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BINATIONAL COMMUNICATION: Using the U.S. and Mexico's Border Wall's Hostile Architecture for Friendship and Aid...



A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR...

TO THE READER,

A LITTLE OVER A DECADE AGO WAS WHEN I FIRST BECAME INTERESTED IN HISTORY - learning about it, reading about it, writing about it. Since then, I've not stopped studying it. One major thing that has changed since then, however, is my perception of it: I often felt that our dull, boring lives in the present were so uninteresting compared to the extraordinary, tumultuous, and even frightening moments of the past. Over the course of recent years, however, I am no longer of that opinion. From environmental disasters caused by climate change to a spike in international political violence and warfare to the extreme polarization of politics domestically in nations throughout the world, modern times, regardless of how we feel about it, are far from boring.

From this stems a joke from some time ago, when a friend of mine asked if there were any job prospects for those who study Eastern Europe (my current historical focus). I replied that, "unfortunately, there are." But, jokes aside, regardless how we feel about our current reality, international affairs will never cease to be important. So long as there is more than one ideology, belief system, and side to every problem, we will not see a day when a magazine of this type will have no reason to exist.

In light of this, I believe wholeheartedly that Clemson, both as a city and a university, is no less a part of our interconnected, globalized, and ever-changing world than the largest megalopolis in East Asia or the smallest village in the Congo. The thoughts, ideas, and observations of students from this university, as well as other universities, are similarly important. And, in recognition of this fact, we have made it our mission to elevate The Pendulum to incorporate a wider variety of voices from Clemson and beyond.

Specifically, this year I would like to thank everyone for their fantastic work on the articles that you are about to read. To our writers, both from Clemson and abroad, thank you for contributing your work to our little project: it is because of you that we are able to broaden our horizons and awareness of the international community as we have. To my staff, I genuinely could not wish for a more devoted, capable, and inspiring group of people to have worked with. You have not only contributed to another successful issue of our magazine, but have also helped me to grow as a leader, and, I hope, helped each other to grow, as well. It truly has been a pleasure getting to know you all more over the semester. Additionally, I would also like to thank Gavin Hunt, specifically, who has worked as an editor on our magazine for the past half-decade, and introduced me more to this organization as editor of my first Pendulum article back in 2021. And, to our readers, thank you for engaging with our effort to broaden our collective horizon.

Cheers,



MATTHEW M. PLOYHART

MORE
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BINATIONAL COMMUNICATION:

Using the U.S. and Mexico's Border Wall's Hostile Architecture for Friendship and Aid

Tiffany Messer-Bass

The morning of July 28, 2019 in El Paso, Texas appeared to be ordinary. On this day, two architects approached the politically contentious border wall with Mexico and set to work on bridging the distance with playground equipment - an art installation of three pink see-saws (teeter totters, some prefer to call them) made their debut known collectively as The Teeter Totter Wall. For around forty minutes, children and adults on each side of the border wall engaged in play. It was just one moment in binational history between the United States and Mexico that Texans and residents of Mexico's Anapra community joined together for a small moment of joy, laughter, and connection undefined by their respective nationalities.

Images and video of the short-lived event spread globally, with the BBC even reporting on the attendance of United States border patrol officers and Mexican soldiers. After only 40 minutes, U.S. Border Patrol deconstructed the installation. Ronald Rael and Virginia San Fratello, the architects behind the installation, planned for the event for ten years before bringing it to life in 2019. One of the creators entered legally into Mexico, working from the Juarez side while the other worked from El Paso. Together, they used the structure of the wall itself as the fulcrum for the bright pink see-saws. A joint statement on their architecture firm's website states:

The trade and labor relationships between the U.S. and Mexico are in delicate balance. Mexicans throng to the U.S. to find work, but often long to live comfortably in their own country. U.S. industry and agriculture is dependent upon immigrant labor pools, yet the Department of Homeland Security, Border Patrol, and Immigration and Naturalization Services have made

it increasingly difficult to attract foreign labor. The Teeter Totter Wall demonstrates the delicate balances between the two nations.

The innovative pair later won the 2020 Beazley Design of the Year award for their collaboration and radical proposal to unite the two countries in play.

The U.S.-Mexico Border Wall is an example of hostile architecture. Hostile architecture is designed and built to hinder some groups (or all people) from accessing a space. For example, hostile architecture to the homeless community might be seen in urban areas where armrests in the middle of park benches keep them from sleeping on the benches. In the United States, both the Trump and Biden administrations have continued to erect new swaths of the border wall to discourage Mexican residents from illegally crossing the border. Many argue, however, that the U.S. is being cruel to Mexican citizens in severe need of refuge and aid, given Mexico's increase in crime rates over the past decades.

El Parque de la Amistad in Tijuana and Friendship Park near California's San Ysidro Port of Entry are formerly one binational park. The park is located at the top of Monument Mesa, where the U.S.-Mexico Boundary Commission first met in 1849 upon the conclusion of war between the two countries. Today, the monument still stands as a reminder of goodwill between the two countries and sits equally on the boundary between Mexico and the U.S. Many generations of Americans and Mexicans remember Friendship Park as the place with no border where they could ride their bikes to the opposite side to enjoy food, surfing, and binational engagement. This continued into 1971 when First Lady Pat Nixon inaugurated the American side of the park as California's Border Field



State Park. Her goal was to create an international park of friendship akin to those shared with the U.S. and Canada. Reports of the event claim that Nixon told her security detail to cut the barbed wire from the border wall and is quoted as saying, "I hope there won't be a fence too long here."

