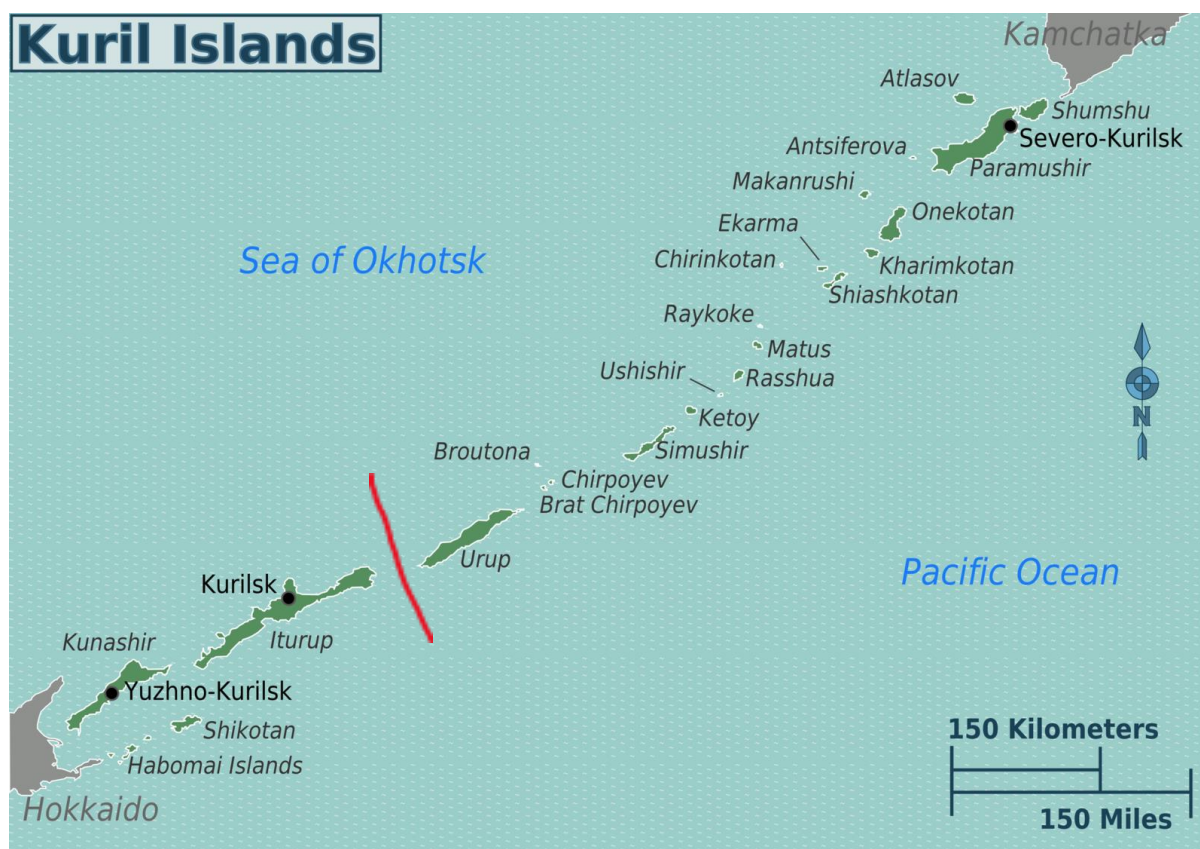


Figure I: The Kuril Islands chain. The four disputed Southern Kuril Islands – Iturup, Kunashir, Shikotan, and the Habomai Islands – are situated to the left of the red line. Image source: wikitravel.org/en/File:Kurils_map.png

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 renewed the opportunity to discuss a transfer of the Southern Kurils. While the Russian leaders Gorbachev and Yeltsin initially appeared willing to discuss the issue in exchange for economic assistance, opportunities for a resolution fell through. Both of these politicians faced strong political and public backlash within Russia that hindered their ability to negotiate with their Japanese counterparts. Furthermore, the Japanese leadership, inspired by their own public and political support bases, insisted that Russia needed to recognize Japanese sovereignty over all four islands, which further complicated attempts to resolve the conflict (Burrett, 2014, pp.16–17). Russia and Japan continued to discuss potential resolutions to the Southern Kurils dispute throughout the 2000s. Most notably, the Russian President Vladimir Putin offered to resolve the dispute on the basis of the 1956 Joint Declaration Agreement on multiple occasions, including in 2001, 2004, and 2012; however, Japan's insistence of returning all four islands continued to stall progress on the issue (Richardson, 2017, pp.17–18). In 2016, Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, the leader of Japan at the time, introduced a “new approach” to Russia that proposed finding a favorable settlement to the territorial dispute while simultaneously increasing Russia and Japan's economic cooperation (Kireeva, 2019, p.80). After initial hopes that the two countries could resolve the issue, which culminated in a November 2018 announcement that Putin and Abe planned to sign a deal based on the 1956 Joint Declaration, the proposal swiftly fell through (Kireeva, 2019, p.89). Russia and Japan both faced domestic backlash, as most Russians did not want to concede any territory, while the Japanese public wanted greater assurance that they could reclaim all four islands (Kireeva, 2019, pp.89–90). Furthermore, the two countries disagreed on the necessary terms of the deal moving forward; for example, Russia demanded that Japan recognize Russian sovereignty over the islands based on the outcomes of WWII (Hirose, 2019). Negotiations slowed down starting in the early months of 2019, and the issue currently remains at an impasse for President Putin and the current prime minister of Japan, Suga Yoshihide.

The Southern Kurils case study poses a puzzle for scholars on the region: why has this issue endured for so long, despite the fact that numerous opportunities and frameworks for resolving the dispute have been set in place? The academic literature on the Southern Kurils frequently utilizes two particular theoretical tools for analyzing the issue: realism, which claims that material and geostrategic factors are the driving forces behind geopolitical decision-making, and constructivism, which highlights how national and historical identity shape a country's actions. This paper will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of these theoretical frameworks for explaining Russia and Japan's perspectives on the Southern Kurils dispute. While both

theories provide deeper insight into uncovering Russia and Japan's stances on the issue, neither approach fully explains why the conflict has endured for so long. Realism does not comprehensively explain Japan's perspective towards the dispute, while constructivism does not account for why Russia was willing to compromise on the issue in the past. Thus, this paper argues that the two-level game theory, which emphasizes how a state's foreign policy is heavily impacted by its domestic dynamics, must be added as a third approach to fully understand why the Southern Kurils case has proven to be such a difficult issue to resolve.

The Realist perspective

From a realist perspective, the Southern Kurils offer economic and strategic benefits that appeal to both Russia and Japan. In terms of their economic advantages, the Southern Kurils constitute a rich area for commercial fishing and contains significant oil and mineral reserves (Bausheva, 2018). From a strategic standpoint, the islands grant access to the Sea of Okhotsk, thus allowing for greater trade and naval activity in the Northeast Pacific (GlobalSecurity.org, 2019). Given the islands' assets, it would seem that it would be in each country's self-interest to consolidate its sovereignty over the Southern Kurils. However, 2014 marked a turning point which strengthened Russia's interests in the islands while simultaneously weakening Japan's potential to negotiate a handover of the islands. In 2014, Russia's policy of developing the Russian Far East, as well as strengthening its position as an Asian-Pacific power, gained heightened importance after its annexation of Crimea. Western-aligned countries, including the USA and the EU, imposed sanctions on Russia following the crisis, and as a result Russia pivoted to Asia to foster alternative economic partnerships (Diesen, 2018, p.599). Maintaining Russian sovereignty over the Southern Kurils factored into Russia's heightened commitment to building itself up as an Asian-Pacific power, and subsequently Russia became less willing to cede the Southern Kurils over to Japan (Diesen, 2018, pp.598–599).

The rise of the Southern Kurils' importance to Russia coincided with the decline of Japanese leverage for transferring the islands back. Japan lacks a sufficient bargaining chip towards convincing Russia to hand over the islands. Japan has primarily utilized economic incentives, such as promises of increased economic collaboration and investment in the Southern Kurils and the Russian Far East, to encourage Russia to return the islands (Sun, 2018, p.792). While Japan does offer enticing economic opportunities for Russia, especially in terms of developing its high-tech sector, it is far from the only partnership available in the Asia-Pacific region

(Trenin and Weber, 2012). The rise of China in particular has provided Russia with an alternative option for deepening its engagement in the Far East, and correspondingly Russia has a significantly stronger trade relationship with China compared to Japan. China comprises 13.4% of Russia's total export sales, making it Russia's top trading partner; meanwhile, Japan accounts for 2.7% of Russia's export sales, which designates it as its twelfth largest trading partner (Workman, 2020). China and its enormous market potential thus weakens Japan's economic bargaining power in settling the territorial dispute.

