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## CONTENT

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**Claire Spangler**

*Ontological Security and the Stag Hunt:*

*An expansion of the Ontological Security Dilemma ..... 1–9*

**Laura Pistarini Teixeira Nunes**

*Political violence in social movements: a comparative perspective*

*of the American and Northern Irish civil rights moments ..... 10–25*

**Carolina Montorfano**

*Great power responsibility for climate change:*

*the missing environmental leadership ..... 26–38*

**Chattalie Jayatilaka**

*The benefits and risks of digital diplomacy on international relations ..... 39–50*

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## **ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY AND THE STAG HUNT: AN EXPANSION OF THE ONTOLOGICAL SECURITY DILEMMA**

Claire Spangler

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Ontological security (OS) expands security studies by including the role of actors' identities. The inclusion, however, is fraught with pitfalls as scholars look to apply individual level theory to collective actors such as states. Jennifer Mitzen's ontological security dilemma allows for the consideration of identities yet succumbs to a number of the classic errors of OS studies. To utilize Mitzen's contributions to the field, while avoiding such mistakes, this research applies OS to alternative game theory. The Stag Hunt is a multi-player, iterated game that allows for identity evolution over time and for non-oppositional relations between actors. Building off of Mitzen's application, the Stag Hunt extends the potential applications of OS within International Relations (IR) theory and creates the possibility for alternative identities and 'security' outcomes. Such expansion transcends the pitfalls of Mitzen's application and has the potential to revolutionize conceptual security.

### **Ontological Security and the Security Dilemma**

OS is used in IR to allow for the consideration of non-physical security and to explain the role of identity in actor's decisions regarding security issues. Mitzen's application is informed by Giddens's sociology extension of OS. Mitzen posits, "ontological security refers to the need to experience oneself as a whole, continuous person in time ... in order to realize a sense of agency" (2006, p. 342). To experience oneself as whole, one must have "...faith in those social narratives and routines in which we are embedded and through which our self-identity is constituted" (Rossdale 2015, p. 372). The social narrative allows actors to create meanings for their actions as consistent with their identities, and to contextualize themselves in relation to Others and their sociopolitical context (Steele 2008, p. 6). It is therefore an internal depiction of the actor that influences their place in society; importantly, society reflects the identity back, stabilizing the Self and creating relational dependency. Routines are similarly constitutive as actors affirm themselves by generating trust with routinization (Mitzen 2006, p. 346). The

establishment of trust (or failure to) influences actor flexibility, meaning that reflexive actors tolerate and learn from disruptions in their feedback loop, while ridged actors cannot comprehend routine disruptions. Therefore, the Secure have assured expectations about their social being from narratives and routinization and, from this stability, know how to act, engaging their capacity for agency. The Insecure, however, are incapacitated by disruption and cannot engage their agency for lack of knowledge about what to confront in which manner (Mitzen 2006, p. 350).

In applying OS for IR, the individual level theory is often used at the state level. A common risk of using the theory to interpret collective behavior is homogenizing the sub-state level, an inherent factor of state's identities (Steele 2008, p. 17). To avoid such homogeneity, this research restricts its application for purely methodological purposes and follows the conceptual usefulness of 'state personhood,' as a fiction or metaphor (Wendt 2004, p. 289).

### *Security Dilemma*

Mitzen's ontological security dilemma transcends the constraints of traditional security studies by considering identity needs. The security dilemma is a classic application of power politics of rational choice theory in which actors in crises pursue their physical security, often at the expense of their adversary. Actor decisions are based purely on physical security interests and are highly competitive, intrinsic of the zero-sum game. Wendt explains:

A "black box" is put around identity- and interest-formation, and analysis focuses instead on the relationship between expectations and behavior. The norms that evolve from interaction are treated as rules and behavioral regularities which are external to the actors and which resist change because of the transaction costs of creating new ones (1992, p. 416).

Mitzen expands the narrow, traditional view to include the 'black boxed' identity and interest formation, as physical concerns are not sufficient to explain actor decisions. Specifically, physical interests cannot explain why actors choose defection, appearing as aggressors, when they are, in fact, security seekers (Mitzen 2008, p. 358). Crucial to this understanding is the importance of routinization for OS. Mitzen explains that:

Where ontological needs are met by routinized competition, it is no longer accurate to say that states face a physical security dilemma. A state in a true dilemma would prefer cooperation to defection but cannot be sure it won't be exploited. States in routinized competition, on the other hand, are quite sure...they prefer conflict to cooperation, because only through conflict do they know who they are (2008, p. 361).

Actors satisfy their OS needs by continuing routines their identity is dependent on. Such routines are formed from uncertainty about the other state's actions; uncertainty is created when actors do not align with their socially held narrative. Routines therefore retain consistency with narratives held internally and by Others, which are doubly reflected back onto the Self through Self/Other relations, disproportionately and significantly affecting the Self. Actors, including security seekers, will defect when they encounter uncertainty and will learn from this both their own role in the conflict and the likely decision of the other actor. This is routinized and narrativized, alleviating the original uncertainty, and consequently incentivizing repeated defection as the actor gains in OS from each move (Mitzen 2008, p. 359).

Mitzen successfully uses OS to expand upon traditional security by illuminating the relationship between security logic and identity creation. However, Mitzen does not adequately construct her application of OS for the state level in three ways. First, Mitzen overemphasizes the social narrative, or the role of the Other, in identity formation by focusing on social interactions instead of a reflexive understanding of the Self. This makes identity wholly oppositional, homogenizing the sub-state level on which states are based and obscuring the "...political and normative nature of the ontological security process (Steele 2008, p. 17). Second, Mitzen neglects the historical evolution of Giddens' sociologically based theory by considering states as pre-theoretically given units (Krolikowski 2008, p. 124). While Mitzen invokes the importance of temporality (iterations) for identity formation, it is for the purpose of other actors recognizing and reflecting back one's identity. Both factors essentialize the state, making basic aspects of OS redundant. Finally, Mitzen applies OS to crises, instead of the quotidian (Krolikowski 2008, p. 113). While theoretically illuminating, the reality of identity routinization based on crises is implausible. Reactions in crises are unlikely to be equal to the everyday decisions that constitute an actor's identity and would be relatively less threatening than disruption to quotidian routines that compose identities. However, alternative applications of OS to game theory alleviate these pitfalls.

## The Stag Hunt

OS can be explored through game theory while avoiding the pitfalls inherent in Mitzen's application, by utilizing the iterated and non-zero-sum Stag Hunt. In the multi-player game, each actor is a hunter with the choice of hunting hare or deer; hunters hunt hare alone (and without diminishing other hunter's chances) but hunters must work together to hunt deer (Skyrms 2001, p. 31). The deer's high value and the higher likelihood of attaining the deer through cooperation discourages defection. Thus, while cooperation yields less than defection in the security dilemma, the Stag Hunt reverses this relation. The iterated game creates a problem of cooperation, as the 'rational' choice becomes whatever the hunter believes the others will choose. This system opens the possibility for evolution of hunters' rationale (Skyrms 2001, p. 37). Consider the following hypothetical: *in a group of stag and hare hunters, stag hunters learn to cooperate over time and will prosper. If (1) hunters occasionally reconsider their technique and (2) if the structure is reflexive and the learning dynamics healthy, then hare hunters will slowly adapt into stag hunters* (Skyrms 2001, p. 37-38). This hypothetical is dependent on two variables: the allowance of time to evaluate and the non-oppositional structure of the game allowing for the possibility of hunters adapting and cooperating.

### Iterations

Identity formation is inherently temporal (Mitzen 2006, p. 342). Actors must recognize their identity as constant internally, and as recognized and reflected by others who have learned, over time, their identity. This process is better facilitated by the Stag Hunt than Mitzen's security dilemma in two ways. Firstly, the quotidian action of hunting allows for the game to align with Giddens' sociological based thinking more clearly; the normal decision-making process of the hunters are more easily routinized in a stable fashion than the crises decision making of Mitzen's security dilemma (Krolikowski 2008, p. 131). Second, the Stag Hunt provides occasions for hunters to evaluate their decision-making. Wendt posits that "...meanings in terms of which action is organized arise out of interaction," and that "...conceptions of self and interest tend to 'mirror' the practices of significant others over time" (1992, p. 403-404). Therefore, long-term interaction facilitates evaluation and change towards mutual cooperation. Essential for this evaluation, however, is non-oppositional relations, or a non-zero-sum game. Mitzen's ontological security dilemma concedes the possibility of actor's learning over iterated games, yet only for the potential of other's recognizing them and their behavior. Thus, actors

in her game remain stagnant as they are frozen by their relational identities. Mitzen states that, “for a role to constitute an actor and motivate behavior over time, it must be expressed in behavior and that behavior must be recognized by others as fulfilling the role;” consequently, “...a state cannot ‘be’ or sustain its type without its strategic partner acting in a certain way (recognizing it)” (2008, p. 358). The effect of time is therefore for the benefit of the Other and it is unlikely to allow for actor ‘role’ changes in the competitive atmosphere.

### *Others*

The Stag Hunt allows oppositional dichotomies intrinsic to the security dilemma to break down through non-oppositional relations and by being a non-zero-sum game. As aforementioned, Mitzen’s emphasis on the Other both overemphasizes the oppositional dichotomy of actors and obscures the role of the Self. Indeed, this is an endemic issue of OS which Kinnvall identifies as the “...tendency for those seeking ontological security to ‘securitize subjectivity,’ to enact a violent othering which denotes exclusionary and antagonistic differences” (Rossdale 2015, p. 373; Kinnvall 2004, p. 755). The competition of the security dilemma thus promotes securitized subjectivity in the promotion of certainty. Furthermore, in considering Mitzen’s dependence on the Other, Steele contends that, while agents must understand the social world, they are not dependent on it “...in that (1) the screening of ‘relevant’ elements of that social world is in part constituted by an agent’s sense of Self and (2) ...how an agent ‘makes sense’ of those elements – is in part also dependent upon an agent’s updating of information” (2008, p. 59). The Self cannot be wholly oppositional as an internal understanding is requisite to comprehend and learn about the world. An incapacity to learn leads to the loss of agency, as the actor is caught continually reflecting the same information to Others (Steele 2008, p. 59). Therefore, dependence on oppositional relations in Mitzen’s security dilemma deteriorates Self-identity, stagnates agency and promotes aggressive postures in the zero-sum game.