So, what happened? Friendship Park's advocacy site reports:

"In 2006, the US federal government took land by eminent domain from the State of California, and, after waiving dozens of laws intended to protect public spaces like this one, constructed an elaborate system of walls across the face of Friendship Park. The Friends of Friendship Park advocated for continued public access to the space, and beginning in 2011, San Diego Border Patrol officials opened the U.S. side of Friendship Park for limited hours each weekend, allowing people from the United States to enter between the two border walls, where they could speak to loved ones through the thick metal mesh that now covers the "primary wall."

This was the beginning of the end of Friendship Park. The park was closed completely in February 2020 with no plans to reopen it as of 2024.

Despite this setback of international cooperation and relations, citizens from both sides of the border structure continue to collaborate and communicate. One such instance is the presence of a border church that operates on the border to allow Mexicans and Americans to take communion together. Human rights groups such as the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) have set up food, water, and aid stations where volunteers share meals and resources through the slats of the wall, taking advantage of the open structural design to assist migrants who have likely traveled for days or weeks. The aid stations include medical care, legal advice, charging stations for cell phones, and items for infants, such as diapers and formula among many more. These humanitarian acts of kindness serve as a direct counteraction to the hostile architecture and non-inclusive federal policies.

These acts are not performed by organizations or large groups alone. There are reports of individual Americans crossing into Mexico through one of the border crossings legally with their passport in the evenings around sunset to use a projector to display imagery on the border structure. These images are encouraging and welcoming in nature. One projection shows a silhouette of the Statue of Liberty with the message "Refugees are welcome here," while another displays a trampoline accompanied by the words "Use in case of wall." Overall, there is a stark juxtaposition between American media on public comments and sentiment regarding the hostile

architecture. "Border crisis" is a mainstream phrase often used to incite fear of migrants entering the United States in droves, but not all sources truly consider it a crisis.

If there is anything to be learned from art and repurposing hostile architecture, it is that most people tend to fall back on their humanitarian nature to be inviting and helpful rather than gatekeeping safety. Although this article focuses on using the border wall to share connections and messages, the graffiti on the wall that cannot be seen on the other side tends to tell the same narrative. The negative narratives that circle broadcast television, newspapers, and social media do not appear to be representative of the visual rhetoric that has been painted. The militarization and control displayed by uniformed border patrol officers and their armored vehicles seem out of place with messages of peace on the dividing line they defend.

Today, the border structure Pat Nixon wanted to see as less hostile in 1971 has grown from 17 feet to 30 feet in height and now lines the middle of the former Friendship Park. These expansions of the wall have made border crossings more perilous since their addition with the number of drownings in the Pacific Ocean to navigate around the wall increasing to 33 fatalities. Prior to the expansion, there had only been one death. The United States side is barren and desolate, but once one crosses into Tijuana, the Mexican side of the wall is colorful, lively, and filled with murals touting peace, friendship, and solidarity. These murals, graffiti, and art installations have been created by both Mexican and American citizens alike, creating a kinship that transcends political parties and barriers.

In the future, it will be imperative to devise a solution to eliminate migrant fatalities. The impassioned creative efforts by ordinary citizens continues to not only inform and persuade, but warn state and national leadership that their policies and actions are driving death and injury rates to new highs for the sake of communicating political vitriol. As an alternative, migrant aid organizations and think tanks propose clearer, more accessible pathways to citizenship. Advocacy groups argue that the best way forward is to allow those already residing illegally in the country a pathway to citizenship as well as those migrants brought here as children. Another solution might be to recruit talented migrants with skillsets needed in the United States that are not being filled by citizens, but are critical to the country's needs. As border rhetoric and immigration cases grow, it is hoped that these solutions can take hold and create a peaceful outlook with our southern neighbors.





CRISIS IN ECUADOR:

Is a War on Drugs the Solution?

John Elliott

"I no longer answer the phone with the same confidence as before. Businesses don't open the way they used to. [I'm scared] of not being able to continue working because someone might come to extort me." said Ecuadorian dentist Paulina Guaman in a recent interview with Al Jazeera. Once considered one of the safest countries in Latin America, over the past half-decade, Ecuador has rapidly become one of the most violent. There were over 391 violent deaths in January alone, and over the past year, Ecuador's murder rate has reached 44.5 deaths per 100,000 people as it registered 7,832 murders. For context, the murder rate was 7.7 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2020 and 5.8 in 2017 before the pandemic. This spike in violence has led to drastic action by Ecuador's president, Daniel Noboa. His executive decree has set up national referendums that would initiate an increase in security powers and amend the Constitution. This has also led to the declaration of a state of internal and armed conflict in the country.

Experts point to several factors that are fueling

the increased gang presence and violence in Ecuador. The first is a global boom in the demand for cocaine, which impacts Ecuador as it is situated right between Peru and Columbia, which are two of the world's largest cocaine producers. Cocaine exporters have shifted to using ports, which Ecuador has an abundance of, as opposed to moving the drug through Mexico. Another factor is the power vacuum that has opened in the wake of Colombia's peace deal with FARC. FARC is a communist guerilla movement that has operated drug trafficking routes in the past for funding. This has led other groups to take over FARC's drug trafficking routes and some disaffected members of FARC have also moved their operations to Ecuador. Ecuador's political and legal institutions are also relatively weak and have struggled to enforce the law. In 2022, the head of Ecuador's prison agency estimated that over a third of Ecuador's prison population was a member of a gang, and those gangs were continuing operations through state prisons. The gangs have a tremendous influence on the justice system and

Ecuador's past presidents have focused on political goals as opposed to trying to counter this growing influence in the justice system. COVID-19 has also had devastating consequences for Ecuador's already struggling economy. As a result of increased unemployment and poverty, the recruitment efforts of the gangs have been bolstered.