However, the China factor does not imply that Russia and Japan have no reason to seek economic ties with one another. On the contrary, both countries are incentivized to engage with each other to offset China's influence in the region. In Russia's case, it risks becoming overly dependent on China if it does not seek out additional economic partnerships with other countries (Diesen, 2018, p.599). Japan also needs to consolidate its Asian-Pacific alliances in prevent becoming completely overshadowed by China. (Diesen, 2018, p.600) Given these circumstances, Russia and Japan will likely strengthen their collaboration in the coming years. Russia nonetheless possesses the upper hand in this scenario, however, as it can still turn to China if it disagrees with Japan's proposed conditions for their relationship (Sun, 2018, p.793). If Japan wants to counter Chinese dominance in the region, it will likely have to scale back on, if not surrender, its demands over the Southern Kurils to secure cooperation with Russia (Diesen, 2018, p.602). The heightened preeminence of the Southern Kurils to Russia's interests, coupled with Japan's weakened negotiating power in the face of China's rise, limits the likelihood that it would be willing to cede the islands to Japan.

Given these circumstances, it is clear why Russia would want to maintain the status quo. Russia now attaches greater value to the Southern Kurils as a result of its 2014 pivot to the Asia-Pacific region, and it can use its relationship with China as an alternative to a Japanese-dominated one. The Japanese perspective, on the other hand, is more puzzling. Due to Japan's diminished bargaining power, as well as the pressure to counteract the rise of China in the region, it would seem more logical for Japan to secure closer ties to Russia instead of continuing to advocate for a handover of the islands. Admittedly, Japan's 2018 agreement to form a settlement based on the 1956 Joint Declaration, which only guarantees the return of two of the islands, shows that Japan is more willing to make concessions compared to its previous stance. Nevertheless, why did it take Japan so long to come to this point? Furthermore, negotiations for the agreement ultimately fell through, which reflects a degree of reluctance on Japan's part to actually go through with the compromise. Thus, while realism convincingly argues why Russia would want

to hold onto the islands, it does not sufficiently explain Japan's rationale for its territorial claim.

The Constructivist perspective

Both Russia and Japan's claims towards the Southern Kurils go beyond their utilitarian interests in the islands. The dispute is also heavily linked to constructivist notions of their respective national and historical identities and gets to the core of how each nation envisions itself. From the Russian standpoint, the Southern Kurils are heavily associated with two historical events that profoundly impacted Russia's national identity: WWII and the fall of the Soviet Union. With regard to WWII, Russia regards this time period as an era of great heroism in which the valiant sacrifices of Soviet citizens and soldiers not only protected the Soviet Union from a Fascist takeover, but also proved instrumental in securing an Allied victory over the Axis forces (Zhurzhenko, 2007). Russia/ the Soviet Union's role in WWII also marked the moment in which it ascended to superpower status on the world stage. This newfound distinction was confirmed at the Yalta Conference, in which Russia/ the Soviet Union played an instrumental role in defining the future of the new world order (Zhurzhenko, 2007). One of the outcomes, of course, was granting the Soviet Union jurisdiction over the Southern Kurils. Russia justifies its ownership of the Southern Kurils as a reward for being on the winning side of the war and claims that Japan losing its hold over the islands served as retribution for siding with the Axis powers (GlobalSecurity.org, 2019). Another critical juncture that affected Russia's stance towards the Southern Kurils was the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The 1990s marked a turbulent period for Russia, as the establishment of the newly independent republics suddenly drew up new geographical boundaries (Richardson, 2018, p.11). Furthermore, the economic and political turmoil that resulted from Russia attempting to rapidly transition to a free market democracy contributed to the decline of Russia's great power status (Richardson, 2018, p.11). Many Russians felt a collective sense of identity loss as they sought to redefine themselves now that their Soviet identity no longer existed. As a result of this trauma, the Southern Kurils took on greater significance as immutably "Russian" territory. Many Russians felt averse to losing more territory in general. However, the Southern Kurils had additional significance attached to them, as they symbolized wartime victory and great power status (Richardson, 2018, p.11). The Southern Kurils served as a remnant of Russian/Soviet glory, and thus Russia wanted to hold onto it to anchor its sense of identity during the turbulence of post-Soviet transition. The

Southern Kurils acquired deep significance for Russia during WWII and the post-Soviet transition era, and thus Russia is disinclined to transfer the islands to Japan.

Constructivism also play an enormously influential role in shaping Japan's argument towards reclaiming the islands. The loss of the Southern Kurils evokes a sense of shame within the Japanese national consciousness, as it is associated with the trauma of the country's WWII defeat (Burrett, 2014, p.21). Japan has also disputed the legitimacy of the 1945 Yalta Agreement and the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty in establishing Russian sovereignty over the Southern Kuril, which has created a sense that it has been treated unfairly by the international community on this issue (Ministry, 2008). Japan's symbolic sense of loss has been amplified by the human face to it attaches loss of the islands, as the approximately 17,000 Japanese citizens who had previously inhabited the Southern Kurils were forced to relocate to mainland Japan following the Soviet Union's annexation of the islands (Dudden, 2014, p.108). The former residents of the Southern Kurils, in fact, initiated Japan's national mission to reclaim the Southern Kurils. In the 1950s, former islanders advocated for greater economic support from the national government and petitioned for the return of the Southern Kurils (Kuroiwa, 2013, pp.195–196). The Japanese government noticed their efforts, which in turn inspired it to adopt reclaiming all four of the Southern Kurils as a foreign policy objective. The government initiated several campaigns to spread awareness of the territorial dispute throughout all of Japan's prefectures and emphasized the importance of reclaiming these “inherently Japanese territories” (Kuroiwa, 2013, pp.201–202). This movement has manifested itself in several ways. For example, the 2014 film *Giovanni's Island* recounts the story of two brothers and their forced evacuation from Shikotan. Japanese school textbooks include the Southern Kurils in its maps of Japan, and the Japanese government even created “Northern Territories Day” as an official remembrance of the continued territorial dispute (Burrett, 2014, p.22). The Japanese government's decades of concerted efforts to rally national support for the handover of the islands has turned it into a national mission to restore Japan's damaged national prestige and to bring justice to the original Japanese inhabitants of the Southern Kurils.

Constructivism heavily factors into both Russia and Japan's claims over their rights to the islands. This framework convincingly explains why both Russia and Japan attach such importance to the islands. In particular, it uncovers why recovering the islands is a matter of such importance to Japan. One issue that could be expanded upon with this theory, however, is why the Russian government had been more open to negotiating a compromise – particularly in the 1990s and early 2000s – even though the islands hold such a prominent position in the

Russian national imagination. Thus, while the role of national and historical identity comes closer to elucidating why the Southern Kurils are so valuable for both Russia and Japan, there is one more theoretical framework that can comprehensively explain this puzzle.

Filling in the gaps: The Two-Level Game Theory

Realism and constructivism serve as useful tools for unpacking the complexities surrounding the Southern Kurils dispute. Nevertheless, neither approach can fully explain why Russia and Japan place such a high degree of importance on the islands. The realist angle does not account for Japan's continued pursuit over the islands despite its lack of leverage in terms of reobtaining them, while the constructivist approach does not disclose Russia's previous willingness to negotiate a settlement despite. In order to fully illustrate the factors that contribute to the dispute, there needs to be a closer analysis into the internal factors that affect Russian and Japanese policy towards the Southern Kurils. One theoretical framework that could be utilized to fill in the gaps of the realist framework and the national and historical identity approach is Robert Putnam's two-level game theory. This theory states that a nation's policy objectives are shaped by the interplay of powerful domestic and international influences (Putnam, 1988, 431). While the ultimate goal of the game is maintaining as much consistency between the domestic and international games, this balancing act cannot always be achieved (Putnam, 1988, 434). Analyzing the tension between domestic and international preferences can thus clarify seemingly unexpected actions that nations occasionally take when dealing with major policy issues—including Russia and Japan's stances in the Southern Kurils dispute.