The Stag Hunt’s mitigation of totalizing competition devolves the security dilemma’s Self/Other continuum. Unlike the security dilemma, defection in the Stag Hunt yields a result, although less than that of cooperation, making it a non-zero-sum game; the competitive nature of the security dilemma is thus replaced by incentives for cooperation (Skyrms 2001, p. 34). Therefore, the oppositional relations of Mitzen’s theory are not institutionalized by the Stag Hunt. By freeing actor identities from this inherently antagonistic dichotomy, the Stag Hunt opens the possibility to non-oppositional identities. Browning and Joenniemi find that,



“...while a minimum requirement for any entity’s existence is that it can distinguish itself from other entities, such discrimination need not be based on particular substantive differences nor oppositional” (2013, p. 492). By evading oppositional relations, otherness can be constructed non-antagonistically. Rumelili posits that, “...constructions of difference are situated on multiple dimensions and do not necessarily entail the construction of an Other as a threat” (2015, p. 68). Indeed, by moving beyond securitization of the Other, identities become free to be defined by that other than their relation.

## **Alternative Applications**

### *Identity Disruption*

Having broken down the limitations of Mitzen’s security dilemma by considering the temporality and non-oppositional relations of the Stag Hunt, it is now possible to expand the scope of OS by exploring alternative identities and security conceptions. While the mitigation of the Self/Other continuum allows actors to formulate their own identities, it is not enough for actors to transcend the exclusionary logic of security (Rumelili 2015, p. 64). Aradau posits that emancipatory logic “...activates a different logic based on universal address and recognition. Such a logic disrupts the exclusionary logic of security and, simultaneously, furnishes a principle upon which a new relationality with the other can be conceived” (2004, p. 401). Such emancipation requires a “process of dis-identification, a rupture from the assigned identity and a partaking of a universal principle” (Aradau 2004, p. 402). To ascend to universal principles, the Self must break with social conceptions that deny choice or promote securitization; Steele chooses to embrace the inescapable experience of uncertainty to negate its influence on the Self, creating a ‘subjective flexibility’ that “...eschews safe spaces and completeness in favor of a more ‘radical disruption of the self’” (2008, 62; Rossdale 2015, p. 377). However, Rossdale counters that, Steele still holds OS as a ‘guiding aspiration’ and, therefore, “...the values of angst, contradiction, opacity, and non-autonomy are thus subordinated, conceptualized as impediments to being which might (usefully) be traversed en route to an authentic, autonomous whole” (Rossdale 2015, p. 377). To truly deracinate assigned and enforced identities, epistemic coordinates of OS must be refused (Rossdale 2015, p. 369). Butler envisions this as the questioning of the ‘regime of truth’ of OS:

. . . if I question the regime of truth, I question, too, the regime through which being, and my own ontological status, is allocated. Critique is not merely of a given social practice or a certain horizon of intelligibility within which practices and institutions appear, it also implies that I come into question for myself (2007, p. 23).

Butler seeks to break from limiting and exogenously dictated standards inherent in dominant regimes of truth, and instead promote individual accountability for identities and narratives in a manner that "...prioritizes explorations (and disruptions) of relationality and subjectivation" (Rossdale 2015, p. 377). This exogeneous pursuit allows critical engagement with 'onto-political logic' instead of cyclically reproducing it (Rossdale 2015, p. 377). While the regime of truth operates within traditional security thinking and Mitzen's application as they both create situations of securitization that externalize difference in the pursuit of 'certainty,' the Stag Hunt 'opens' the 'security' process; the non-oppositional relations in the Stag Hunt allow for desecuritized situations through the reversing of the othering process (Browning and Joenniemi 2013, p. 496). The management of threats are thus shared and break with dominant security truths. While such an outcome is not inherent to the Stag Hunt, it is made possible by the open structure.

### *Alternative Outcomes*

The disruption to conventional OS logic allows for consideration of two alternative 'security' strategies that go beyond the binary logic of ontological 'security' and 'insecurity:' asecuritization and resistance. Asecuritization takes the logic of desecuritization one step further, arguing that "...while desecuritization strategies focus on how to escape and move away from the exceptionalist politics of securitization in asserting ontological security, asecuritization lacks directionality and assumes a normalized politics from the start" (Browning and Joenniemi 2013, p. 497). Asecuritization does this by referring "...to the discourses upholding ontological security where questions of security are themselves simply not part of the picture;" security is thus non-motivational, implying the acceptance of "...ambiguity, difference and the inherently fragmentary nature of identity" (Browning and Joenniemi 2013, p. 497). Asecuritization is possible in the Stag Hunt due to the non-oppositional and cooperative climate; if the 'evolution stage' successfully occurs, issues of security effectively disappear, normalizing politics. Importantly, while desecuritization is possible from the start in the Stag Hunt, this research contributes that situations reflecting asecuritization are achievable *over time*

– this does not start with the assumption of ‘normalized politics,’ but does result in a like outcome.

A second strategy of resistance follows the radical disruption of identity posited by Butler. Rossdale uses Haraway’s Cyborg Manifesto to fashion the disruption of regimes into a strategy of resistance “...which holds the subject in a ceaseless and creative irony, an ontological dissonance or discomfort which celebrates incompleteness and expendability as the precondition of otherness” (2015, p. 380). The individual is the focus of critique and can be “...partial, contradictory, permanently unclosed constructions,” and therefore be not defined by ‘onto-political logic’ (Rossdale, 2015, 379). Free from such constraints, the pursuit of individual accountability for unique identities and narratives is possible. The individual thus refuses “ontological security-seeking behavior” in favor of a “ceaseless” experiment of breaking down “...dominant regimes by exploring alternative relations and ways of being” (Rossdale 2015, p. 380). Such resistance creates a new space “...in which subjectivity remains an open (and political) question [and] narratives of security fail to impose themselves and depoliticize ontology” (Rossdale 2015, p. 380). The radical resistance thus allows for a radical asecurty outcome in which identities are unconstrained. The manifestation of such outcomes is ambiguous; when placed within the Stag Hunt, hunters may question the hunt’s structure and instead create a utopian commune with equally distributed labor and goods. Alternatively, and more radically, they may question their very subjectivity as hunters and turn to gathering or, indeed, an omnivorous medley, subject to diachronic change.

## Conclusion

The application of OS illuminates factors obscured by traditional security studies and Mitzen’s security dilemma such as identity and relations. However, the sociological based theory requires such factors, even when applied to the state or collective level. Mitzen fails to properly account for the quotidian and internal nature of identities, instead depending solely on oppositional relations. By supplanting the zero-sum security dilemma with the cooperation inducing Stag Hunt, such gaps are accounted for as the non-exclusionary result schema allows for the evolution and the creation of non-oppositional identities. The Stag Hunt therefore opens the application of OS to alternative forms of identity and ‘security’ outcomes such as asecurty and resistance. The resulting possibilities most aptly reflect the spiritual nature of OS and are fundamentally valuable when applied to IR.

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## **POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE OF THE AMERICAN AND NORTHERN IRISH CIVIL RIGHTS MOMENTS**

Laura Pistarini Teixeira Nunes

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### **ABSTRACT**

In this essay, I will be investigating the reasons why some social movements become armed conflicts while others do not. To do this, I will compare the political and social processes that took place within the Civil Rights Movements in the United States and Northern Ireland. I will begin with an explanation of the basic concepts of social movement theory around which I will construct the historical narrative of the movements in question. Then, I will focus on the historical background and core differences in the emergence of the movements. In a third moment, I will analyze the movement's developments, one at a time, and debate how the processes explained in the methodology section culminate in positive and negative radical flank effects, a concept that is key to explain those different political outcomes.

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### **Introduction**

Racist policies and institutions of the United States have been crushing black communities since always – it is impossible to deny that black genocide is systemic. Undeniably, black communities in the US have passed through uncountable abuses: a forced diaspora, slavery, Black Codes, Jim Crow, resistance to the Civil Rights Movements, and still today, they live in an acutely hostile society marked by the Prison Industrial Complex, police brutality, homelessness, unequal access to education, healthcare and employment, just to quote a few. It is curious to reflect about why, despite the many injustices that have been afflicting Afro-Americans in the course of its history, they have never responded with an armed, open, conflict – even if white supremacists have always battled to make sure that black communities perceived that a real conflict was going on.

To analyze this question more deeply, that is, *why do some (mainly) non-violent social movements become violent, armed, conflicts and others do not*, I will be comparing the Civil Rights Movements in the United States with the one in Northern Ireland. I will use a *Most Similar Systems Design* because, despite their obvious difference (i.e. the Irish Troubles was an

ethno-nationalist conflict that lasted for three decades), those movements held many similarities **before** the ignition of conflict.

In fact, the period that will be analyzed comprehends the roots of the US Civil Rights Movement until **1968** – with the passing of the *Fair Housing Act* days after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. – and from the beginnings of the Irish Civil Rights Movement until **1969**, when violent repression and the Stormont elections marked the brink of the revitalization of ethnonational cleavages that culminated in the explosion of conflict. I hope that this qualitative comparison will be useful to understand the dynamic mechanisms that led those two, quite similar, civil rights movements unfold in two different political outcomes.

### **Methodology and Social Movement Theory**

It would be impossible to draw an effective analysis of the American and Irish Civil Rights Movements without explicating that social movements are, by definition, a dynamic entity. Only by understanding “social movements as heterogeneous networks that develop interactively over time and through different stages of mobilization” (Bosi, 2006, p.82) can we link framing processes and political opportunity structures to explain why a movement’s message, tactics, and goals can change. The factor of dynamicity is particularly important to this paper, once I will try to capture why *initially* non-violent social movements can become, or not, armed conflicts.

In order to explain how movements emerge and develop, I will concentrate on the interactivity of some major concepts in social movement theory. When I will talk about the **framing process**, I will be referring to the “efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action”. (McAdam, 2008, p.6) Those are culturally constructed meanings – frames – and common perceptions of grievances, viewed as essential because they mediate between opportunity, organization, and action. Framing processes tend to be less consciously strategic at the beginning than in a more mature movement, and participants might not even be aware that they are engaged in an actually significant process. However, it is highly unlikely that collective action will take place to address a problem if those frames are missing.