In response to this crisis, President Noboa has launched a war on gangs that currently includes an 800 million-dollar security plan. 200 million of those dollars will be spent purchasing weapons from the United States. As a result of this military response to the conflict, violence has declined by about 63 percent, but this has only reduced the rate of violence to the rate of violence in 2023, which was already at a record high. One concern with this approach to the conflict is that high spending on military operations, weapons, and prisons to hold those arrested will worsen the country's debt crisis and economic situation. This exacerbates one of the root causes of the conflict, which is the country's dire economic situation after the pandemic, which gangs have used to boost their recruiting efforts. President Noboa has asked for debt relief from the United States and Europe, raised the country's VAT tax, and taxed bank profits in order to fund the war on gangs. The VAT tax stands for value-added tax and is a tax that taxes production at each stage of production and finally sale to the consumer. This will take money away from the country's economically disadvantaged as the VAT tax affects lower socioeconomic groups the most and could also decrease bank investment economically. Thus, it worsens one of the root causes of the crisis while escalating violence with well-funded and powerful gangs.

In light of the already tight finances in Ecuador, the country likely cannot afford to hold the prison population that arresting all or a large enough number of the gang members would require. Since the crackdown, Ecuador has already arrested over 6000 gang members, and this occurred as Ecuador's prison population had already exceeded its stated capacity at the end of 2022. It's also worth noting that Ecuador's gangs were effectively maintaining operations through the prison system, and overcrowding the prison system is not likely to improve this situation.

The escalating violence in Ecuador has also generated a migration crisis within the country. In 2023, there was a seventy-five percent increase in Ecuadorians navigating the Darien Gap. This helps contribute to a broader migration crisis across Latin America. According to the government of Panama, over five hundred and twenty thousand people crossed through the Darien Gap on the way to the United States last year and the crisis in Ecuador will only increase those numbers. Ecuador is also home to large numbers of Colombians and Venezuelans

fleeing political crises in their home countries. With Ecuador descending into violence, these migrants may well try the Darien Gap on the way to the United States to find more permanent safety. The Darien Gap jungle is extremely dangerous and migrants face danger from armed groups and often are sexually assaulted by these groups. Thus for both humanitarian reasons and the need to solve its domestic migration crisis, The United States has an interest in reducing violence and returning stability to Ecuador.

The United States has a long history of providing economic assistance to Ecuador. USAID has worked with Ecuador since 1961 and recently reaffirmed its commitments through 2030. However, due to the crisis in Ecuador, more assistance will be required. In order to solve this crisis, Ecuador will need aid from neighboring countries Venezuela and Colombia, as well as assistance from major powers like the United States. The United States has ramped up some security and military assistance to Ecuador in response to the crisis. While increased military security is a popular solution and even necessary at this point, addressing the root causes of violence is necessary to avoid endless escalation that is set to worsen the current situation. Increasing U.S. economic aid to Ecuador to help the country recover from the pandemic and rebuild its economy would help with this. Over the history of its relations with Ecuador, USAID has helped Ecuador construct infrastructure, increase access to clean water, and has created an influx of jobs in the country. The United States should assist Ecuador because not only does it have the money to help Ecuador fund its security while addressing the economic crisis for its citizens, but assistance could help reduce the migration crisis. Tens of thousands of migrants have come from Ecuador, and many more come from other countries through Ecuador. Strengthening institutions in Ecuador will help reduce these outflows, helping to reduce the scale of one of the most contentious issues in U.S. politics.



THE BUKELE PARADOX:

Balancing Popular Support and Democratic Values

Gabriel del Bosque Velasco

Over the last few decades, there has been a notable uptick in democratically elected populist leaders from all ranges of the political spectrum in Latin America, from Argentinian anarcho-capitalist Javier Milei to Mexican socialist leader Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador to Brazilian left-leaning centrist Lula Da Silva. However, none of these leaders have enjoyed the overwhelming stability and popular support that El Salvador's Nayib Bukele has experienced. Populism as a political ideology and movement should not be looked at with an inherent right or left-wing flair; it should instead be regarded and treated as a political movement that attempts to gain legitimacy among ordinary people who feel that their concerns are disregarded by established elite groups. It is important to note that populism within itself is neither good nor bad. Instead, the manifestation of populism should be analyzed, taking into account whether it evolves democratically or anti-democratically and whether it serves as a correcting or corrupting force for a country's democracy.

One thing remains clear about El Salvador's

Nayib Bukele: despite widespread domestic support and waves upon waves of praise from numerous American figures, Bukele has shown worrying authoritarian tendencies which has in many instances actively worked to upset the balance of the Salvadoran governmental system; thus, the political situation has sprouted a dilemma regarding the balance between the value of democratic ideals and popular support.

Bukele's party, Nuevas Ideas, razed the 2023 Salvadoran elections: Bukele cruised to a crushing electoral victory by picking up 84.56% of the votes, which translated to 70.56% of the seats within the Legislative Assembly. Despite the dominance, political opposition has levied accusations regarding possible electoral fraud. In the face of these allegations an observational mission was sent to El Salvador by the Organization of American States (OAS), an organization comprised of 32 independent states in the Americas with the goal to create and foment a multilateral, regional body focused on human rights, electoral oversight, social and economic development, and security in the Western Hemisphere.