In the case of Russia, it has fairly civil relations with Japan, despite the ongoing territorial dispute (Bokarev, 2020). In many respects, it had been relatively open to discussing a settlement to the Southern Kurils issue, especially in the 1990s and early 2000s. In that time period, Japan was the strongest power in the Asia-Pacific, while Russia was comparatively weak after the fall of the Soviet Union. Thus, Russia strived to compromise on the issue to establish stronger relations with Japan while still maintaining some degree of sovereignty over the Southern Kurils; these objectives explain why the Russian leadership, including Putin, were more willing to negotiate on the issue in the past (Burrett, 2014, pp.16–17). However, Russia has grown increasingly unwilling to compromise since the 2014 Crimean crisis and pivot to the Asia-Pacific. Part of the reason, as mentioned in the section about the realist perspective, regards shifting geopolitical realities that boosted Russian interest in the Southern Kurils while

weakening the need for a Japanese partnership. However, this event unleashed a surge of nationalist pride within Russia that significantly affected domestic attitudes towards the dispute. Nationalist groups became one of the most visible manifestations of national pride in Russia, and their praise for Putin's actions helped reinforce such sentiments throughout the country (Higgins, 2019). However, Putin does not enjoy their unconditional support: if he pursues any actions that could be perceived as betraying Russia's interests, he risks losing the nationalists' approval. In turn, they may begin to openly criticize Russia's internal problems, such as corruption, poverty, and poor infrastructure, which may sabotage Putin's overall support base (Higgins, 2019). Groups such as the Russian Left Front have protested against a handover of the Southern Kurils, and thus Putin must proceed carefully when negotiating on the issue to not appear weak in terms of defending Russia's interests (Higgins, 2019). Furthermore, the Russian public vehemently opposes the idea of returning any of the islands to Japan: according to a national survey poll, 77% of Russians believe that Japan should not receive any sort of territorial handover (TASS, 2019). Given these domestic constraints, Putin is in a position in which he is less able to negotiate over the Southern Kurils, which helps to explain why he has become increasingly hesitant to broker a compromise when compared to his past preferences.

Domestic pressures also directly influence Japan's policy towards the Southern Kurils. As stated in the section about national and historical identity, decades of the governmental campaign to reclaim the islands left its mark on Japanese society. Conservative political parties and nationalist groups that steadfastly advocate for the return of all four islands hold a prominent place in Japanese politics. Prime Minister Suga's ascension to the position of prime minister occurred too recently to evaluate his handling of the Southern Kurils dispute. Given that Suga served as the chief secretary and head government spokesman in his predecessor Abe's cabinet, analyzing Abe's conduct provides insight into how the Suga administration will most likely act (Kuhn, 2020). The Liberal Democratic Party, the political party of Suga and Abe, has a strong nationalistic bent, and thus both prime ministers have faced pressure from members within their own party to not back down on reclaiming all four islands (Tsuruoka, 2019). In the public sphere, Japanese attitudes are more mixed compared to Russia. While some Japanese analysts claim that public interest in the issue – particularly amongst younger generations – is declining (The Economist, 2017), other indicators show that most Japanese citizens are still determined to reclaim the islands. A recent public survey revealed that 79% of respondents wanted all four islands to be returned, whether that return meant a gradual return of the islands or an immediate transfer of all four islands (Nikkei, 2018). Only 5% of

respondents stated that they wanted just two islands back (Nikkei, 2018). During Abe's tenure, he did not want to risk incurring backlash from political parties and the public if they perceived him to be too accommodating to Russia's preferences: Suga will most likely be placed in a similar position. Thus, the domestic forces that Abe faced urged him to pressure Russia into returning of the islands. Correspondingly, there is a high probability that Suga will pursue a similar course of action, even though the likelihood of Japan receiving a satisfactory deal is becoming increasingly less probable.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Southern Kurils dispute continues to be a matter that Russia and Japan are not close to resolving. Nevertheless, it is an issue that is worthy of analysis, as it reveals a great deal about the dynamics of Russo-Japanese interaction and will remain a primary focus in the future development of these countries' relations. The theories of realism and national and historical identity provide a solid foundation for understanding the key dynamics of this issue, while the theory of two-level games allow researchers to understand some of the finer nuances surrounding the dispute. Time will only tell how this matter will ultimately be resolved – if it will be at all. In the meantime, analysts can utilize a multidimensional understanding of the Southern Kurils dispute to try to minimize tensions between Russia and Japan and promote greater cooperation and stability in the greater Asia-Pacific region.

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STATELESS: AN INSIGHT INTO THE HARROWING CONDITIONS OF AUSTRALIA'S IMMIGRATION DETENTION SYSTEM

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Introduction

Stateless is a television series released in March of 2020, that follows the lives of four strangers surrounding an immigration detention centre in Australia. The series, whilst fictional, is based on true stories from Australian immigration detention centres, as well as the story of Cornelia Rau, an Australian citizen who was unlawfully detained for 10 months in an Australian immigration detention centre (Stateless, 2020). The series reveals the harrowing conditions of the Australian immigration system and detention centres, as well as the lived experiences suffered by asylum seekers and refugees. It also details the struggles faced by those in charge of such centres, and the long-lasting impacts on all involved in the process. In the ending credits of the final episode, awareness is brought to the real-life situation going on in Australia, including the offshore detention centres of Manus Island in Papua New Guinea and Nauru, and the human rights atrocities that occurred in these centres.

Series summary

The series opens with a woman running across the open desert, and then flashbacks to a few months before to reveal the story of Sofie Werner (Yvonne Strahovski), an Australian citizen who was unlawfully detained in an immigration detention centre. Sofie posed as a German citizen trying to get herself deported from Australia following a harrowing encounter with a cult, GOPA, and suffers a mental health crisis, losing touch with reality. She ends up in the fictional Barton immigration detention centre, with her true identity unknown. Her state of mental health deteriorates further throughout the series, losing sight of her identity and reality around her. The series also follows the story of another detainee, Ameer (Fayssal Bazzi), a teacher from Afghanistan. Ameer's story begins having fled Afghanistan with his wife and two daughters, Sadiqa and Mina, and desperately trying to reach Australia by boat from Indonesia.

After encountering trouble with human traffickers, Ameer manages to get his wife and children on a boat to Australia but gets left behind, promising to find them again in Australia. Upon arriving in Australia, Ameer is reunited with his daughter Mina at Barton but finds out that his wife and Sadiqa did not survive the journey. The story of Ameer is sadly not a rare one in reality, with many families becoming separated when fleeing persecution from war and violence. Cameron Sandford (Jai Courtney) is a newly recruited officer at the centre working for the security firm KORVO. Initially, he tries to interact with the ‘Unlawful Non-Citizens’ (UNCs) as they are referred to by the Australian immigration system and to help improve their lives there. However, pressure from the other officers and the bleak conditions of the centre take its toll on Cam, who eventually becomes uncaring and aggressive towards the UNCs. Finally, Clare Kowitz (Asher Keddie) is the new general manager for the Department of Immigration at Barton, and is overwhelmed by the challenges she faces at the centre; a lack of funding and a stagnated immigration process leaving many locked up in the centre for years.

The six-episode series follows the lives of the four characters, showing the impact the environment of the detention centre has on them. The series ends with a heart-breaking episode, in which Ameer must denounce his daughter Mina to ensure she receives a protection visa and is not deported back to Afghanistan. Ameer is left behind in the centre, probably for many more years to come. Sofie, having been missing for months, is finally found by her sister and recognised as an Australian citizen, and is transferred out of the centre to a psychiatric hospital. Clare, frustrated with her job and the failings of the Australian Immigration Department, exposes the scandal of an Australian citizen having been held by the centre during a visit by the Human Rights Commission. Cam reaches the pinnacle of his frustration and breaks down crying after nearly assaulting a UNC and walks out of the centre, presumably quitting his job. The stories of the characters’ lives in *Stateless* provide a multidimensional insight into Australia’s immigration system, and the issues surrounding it.

The Australian immigration system

Australia has one of the world’s strictest immigration systems of mandatory detention, and under Australia’s Migration Act 1958, all unlawful non-citizens are to be detained indefinitely until they are granted a visa, or are removed from Australian territory (Peterie, 2018). Since 2013, the Australian immigration system has operated under a ‘stop the boats’ policy, stopping boats carrying migrants and asylum seekers from illegally entering Australian waters (Karlsen,

2016). Maritime asylum seekers reach Australia via boats from Indonesia through people smugglers, and hundreds die making the journey at sea. Both of Australia's main political parties, the Liberal-National coalition and Labour, support offshore processing and strict immigration policies; hence there is little political motivation for reform (Essex, 2019). The Australian government says they are stopping criminal gangs who control the people smuggling by deterring maritime asylum seekers, but many critics say that the policy is racially motivated (BBC News, 2017). Up until the 1970s, those applying for settlement in Australia under the White Australia Policy were evaluated on the basis of their race and origin. In 1973, Australia abolished the White Australia Policy that used race as a criteria in immigration selection, and shifted to a points based system, based on skills and family reunion (York, 2003). However, racism is still evident in the process. For example, of Australia's humanitarian intake of the 12,000 refugees displaced by the Syrian Iraqi conflict, 80% of those settled were Christian, despite majority of those from the region being Muslim (Doherty, 2018). There has been a visible decline in the intake of refugees identifying as Muslim in recent years, with the number going down from 34% since the year 2000 to 27% in the past few years (Refugee Council of Australia, 2019). In 2013, Operation Sovereign Borders gave the military control over asylum operations, patrolling Australian waters and intercepting migrant boats, turning them back to Indonesia in lifeboats denying them the international human right to protection (Karlsen and Phillips, 2017).