In this direction, **frame activities** are “abstract forms of political rhetoric rather than as belief systems anchored to specific contents” (Diani, 1996, p.1058) and, **frame alignment**, “the integration of **mobilizing messages** with dominant representations of the political environment”. (Diani, 1996, p.1058) Those messages are not static: they reciprocally reflect the interactions of the actors, redefining, and being redefined by identity shifts, new political opportunities, strategies, alliances, and goals. This process can happen multiple times during the development of the movement. For a certain mobilizing message to gain success in a specific period in detriment of others, “the alignment with the dominant master frame configuration that is associated with the dominant political environment is a crucial determinant”. (Diani, 1996, p.1058)

In fact, the **structure of political opportunities** – and **the perception of their existence** – will be dealt with as independent variables because, as they change in the different stages of the movement’s development, they *favor the mobilizing message and/or political identities of some groups over others*. Those groups may bear different opinions on the **legitimacy of the use of violence and armed resistance** – our dependent variable in analyzing the *different political outcomes* of both movements.

At the same time, **structural vulnerability** is an equally important factor in a movement’s emergence and development, since “most social movements and revolutions are set in motion by social changes that render the established political order more vulnerable to receptive challenge”. (McAdam, 2008, p.8) However, those political opportunities are only one of the prerequisites of action, which will not take place without a proper and sufficient **organization**. It is important to point out that the notion of “opportunity” is socially constructed, and only real when perceived as such by a “group of actors sufficiently well organized to act on this shared definition of the situation [...] by setting in motion framing processes that further undermine the legitimacy of the system. [...] Framing processes clearly encourage mobilization, as people seek to organize and act on their growing awareness of the system’s illegitimacy or vulnerability”. (McAdam, 2008, p.8) People organize, mobilize, and act through different **mobilizing structures** – formal or informal collective vehicles and networks – that help shape the organizational dynamics of collective action.

## Historical background: movements' emergence

In 1920, the *Government of Ireland Act* separated the island into two political systems: the Irish Free State (today, the Republic of Ireland) which was independent, and Northern Ireland – formally dependent on the United Kingdom, but that held its own Parliament at Stormont, Belfast. Since then, Northern Ireland had been characterized by an intense polarization between a Unionist majority – Protestant, loyalist, and partitionist – and a Nationalist minority – Catholic and anti-partitionists – that since the partition had been increasingly self-segregated. Indeed, not only the Nationalists were isolated *socially*, as both communities usually lived in different areas, attended different schools, and very commonly practiced endogamy, but the Unionists also monopolized the *political* capital – even in areas where they were the numerical minority, which was possible through the control of housing allocation and the practice of endemic gerrymandering. Besides, the oppressive element of the economic class was important: Protestants were heavily present in particularly important sectors of the economy, which made political participation even harder for Catholics because “after 1945 the local government franchise was restricted to ratepayers (property owners), which was not the case for the rest of the UK”. (Bosi, 2006, p.82) Finally, the Special Powers Act of 1922, which theoretically only gave exceptional authorities to the police in a state of emergency, allowed a further restriction of civil rights, prohibiting meetings and processions and permitting indefinite arrests and internments without an imminent charge or trial, and searches of private property without warrants.

At the beginning of the 1960s, a Civil Rights Movement (CRM) network composed of organizations, groups, and activists began to question discriminatory and segregationist practices with a clearly **reformist message** and non-violent tactics. Their initial **goals'** spotlight was on *constitutional objectives* that would *make the regional political system fairer* by protecting basic freedoms and the equality of citizens; ensuring electoral representation by advocating for universal suffrage and the end of gerrymandering; and providing guarantees for freedom of speech, assembly, and association.

Similarly, **racial segregation** was the rule in the United States. However, it was not only socially but also legally enforced: in 1896, the Supreme Court approved the constitutionality of the practice in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, as long as “separate but equal” facilities were provided. Added to the bloody and cruel history of slavery – outlawed in 1865 with the Thirteenth Amendment – and objectification of black people, the Jim Crow laws restrained African



Americans' accessibility to the most basic services and opportunities such as education, justice, health care, housing, employment, transportation, and political participation (due to discriminatory disenfranchisement). As a result, their communities were particularly vulnerable to poverty, crime, drugs, and diseases, which obstructed the social ascent of African Americans, and fueled more discrimination and stigma.

The return of African American veterans that had fought in a segregated military during the Second World War defending white people's liberty, equality, justice, and democracy abroad was a factor that helped detonate the 20<sup>th</sup> century American CRM, as black soldiers came back to a United States that was still unwilling to provide those rights to their own citizens. African Americans of every societal level demanded equality and rights of access to all of the crucial activities of ordinary life that would permit the full expression of their human dignity: ending police violence, racial oppression, and segregated transportation and school facilities, enabling political participation through the eradication of discriminatory disenfranchisement.

One of the first approaches to undermine the legal foundation of Jim Crow was done within courts, especially with the work of the *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People* (NAACP) – which was even outlawed in some Southern States. Indeed, a vital difference between the CRM in the United States and Northern Ireland is that *de jure* segregation in the US was first questioned in 1954 when the Supreme Court admitted the unconstitutionality of segregation in schools in the case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. This was crucial because incited, for the first time, the feeling within black communities that they had an institutional ally that would have backed up their causes, which was a clear sign of **structural vulnerability**. At the same time, this landmark brought about a countermovement by white Southerners, “Massive Resistance”, to deter desegregation. Federal intervention was needed to enable the enforcement of the court's decision.

One important difference worth pointing out is the fact that the American CRM involved a particularly sensible identity factor that is **race**, marked by centuries of white supremacy that began with the forced diaspora, and the system of slavery, which continued through Jim Crow. When Northern Irish and Black Americans talk about *colonial rule*, this term is **not** perfectly **equivalent** (even if some scholars refer to the term “white negroes” to indicate the way in which Catholic Northern Irish people were treated in the UK). Albeit religious conflicts between Catholics and Protestants had been incredibly violent in Europe, and these religious differences were related to painful **framing activities** that were yet present in the UK in the 20<sup>th</sup> century,

there is no possible comparison between those groups in terms of the hostility of the oppression they suffered. Being black makes one immediately a target because the reason for their “inferiority” is visible, and enslaver and white supremacist institutions ignite particularly violent and oppressive mechanisms that reached the extreme of people’s dehumanization in every possible way – from physical abuse to the wrecking of entire civilizations’ subjectivities. This made those institutions and values particularly hard to fight; in fact, it is no wonder that even if the system of slavery had global reach, the only slave rebellion that turned out to be unquestionably successful was the Haitian Revolution in 1791.

### **Movements’ development between political opportunities and the radical flank effect**

#### *US Civil Rights Movement*

The NAACP, however, was not the only important group in the CRM network in the US. In fact, **organizations such as the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)**, and labor unions such as the *American Federation of Labor (AFL-CIO)* also provided incredibly significant efforts to help accelerate the momentum for passage of federal civil rights legislation.

Their initial mobilizing messages were very similar, at their inception, as they all defended the philosophy of nonviolence, even if they differed in the **internal organization** (leadership models and decision-making processes) and **framing processes**. The SCLC had a highly hierarchical and leader-centered approach, which rendered it difficult for participants to engage in discussions that challenged the fundamental practices of the organization. Its leadership was mainly composed of high-middle class, Black church members, exponents that had an easier time negotiating with whites and with executive institutions. Indeed, their main figure was Martin Luther King Jr.:

“The Kennedy and Johnson administrations and SCLC leadership developed and maintained a cooperative relationship in the early to mid-1960s. Although on several occasions King and SCLC did openly criticize the Kennedy administration for its inaction, [they] occasionally honored the Kennedy and Johnson administrations’ requests to have moratoriums on civil rights demonstrations at critical periods in local desegregation campaigns.” (Umoja, 1999, p.568)

In December 1955, with the arrest of Rosa Parks in Alabama, King came up as the leader of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the first mass direct action during the contemporary CRM, which would present a template for other nonviolent protests and civil disobedience initiatives across the country.<sup>1</sup> In August 1963, the SCLC was key in organizing and mobilizing the *March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom*, which ended up helping to gain momentum for the approval of the ***Civil Rights Act in 1964***.

Indeed, the SCLC leadership relied completely on the **community mobilization tradition**, centered on organizing mass mobilizations to create major nation-wide events, demonstrations, and marches that would force the participation of the media and the positioning of national leadership. This dynamic was intensified when King became an influential national and international personality, which allowed him to attract great numbers of people and to make major tactical and strategic decisions without consulting the local activists and communities – often failing to obtain their demands in detriment of achieving a federal civil rights legislation.

On the other hand, SNCC and CORE, generally seen and portrayed as troublemakers, did not enjoy amicable relations with Washington. Moreover, they were more secular and democratic in nature, consequently allowing the composition, consciousness, and ideological orientation of its voting membership to reform the organization from below (which was not possible in the leader-centered framework of the SCLC). They were mainly composed of students, local activists, workers, farmers, and sharecroppers, generally of lower classes and more vulnerable to radicalization. Undoubtedly, those were preeminent organizations committed to the elimination of segregation in the South, starting with the *Sit-In Movement* of 1960 and the *Freedom Rides*, in the next year.

By 1965, however, even after the passing of the *Civil Rights* and *Voting Rights Acts* months earlier, the members of the SNCC and CORE started to feel the inefficiency of nonviolence. In fact, in most of the south, white supremacist terror was still the order of the day, and people of color often received less than minimal protection from the federal government and local authorities. As people progressively began to question the applicability of nonviolent methods to their reality, a growing number of CORE workers in the South were arming themselves for protection. A more militant variety of activism emerged, based on black self-reliance, cultural pride, self-defense in the face of racial violence, and, conclusively, Black Nationalism – whose

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<sup>1</sup> The boycott ended successfully in November 1956, when a ruling of the Supreme Court established that segregation on public buses was unconstitutional.

most influential proponent was Malcolm X. As the cultural climate shifted, debates were held within those organizations on the adoption of armed self-defense as a legitimate and viable tactic in the struggle to achieve civil and human rights, thereby rejecting nonviolence as the principal method and philosophy of the civil rights movement. In 1966, their strategy ultimately changed, owing to their **democratic organizational structures and decision-making process**.