Bukele's electoral victory has been verified by national and international media sources, cementing and legitimizing his presidential Victory.

Despite enjoying widespread popular support, concerns have arisen regarding the means through which Bukele secured electoral dominance and overturned a 2014 decision barring immediate reelection. International media outlets have raised alarms about Bukele's authoritarian tendencies, particularly his self-proclaimed title as "the world's coolest dictator" following a 2019 speech at the UN's General Assembly. This has fueled criticisms regarding his authoritarian rhetoric and governing style. Ultimately, despite foreign concerns about the possibility of the rise of a strong authoritarian regime in the Central American country, there has been no widespread combativeness from the population; on the contrary, Bukele boasts an astronomically high approval rate of 90% according to a March 2024 poll conducted by the Consultoría Interdisciplinaria en Desarrollo (CID) a leading market research company in Latin America.

Bukele has created a polarizing personality seemingly custom-made to exist in the modern political era, from back and forths on social media platform X (formerly known as Twitter) to speeches at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) and at domestic rallies. One thing remains clear amidst the uncertainty of the state of democracy in El Salvador—the people want Bukele.

Nayib Bukele's appeal to Salvadoran people mainly stems from the sizable and immeasurable strides he has made to promote law and order within El Salvador, reflected by the near 50% drop in the homicide rate during his first year in office. The media have characterized

Bukele through his authoritarian approach to tackling the gang problem in El Salvador, including the construction of the Centro de Confinamiento del Terrorismo (CEOT), a 40,000-capacity mega-prison isolated from urban and rural population centers. It even boasts its own water and electricity grid. CEOT was built with a singular purpose in mind: to house and contain thousands of gang members apprehended during the 2022 gang crackdown. The crackdown manifested itself in the form of a state of exception, which is similar in nature to that of martial law, with the key difference being that a state of exception is based upon the sovereign's ability to ignore the rule of law in the face of precarious and unforeseen circumstances.

Through this mechanism, Bukele's government has rounded up more than 78,000 alleged gang members. Despite the temporary nature of a state of exception, it was recently extended for the 24th consecutive time by the Legislative Assembly, marking March of 2024 as the two year anniversary since the beginning of the state of

exception. Despite the arbitrary nature of the round-ups and the concerns raised by human rights activist groups such as Amnesty International, thousands of people were indiscriminately prosecuted. Most of these individuals were denied contact with their legal representatives, and hearings, which were rushed, sometimes dealt with hundreds of defendants at a time (as noted in Amnesty International's 2022/2023 report).

On top of these concerns, the Bukele-led government authorized for the suspension of the rights of association and legal counsel, an increase in the amount of time that persons may be detained without being charged from three days to fifteen, and for the government to monitor citizens' communications without warrants has raised heavy concerns internationally. Moreover, legislative action by members of Nuevas Ideas has reduced the age of criminal responsibility from 16 to 12 and has given Salvadoran police forces the right to arbitrarily search and strip anyone they deem suspicious of gang activity in search of affiliation tattoos or other bodily markings.

However, the situation on the ground for the average Salvadoran citizen has been overwhelmingly improved through such efforts. In a Gallup poll conducted in April of 2022, 91% of Salvadoreans supported these measures; on top of domestic support, there has been a large amount of regional support for these measures, as the President of Honduras, Xiomara Castro, has launched her version of the crackdown. These obvious rifts between the reality on the ground and the outrage expressed by activist groups provide a clearer example of why populist leaders such as Bukele manage to captivate countries: it is within the rhetoric of populist leaders that groups such as Amnesty International express their criticism and condemnations from a point of comfortable privilege, under informed on the day-to-day realities and perceptions of the citizenry.

Circling back to the question proposed previously: is it right for foreign media or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to actively criticize practices that are not only accepted, but also widely embraced, by the majority of the population? Notwithstanding the nature of these policies and the objections raised by numerous media outlets and human rights groups, the measures employed during the gang crackdown have seen massive public support, as citizens have reported that the safety and security of day-to-day life has massively increased. Article 1 of the Salvadoran constitution states, "Consequently, it is the obligation of the State to ensure the inhabitants of the Republic the enjoyment of freedom, health, culture, economic well-being and social justice;" thus, ultimately, it is a leader's responsibility to maintain and promote domestic security

to their citizens.

The successful crackdown on gang violence and other forms of crime in the country forms part of a delicate juggling act by Bukele. The authoritarian measures he took to address the gang issue are not the root of the concerns regarding democratic backsliding; instead, the concerns stem from how Bukele has conducted and influenced domestic policy matters. Bukele has shown that he is more than willing to bend the rules and even break them in order for his domestic policy to proceed.

On February 9th, 2020, an incident occurred that was given the name "El Bukeleazo," also referred to as "9F." In an attempt to secure a 109 million dollar loan from the United States, Bukele, accompanied by uniformed soldiers of the Salvadoran Army, entered the Blue Room of the National Assembly. He sat in the chair of the presiding officer and began to speak. "It's clear who's in control of the situation," he said, "and we're going to put the decision in the hands of God." Then, he began to pray.