In 2001 the Pacific Solution was introduced by the Australian government after a Norwegian Freight Ship arrived in Australian waters carrying over 400 Hazara Afghan refugees who they had rescued at sea. They were refused entry to Australian waters, despite this going against International Law, and were sent to a camp on Nauru Island. The 'Nauru Regime' lasted until 2007, and the inhabitants endured atrocious conditions of overcrowded tents and water shortages (Doherty, 2016). However, once it was established that the Hazara Afghans were genuine asylum seekers, not criminals, most were resettled in Australia and the camp was shut down (Doherty, 2016).

In 2012, following a significant increase in maritime asylum seekers, Nauru Island was reopened as an immigration detention centre under the Memorandum of Understanding with the government of Nauru. A similar agreement, the 2013 Regional Resettlement Agreement was also made with Papua New Guinea, whereby maritime asylum seekers arriving in Australia would be sent to Manus Island for offshore processing (Bochenek, 2016a). Since 2012, over 4,000 asylum seekers and refugees have been forcibly sent to Nauru or Manus Island, not

including children born in the centres (Refugee Council of Australia, 2021a). As a result of these policies, between 2013 and 2016, asylum seekers arriving in Australia illegally via boat were sent to Nauru Island or Manus Island in Papua New Guinea for offshore processing but were not to be resettled in Australia (Karlsen, 2016).

Journalists, researchers and advocates had severely limited access to the centres, and those working there faced a punishment of up to two years in prison if they spoke out about the ongoings at the centre under the 2015 Australian Border Force Act (Doherty, 2016). However, some still did, and a file leak dubbed by the Guardian as the ‘Nauru files’ revealed severe atrocities and human rights violations that occurred at the centres between 2013 and 2015. Over half of the 2,116 reports leaked involve children, who make up 18% of the camp population, including allegations of sexual assault and abuse (Farrell et al, 2016). Scholars have described Australia’s immigration policies as being a form of state-sanctioned child abuse, and of violating human rights (Essex, 2019). Dr. Young, a former psychiatrist responsible for the care of asylum seekers on the offshore detention centres described the camps as being toxic and deliberately harmful to the vulnerable detainees, bordering on torture (Farrell et al, 2016).

Refugee and asylum seekers’ communications with the outside world are strictly monitored, but some have managed to leak out letters, electronic messages and videos filmed on cell phones. This is how footage of Omid Masoumali dousing himself with petrol and setting himself alight in protest to the camp’s atrocious conditions on Nauru was leaked, followed by Hodan Yasin also setting herself on fire in protest just a few days later (Boochani, 2019). Traumatologist Paul Stevenson said that even after working with victims of terrorist attacks and natural disasters for over 40 years, the conditions in the Nauru and Manus Island detention camps were some of the worst atrocities he had seen (Doherty, 2016). Human Rights Watch described camp conditions as prison-like, and camp detainees faced constant violence, threats and harassment from locals on both islands (Bochenek, 2016b).

Nauru is a small island nation consisting of 21 square kilometres in the middle of the Pacific, 3000 kilometres away from the Australian mainland (BBC News, 2018b). Manus Island is 320 kilometres north of the main island of Papua New Guinea (Britannica, 2013). Detainees in offshore detention centres are denied access to proper legal support, medical services and contact with the outside world. Offshore detention is by design meant to be brutal to deter asylum seekers from attempting to reach Australia and force them to agree to return to their countries of origin, from which they had fled (Peterie, 2018). Between 2013 and 2019, at least

twelve asylum seekers and refugees have died in Australian offshore detention centres (BBC News, 2019). Australia claims they are preventing human trafficking and saving lives at sea with their boat deterrence policies, but have been accused by many organisations including the United Nations as having inhumane immigration policies. Manus Island detention centre was shut down in 2016 after the Papua New Guinea Supreme Court ruled that placing asylum seekers and refugees who committed no crimes in detention centres was unconstitutional (BBC News, 2017). In 2018, during an 11 month period on Nauru Island, the Medicines Sans Frontiers organisation treated 78 people for self-harm or suicide and called for an immediate evacuation of asylum seekers and refugees off the island in view of the devastating mental health crisis (BBC News, 2018a). Human Rights Watch documented the story of Faruk, a Rohingya Muslim who arrived in Australian waters by boat in 2013 fleeing persecution in Burma. He was immediately transferred to a detention centre on Manus Island and was held there for four years, suffering abuse and pressure from centre staff, and fear from the local island inhabitants who showed hostility towards him (Dholakia, 2017).

Australia has received many sustained criticisms and calls for change regarding its immigration policies. In 2014, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights raised serious concerns over the offshore processing and boat turnarounds, as they were “leading to a chain of human rights violations, including arbitrary detention and possible torture following return to home countries” (OHCHR, 2014). The United Nations Committee against Torture in 2014 also stated its concerns over offshore processing, stating that the conditions in the offshore centres were creating “serious physical and mental pain and suffering” (United Nations, 2014). In 2015, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment declared that Australia’s offshore processing policies were systematically violating the United Nations Declaration Against Torture (United Nations, 2015). In 2019 when United Nations Human Rights experts urged for Australia to immediately provide appropriate and necessary healthcare to the asylum seekers and refugees on the offshore centres, and transfer those requiring urgent medical attention to Australia, Australia’s response was to claim that no one was being denied appropriate health care (OHCHR, 2019). The Australian government has consistently failed to respond to the warnings, accusations and evidence of the situation on the offshore processing centres (Bochenek, 2016a). In August 2020 Australia re-opened the Christmas Island West Point immigration detention centre, which is unequipped with appropriate health care facilities, and should not be used for hosting asylum seekers and refugees, according to OHCHR (OHCHR, 2019). As of October 2020, there were

already 220 asylum seekers and refugees in the centre (Refugee Council Australia, 2021b). In total, as of the 31st of October 2020, there were 1,533 asylum seekers and refugees in immigration detention facilities (Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, 2020).

The treatment of asylum seekers and refugees in Australian immigration detention as depicted in *Stateless* barely touches the surface of the true situation ongoing in Australia, but still conveys a powerful message and raises awareness of the fundamental problems within the Australian immigration system and the maltreatment of those being processed within it. There is an urgent need for reform in the Australian immigration system, as vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees, especially children, should not be held in such conditions.

Accomplishments of the series

Whilst the series was set on a mainland Australia detention centre rather than offshore, it still effectively demonstrated and brought awareness to the failings of the Australian immigration system, and the desolate conditions at immigration detention facilities, and the issues surrounding their runnings. The series was based on true stories from Australian immigration detention centres, adding a valuable sense of authenticity. The story of Sofie Werner in the series is based on the true story of Cornelia Rau, an Australian woman who was wrongfully held in an immigration detention centre which led to a public inquiry that uncovered the systemic failings of the Australian Immigration Department, requiring urgent reform. The inquiry also recommended an independent review to ensure detention policy is fair with demonstrated respect for human dignity (Stateless, 2020).

Cornelia Rau was an Australian permanent resident who had previously been working for Qantas airlines. Following a series of psychological issues, with assessments of bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, she was handed into the police by concerned citizens in 2004, who deemed her to be an illegal immigrant, as she spoke in German and claimed several unlikely identities. She was initially placed in Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre, and was eventually moved to Baxter Detention Centre in South Australia on the grounds of being identified as an unlawful non-citizen (Freckelton, 2005). The Baxter Detention Centre was under DIMIA's jurisdiction but is run by the private company Global Solutions Limited. Rau received a psychological assessment in the first weeks of her arrival at Baxter, but the recommendation given to transfer her to a psychiatric hospital was withdrawn a week later deemed as unnecessary. Rau displayed

consistent signs of psychological unrest, going by different names and claiming to have only recently arrived in Australia, despite having lived there since the age of 18 months (Freckelton, 2005). She was recorded as possibly having Schizophrenia and Personality Disorder, and was recommended hospitalisation and treatment or monitoring in detention, but did not receive these recommendations (Freckelton, 2005). The story of Cornelia Rau is both a reflection on the failures of Australia's health system to address issues of mental health and also the severe lack of support given to those in immigration detention. The Commonwealth Ombudsman in 2001 had noted that immigration detainees receive fewer rights than prisoners in incarceration, and have a weaker accountability framework (Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman, 2001, p.3).