In this perspective, the *March Against Fear* from Memphis (Tennessee) to Jackson (Mississippi), held in June, “represented a significant shift in the character and balance of forces in the southern civil rights movement”. (Umoja, 1999, p.558) During the organization of the march, the SNCC, supported by CORE, urged to downplay white participation and proposed the arrangement of armed security for protesters, to be provided by *Deacons for Defense and Justice*, a Louisiana-based paramilitary organization. Martin Luther King Jr., chairman of the SCLC, was reluctant and continued to argue for the practice of nonviolence and the necessity to take advantage of multiracial participation in the marches, but ended up conceding to maintain the unity of the movement. The involvement of *Deacons* is considered a shift in the American CRM, which has been mistakenly portrayed by scholars and mass media as a nonviolent movement. Actually, it was a complex social movement that advocated for basic citizenship and human rights by employing diverse tactics in its different phases. Granted that nonviolent action may have been possibly more common overall, every so often armed self-defense, retaliatory violence, and other forms of armed resistance were applied too.

This shift towards a radicalization of mobilizing tactics was intrinsically related to the **perception of political opportunities** by African Americans, as King himself summarized:

“I’m trying desperately to keep the movement nonviolent, but I can’t keep it nonviolent by myself. Much of the responsibility is on the white power structure to give meaningful concessions to Negroes’. Consistent with King’s sentiments, SCLC did not abandon its advocacy of nonviolence and did not publicly embrace armed self-defense.” (Umoja, 1999, p.563)

Indeed, the SCLC leadership, with their mediational advantage, believed that Black Power would alienate the general white population (especially liberals) and tried their best to dissociate itself from tactics of armed resistance. This attitude seems to go in line with McAdam’s four dimensions of political opportunity structures, composed of: “the relative openness or closure

of the institutionalized political system; the stability of that broad set of elite alignments that typically undergrid a polity; the presence of elite allies; the state's capacity and propensity to repression". (McAdam, 2008, p.10)

We cannot know what a continuation of King's leadership would have meant for the movement. His assassination in April 1968 brought not only national mourning but also anger and riots that led to a further radicalization of the movement. President Johnson, afraid of the consequences, pushed for the accelerated passing of the *Fair Housing Act*, only a week after the crime. In fact, many authors indicate the presence of a **Positive Radical Flank Effect** during the entirety of the American CRM, endorsing the evidence that the **framing** and **fragmentation** of the movement in moderates and radicals – and constant threat of violence of the latter – was **the true motor that pushed for political concessions** like the acts of 1964, 1965 and 1968.

The **Positive Radical Flank Effect** relates to beneficial repercussions to moderate Social Movement Organizations (SMO) in terms of funding<sup>2</sup>, credibility, legitimation, and reinforcement of their bargaining power in the presence of a fragmentation of the movement in moderates and radicals. Indeed, Gupta (2002) presents two preconditions to RFE, fragmentation and framing, and three variables to explain and predict their political outcomes: "the way moderates signal their differences from radicals, the vulnerability of targets, and the cost to targets of conceding to movement demands". (Ellefsen, 2018, p.114)

In other words, American leadership accepted to make concessions in strategic moments, when ignoring the movement was explicitly unfeasible – otherwise, the risks would have been too high. In fact, James Cone states that Malcom X was well aware of this mechanism and felt that the best thing he could do to help Martin Luther King Jr. was to keep a fiery, militant rhetoric (Nepstad, 2015). Indeed, the American government was more prone to accept moderate requests when faced with radicals' demands, consequently **avoiding the ignition of violent conflict**.

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<sup>2</sup> Haines, in his paper "Black Radicalization and the Funding of Civil Rights: 1957–1970.", proves that the effects of black radicalization were more complex than a sole "white backlash" as it was commonly sustained – in fact, the emergence of radical groups actually stimulated a boost in financial support by white groups to more moderate black organizations, especially during the late 1960s.

*Northern Irish Civil Rights Movement*

Bosi (2006) has interestingly analyzed in his paper “The Dynamics of Social Movement Development: Northern Ireland's Civil Rights Movement in The 1960s”, how an anti-sectarian and reformist civil rights message, prevalent at the beginning of the mobilization (due to the perceived opportunities in the political context of the 1960s) shifted into an exclusivist Nationalist one during the 1970s. His explanation blames the **changes in the political opportunity structure** – the increased use of police repression, lack of political responsiveness, and counter mobilization – which pushed for a **framing process** that encouraged the **emergence of mobilizing structures** that accentuated the traditional ethnonational divisions; revanchist, anti-partitionist messages; and **favoring the use of radical tactics**. In other words, the fact that the government did not ingeniously avail of political momentums during the development of the movement by making strategic concessions brought about the ignition of the conflict, **which seems to be the opposite of what happened with the American CRM.**

From the 1920s to the 1960s, the partition issue monopolized the sociopolitical system in Northern Ireland. There was little space for groups that did not define themselves along the country's ethnonational cleavage: in fact, this political system was characterized by an imperfect two-party system dominated by the Ulster Unionist Party (UPP) and the Nationalist Party (NP) (Bosi, 2006). The NP was conservative, anti-partitionist, pro-clerical, and often refused to participate in the building of the State due to the historical grievances and injustices suffered – which allowed the consolidation of a sociocultural ghetto. Lacking the opportunity and the determination to push for reformist policies within Northern Ireland's institutions, the political system was crystallized into a Unionist establishment that demonized and portrayed the NP as disloyal. Therefore, the sectarian environment was crucial to the domination of the UPP, since the debate on the partition distracted the population from practical civil rights issues such as voting rights, housing, employment, and explains why they perceived the emergence of the CRM as a threat, which culminated in violent repression and unionist countermovement.

As the 1960s began, there were considerable conjectural factors at the macro level that created conditions for transcending the old cleavages, such as the Khrushchev Thaw; the U.S. Black civil rights movement, and the election of the Labor government in 1964. Moreover, locally, the decline of Northern Ireland's staple industries caused economic difficulties that helped destabilize the political alignments. Electoral support for parties that were not positioned on the

partition issue increased significantly, which made the Unionist élite increasingly preoccupied, as they feared to lose their majority privileges to more moderate parties:

“The new Prime Minister, Terence O’Neill (1963-1969), acted in accordance with these calculations and, in order to maintain the UUP’s political power, opened a palliative process of “rhetorical” social reforms and better relations with the Nationalist community. His goals were, first, to recover the Unionist working-class vote and, second, to relaunch unionism as a political project for the future of Northern Ireland.” (Bosi, 2006, p.87)

However, his policies were received with criticism and dissent from the more conservative Unionists and ignited a reactionary countermovement, making the internal divisions explicit. This shift made the minority community progressively more optimistic, as the **structural fragility** and the **loss of relevance of the traditional political divisions seemed to open space for political opportunities**, especially through direct action, which brought about the emergence of **reformist mobilizing messages** that prioritized political realignment and the necessity to engage with the political institutions.

Indeed, the heterogeneous network that ascended established institutional and political channels to articulate grievances and claimed for civil rights and social justice reforms through legal, nonviolent, tactics. Nationalist reformers, socialist republicans, progressive Unionists, liberals, trade unionists, and Communist activists constituted the network. Their ideological differences were **framed** by a sense of belonging, solidarity, and cooperation within the civil rights’ cause, as they felt united against common enemies: the Northern Irish political system and its discriminatory practices, sectarianism, and the hegemonic structure of the Unionist establishment and NP’s abstentionist tactics. Through anti-sectarianism, Marxism, trade unionism, anti-imperialism, and nonviolent, new-left and student movement principles, they wished to create an inclusive and polycentric collective identity that transcended the old ethnonational divisions of the region.

The CRM network sent letters to the Westminster and Stormont parliaments; filed lists of demands; gathered petitions; conducted leaflet campaigns; and held public meetings; but after years of inertia, the Unionist establishment seemed unable to deliver reforms on the end of gerrymandering, fair allocation of houses and jobs, and other policy issues. Increased Nationalist resentment coincided with the worldwide commotion of 1968, and CRM activists began to wonder if unconventional methods of political contention could influence public policy and opinion more efficiently since they were not allowed in through institutional means.

The **mobilizing message became progressively antisystem** and seemed better able to respond to the political opportunities of 1968: challenging the legitimacy of the political system and stressing the necessity to pressure the élites through the mobilization of street protests, communal marches, and parades in an attempt to gain media attention.

The watershed in the radicalization of the movement happened with the police brutality and repression exercised by the *Royal Ulster Constabulary* against unarmed protesters during a civil rights march in Londonderry, on October 5, 1968. Indeed, this episode proved that the establishment was not willing to listen and stirred up further mobilizations, having a significant role in fostering a new sense of common identity, solidarity, and feelings of resentment against ethnonational oppression between the CRM and the Nationalist community, especially students, at the cost of alienating most of the moderate Unionists who had sympathy for the cause (Bosi, 2006).

In fact, the majority community perceived the violence used by the RUC as proportional, not only claiming loyalty for the public institutions but also organizing a countermovement that asked for tougher repression of the Nationalists. Interactively, the establishment portrayed the **CRM as a threat to Northern Ireland's status quo**, branding the movement as a Republican-Communist conspiracy that aimed at overthrowing the democratic political institutions. As a result, the Northern Irish society was brought back to the past ethnonational cleavages that progressively eroded the minorities' trust in the institutions and ultimately painted the establishment itself as their enemy: a new political framework that could sustain conflict for decades (Dochartaigh, 2005) was formed due to the changing political opportunities and the radicalized mobilizing message.

Preoccupied with the unpredictability of the circumstances, the Unionist administration chose a **strategy of repression and reform**. O'Neill yielded a program of reforms that tackled most of the CRM's demands, wishing to split the network by appeasing the moderates, since the ideological differences inside the CRM and competition for the same support base and public opinion sectors between moderates and radicals were starting to become more visible. As a response to those concessions, moderates advocated for a truce that entailed the suspension of agitation to give the reforms a chance and allow the normalization of the situation. The Radicals did not agree and set up a march between Belfast and Londonderry to protest sectarianism, at the beginning of January 1969, that would cut across both Nationalist and Unionist villages. Loyalists interpreted it as a confrontational tactic and countered with brutality, which was



exposed by international media. The riots and barricades lasted various days, and by then it was obvious how the polarization of Northern Ireland was mutating into communal disorder.

The revitalization of traditional ethnonational divisions was confirmed by the results of the Stormont parliament's elections in February 1969, when support dropped for political parties that did not identify themselves on the partition issue. This had to do with a **framing process**, fomented by a perception of **poor opportunities** for autonomous action and by a revitalized Nationalist **mobilizing message** that was confrontational, communal, and anti-partitionist, that at that stage changed the composition of the movement. Appealing to participants from the Nationalist "ghettos", which came from different backgrounds in comparison to members of the CRM in its early phase, and whose **grievances** were not related to voting rights, housing issues, and employment access anymore, but that **regarded policing and internment issues**. Their indignation and moral outrage **justified the use of violence as a legitimate political means**, and the movement's political **goals** passed from civil rights reforms to the overthrow of the Unionist State and the subsequent unification of Ireland – allowing no political space for any kind of reform suggested by moderates.