The separation of church and state is entrenched in the Salvadoran constitution, as members of the Clergy are not allowed to participate in the government in any form. Furthermore, in 2021, the Legislative Assembly, which by that point Nuevas Ideas held a 66.46% majority in, voted to remove all five of the Supreme Court's Constitutional Court judges. This decision was made on the grounds that the judges had issued "arbitrary decisions." Moreover, the legislature also voted to remove Attorney General Raúl Melara. He was amidst an investigation into alleged corruption during the handling of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

On top of that, Bukele has been heavily criticized by human rights organization Reporters Without Borders (RSF), which placed El Salvador in 115th place in their 2023 Classification for Freedom of the Press. In addition, RSF, along with seven allied organizations, raised concerns regarding the deterioration of independent information around the time of the 2024 elections. In a joint statement, the RSF noted: "The instrumentalization of the state of exception, by the government, to maintain public information under confidentiality and the ineffectiveness of the Institute for Access to Public Information are signs of a deliberate blocking of information..." Bukele has been able to embody the reality of a modern political leader to attack and draw skepticism to press counter to his policies; Bukele has routinely utilized X as a forum to spread propaganda and further his rhetoric by appealing to a younger base and then project his policies on a world scale removed from press conferences or long, drawn out speeches.

Understanding the duality and interaction

between the mythical and idealistic will of the people and the seriousness of authoritarian tendencies in a government is essential before a leader can be given the title of an authoritarian dictator. Despite the trends seen in El Salvador, from using a state of exception to stretch the constitutional limits of his power to the shady practices and borderline coup d'etat seen during the Bukelazo, the truth remains that the Salvadoran people ultimately want Bukele. Thus, the question must be examined: when is the time for NGOs, international media outlets, and foreign governments to criticize a government that has seen overwhelming support from the very people whose allegiance it is to? It also begs the question of at what point can a leader be deemed a dictator or the orchestrator of a self-perpetuating, oppressive regime if genuine, organic, and overwhelming majority support exists for them.

Ultimately, while the criticisms of Nayib Bukele's regime and his policies are well-founded in truth and draw similarities to other authoritarian regimes, the average person in El Salvador has seen an overall increase in their daily quality of life through the policies that Bukele has employed. In the status quo, Bukele can be seen as a funambulist or a juggler; he has been able to balance the role of an authoritarian leader and policymaker with that of the people's sentiments and whims; only time can tell whether he falls or concludes his act and takes a bow.



ELUSIVE PEACE?

Understanding the India-Pakistan Rivalry

Harshil N. Patel

INTRODUCTION:

The partition of the Indian Subcontinent is the genesis of the Kashmir Conflict, which has plagued both India and Pakistan for decades. Since partition and after seventy-six years of independence, there have been four major wars, multiple military standoffs and border skirmishes. While political tensions between both leaders of both countries in the sub-continent existed well before 1947, the persistent military rivalry that continues today can be better understood by applying key frameworks of international conflict; in particular, the bargaining theory can help us understand why hostility between the two countries still continues.

Within this essay, I argue how historical grievances and deep mistrust between the two countries have resulted in a failure to identify bargaining range, intensifying the existing security dilemma. This paper will assert and explain the intractability of the Kashmir conflict and explore its linkages to the failure to establish long-term and flourishing bilateral ties between Islamabad and New Delhi.

I HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE CONFLICT:

Before the Indian Subcontinent gained independence and was partitioned, India had five hundred and sixty-five princely states and seventeen provinces. The

princely states were ruled independently by a maharaja or a nawab, while the British did control these states but did not interfere with their internal affairs. In 1947, when the British departed from India, it left Princely states with three choices: (1) To join Hindu majority secular India. (2) To join a Muslim-majority Islamic Pakistan, or (3) To remain independent. With this arose a potent question for those handful of princely states, which either had a Muslim ruler with a Hindu majority population or a Hindu ruler with a Muslim majority population. The Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir was one such case; it had a Hindu ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh, ruling a predominantly Muslim population in Kashmir Valley. The areas of Jammu and Ladakh had a Hindu and a Buddhist majority, respectively.

Facing such a dilemma, the Maharaja chose to remain independent. Pakistan, on the other hand, repeatedly persuaded Maharaja Hari Singh to join Pakistan, as Kashmir had a Muslim majority, but he refused Jinnah's offer. In late October, the Pakistani Military, accompanied by tribal Pashtuns of Waziristan, invaded the Kashmir valley, aiming to depose the Hindu monarchy in Srinagar. As Maharaj's troops could not withstand the rogue Pakistani invaders, he then decided to accede Kashmir into India so New Delhi could intervene and push back the invaders. The Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir legally acceded Kashmir to India by signing the

highly controversial Instrument of Accession document on 27th October 1947, formally making Jammu and Kashmir a part of India. While the war was still ongoing, Indian Prime Minister Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru decided to internationalize the issues by seeking a multilateral solution. The UN Security Council passed a resolution agreeing on three-step solutions to the conflict. First, "Pakistan should undertake to use its best endeavors: (a) To secure the withdrawal from the State of Jammu and Kashmir of tribesmen and Pakistani nationals. Second, Indian forces have been reduced to the minimum strength." Third, India must conduct a free and impartial plebiscite." Prime Minister Nehru, playing along, openly agreed to a U.N.-controlled plebiscite, hoping it was the only way to stop the war. Pakistan, too, accepted the UN's plebiscite offer in the hope that Kashmir's predominantly Muslim population would vote in its favor.

II VIEWING THE INDIA-PAKISTAN CONFLICT THROUGH A BARGAINING THEORY LENS:

The bargaining Theory views the outbreak of conflict between states as a failure of bargaining, analyzing the potential gains and losses and the outcome of war between two actors as they interact and bargain. The bargaining model considers states as rational actors, and a war between them can occur due to severe uncertainty and commitment problems, and as a result, the provision of reliable information and serious steps to alleviate commitment problems makes war less likely between them.