The series also explores the negative mental health impacts of immigration detention through Ameer's daughter Mina. Mina's story, committing self-harm in the detention centre, is a common one, with cases of self-harm having greatly increased in Australian immigration detention centres over the past decade (Hedrick, 2017, pp.89). Mina begins to self-harm due to the uncertainty of herself and her father acquiring a protection visa to be able to move on with their lives in Australia. Ameer says that things will get easier once they leave the centre and have hope for the future, as being stuck in the centre all there is to think about is the past. Studies have consistently demonstrated that immigration detention has adverse effects on the mental health of detainees. A study done with Werthern et al. reveals that in 26 studies reporting on 2099 participants, immigration detainees of all ages experience heightened levels of mental health problems both during and after immigration detention (2018). The most common symptoms include anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, with higher symptoms than non-detained refugees. The study concludes that there is an urgent need for greater consideration of mental health risks in detention and of self-harm, and an overall greater need for care of detainees. Time spent in immigration for refugees and asylum seekers is a loss of their liberty and a great stressor, with the constant threat of being sent back to their country of origin (Werthern et al., 2018). They are also exposed to abuse by staff, as seen in *Stateless* when three KORVO officers beat up a detainee out of view of the security cameras. Detainees are further vulnerable to violence from other detainees, social isolation, and forcible return from countries they fled due to violence, persecution and human rights abuses (Werthern et al., 2018). The series does a good job at bringing the issue of mental health in detention to light through the characters of Sofie and Mina, and the difficulties they face.

The series also does well in revealing insight into the struggles faced by refugees and asylum seekers on their journeys, and the difficult choices they are forced to make in order to survive and protect their loved ones. It exemplifies the devastating separation of families in the processing system and provides a sense of humanity to the plight of refugees, which too often is reduced to figures and statistics by the media.

Criticism of the series

Whilst the series does a good job of depicting the stories and lived experiences of the four main characters, the series has been criticised for being centred around the story of Sofie, a white middle-class Australian, overshadowing the stories and experiences of the refugees and asylum seekers at the detention centre. In an interview, Cate Blanchett, a co-creator of the series, defended this decision, saying that the character of Sofie was created to get people in the audience who lack interface with the refugee experience to be able to better imagine themselves in their situation (Blake and Blanchett, 2020). Blanchett goes on to say how the storyline of the cult from which Sofie flees parallels the refugee experience of coming to Australia in the hopes of a better future, leaving behind their past and families only to be met with false hopes and promises (Blake and Blanchett, 2020). Blanchett's concept behind the main character of Sofie is an innovative way to get the audience to better connect and understand the plight of refugees and asylum seekers, but risks bordering on a Eurocentric approach. The series could have benefitted from a greater focus on the backgrounds and struggles of the refugees and asylum seekers at the centre, as the majority of their stories were left unaddressed in lieu of focusing on the lives of the KORVO officers and administrative centre staff. The emphasis on Ameer's crimes committed en route to Australia, preventing him and his daughter from receiving protection visas, was important in showing the challenges faced in obtaining visas, but arguably was overly focused on the faults of Ameer, rather than the issues of the Australian immigration system itself.

Conclusion

The series ends with the reminder that there are over 70 million people worldwide who are displaced seeking sanctuary, and that those arriving in Australia seeking protection without visas are sent to offshore detention centres, disrespecting their rights to human dignity (Stateless, 2020). Stateless is a powerful and insightful series, bringing awareness to the issues within the Australian Immigration system, which are also seen globally in other countries with the influx of refugees and asylum seekers in the 21st century. The crisis in the microcosm of Barton detention centre is an issue that is present globally, with harsh receptions and the dehumanisation of refugees and asylum seekers seeking protection and sanctuary. It demonstrates the extreme difficulties faced by those seeking asylum in the immigration process, the seeming impossibility of obtaining a visa, and the real risks of being deported back to the lands they have fled. There is indubitably an urgent need for governments globally to change such policies, to facilitate the process for those seeking asylum and to fulfill their human rights and provide them with protection, dignity and respect.

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IS CHINA A STATUS QUO/SECURITY SEEKING OR A REVISIONIST/GREEDY POWER?

Tekla Gabritchidze

“He who knows when he can fight and when he cannot, will be victorious”.

-Sun Tzu

Introduction

The new millennium faces the power shift in the international system. The American unipolar moment comes to an end, and new contours of shifting world order are already visible. If years ago, China's ascent was still dubious, now how China will rise, or in other words, the China threat is the major quarrelsome topic in the ongoing debates among scholars and policymakers. Unequivocally, China's intentions and the eagerness of the West to adapt to rising China will determine the stability of the international order. There are two leading arguments in the current China debate. The realists argue that with the growth of its relative power in the system, China will become revisionist and confront the liberal international order and its hegemon, the United States. Liberal institutionalists argue that due to growing economic interdependence and its benefits, China will comply with the current world order and restrain its greedy intentions. The paper analyses the arguments from both sides of the theoretical divide and important variables determining Beijing's actions, and argues that China is a rising status-quo power.

Waking dragon: revisionist China

The realist scholars of international relations, unsurprisingly, have very pessimistic views on the ascent of China. In an anarchic international system, in which uncertainty of other states' motives is omnipresent, and all great powers possess offensive military capabilities, states are emboldened to maximize their relative power vis-à-vis their “peer competitors” to achieve hegemony, and attain the only great power status in the system. (Brzezinski and Mearsheimer, 2009, pp.47–48) The realist world is characterized by realpolitik, where, according to John. J.

Mearsheimer, preeminent offensive realist of our day, “it is better to be Godzilla than Bambi” in order to survive. (Mearsheimer, 2006, p.162) Mearsheimer incorporates his theory into the analysis and provides a very thoughtful and influential contribution to the ongoing debate on the rise of China, and future Sino-American relationship. If the tendency of China’s economic growth and development continues in the same rhythm for the next decades, China’s relative power vis-à-vis (Mearsheimer, 2014, p.10) its neighbours and the United States will increase. In such favourable condition, China will try to declare regional hegemony, and maximize the gap between itself and its neighbours. However, the U.S. military presence in its region puts China in an insecure position, and as history repeats itself, China will emulate the U.S Monroe Doctrine and expel the United

States from Asia, the same way America wiped out European powers from Western hemisphere in the 19th century. Furthermore, with achieving regional hegemony, China will get leverage to take back Taiwan, the enduring key issue for Chinese leadership and nation. The United States and Japan, due to the strategic importance of Taiwan, will enter into extreme security competition, where the future relationship between two great powers will frame as the Cold War analogy. (Mearsheimer, 2006, p.162)

The rapid military surge is a principal source of distrust on China’s rise. Donald Rumsfeld, former U.S. secretary of defence notes “since no nation threatens China, one must wonder: Why this growing investment? Why these continuing large and expanding arms purchases?” (Glaser, 2011, p.91) Beijing’s rapid economic growth over the decades has indeed been translated into the military realm, and China’s military capabilities have been transformed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The proponents of revisionist China argue that Beijing’s enhanced military capabilities have implications for its expansionist intentions, and low military transparency further intensifies their doubts. (Liff and Ikenberry, 2011, pp.66–67) The Pentagon’s 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review remarks “the rapid pace and comprehensive scope of China’s military modernization... combined with a relative lack of transparency and openness from China’s leaders regarding both military capabilities and intentions”. (Liff and Ikenberry, 2011, p.85) Furthermore, China’s aggressive policies in the East and South China sea strengthen the fear of those claiming China’s assertive turn, while the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) president Xi Jinping’s newly launched project in 2013, is perceived as another policy of China’s ‘civil and military fusion’ program, which “strategic strongpoints” will give the advantage to People’s Liberation Army to strengthen their positions, or even expand their presence further from China’s shores. (Russel and Samuel, 2020)

Another point of the China threat argumentation is the current world order and China's dissatisfaction. After World War 2, when the current liberal international order was founded, China was isolated from the international system, hence its interests were not considered. China does not bend on underlying norms, and in case of dissatisfaction, Beijing operates outside of the regimes, and fulfils its goals as it arranged separate currency channels with Japan, Brazil, and other countries to foster the use of the Chinese Yuan on the international stage. (Kissinger 2012, p.52) The leading China expert in the United States, David Shambaugh, claims that although throughout these years China has embraced itself to international regimes, the integration is not deep, and while accepting the rules, China does not comply "all the norms underlying the international community". So, "China accepts multilateralism in form but not in essence". (Shambaugh, 2001, p.28) While consensus exists, that China has enormously benefited from its integration into the global capitalist system, critics are concerned that it does not play according to the Western rules, instead, Beijing is pushing its own "brand of modernity". (Steinfeld, 2013, p.888) There are three main reasons why Beijing engaged itself in international organizations. First, China has realized the universality of membership; second, the social costs to remain outside of the system was too high to bear; and third, CCP leadership recognized the chance given by international organizations to limit the power of the United States. (Shambaugh, 2001, pp.28–29) The consensus exists on both sides of the debate that there are certain issues China is dissatisfied with, including the U.S. global dominance, the issue of Taiwan, and the pressure from the West to transform China's political system to the western model of democracy. (Legro, 2007, p.517) If China's dissatisfaction grows, Beijing will try to set up additional alternative arrangements, and the competition between the two blocks will intensify. (Kissinger, 2012, p.52) If China gains enough momentum, by the time resentment trumps economic benefits, Beijing will try to replace Washington and exploit the current system and transform it according to its preferences.