It appears that the **profound fragmentation** of the CRM, which allowed no room for moderates to take advantage of the radical message and accept the government's political concessions, was key in bringing about a **Negative Radical Flank Effect**. Allied, and perhaps concatenated by that, the **securitization** of the CRM destructed the possibility of negotiation and caused further escalation:

"Securitization, first outlined in depth by Wæver in 1995, refers to the discursive construction of threat. More specifically, securitization may be defined as a process in which an actor declares a particular issue, dynamic or actor to be an 'existential threat' to a particular referent object. If accepted as such by a relevant audience, this enables the suspension of normal politics and the use of emergency measures in responding to that perceived crisis." (Williams et al., 2018, p.69)

As Nationalist activists were framed as terrorists and systemically targeted,

"Defensive resistance became the main preoccupation of the movement, not only as a way to protect Nationalist neighborhoods from violent attacks, but also to create and reinforce solidarity and mutual support – to indirectly increase activists' commitment to the social movement network at a time when risk of injury and social condemnation were reasons for disengagement." (Bosi, 2006, p.94)

As both sides believed in the dangerousness of the other, the movement saw the emergence of new leadership that not only justified but also saw political violence as the only possible and legitimate mean to achieve their goals, **almost as if the securitization process worked as a self-fulfilling prophecy**. By then, the scenario in Northern Ireland became dominated by full-scale violence and sectarianism, with no space available for civil rights and social justice themes, and the two groups' clashes turned into a matter of survival.

It may be interesting to expand the comparison of both movements by making further investigations on the securitization of the Black Panther Party. Hue Percy Newton himself stated that the founding of the party aimed to counter perceived existential threats to the black community and, reciprocally, the American establishment sold the movement as the greatest threat to US security. These dynamics also appear analogous to the ones that took place in that phase of Northern Ireland's Troubles.

## Conclusion

Even if *de jure* segregation in the US was progressively torn with the acts of the 1960s, *de facto* segregation is still very real today, and the goals of full social, economic, and political equality still have not been reached. Just like enslaver institutions were transposed in Jim Crow Laws, the oppression of African Americans flows almost liberally through today's American institutions. A good example of that could be the Nixon administration's War on Drugs, which served to criminalize black communities. Today, the same result is achieved through the Industrial Prison Complex and police brutality.

Finally, it seems that political structures can afford to ignore social movements' requests up until a certain brink, a range within which the government can avoid paying the costs of making concessions. In this logic, the interactions between moderate and radical wings play a vital role, and when the CRM network perceives a situation as the last straw, usually due to excessive repression, a growing sense of inefficiency of actions that go through peaceful and institutional channels may take place, and we can see a shift towards the appeal of violent tactics by radicals. A decisive element seems to be a capable mediational fraction that can use the fear caused by radicals to push for spaces in the political structures that can appease hardcore goals by making cautious political concessions.

This comparison shows that the American government was, perhaps, unfortunately, incredibly capable to navigate those dynamics and make minimal concessions as later as possible; and that the Northern Irish establishment, in contraposition, took excessive risks with their late concessions, attempts to fragment the movement, and securitization processes. This panorama, however, is not reassuring: how many George Floyds will still have to die for governments to take social justice requests seriously?

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## **GREAT POWER RESPONSIBILITY FOR CLIMATE CHANGE: THE MISSING ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper aims to discuss great power responsibility in the context of climate change negotiations within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It considers an English School perspective on great powers identity arguing that from greater power derives greater responsibilities in international affairs, with a focus on the security dimension. Thereafter, it demonstrates how climate change is increasingly regarded as a security issue by introducing the discourse on environmental security and its related debate, with an identification of the topic within the human security realm. As a result, major powers are expected by the international community to invest bigger efforts in tackling this challenge and a certain level of accountability is required.

Are these claims satisfied? After a UNFCCC process' overview and brief assessments on the U.S., China and EU contributions to this process, I conclude that great powers are barely fulfilling their climate responsibilities. Moreover, a persistent leadership vacuum makes it impossible to address the problem with a suitable and effective global strategy.

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### **Introduction**

The concept of responsibility has always been crucial within the international debate and the increasingly central topic of climate change puts on further discussions. Since the beginning of the climate negotiations within the United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDRs) has been regarded as a guideline and the main condition for a more inclusive global response (Kopra, 2019). Generally, it is based on the division between developed and developing countries, allocating more duties to the former and less to the latter. However, this distinction is increasingly contested by many parties and the evolving structure of power relations inevitably calls for a reform in the allocation of international climate responsibility, especially in relation to emerging countries.

In particular, the role of great powers in climate negotiations emerged as a dominant issue among academics (Kopra, 2019, Bernstein, 2020) since the lack of a strong leadership is getting more and more evident after the great expectations on Paris Agreement's outcomes. Even if informally accepted, major powers share greater responsibilities than other states in guaranteeing security and stability in the international order. However, as outlined by Bernstein (2020), it seems that great powers' environmental responsibility is declining, not only because of the United States' withdrawal from the Paris accord, but also due to the conservative positions of other major actors. For instance, the 2018 G7 final communiqué does not mention any type of environmental responsibility, while the 2015 G7 draft emphasized that "The G7 feels a special responsibility for shaping our planet's future", marking a shift in the acknowledgement of climate accountability.

Although the necessity of an effective climate regime is getting urgent, major countries seem reluctant to endorse their responsibility, leaving global expectations unmet.

### **Great power responsibility in IR theories**

The notion of great power was first introduced during the 1814-1815 Congress of Vienna to define those European countries recognized to have a greater amount of power than other states and thus being part of a "special" group (Bukovansky et al., 2012). This status was mainly on the basis of their bigger material capabilities and the then emergence of a "great power principle" generated the need to define in practice which type of role these actors should fulfill. It was stated that great powers are entitled to special rights in virtue of their share of power, but they also have to endorse unique responsibilities within the Concert of Europe, meaning the preservation of the balance of power and the territorial resolution established in 1814 (Bukovansky et al., 2012).

In 1919, President Woodrow Wilson acknowledged the importance of great power responsibility in view of the maintenance of peace and stability within its project of the League of Nations; however, the great power doctrine reached its popularity in 1930's and 1940's when several agreements emphasized this dimension (Bukovansky et al., 2012). The framework of the United Nations with the special role of the Security Council's seats reflects perfectly the great power mindset of the "Big Three".

Due to its increasing diffusion in diplomatic practices, International Relations theories started soon including great power discourse within their theoretical understanding of countries relations.

Realists stressed the material dimensions of great powers, especially in reference to their military capabilities and their projection at a regional or even global level, and they perceived this “greatness” to be applicable to any kind of global issue (Bernstein, 2020). This vision is in contrast with the one proposed by constructivists, which identify issue-related material and ideational structure thus conceiving different material and ideational capabilities to great powers. Moreover, in virtue of these recognized capabilities, special rights and responsibilities are legitimized by other states to great powers.

The English School gives a broad definition considering realist and constructivist features: they outline both material strengths of great powers and the social acknowledgment they need from others to exercise their privileges and duties. (Kopra, 2019). Hadley Bull (1980) outlines certain characteristics which all great powers share. Firstly, great powers have higher material resources than other states, for example military or economic strengths but also soft power. Secondly, the status of great power makes sense only in relation to other states’ statuses and it is based on the “great power club” membership, which implies a hierarchical structure in international society. Finally, great powers are recognized to have special rights and duties. Rights include a primary position in the processes of decision making within international institutions, such as a seat in the UN Security Council or voting rights in the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Duties are expected to be the maintenance and preservation of international order and its wellbeing by including other states’ interests while achieving national ones and promoting peace and security (Bull, 1980). The key ES concept of international society, though, is in contrast with constructivists as it involves the perception of international norms and practices (primary institutions) as a whole and interlinked with values and beliefs on which the international system is based.

Responsibility neither static nor given but to be constantly negotiated within the great power club, thus resulting deeply affected by states’ interests, principles and security orientation (Kopra, 2019). For instance, one major development has been the concept of human security and the following doctrine of Responsibility to Protect (R2P), which revolutionized international and state responsibilities. As Bernstein (2020) points out, a failure in the fulfillment of such duties would result not only in a decline of legitimacy towards great powers

and global institutions, but also in diffused criticism such as in the case of China's opposition to UN Security Council actions.

### **Climate change as a security issue**

Nowadays, a key topic in the UN agenda and at the center of great power responsibility debate is the global challenge posed by climate change, regarded as a security issue. In 1992 the UN Security Council stated that “non-military sources of instability in the economic, social, humanitarian and ecological fields have become threats to peace and security”, recognizing for the first time new security dimensions including the environmental one. As a result at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, studies about environmental security and its nexus with climate change became popular and more accurate. As Detraz and Betsill (2009) point out, two separated discourses have been elaborated on it, and they offer two different conceptualizations of the link between environment and security: environmental conflicts and environmental security. The former is a more recent one and considers a traditional security framework finding the link in those conflicts generated by environmental degradation, especially by a lack of resources, which undermine human wellbeing. However, the focus is mainly on sovereign states and their integrity instead of on the world population as a whole, thus policy-making would be geared to short-term adaptation strategies so as to avoid conflicts and maintain national stability. Homer-Dixon (1994-1999) describes adaptation as a fundamental step to tackle conflicts; it involves resources substitution and conservation as to adjust to a changing world. On the other hand, environmental security is a broader concept as it takes into account a large variety of threats generated by environmental changes occurring around the globe which could hurt human lives. Since human vulnerability is placed at the core of the debate, the 1994 UN Development Program report labelled environmental security as an independent area of human security. For instance, environmental changes have an impact on accelerating globalization, spreading diseases and generating alarm over the sustainability of development and population increases. Unlike environmental conflicts, in this case policies are long-term strategies which take action on human behavior and natural processes and stress the humanitarian dimension over the national one. Undoubtedly, states play a crucial role in the implementation of policies but also international institutions and non-state actors are relevant in this regard, and sometimes these other entities above or below the state could be appointed the authority to manage human security actions.



What these two orientations have in common is the nexus with climate change since it is considered the onset of both environmental conflicts and environmental security, and it acts as a threat multiplier.