Now imagine two countries trying to make a trade deal; each nation must fulfill specific objectives, effectively negotiate tariffs, and divide the production and patent rights over a rare commodity native to their region. Both countries want lower tariffs and can't divide production and patent rights of that commodity, as it has value to their national identity; as they can't negotiate a deal, they begin a trade war. With this trade war, the economy and population of both countries are affected and people start to grow hatred towards each other. Now, imagine this situation in a military context: the countries are India and Pakistan, and that rare commodity Kashmir. In the following few sections, I apply each component of the bargaining theory to the India-Pakistan rivalry to explain why the two neighbors are still unable to resolve the Kashmir Conflict.

A. CREDIBLE COMMITMENT:

Commitment problems occur when one side has reasons to mistrust the other side to keep their end of the bargain. This mistrust occurs because at least one party has an incentive to withdraw from the deal, and inflict costs on the other due to such defection. Due to

anarchy and lack of enforcement of bargain terms, states are unable to trust promises from the other that they won't be taken advantage of. After the Ceasefire line was negotiated on January 1, 1949, Kashmir was divided into two parts: Pakistan-administered Kashmir and Indian-administered Kashmir. Shortly after, the U.N. Commission clarified the August 13 resolution and stated that Kashmir's accession should be determined by fulfilling Parts I and II of the resolution, followed by a plebiscite. The UN-mandated resolution points were never really executed due to significant credible commitment issues and a lack of trust between India and Pakistan. Both countries often blamed each other for not undertaking the U.N. Security Council guidelines measures. Between 1949 and 1953, there were many plebiscite negotiations, but they resulted in no success due to a lack of credible commitment from both sides, and they often argued over their heavy military presence, which was the primary roadblock to conducting a plebiscite. At the same time, the U.N. remained active but had no success as the Security Council kept renewing its call for a referendum.

Another credible commitment issue is when both countries significantly shifted their foreign policy. In 1953, when Prime Minister Nehru and his Pakistani counterpart Mohammad Ali Bogra met, Nehru offered to conduct a plebiscite in Kashmir, per Pakistan's long-standing demand. Nehru's position on that offer was very clear, as he genuinely believed that "India must not hold Kashmir against the wishes of its people." However, Pakistan missed a golden opportunity, as India resented its alliance with the U.S., as Nehru believed that the presence of international powers in the region could damage Indo-Pakistan relations and India's withdrawal from a plebiscite offer. Reaffirming India's neutrality in the Cold War and commitment to the Non-Aligned Movement, Nehru, acknowledging the consequential U.S. pressure, said, "The Kashmir issue has given us a great deal of trouble. The attitude of the great powers has been astonishing. Some of them have shown active partisanship for Pakistan. We have not been given a square deal." Such credible commitment issues and complex elements of Cold War politics pushed India and Pakistan into a perpetual vortex of unsolvable indivisibility bilateral strains.

B. ISSUE INDIVISIBILITY IN POLITICAL AND TERRITORIAL SPHERE:

By 1953, Kashmiri leader Sheikh Abdullah began advocating for an independent Kashmir. This time, New Delhi had no choice but to compromise and surrender to the demands of Abdullah, as it feared another war. As a result, India agreed to grant the state of Jammu and Kashmir a special status by adding Article 370 and Section 35a in the Indian Constitution, which allowed Kashmir to have autonomy over its internal affairs, along



with a separate constitution and a state flag. Even though provided with his demands, Abdullah continued his stance on Kashmir's independence. He used it as a tool of political blackmail to leverage his position against India, particularly Nehru. In an interview with the Scotsman, Abdullah said, "Accession to either side cannot bring peace. An independent Kashmir must be guaranteed." These developments in the domestic politics of Kashmir created a perfect storm or, rather, a golden opportunity for Pakistan.

Since partition, India viewed Pakistan as an illegitimate state carved out of India, which encompassed the entire subcontinent. Pakistan, on the other hand, held the view that it was incomplete without the integration of the contiguous Muslim-majority state. Pakistan, as an Islamic nation, also sees itself as a fit advocate for Muslim rights in India and uses Kashmiri Separatism as a weapon to pressure India on two fronts: first, for not holding a plebiscite and barring Kashmir from their rights, which India always discarded as an interference in its domestic affairs, and argued that its government is found on secular principles.

Kashmir's Geo-strategic importance for both countries is another central point of the issue of indivisibility. The Geographical position of Kashmir acts as a strategic tri-junction for three nuclear neighbors. It connects South and Central Asia and creates a geographical bridge between Europe and other parts of Asia, making it an economically viable asset. Kashmir also shares a small yet crucial border with Afghanistan and once was just less than twenty miles away from the Soviet Union, which made it strategically more critical even for foreign powers in the context of the Cold War.

Another central point of contention, apart from geopolitics and security in Kashmir, is the control over water resources. Large Himalayan rivers which flow in Pakistan either originate in India or pass through Indian-administered Kashmir. Pakistan's most densely populated areas heavily depend on the basin waters flowing from India, which provide water for agriculture, industry, daily use, drinking, and hydroelectricity. In 1960, both countries signed the controversial Indus Water Treaty and agreed to share the water. However, India, from time to time, has threatened Pakistan to divert river waters and unilaterally exit from the Indus Water Treaty. Ideological, political, and territorial disputes act as an intangible salience for both countries, which increases the severity of the militarized conflict and decreases the prospects of a peaceful agreement.