China's authoritarian regime and the Communist Party of China (CPC) is another factor for raising an alarm of greedy China. The relationship between society and government is qualitatively different from the western counterpart. (Steinfeld, 2013, p.888) China has developed in many ways, but today Jinping's oppressive policies do not significantly differ from Xiaoping's repressions back in the 1980s. The government is not willing to transform the country's political system, as it would constrain the ruling party's power to enforce authoritative decisions. The mass surveillance, censorship, full control of media, the internet, and academia, not to mention the suppression of opponents, oppression of minorities, and constraining the

basic individual freedom of ordinary citizens is not “a new normal” for CPC. (World Report, 2019) The state and party are not separated in China, and there is no dividing line between the private and state sector as well. Despite positive developments in the private sector, China’s state sector still produces 40% of the total GDP, and the business is in the hands of the party members. (Steinfeld, 2013, p.887) Thus, CPC maintains tight control of the market as well. Shambaugh gives very insightful views while arguing that China’s domestic politics and xenophobic nationalism have repercussions not only for internal affairs but determines China’s foreign policy and its stance on the world stage. (Shambaugh, 2001, p.30) The separation between CPC’s political objectives and the national interest could be the slippery slope to revisionism. In that case, China represents the threat not only to U.S. hegemony but the current liberal international order due to its practice of state capitalism and one-party system. (Steinfeld, 2013, p.887)

Status-quo China

Mearsheimer’s theory can not fully accommodate new realities. The nuclear age has altered the dynamics of great power relations, and unlike the past, great powers can not go to war with each other without catastrophic damages, and the total elimination of societies. (Brzezinski and Mearsheimer, 2009, pp.48–49) The Cold War analogy has multiple flaws. Firstly, unlike the Soviet Union, China’s globally penetrated economy is thriving. (Kissinger, 2012, p.48) China is the major trade partner for its neighbours, the United States, and the European Union. (United States Trade, n.d.) Secondly, while the Soviet Union confronted small, weakened countries relying on US commitments for defence, China is challenged by its unfavourable geopolitical location, being neighboured by Russia, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, and India. While two of China’s neighbours, Russia and India, possess nuclear powers, Japan could easily acquire them in case of escalation. Third, while China is present in the international system in the current dimensions for 2000 years, the Soviet Union, and its predecessor due to its imperialist tradition, “between Peter the Great and the end of World War II, projected itself from the region around Moscow to the centre of Europe.” (Kissinger, 2005) China, unlike the Soviet Union, does not wish to engage itself in military competition with the USA, instead, the focus is on economic development, and gaining a great power status. (Brzezinski and Mearsheimer, 2009, p.46) The revisionism does not match with the China’s aim to sustain its economic growth.

The fear of China's military surge is full of misperceptions. First of all, it would be irrational if China's spectacular economic growth would not be translated into its military capabilities. (Kissinger, 2005) Secondly, taking into consideration China's vulnerable geopolitical situation, military growth serves the interest of defence, rather than offense. Glaser notes it very accurately while stating that "If China were able to operate carrier battle groups near the U.S. coast and attack the U.S. homeland with long-range bombers, Washington would naturally want the ability to blunt such and if the United States had a strategic nuclear force as vulnerable and comparatively small as China's somewhere between a tenth and a hundredth the size of the U.S. it would try to catch up as quickly as it had the resources to do so." (Glaser, 2011, p.91) According to former US director of National Intelligence "any Chinese regime, even a democratic one, would have similar goals". (Moravcsik, 2008, p.27) Furthermore, China's actions towards disputed territories should not be considered as expansionist, instead, Beijing deems the issue of Taiwan, and the East and South China seas as a domestic matter, that requires an internal decision made by the sovereign authority. As Mao said to Americans in 1970 "You have occupied our Taiwan Island, but I have never occupied your Long Island". (Legro, 2007, p.517) China fully recognizes its strength and weaknesses, and its military build-up does not necessarily mean that it wants to coerce the world. Instead, the long military tradition of neighbouring states and the probability of containment put China in an insecure position. (Kissinger, 2005) Hence, Beijing's military growth and modernization is an adequate response to the current circumstances and proves Chinese leadership to be seeking security, rather than expansionism.

Although Shambaugh's arguments have building blocks, they do not fully capture reality. China has joined loads of international organizations, and institutional integration is the inmost now than ever before. While it is true that the current world order was founded without China's participation, it is fundamentally different from all those existing in the past. The current liberal international order is characterized by a loose institutional framework, the participation of not only by great powers but everyone willing to be engaged. The open-market and rule-based institutions provide huge benefits to all the members, while the participation costs are significantly low. (Ikenberry, 2008, pp.28–29) Since 1970s, China has demonstrated its status quo engagement and showed its willingness to participate in the system. Overtime Beijing has embraced a wide range of international institutions, and informal cooperative settings. (Legro, 2007, p.517) In the early 1970s, China has signed 10-20% of the international arms control agreements, while by 1990s, it had signed around 80% of such agreements. Since the mid-

1990s, China has not only participated in the international regimes but became the active player and agenda-setter. From the early 1970s to the middle 1990s, China moved from isolation to a willingness to participate in international institutions. For example, by the early 1970s, China had signed 10–20% of the international arms control agreements, and the number of such treaties increased up to 80% by 1990s. In the mid-1990s, China has not only increased its participation in various Asian multilateral arrangements, but also has become an active player in dealing with many important global issues, such as China's economic assistance during the Asian financial crisis in 1997, or assistance for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. China has established partnerships in its region (South Korea, Russia, ASEAN), as well as with Western great powers. Beijing has played an active role in the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), showed an increasing willingness to comply with international norms on free trade, and nuclear proliferation. (Ding, 2010, pp.269–270) Currently, Beijing made serious steps to take the leading role of agenda-setter in environmental protection. Even Shambaugh, despite being pessimistic on China's integration, asserts that: "China's efforts to improve its ties with ASEAN are not merely part of a larger 'charm offensive'. They represent, in some cases, fundamental compromises that China has chosen to make in limiting its own sovereign interests for the sake of engagement in multilateral frameworks and pursuit of greater regional interdependence." (Ding, 2010, pp.268) China appreciates the current order not only for the given opportunities but for the protections provided by these institutions, such as the WTO's multilateral trade principles and dispute-settlement mechanisms. (Ikenberry, 2008, p.32) China's politics vis-à-vis international regimes suggest that Beijing's economic interests are compatible with the current order, and China, the country that benefited a lot from it, shares the interest of the United States to maintain the system that it has joined.

The advocates of status-quo China argue that as an authoritarian regime, China's Communist ruling party's main objective is to gain the acceptance by the rest of the world, while at the same time gain internal recognition and legitimacy. China's expansionist foreign policy would put the CCP party's power grip under danger. (Ding, 2010, pp.257) In order to challenge the United States and the West in general, besides military capability Chinese leadership will require domestic legitimacy, which will be difficult to achieve in case of crises while being blockaded by external powers. If the escalation breaks out, China will find itself in total isolation, and the blockade of the maritime trade and the flow of oil would lead to the total demolition of the economy. Even though the Taiwan issue remains to be the trigger for China's

assertive behaviour, still China seems to be a rational and flexible player. Besides domestic consensus on non-military actions towards Taiwan, the ruling party seems to be very vigilant. As Communist Party magazine noted, “we have basically contained the overt threat of Taiwanese independence since Chen took office, avoiding a worst-case scenario and maintaining the status of Taiwan as part of China”. (Brzezinski and Mearsheimer, 2009, p.47)

China’s current regime is not fundamentally distinct from the Western model at all. Contrary to Beijing’s claims of China embracing “socialism with Chinese characteristics”, China currently is already an “imported Western system - a people’s republic”. Even though China has not fully transitioned itself to democracy, it is “a hybrid modern republic combined with an archaic autocracy”. (Xiang, 2016, p.59) Despite the autocratic regime, progressive developments cannot be fully disregarded. China’s integration into the global economy and playing in the world market has led to revisions in laws, business regulations, and labour market, as well as promising changes within society. Besides economics, integration has had an effect on China’s political legitimacy and contributed to internalizing the Western rules of governance. As Steinfeld claims, “China today, after nearly a century of upheaval, is recapturing its identity and sense of self-worth not by lashing out but instead by attaching itself to an existing global order, our order... It is not just opening itself up to us as investors or economic actors. Rather, it is absorbing our notions of governance and taking them as its own”. (Steinfeld, 2013, pp.887–888)