Although these two discourses differ in several aspects, like the political and ontological ones, in the international debate on climate action, environmental conflict discourse is treated as part of the broader environmental security one (Detraz and Betsill, 2009). The first real acknowledgement of the climate-conflicts correlation occurred in the 2007 Security Council meeting as 27 out of the 55 speakers mentioned it, but all within the broader discourse of environmental security. Furthermore, in the UNFCCC report about the adoption of the Paris Agreement (2016), adaptation is recognized as a key contribution to long-term strategies to account for the immediate need of developing countries, and this effort should be promoted by states with a transparent and inclusive approach. Thus, it is clear how even the environmental conflicts policy-making has been embedded in the dominant one.

The discussion about how environmental degradation and climate change have been introduced into a security discourse, it is useful to understand why climate change action is or at least should be, a matter of great power responsibility and considered in the “high politics” sphere.

Since the environmental security discourse is the dominant one in the international debate and as presented above it affects human security with a strong international dimension, it consequently calls for a global response led by great powers, which because of their position have greater responsibilities.

### **The development of the climate change action and great powers**

The United Nations Framework Conference on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is the most important institution committed to the challenge of climate change. It was created after the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) carried out in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992; this meeting has marked the starting point of global cooperation on environment since 172 states representatives attended it together with thousands of NGOs’ advocates (Kopra, 2019). The agreements drafted during this conference such as Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and first among them the UNFCCC, are considered as universal milestones of the successive accords. Moreover, the fundamental principles of environmental law which still apply today were forged in Rio, like the principle of sustainable

development (principles 1, 4,6,8) the principle of no harm (principle 2), and the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDRs, principle 7) resulted as the most controversial one. It relies, indeed, on the distinction between developed and developing countries and their unequal contribution to environmental degradation, which would lead to different measures and restriction's level.

The first review of the FCCC commitment known as Conference of the Parties 1(COP-1) was held in Berlin and produced the so-called "Berlin Mandate". It highlighted the necessity to set quantified emissions limitations for developed countries and more ambitious environmental policies for the next century; this project was then elaborated by a group ad hoc and presented at COP-3 in Kyoto.

In December 1997 was adopted the Kyoto Protocol, entered into force in February 2005 after 192 states ratified it with the United States being the only country not doing it. The reason for this choice by the then Clinton administration lies in the legally binding and specific measures stated in the protocol applying to industrialized countries with the aim to limit their greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions. An appropriate schema for monitoring and recording emissions was designed; the average reduction target was set at 5 percent of the emissions registered in each country in 1990 and applied for the period 2008-2012 (UNFCCC, 2008); moreover, a flexible mechanism was established along with a control and procedure mechanism. This differentiated treatment was possible under the CBDR principle defined in Rio, and it has been the condition that generated such a positive worldwide commitment (Breidenich, Magraw, Rowley and Rubin, 1998).

Another noteworthy meeting was the COP-13 held in Bali in 2007, where the nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs) were proposed for developing countries as their support to the climate change challenge was then considered fundamental since countries like China and India were major emitters. However, NAMAs were neither legally binding nor compulsory, but totally voluntary and nationally defined (Kopra, 2019). In addition, the control mechanism established for NAMAs, the measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) was then renegotiated during the 2009's COP-15 in Copenhagen, when the BASIC group (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) acted jointly to renegotiate it, obtaining a revised mechanism considered less intrusive in their sovereignty.

The distinction between industrialized countries (Annex I) and developing one (non-Annex I) was formally eliminated during the Durban conference in 2011, but in practice developing countries are still not bound to any kind of restrictions.

Further achievements were registered in 2014 at COP-20 with the Lima accord, signed by 187 countries. The almost universal participation could be seen as a symptom of the growing awareness of climate change discourse considering that all parties were obliged to commit to the intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs), with ambitious efforts required by all countries (Kopra, 2019).

In 2015 at COP-21 in Paris was signed the Paris Agreement, a real landmark in global and multilateral efforts on the environment. It entered into force in November 2016 and its main goal is to limit global warming at a level below 2 or even 1.5 degree Celsius on a 5-year cycle basis. One key feature of this accord are the national determined contributions (NDCs), according to which each country has to submit to UNFCCC its plan to reduce GHG emissions and its adaptation strategy (UNFCCC, 2016). Along with NDCs, countries must formulate and communicate by 2020 their long-term low greenhouse emissions development strategies (LT-LEDS). The both long and short-term policy structure is consistent with the environmental security policies discussed in the previous paragraph. The Paris Agreement also provides a mechanism for financial, technical and capacity building support by developed countries to developing ones; this is a characteristic which developed during the entire UNFCCC process and that has been enforced in this accord.

The Paris framework is the one regulating the ongoing environmental regime, and it has been embraced with enthusiasm and great expectations. However, almost six years after the deal many political and economic events have altered its efficiency and the efficacy, making it clear that the lack of a climate leadership represents a problem for the process. Thus, it is useful to analyse what has been the contribution of great powers and if they acted in a responsible way.

### *The United States*

The U.S position in the climate change process has always been checkered. Since 1970's with the foundation of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the United States' support to

climate change science was relevant and crucial for the successive developments and in 1992 they signed the UNFCCC hoping for further cooperation in the field. However, in 1997 the Clinton administration didn't ratify the Kyoto Protocol making it difficult its application; in fact, in order for the deal to enter into force, countries providing for the 55% of the 1990 global emissions had to ratify it (UNFCCC). After Russia ratification in 2004 and the application of the protocol, the United States became the only industrialized country which didn't take part in it. Reasons for this choice lie in the binding nature of the limits and in the CBDRs principle applied in Kyoto: in 1997, indeed, the Senate passed a resolution calling for an equal treatment between developed and developing countries and therefore the imposition of binding measure for the latter too (Ezroj, 2011). The Kyoto outcome was inconsistent with U.S. requests and therefore the ratification was missed.

The U.S. stance under President Bush moved even more faraway from climate change negotiations. Not only he remarked that the protocol exempts major emitters like China and India from mandatory restrictions, but also that energy costs would have risen as a result of climate actions. The Bush presidency determined the very end of American leadership in the building process of a global climate regime.

With the election of Barack Obama in 2009 climate change was reconsidered in the U.S. political agenda. Ambitious GHG emissions and fuel efficiency standards were set and in June 2013 was announced the Climate Action Plan (PACP), a policy draft regulating climate change both nationally and internationally (Kienast, 2015). Environmentalists and the whole international community had expected Obama to forge a new path towards climate cooperation and a significant step forward; the 2014 US-China joint statement on climate change seemed to be a symbolic acknowledgment of great power responsibilities and a good premise of the Paris conference the following year (Kopra, 2019).

However, a major turning point was marked by the election of President Trump at the White House, who carried out a political agenda without any commitment to global environmental issues together with a strong delegitimization campaign toward climate change science. In 2017 he announced the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement generating strong criticism worldwide.

Nowadays, newly elected President Biden seems intent to restore the U.S. role in UNFCCC and its global climate image and it was a pillar of his agenda during the elections. Soon after being sworn in as president, he rejoined the Paris deal, and on Earth Day in April 2021 he organized

a virtual summit with 40 major countries' leaders to discuss the climate change crisis and new far-reaching goals.

Is the United States global climate leadership back? Undoubtedly, Biden has shown a renewed enthusiasm and activism, but it still has to be proved throughout his mandate. Generally, in the last two decades Washington has hardly met international expectations and it's the only industrialized country to have withdrawn from major accords making even harder the development of environmental security. As a recognized great power which forged the present international liberal system and its major multilateral institutions which played an unprecedented role in granting stability and security and fostering cooperation in the last 75 years, the United States are essential in climate change negotiations.

### *China*

Although China's stance and contribution have changed positively throughout the UNFCCC process, its position remains ambiguous. Since the 1992 UNCED in Rio, China presented itself as the main advocate of developing countries' interests and started building its environmental diplomacy of which guidelines were defined the year before in 1991, during the Beijing Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development with 41 developing countries participating. The result was the Beijing Declaration, a manifesto which called for no binding measures for developing countries as it recognized the right to development with financial assistance and technology transfer, as well as no interference in internal affairs (Kopra, 2019). The conference helped build a shared position between those parties and their demands were accepted; therefore, China ratified UNFCCC in 1994.

In 1995 at COP-1, Chinese delegation started questioning the scientific basis of climate change supported by Brazil, India and the United States, opposing EU and small islands concerns:

Scientifically, as Article 4.1 [of UNFCCC] has stated, there still exist some 'uncertainties regarding the causes, effects, magnitude, and timing of climate change'. This is common knowledge. Based on this knowledge, we should be very prudent in future action. (Chinese Delegation 1995, quoted in Johnston 1998)

Despite its criticism, Beijing signed the Berlin Mandate, and later ratified the Kyoto Protocol.

Naturally, China has been and still is a great supporter of the CBDRs principle and opposed the Kyoto flexibility mechanism describing it as a means for industrialized states to escape their responsibilities. Moreover, it firmly rejected any attempt to be supervised or bound to any specific commitment; for instance, during 2009 COP-15 China and other developing countries refused MRV on NAMAs as they are under national competence.

During COP-21 in Paris China played a crucial role and demonstrated itself of being constructive and cooperative for the conclusion of the climate agreement, and China's Foreign Minister spokesman Hong Lei accomplished "China's sense of responsibility as a major country in tackling climate change" (Kopra, 2019).

Even though China can't be considered a developing country anymore, it continues positioning itself as such stressing that "China has never separated itself from developing countries and will never do so" (Wang, 2013). On the other hand, the Chinese international identity-building process is more addressed to forge a great power image as witnessed by several declarations and cooperation projects in Asia-Pacific. For example, at the UN Climate Summit in 2014 Zhang Gaoli said that "responding to climate change is what China needs to do to achieve sustainable development at home as well as to fulfill its international obligations as a responsible major country", while Xi Jinping at the 2014 APEC Summit stated that as "its overall national strength grows, China will be both capable and willing to provide more public goods for the Asia-Pacific and the world" (Xi, 2014). It is clear, though, that Beijing is increasingly portraying itself as a great power, since the lavishing of public goods, intended as peace, security and stability of the international order, is a dominant characteristic of major countries.

This dualistic identity of developing country-great power explains why China can't be considered a responsible great power in the climate change process. Although its contribution has grown since 1992, the refusal of any binding commitment, international control and verification mechanism, the stress on sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs, mark Beijing as not willing to take greater responsibilities.