C. BLUFFING:

India-Pakistan rivalry is not just marked by military conflict but also a conflict of bold statements,

pretentious behavior, and bluffing. Under the Bargaining Theory, countries know their capabilities, but due to a lack of transparency and previous bargaining failures, countries often can miscalculate each other's capabilities. In the context of the India-Pakistan rivalry, while the two countries don't misinterpret each other's intentions necessarily, as they have knowledge of the general military balance, they do often extensively exercise bluffing—directed at domestic audiences; supporters and rivals. Leaders of both countries have often made claims about things they would do in their tenure, but such statements mostly had a populist rhetoric. The heavy militarization of the conflict has pushed leaders to bluff about their military superiority and nuclear arsenals, but also to sustain the military rivalry to maintain domestic power over other political actors. While making such outrageous statements has not benefited either country's reputation on the global stage, the benefits of such behavior is substantial in their respective domestic spheres.

For example, when in 2016, India claimed of conducting Surgical Strike operations against terrorist launchpads in Pakistan-Administered Kashmir; Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif claimed that India had fabricated the presence of terrorists and said Islamabad has made "unparalleled contributions in the global fight against terrorism." At the same time, the Pakistan Army Gen. Raheel Sharif, in a televised speech, said that Pakistan's armed forces would react with a "befitting response" to the military aggression from India. However, such bold statements and actions from Pakistan have been viewed by India as a bluff and pretension.

At the diplomatic level, especially at the United Nations, India has been a long claimant that Pakistan is the actual aggressor in Kashmir and actively harbors terrorism on its soil. One recent and notable prime example of bluffing in the domestic sphere came from India in 2019. Prime Minister Modi, addressing a campaign rally during the 2019 General Election, attacking the opposition, said that the previous government under the Indian National Congress was intimidated as their strategic experts used to warn that Pakistan had the nuclear button. Modi, while making a political jibe, indirectly affirmed India's military capability to launch nuclear attacks from land, air, and sea, said, "What do we have then? Have we kept our nuclear bomb for Diwali?" Prime Minister Modi secured a historic and a landslide second term in that election.

Along with other domestic issues, Modi's campaign was heavily fought under the shadow of nationalism and anti-Pakistan stance as the Pulwama Terror attacks on an Indian Army convoy and the subsequent Balakot Air Strikes by Indian Air Force in Pakistan occurred just weeks before the General

Elections. Similarly, in Pakistan, the government and all the political parties often use the Kashmir issue and anti-India positions to garner domestic support as well as the support of the powerful military generals and the deep state establishments in Islamabad.

III AN INTENSIFYING SECURITY DILEMMA:

When Militarized conflicts are studied and discussed, the security dilemma is an unmissable concept central to the very nature of geo-political insecurities and lack of effective signaling. This theory, explained by Robert Jervis, suggests that since there is no authority to enforce international laws, in an uncertain world, states seeking security unintentionally make other states feel insecure, which can result in an intensifying security dilemma. In the case of India and Pakistan, as I explain below, this has resulted in an arms race and the continued use of proxy groups in the region, further amplifying mistrust between the two countries.

A. ARMS RACE:

The intense arms race between India and Pakistan is indeed caused due to the lack of signaling and adequate communication. An integral part of the security dilemma, the arms race between countries, can be understood through analyzing subjective security issues. Subjective security is primarily based on threat perceptions; the anarchy and pre-existing bargaining failures which has made cooperation seem impossible. This phenomenon has pushed both countries towards coercive diplomacy, where they often attempt and bluff to change each other's actions and behavior. Such occurrences have put both countries in an action-reaction spiral of arms build-up. India developed its nuclear weapons in the 1970s, Pakistan followed suit in order to preserve its sovereignty; India initiated a ballistic missile programme and Pakistan followed the same route; India then adopted an aggressive limited war doctrine, to which Pakistan reacted by developing tactical nuclear weapons (TNW). Similarly, when India developed a limited ballistic missile defense (BMD) capability, Pakistan responded by developing missiles designed to defeat and saturate the system adjusting its nuclear force posture. The security dynamics in the region changed after 1998, when both India and Pakistan announced their possession of nuclear weapons.

As nuclear powers, both countries have, "No first Use Policy", but still the nuclear asset acts as a deterrent that prevents undesirable actions and consequences from both sides. Due to pride, grievances, and a race to claim hegemony in the region, both countries often showcase their weapons to enhance their image and indirectly signal their adversaries about their capabilities. Today,

the dynamics have changed. India and Pakistan are indeed racing toward their respective national security objectives, but they are running to chase vastly different goals. Pakistan is building weapons systems below the nuclear threshold to deter much more militarily and economically powerful India. Meanwhile, today India is developing and building systems primarily to strengthen its strategic deterrent against its bigger adversary, China. India not only has a large system of advanced inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBM), but recently also became one of the four countries capable of using Anti-satellite weapons (ASAT). In the context of Kashmir's issue of indivisibility, nuclear deterrence, and lesser military capabilities than India, Pakistan has historically engaged in asymmetric security strategies against India, causing proxy warfare and further elongating the conflict.