Based on the above argumentation, China does not seem to be the waking dragon, but status-quo seeking vulnerable power. The revisionist China argumentation disregards the conditions that provide China both with advantages and incentives for restraint. Comparing China to imperialist Germany does not correspond to new realities. Nuclear weapons, deep economic interdependence, and globalization have changed global power politics. China, as one of the biggest beneficiaries of the current world order, will not take the saw to the branch she is sitting on. Furthermore, the domestic challenges and strategically vulnerable position further constrain Beijing’s greedy intentions but intensifies China’s security-seeking behaviour, which is often translated as offensive. In reality, as Moravcsik states, “But if the West has anything to fear, it’s not the resurgent Red Dragon, nor that China’s government will succeed in its grand ambitions – but rather that it won’t.” (Moravcsik, 2010)

Conclusion

The paper has discussed the multiple opposing narratives on China's ascent and its intentions from different angles and demonstrated that China does not pose the threat to the current world order, on the contrary, the Chinese leadership is seeking security, and over the decades Beijing has demonstrated the willingness to cooperate through its status-quo policies. The cooperation for Beijing has multiple incentives, such as adjusting its developed and developing regions, harmonize its political institutions to the technological and economic revolutions; and avoid the negative effects of confrontation on the raising of the standard of living, which is the primary source of government's legitimacy. (Kissinger, 2005) Although the benefits of cooperation trump the greediness, China finds itself in the fuelled security dilemma with the United States and its allies. China, as a status quo power, that is caught in the security dilemma can be quite willing to use force to defend its territory and its sphere of influence. (Johnston, 2003, p.56) The major reason for the security dilemma is the misperceptions that both powers have on each other's motives. The USA, on the one hand as a status-quo power, is concerned by the rising power and its true intentions and enforces strategies such as "Pivot to Asia", and China, on the other hand, due to its historical memory of the colonial past, and current vulnerable geopolitical position perceives US actions as assertive. Consequently, China's military surge, and its policies in its surroundings serve Beijing's interest to increase security vis-à-vis its neighbours and the United States and balance the power in the region. "Security dilemmas are socializing experiences". (Johnston, 2013, p.56) Thus, the interests and intentions can be redefined over time with the changes in leadership and their ideologies. The today's People's Republic of China is status-quo oriented than it was ever before, but this does not guarantee that tomorrow's China will not be revisionist.

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DOES THE IDEA OF ‘LIBERAL PEACE’ DO MORE HARM THAN GOOD?

Aisling Maria Keys

Introduction

Forceful criticism concerning liberal peace has emerged in recent years that have questioned its Western-led hegemonic approach replicating liberal institutions, denying local agency, its colonial rationality and its fixation on institutionalization, to name but a few examples. There is undoubtedly a negligence of liberal peace to construct a nuanced understanding of the dynamics of a country emerging from conflict engendering ethnic, religious, cultural and gendered biases. Therefore, an important question that could be made concerning peacebuilding is peace for who? Liberal peacebuilding tends to propagate local elitist groups and perpetuate structures of domination that exist within the liberal paradigm. However, such a wide assessment of liberal peace would be impossible within the scope of this essay, therefore this essay will gauge whether liberal peace does more harm than good for women.

Since the liberal paradigm is hugely influential over liberal peace, this essay will commence by examining the historical emergence of liberalism. Rooting its emergence in gendered power dynamics and militarism, which created a man's world that privileges power, conflict and warfare. The power dynamics that is rooted in the liberal world system has led to the de facto exclusion of women in the liberal democratic state and as a byproduct an exclusion in liberal peacebuilding. Next this essay will highlight the consequences this participatory exclusion has had on peacebuilding's ability to account for women's security, needs and experiences.

Liberalism is the defining feature of modern democracies; the concept is founded on individual's right to life, liberty and property. Liberalism proposes that despite anarchy there are opportunities for cooperation between states. Liberalism believes that through 'Economic interdependence, collaboration, and 'highly institutionalized' international regimes can facilitate cooperation, trust and a neutralization of the security dilemma when they 'specify strict patterns of behaviour and insure that no one cheats' (Stein. 1983, p.129)'. The institutionalized objective appears promising to post-conflict restoration but in fact, such an approach leaves individuals disenfranchised and fails to rebuild the society.

The gendered dimensions of liberalism

Peacebuilding today is still under the hegemonic influence of the United States and liberal values. While liberal values claim to bolster equality and liberty, there is a persistence of injustices that arise out of it, as the ideology is designed to cope with instabilities and inequalities within a world order that is itself dysfunctional (Michael, 2004, p.40). Democracy in the United States was established by the ‘founding fathers’ based on the belief from the enlightenment that all ‘men’ were created equal, as Tickner argued ‘politics and masculinity have a long and close association’ (Tickner, 1992, p.6). Even though, the usage of the word ‘man’ is equivalent to humankind, it still serves as an indication that the experiences of men are erroneously assumed to be the ones of humankind with regards to power, war and politics (Fritzsche, 2011, p.45). Therefore, the rights of men were represented as being universal rights but instead they were rights that were silently privileging the white male as the affluent source of power at the time, while marginalizing women’s rights and political agency (Eisenstein, 1994, p.5). ‘The liberal democratic state does not declare the equality of women to be part of state discourse: her equality is not theorized as such’ (Eisenstein, 1994, p.17), there has been a failure of liberalism to mainstream gender. Women’s rights in the US has since ameliorated, women have gained the legal right to vote in 1920, entry into the labour market and improvements have been made with incorporating women’s needs into the political and legal infrastructure. However, the foundations of the apparatus are already gendered, not to mention liberal theory privileges the economy as the core of society, which reinforces structural gender inequalities (True, 2013, p.2).

Women have yet to be treated equal in the labour market occupying second-class jobs in the lower paying sector of the economy and are being paid less for equal work. (Eisenstein, 1994, p.16). It is insufficient to equate gender equality to the right to work, especially when women’s and men’s contributions are not valued equivalently. A fault embedded in liberal theory, because liberalism does not promise emancipation, instead it promises opportunity (Eisenstein, 1994, p.17). Furthermore, the process in which the militarization is theoretically constructed is inseparable from the concept of masculinity, on an account of politicians, diplomats and soldiers having been exclusively men. Consequently, war is focused primarily on the male soldier’s experience. One can conclude that this focus has constructed a concept of war that is highly gendered. Liberalism’s strong focus on the military facet of international politics, holds a certain form of masculinity in high esteem and therefore can be characterized by a degree of gender-blindness (Fritzsche, 2011, p.51). Therefore, gender is salient in the establishment of

the liberal state and it hardly farfetched to argue that it is also salient in peacebuilding (Bjorkdahl, 2012, p.290).

Peacebuilding has become synonymous with development, security and the reinforcement of the superiority of liberal ideology (Michael, 2014, p.49). “To building peace requires visioning what constitutes peace and security across cultures, nationalities, ethnicities and between genders.” (Dyan, McKay, 1999). Unfortunately, liberal democratic peace is linked with the omission of women and the inclusion of men, this gender hierarchy built into liberalism has created a ‘peace gap’ (Bjorkdahl, 2012, p.286), resulting in the marginalization of women’s agency in the peacemaking process and decision-making roles both on the international and local level (Pankhurst, 2003, p.155). “Despite the work women do at the grassroots level to organize for peace, the majority of their voices go unheard during formal processes including peace negotiations, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, constitution-creation, elections, reconstruction, rehabilitation, truth and reconciliation, and establishing a judicial system.” (McKay, 2004, p.166). Subsequently, omitting women from the process culminates the inferiority of women’s needs, security and gendered violence. Consequently, peacebuilding has failed to promote a gender-just peace that ‘establishes social justice and equity and that recognizes women’s social and reproductive roles and women’s agency’ (Bjorkdahl, 2012, p.288). It should also be acknowledged that peacebuilding is part of a larger gender narrative about war and peace. Taking a look at peace from a gendered vantage point exhibits that there are important gendered elements to the liberal understanding of peace, which might result in peacebuilding being gender-biased. One can thus surmise that in terms of International Relations only men’s experiences have been accounted for (Pankhurst, 2010, p.158). This can be exhibited by the understanding of war alone, which is regarded as an ‘intermediate armed conflict with more than 1000 battle-related deaths’ (Bjorkdahl, 2012, p.290). It can be concluded that the picture of war is dominated by soldiers, who are mostly men, therefore, neglecting 90% of victims of conflict who are civilian.