### *The European Union*

Grouping 27 countries, the European Union is the third largest CO<sub>2</sub> emitter after China and the U.S. Given that it is part of Annex I, its members are under legally-binding reductions and they

play a vital role in providing financial and technological resources to less developed states.

Since the foundation of UNFCCC, the EU has been regarded as a constructive actor within climate negotiations and its legitimization in the field has grown enormously. After the U.S. reduced their engagement at the end of the 20th century, the EU started both presenting itself and being considered as a leader in climate change issues especially in post-Kyoto negotiations (Kilian, Elgstrom, 2010).

However, this leading role has proven to be weaker than expected. At COP-15 in Copenhagen, the European ambitious mitigation objectives found scarce support from both the U.S. and major developing countries like China and India which shared a common position and sidelined EU demand of a common legally-binding commitment to keep the global temperature increase below 2°C (Groen, 2015). In addition, the conservative position on financial aids which called for all parties to contribute except for least developed countries, saw a firm opposition from the group of Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDCs) which claimed for more financial support. A better result was thus obtained at COP-21 in Paris, with more states agreeing with EU proposals (Groen, 2015).

Generally, the gap between public intentions and actions has been criticized a lot in recent years especially concerning financial aid to non-Annex I countries and it has been frequently depicted as an incoherent actor and internally divided (Kilian, Elgstrom, 2010). In this regard the lack of a strong international personality representing the regional organization makes it even harder to build a responsible great power image worldwide. Besides, the concept of environmental security has formally entered EU discourse only in 2008 by including it in the review of the European Security Strategy (Stang and Dimsdale, 2017), and has not been considered as an “high politics” issue until the EU Global Strategy adopted in 2016. This demonstrates the lack of a real great power strategy to forge a climate regime.

Unquestionably, the EU has put reformist climate initiatives on the table within the UNFCCC, diluting the differences marked by the CBDR principle and trying to build a stricter global commitment.

However, its declining structural power and the lack of a uniformed climate strategy able both to represent itself as a strong leader and to attract those progressive developing countries to enforce its stance, reveal obstacles in the fulfillment of climate responsibility.

## Conclusion

Climate change is a global challenge that must be tackled with international cooperation and efforts.

The whole international community has growingly acknowledged the relevance and the magnitude of this issue and its great importance in terms of environmental security.

Based on the idea that great powers have greater responsibilities when it comes to peace and security, it is reasonable to expect certain countries to take a more constructive and reformist position in multilateral institutions such as the UNFCCC. However, the United States, China and the European Union as the three largest emitters and biggest economies seems to be reluctant to take on a role of leadership in climate negotiations. What appears to be even clearer is the need of a coherent and effective climate regime which can guide the international community toward the implementation of strict measures and long-term goals, together with a transparency and accountability control mechanism. This can be reached only by finding a balance with great powers' national interests and sovereignty rights which are the main restraints and reinforcing the common concerns and benefits which such a regime can address.

A protracted vacuum in climate responsibilities may lead to irreversible environmental consequences and a failure in guaranteeing human security to the global humankind.

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## **THE BENEFITS AND RISKS OF DIGITAL DIPLOMACY ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

Chattalie Jayatilaka

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In the year since the onset of the novel-Coronavirus, diplomacy has truly become digital.

World leaders and international organizations are now working from home, and nearly all physical meetings, or multilateral summits have been cancelled for the near future. Diplomatic activity moved online within days of realizing the severity of the pandemic, facilitated by an information and communications technologies (ICT) revolution which has been taking place in the last decade. Driven by the opportunities that this ICT revolution has created for engaging the masses at minimal cost, states have developed a new arsenal of tools and methods to support their foreign policy initiatives. This paper will examine the effects of digital diplomacy on the nature of international relations, with a special focus on how digital diplomacy can change how smaller states conduct foreign policy.

### **What is digital diplomacy?**

After the initial invention of the telephone, it took 75 years to reach 100 million phone users worldwide. In direct contrast, the mobile phone took 16 years and its most popular app, Facebook, took 4 ½ years (Boston Consulting Group 2015). The world is becoming digital, and the sheer speed of the development of new technology has given rise to a digital transformation which has changed the face of traditional diplomacy. Digital diplomacy is the use of digital technologies and social media platforms as a medium for public and foreign diplomacy. These platforms are typically run in the name of a state by its officials to achieve foreign policy goals, and maintain the image and reputation of the state. (Jayatilaka 2019) The upkeep of websites by Foreign Ministries (MFAs), delegations, and international organizations is now standard practice, with the websites used to explain, inform and record foreign policy acts. The phrase “digital diplomacy” can be interchangeable with various other terms such as e-diplomacy, cyber diplomacy, and Twiplomacy, referring to the Twitter presence of states, government leaders

and embassies. The most commonly used social media platforms for diplomatic engagement are Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Youtube.

### **Origins of digital diplomacy**

The use of digital diplomacy has risen in the previous decades alongside the growth of digital technologies. While the study of the effects of digital diplomacy is a relatively young field, the power and influence of social media has been evident on numerous politically momentous occasions. The Arab Spring of 2011 demonstrated the power of social media to achieve large scale political change. Social activists used social media to spread concerns, dissident discourse and broadcast live footage of revolutions around the world. (Holmes and Bjola 2015) The resulting revolutions in various Middle Eastern countries showed that social media (and thus digital modes of media) were a force with legitimate power in international affairs. However, the initial development of digital media for the purpose of diplomatic initiatives did not begin with the Arab Spring like many believe. In fact, the Internet was already being widely used for political and ideological purposes across borders. For example, it was estimated the Internet was being used to for 80% of youth recruitment to Jihadi movements in 2008. (Rashica 2018) These alarming recruitment tactics prompted the Bush Administration to launch the Public Diplomacy 2.0 Initiative which included a digital outreach team and a blog. The initiative saw the State Department migrate onto Facebook alongside the Digital Outreach Team being used to counter the extremist recruitment tactics. It was one of the world's first examples of a team dedicated solely to the idea of digital diplomacy, information dispute and outreach. (Khatib, Dutton, and Thelwall 2012)

Today, digital diplomacy has become commonplace and is in use nearly everywhere. World leaders and their governments have sought innovative ways to connect and inform their audiences through the widespread reach of social media platforms. When the Covid-19 pandemic first began, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Arden started to go live every week on her social media pages in order to share news and updates about efforts to stop the spread (Friedman 2020). In 2015, the German government created the page “Bundesregierung” in order to create direct dialogue between the government and its citizens. The page employs a social media team of 16 who interact directly with half a million people providing in-depth information or setting the record straight (Government of Germany 2019). In India, the Ministry of External Affairs evacuated 18,000 Indian citizens from Libya during the civil war through

mobilization efforts mainly facilitated by Twitter. In continuation of this policy, India continued to use their Twitter to share information to millions stranded during border closures due to the Covid-19 pandemic. (Economic Times 2011) The Estonian government which held the presidency of the UN Security Council in 2020, brought representatives from 80 countries to a virtual conference. Estonia was praised for its flawless execution of the conference using a software developed in Estonia. (Numa 2020)

## **Analytics**

In an era of border closures, travel restrictions, and quarantine orders, the world has never been more digital. The growth of social media platforms alongside the number of active users has been unprecedented. Social media platforms almost tripled their total number of users in the last decade from 970 million in 2010 to 3.81 billion users in 2020 (Clement 2020). However, this spectacular growth, the year to year growth has slowed considerably and now relies on internet and smartphone access particularly in the developing world.

In 2020, it was reported in the annual social media study by Burson Cohn and Wolfe of Twiplomacy that the governments and leaders of 184 countries had an official presence on Facebook. This number is two more than 2019, and represents 95% of 193 UN member states. There are only 9 countries who do not have an official Facebook presence which includes Eritrea, Mauritania, Nicaragua, North Korea, Turkmenistan and a small handful of Pacific island states. (Burson, Cohn and Wolfe 2020) The heads of state and the official governments of 153 countries alongside 90 Foreign Ministers maintain personal pages on Facebook. Interestingly, the personal pages of each individual tends to be more popular then the pages of their respective institution. In March 2020, the combined Facebook pages of nearly 721 personal and institutional pages of world leaders had a combined total likes of more than 362 million page likes as well as 1.4 billion interactions from the previous year. Among the most active world leaders included the Russian Foreign Ministry which shares an average of 27 posts per day and the Government of Uzbekistan and Botswana which share respectively 22 and 20 posts a day (Burson Cohn and Wolfe).

The same social media report by Burson Cohn and Wolfe analyzed the Twitter metrics of the accounts of world leaders, foreign ministers and their departments. According to the study, governments and leaders of 189 countries have registered an official presence on Twitter which

represents 98% of 193 UN member states. The only four countries who do not have a Twitter account are Laos, North Korea, Sao Tome and Principe, and Turkmenistan. As of June 2020, all 1089 personal and institutional pages of world leaders had a combined total of 620 million followers, and had posted 8.7 million tweets since their creation. (Burson Cohn and Wolfe) Through the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, world leaders and governments have taken to Twitter to conduct massive information campaigns on best and safe practices for the population through the use of trending hashtags, and pictures. Many governments and organizations used Twitter to broadcast their virtual meetings such as the European Council and the G7 Conference in March of 2020. Digital diplomacy has become largely normalized as a method and platform of conducting public diplomacy with predictions showing that the number of social media users will continue to grow exponentially reaching an estimated 4.1 billion users by 2025. (Clement 2020)

### **Advantages of digital diplomacy**

The influence and scope of digital diplomacy is now self-evident. Nearly every world leader has a Facebook or Twitter account, and engages with millions of their own citizens as well as citizens of other nations. However, the study of digital diplomacy, and particularly the effects of the Coronavirus on the use of digital communications are still new. It may be too soon to accurately depict the effects of digital diplomacy on international relations whilst the changes are still fresh or ongoing. Despite this, some general effects and advantages of this phenomenon are already incredibly evident.

### *Strengthening international relations*

In the era of globalization, political and foreign relations are now defined by the coherence of a soft diplomatic style of power. The term was coined during the Cold War by American political scientist Joseph Nye in an attempt to describe how a country was able to achieve its diplomatic goals and targets without the use of force or coercion. (Nye 1990) Digital diplomacy has played a key role in this soft power dynamic and has strengthened international relations due to the use of innovative partnerships and strategies rather than unilateral acts of force in order to achieve policy outcomes. (Hutchings and Suri 2015) Globalization has now become defined by a network of states, international organizations, non-governmental organizations,

multinational corporations, intergovernmental organizations and more working together. Through this network, there has been an increase in the intensification of political, economic and cultural interactions beyond territorial borders. (Salmon and Imber 2000) Through even the most disruptive of changes, circumstances or even elections, this network fostered by the rapid growth of communication and interaction keeps the world order united through international interdependence (Goldstein 2003). Digital diplomacy aids in advancing foreign policy goals and strengthening relationships through direct public interaction with the added bonus of being able to connect with various non-state actors online. While some have argued that digital diplomacy will never replace traditional diplomacy, it is clear that the post pandemic world will come to rely heavily on the digital diplomacy tactics and measures that have been adopted.

#### *Direct communication with audiences*

Digital diplomacy has brought a multitude of advantages in its use, particularly for nation states and their relationship with their population, as well as other state actors. One of the first studies conducted on the evolution of public diplomacy is by Walter Roberts. Roberts concludes that there has been a shift from traditional diplomacy which conducted matters on an elitist government to government basis to a new phenomenon which he titled 'public diplomacy'. (Roberts 2007) The newest shift has created a digital version of public diplomacy. This new and preferred digital medium allows relations to be conducted on a government to people basis alongside a more simplified government to government basis.

In the same way, digital diplomacy has allowed citizens to engage directly with their government or even with foreign governments. The geographical distance between embassies are now less important, and social media allows diplomats and citizens alike to observe events, gather information and engage directly with others. Should one wish to express discontent with their State Representative, it is now as easy as tweeting at them on Twitter. In the same way, digital communications have significantly reduced physical barriers for communication. It is now possible for state officials and their departments to conduct official foreign policy business from the comfort of their homes as has been evident throughout the Coronavirus pandemic. In 2020, the United Nations held its first ever virtual General Assembly where representatives were invited to participate through video chat (Heath 2020). Furthermore, digital diplomacy has allowed for the accelerated dissemination of information through social media platforms and official websites. During crises, the state and its representative department is able to share

information and rally citizens through social media platforms. During the initial onset of the Coronavirus, many national foreign affairs departments used Twitter and Facebook in order to widely distribute information about repatriation flights and efforts to its many citizens living abroad. According to the German Foreign Ministry, their social media had received 38,000 comments and messages during the height of repatriation, five times as many compared to the previous month. (Burson, Cohn and Wolfe 2020)

### *Accelerated dissemination of information*

One of the largest advantages to digital technologies in diplomacy has been the potential to share information to relevant parties nearly instantly. In the event of national crises, the fast dissemination of information or quick knowledge is a strong advantage. Digital diplomacy allows for governments and embassies to function efficiently in crisis management in real time on matters of information collection, and decision making. (Rashica 2018) The direct and speedy access to information allows governments to be better prepared to help its citizens and for citizens to receive the information or help they need nearly instantly. The Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs used digital diplomacy to quickly create a repatriation program to facilitate the return of millions of stranded Indian citizens abroad. The Vande Bharat mission was facilitated by embassies and High Commissions who were urged to create websites and share information on Twitter to aid nationals abroad seeking repatriation. (Bhattacharyya 2020)

Just as much as the efficient dissemination of information provides citizens with the necessary aide, digital diplomacy has also allowed for people to protest their objections and collaborate on initiatives. As demonstrated by the revolutions of the Arab Spring, authoritarian states are finding it increasingly difficult to selectively censor information or rebellion thoroughly. Through digital communication, freedom of expression and of objection are difficult to limit and media coverage is instantaneous through smart phones and social networks. During protests in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine, many protests began to record and webcast their experiences live on Facebook. (Wolfsled, Segev, and Sheafer 2013) A frequent exchange of information between international actors has resulted in more sustainable relationships which help facilitate their common interests. Digital platforms like Twitter and Facebook have allowed societies to be more open with their communication, but have also created new tools of control in the fight for power. (Rashica 2018)

## **The risks of digital diplomacy**

### *The influence of the internet*

Alongside the obvious advantages that digital diplomacy can bring, there are a multitude of risks that must be appraised. First, communication technology is pliant in the hands of its holder and their intentions. In this way, digital diplomacy comes with its own setbacks such as limited and diminishing control over information flows. (Jayatilaka 2020) The internet multiplies and amplifies the number of voices which can massively complicate decision making for a government particularly when it is false information that is being spread. The internet has been used in this fashion by terrorist and xenophobic groups to mobilize and recruit. The 2016 American elections demonstrated clearly how social media and public opinion are intertwined with politics through the potential for extremism. The Trump Campaign was able to expertly use Twitter and Facebook to raise issues such as nationalism and patriotism which struck a chord with rural, white America eventually leading to the Capitol Hill attacks in January of 2021. (Groshek and Koc-Michalska 2017) Twitter, Facebook and Youtube have constantly come under pressure from world governments to be stricter in their fight against terrorist propaganda and misinformation, particularly during the Trump Presidency. (Rashica 2018)

### *Training to use mediums*

Alongside the constant technological upgrades, there is a plethora of new communication technologies surfacing regularly. The social media revolution has changed the way people perceive the impact of a single comment or a picture. In turn, it has also allowed people to understand the impact of a single comment or picture gone wrong. Lack of knowledge about these new technologies, and communication platforms comes with terrible political and diplomatic consequences when used in a professional setting. (Rashica 2018) Many governments already have a permanent staff who specialize in digital diplomacy set to monitor forums such as the British Office of Digital Diplomacy. Today, digital diplomacy users must be continuously trained and informed of the possibilities and the consequences of digital diplomacy in order to maximize its benefits and avoid any risks. (Jayatilaka 2020)



*Security of the internet*

The main risk that comes from this digital revolution is the risk of hacking and information leakage. Hacking occurs when state and non-state actors try to attack government systems in order to gain access to sensitive information for a variety of usually nefarious reasons. (Sigholm 2013) State actors must become experts at controlling and protecting information without violating any rights. Cybersecurity is now top on the list of the international diplomatic and political agendas of the UN, NATO, G7 and the G20. (Rashica 2018) Many countries have adopted national cybersecurity strategies and created cybersecurity agencies with dedicated and specialized teams to protect their ICT systems. In 2010, the Wikileaks scandal, the release of over 250,000 diplomatic cables sent between Washington D.C and various US missions, demonstrated to the world the perilous nature of digital secrets. (Marmura 2018) The digital world was here to stay, but with some danger. Terrorist organizations, organized criminals, government security forces, and defense forces are amongst those actively hacking each other. To further complicate matters, the internet and infrastructure used to conduct these attacks are usually privately owned with operators spread globally. (Rashica 2018)

**Digital diplomacy and small states**

Digital diplomacy is a powerful force equalizer. With enough innovation and budget, smaller states stand to benefit the most from the scope and spread of digital forums to conduct diplomacy. A small state is determined by certain quantitative criteria such as the populace, GDP, and the size of the territory. (Rashica 2018) South Asia is a prime example of a number of small states facing many foreign policy and diplomatic constraints due to financial capacity. However, it can be reasoned that these same constrained small states would benefit the most from digital advances. For example, digital diplomacy allows less developed countries with limited finances to leapfrog the industrialization phase to cultivate economies into high value added information economies. But the concept of using digital platforms to conduct diplomacy is a relatively novel one in South Asia. South Asian countries such as India and Sri Lanka have recently seen a surge in social media users only in the past ten years as more and more of the populace gain access to affordable technology and internet services. (Degenhard 2021) However, the COVID-19 pandemic has now forced many South Asian countries to engage primarily in digital diplomacy. Many leaders of nations or envoys are now turning to video

conference calls and online platforms to communicate with their regional and international counterparts.

In this way, digital diplomacy has truly revolutionized the way which traditional diplomacy has been practiced in developing countries. Digital diplomacy has become integral to diplomatic communication due to its effectiveness in achieving and maintaining various goals for international actors. One main variation of digital diplomacy is public diplomacy which allows states to maintain contact with audiences who migrate online for information on sources such as Twitter. The growth of digital diplomacy has altered the foreign policy environment by enhancing the flows of communication and the velocity of events. Smaller states which utilize digital sources for public diplomacy are better able to share key messages with important audiences faster and with more ease. As a result of the financial limitations faced by smaller nations, there is difficulty in managing overwhelming amounts of information into policymaking for the benefit of the state. Through digital diplomacy comes improved information management through digital structions for smaller states. Information and resource management allow small state actors to manage diplomacy in a resource efficient fashion. Digital diplomacy allows states to easily convey overwhelming amounts of information into a manageable flow which helps inform better policy making to anticipate the needs of the state. In turn, the states are able to retain, share and optimize government knowledge to the masses at a relatively low cost.

A typical example of this is the Republic of Kosovo, a new and small country in Eastern Europe with disputed origins and formally recognized by 98 UN member states. According to the World Bank, Kosovo has a population of 1.81 million and remains the third poorest country in Europe in terms of GDP per capita (World Bank 2021). This small country with limited financial resources has wholeheartedly embraced digital diplomacy to link its diplomats and citizens with the rest of the world in order to gain further recognition of their sovereignty. In 2012, the Turkish public diplomacy magazine *Yeni Diplomasi* recognized Kosovo as the fourth best in the world after the UK, USA and Israel (Kosovo Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2018). A further advantage to smaller states is that the cost of using such technologies are falling rapidly due to continuous technological advancements. It is now cheaper and more common than ever for people to have access to the internet. According to the World Bank, more than 50% of the world's population are now connected to the Internet (World Bank 2019). In this way, digital technologies allow small state actors to achieve their policy objectives and perform services through new channels. It allows states to improve their own consular communications and

responses through their Foreign Ministries to create direct, personal communication with citizens abroad and provide aid in crises and disasters situations all for a significantly lower financial burden.

## Conclusion

The evolution of ICT technologies has created a new subsection of diplomacy. Through this new arsenal of tools and methods used by governments and their MFAs, the world of diplomacy has now become more accessible to citizens, non-state actors and smaller states. There is a massive gap between larger, developed states and smaller, developing states which could be bridged by the effective utilization of digital diplomacy strategy to allow smaller often overlooked states a larger place in the international spotlight. States would be able to cultivate a wider digital presence, create and promote e-governance services, increase overall efficiency and directly engage with their communities. Though it may be too soon to fully understand the impact of digital diplomacy on international relations, it is clear that states must take greater account of the influence of this phenomenon or risk becoming ineffective.

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