The majority of limits for successfully integrating gender into peacebuilding emerges from consolidating such concepts into unequal power structures. The, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 calls for ‘encouraging participation, inclusion and protection of women in post conflict situations’, (UN, 2000). However, it overlooks examining potential structures that perpetuate the insecurities of women in such environments (Tamang, 2016, p.233). One of the main structures at plan in warring and post conflict society is that of the military institution. The military sphere itself is gendered, as is the process of militarization

(Tamang, 2016, p.233). Militarization as a process has a direct impact on the lives of individuals both during periods of war and peace and has a strong influence on our perception of peace and violence. As a result of militarization, 'ideas of violence are rigorously indoctrinated in a society where gendered practices and hierarchy is further institutionalized' (Vayrynen, 2007, p.125). Our society highly values a certain type of masculinity that is correlated with virtues of bravery, heroism, machismo and femininity is concerned to be a show of weakness and utilized to shame those who do not comply with the hyper-masculine 'norm' (Vayrynen, 2007, p.129). "Gender relations are "characterized by negotiation, bargaining and exchange between different actors", and men and women are positioned variously within constructions of masculinities and femininities" (Higate and Henry, 2004, p.482). Men and women are routinely raised to fit into a preconceived notion of gender binaries, while those not fitting into this binary norm are considered as 'other'. Such thinking fosters a culture of violence, a result of a "regularized, rigorous structural practice of institutionalizing militarized and hyper masculine values" (Tamang, 2016, p.234). Hyper-masculinity is very evident in the military, which is the traditional realm of international politics (Tamang, 2016, p.235). Furthermore, the United Nations discourse is guided by these neoliberal binaries of masculinity and femininity that give precedence to the "problem-solving epistemology of the 'rationalist' and managerialist masculinity and renders silent the variety of ambivalent and unsecured masculinities and femininities" (Vayrynen, 2007, p.126).

Women's experiences of war have not played nor play an important role in the theorization and perception of the field (Fritzsche 2011, p.48). As a consequence, the rape and sexual violence as tools of war are deemed less important to the overall picture of war. This can be witnessed in the Bosnian war where an estimated of 20,000 women were raped, however only 27 convictions were made, likewise in Rwanda there were half a million rape cases, resulting in only 8 convictions (Zinsstag, 2013, p.191). These facts indicate that violations against women are considered a non-priority. Not to mention that the UN Security Council only condemned conflict related rape and sexual violence as a tool of war in 2009 (Zinsstag, 2013, p.193). That being said women's experience of war should not be exclusively associated with sexual victimization as it discredits the multiple subjectivities held by women in conflict situations such as survivors, political activists and perpetrators of violence (O'Rourke, 2013, p.17). The prominence placed on women's sexual victimhood underpins the marginalization of women as political actors. This emphasis is a result of perpetuation of stereotypes surrounding women as being helpless and passive exposed to assumed male aggression.

State security versus individual security

The bond between masculinity and security is particularly tight and peacebuilding is a security act as much as it is an act of peace. Security is a central concept within the peacebuilding discourse, as peacebuilding's primary aim is the reconstruction of the state apparatus so it can monopolize the use of violence. Peacebuilding is concerned with a state-centric definition of security that includes military and territorial security at the forefront (Tamang, 2016, p.228). Such a state perspective of security tends to emphasize institutions and organizations rather than individual insecurities thus failing to explicate gendered and feminist dimensions (McKay 2004, p.156). The negligence to incorporate the significance of individual security into the peacebuilding infrastructure could be seen as a result of the exclusion of women. A key question that peacebuilding practitioners should be asking is 'whose security is emphasized and how?' Males and females especially in the conflict and post-conflict context experience the erosion of security in a different way. (Fineman, Zinsstag, 2013, p.4) Failing to take into account these differences neglects the gender-specific physical, structural and ecological violence experienced by women. Further, gender justice, the legal processes concerned with gender-specific violence, is often marginalized. In Rwanda women were systematically targeted as 'weapons of war', however hardly anything materialized to deal with the gender-specific victimization (Fineman, Zinsstag, 2013, p.3). Not seeking justice not only perpetuates inequality but also violates fundamental human rights (McKay 2004, p.158) and entrenches male dominance. International policy makers overlook the needs, experiences and women in post-conflict transformation societies. A dimension that is excluded from the discussion of security in peacebuilding is the way in which women experience security and insecurity. Women are prone to certain forms of violence and degradation causing them to suffer in a particular way as victims, peacebuilding justice schemes rarely account for these specific types of gender suffering (Fineman, Zinsstag, 2013, p.2). A gendered perspective is necessary in order to address an understanding of security that goes beyond the state. Such a perspective would entail the inclusion of physical, economic, societal, human and everyday security thus constructing a more comprehensive framework in the post conflict context.

Comparatively gender mainstreaming objectives are usually foreshadowed by concerns of the political economy context. Such contexts, which has the tendency of reinforcing structural gender inequalities 'in employment, the informal economy, and participation in decision-making roles' (True, 2013, p.2). There is still a disengagement in post-conflict reconstruction between creating political-military order and establishing socioeconomic stabilization. Social

aspects of security is considered unimportant and peace operations fail to scrutinize the social impacts of restructuring the political system and rule of law. The absence of integration social and human security has had an excessive negative impact on women's rights in post-conflict societies. This failure demonstrates the lack of mainstream gender in post-conflict budgets and of the under representation of women in decision-making processes. Peacebuilding processes commonly only have limited provisions that specifically focus on creating livelihoods and economic opportunities for women. Furthermore, there is very little done to empower women politically and economically after conflict (True, 2013, p.3). To be effective, they must be able to transform the structures of socioeconomic inequality that affect women's insecurity and vulnerability to violence and poverty after conflict.

Another importance in including an analyses of the individual with regards to security affairs is related to the everyday experience of individuals and how they perceive securities and insecurities (Higate, Henry, 2010, p.34). Constructivist scholars would argue that reality is constructed by out interactions, ideas and through the way we experience our environment (Fritzsche, 2010, p.49). This is why it is essential to not only include human security into the peacebuilding framework but to also understand everyday security. Having a better perception of everyday security would help to understand the ways in which different ethnic groups and genders construct a view of security and insecurity. Comprehending the embodied, spatial and performative dimensions of the everyday security of peacekeepers, for example would display that while they are intended to create security their presence often elicits insecurity from the local population (Higate, Henry, 2010, p.38). Although how a local man versus that of a local women experience the presence of peacekeeping personnel, who are usually a male embodying masculinized regimes will be different. Especially, in the cases of peacekeepers who have raped or sexually abused women. This is just one example of how space and performance shape everyday security and insecurity for women.

Moreover, women are also neglected within disarmament, demobilization and reintegration procedure because women are not perceived to be combatants instead they are viewed as the 'wives' of commanders (McKay, 2004, p.165). Men are presumed to be combatants in fighting forces while women are presumed to be civilians who are victims. This fits within a dominant trend to perceive women as subjects of victimhood who are assigned particular types of agency that is passive, civilian and protected. (O'Rourke, 2013, p.34). There is evidence from this in Sierra Leone where for the most part women were not granted the opportunity to participate in demobilization because they were not seen as fighters. Ergo they loss benefits such as the

prospect of reintegration through learning marketable skills, therefore economically disadvantaging them.

Conclusion

In conclusion, peace operations fail to consider security initiatives that would support women. These operations also fail to give opportunities for women and girls economically and political and fail to integrate women into the decision-making process. I attribute these failures in the liberal mindset, which already approaches reconstruction with a structural bias against women. Through the normalization of masculinity in the military realm and the lack of a gendered liberal democratic state, the concepts of war and peace have been dictated by a binary worldview that places men at the pinnacle. Consequently, liberalism's influence on peacebuilding have caused the perpetuation of the propensity of male gender privilege. This norm also transcended the liberal peace framework and has led to the de facto exclusion of women in post-conflict peace and security formation. International peacebuilding incongruously fortified patriarchal relations of power and traditional gender roles through the subjugation of women and has created a peace that is far from gender-just (Bjorkdahl, 2012, p.289). Furthermore, the failure of the peace process to integrate women into political structures of the emerging state negatively influences the promotion of gender equality and the consolidation of women's needs and experiences (Bjorkdahl, 2012, p.298). While analyzing whether peacebuilding is good for everyone is beyond the scope of this essay, it is evident from the argument presented that peacebuilding does more harm than good for women in post-conflict societies. I believe liberal peacebuilding has its flaws and perpetuates elitist groups, in my opinion a form of international peace guidance is necessary for the post-conflict reconciliation process, but perhaps it is necessary to move beyond the liberal schema and develop a peace that is more comprehensive and places societal reconstruction and equality at the forefront. Perhaps, feminist theories can at least provide us with an opportunity on how to rethink peace to be more gender inclusive.

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