B. PROXY WARFARE:

Pakistan's Proxy warfare against India is often studied in the context of the Kashmir conflict. To deeply analyze this conflict effectively, we must also understand the origins and implications of proxy warfare, its benefits, and how it shaped the India-Pakistan rivalry as we see it today. The 1971 Indo-Pakistani War resulted in the succession of East Pakistan, creating Bangladesh. The Indian Army defeated Pakistan for the third time. Consequently, Pakistan had to surrender its 93,000 troops in East Pakistan, which was the biggest military surrender after the Second World War. This third consecutive conventional war defeat forced Pakistan to shift its military strategies to largely non-conventional ones. Pakistan already had deep historical grievances about Kashmir and its defeat in the previous wars of 1947 and 1965. Indeed, the revanchist spirit and pride were the driving factors that justified Pakistan's adoption of this policy to restore its glory. However, from a strategic standpoint, Pakistan knew it was not capable of winning a conventional war against India, so non-conventional warfare was its best option to prevent India from emerging as the military and economic power of the region. Islamabad was constantly bleeding the Indian Army, keeping New Delhi preoccupied in its internal security issue. After the 1977 military coup, Pakistan's new dictator, General Zia ul Haq, began his infamous "bleed India a thousand cuts policy" to balkanize India. During his rule, Pakistan did not only fund separatism in Kashmir but, along with its ally China, funded the separatist insurgencies in North East India and Naxal-Maoist insurgencies in Central and Eastern India. To fund terrorism, Pakistan allegedly used significant portions from the economic and military aid which the United States provided during the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan.

Also, in the 1980s, India blamed Pakistan's



ISI for funding the Khalistan Movement in the Punjab state of India. During the 1989-90 Kashmir Insurgency, radicalized Kashmiri youth “illegally crossed the de facto border, known as the Line of Control (LoC, into Pakistan to acquire weapons and to learn how to use them against the Indian military, which became a familiar presence in Jammu and Kashmir starting in 1990.” Pakistan-based separatist militant groups, like Jaish-e Muhammad, Hizbul Mujahideen, and Lashkar-e-Taiba, were also formed during or just before the 1989 Insurgency, with the sole aim of integrating Jammu and Kashmir with Pakistan. At the same time, various local plebiscite organizations, like the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), also became Pakistan-centric, entirely against the notion of Independent Kashmir advocated by Sheikh Abdullah. As they shifted their focus to militancy, working closely with Pakistan provided them with money, weapons, and training to influence their ideological agendas targeting India. In doing so, Pakistan was successful in its motives of bleeding India internally, especially in Kashmir, keeping India preoccupied with internal distress. This strategy allowed Pakistan to focus more towards Afghanistan, where along with Americans it was busy nurturing the Afghan Mujahideen, against the Soviets.

C. OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE BEHAVIOR:

As both India and Pakistan have now developed strong nuclear deterrence, the defensive behavior on the threat of nuclear attack is unmindful. After the 1999 War, neither India nor Pakistan have fought a large-scale conventional war. However, proxy warfare in North East India reduced significantly, and the Indian Government was also able to clamp down on the Maoist Insurgency, while terrorism in Kashmir continued with the same intensity. The terror attacks on the Indian Parliament in 2001 and the Mumbai Attacks in 2008 were some of the many significant occasions when terror attacks in India resulted in an intense military standoff at the LoC. During the Mumbai attacks, a 22-year-old Pakistani national, Ajmal Kasab, was captured; he was the only living terrorist of the ten who entered Mumbai on November 26. In his testimony to the Mumbai police, Kasab revealed that Zakur Rahman Lakhvi, the second in command of LeT, gave them instructions via an active mobile phone call from Karachi. Kasab also talked about his recruitment and preliminary training in Pakistan between December 2007 and January 2008, where a batch of 30 recruits were introduced to Hafiz Saeed and Zakiur Rahman Lakhvi, who explained the meaning of jihad. However, Pakistan plausibly denied all such allegations of its involvement in the 2008 Mumbai Attacks and the presence of active terrorist camps in its territory.

Pakistan has long weaponized plausible

deniability as it openly rejected the evidence of 1999 Kargil incursions by its army dressed as mujahideen. Even in 2003, when the AQ Khan nuclear proliferation network was exposed, Islamabad again denied the role of its establishment and instead put all the blame on Khan’s apparent rogue behavior. Due to Pakistan’s plausible deniability, India has significantly shifted its defense and strategic policies in the past decade. The defense that India earlier preferred had limitations and lacked positive results. The strategic doctrine that New Delhi uses today consists of three modes: defensive, defensive offense, and offense. Defensive offense, which best describes India’s strategic doctrine today, was seen in India’s response to the February 14 (2019) Pulwama terror attack that killed 44 Central Reserve Police Force personnel with an aerial strike in Balakot, targeting the terrorist training facility of the perpetrators in mainland Pakistan. Here, India did not militarily counter Pakistan but instead used air attack, indicative of India’s defensive/deterrent intent, through all means of defensive offense. Pakistan again denied any such counterattack by India, but it also didn’t allow any foreign Journalists who flocked to the alleged attack site at Balakot for many weeks. Journalists from Al Jazeera who visited the area earlier in February saw a sign for a school that described the Jaish-e-Mohammed founder, Masood Azhar, as its “leader.”

IV CONCLUSION:

In this essay, I examined the origins of the Kashmir Conflict and how historical grievances and deep mistrust between India and Pakistan have resulted in a failure to identify the bargaining range and security dilemma. The unprecedented position in which both countries are at present suggests that historic credible commitment issues, issue indivisibility, bluffing, and lack of signaling have resulted in a perpetual cycle of conflict characterized by arms race, proxy warfare, and offensive and defensive behavior. The unilateral and belligerent actions from both countries over the last seven decades have further strained the prospects of improved diplomatic ties and peace negotiations, as well as ceaseless militarization due to the perceived threats to national security and territorial integrity. Due to this, the quest for peace remains elusive.

Taking into account the shared history, cultural similarities, and political polarization between the people of the two countries, both Islamabad and New Delhi should bilaterally work and seek new approaches towards a permanent solution, which would put an end to the bloodshed and economic constraints, and unfreezing status quo in Kashmir, by bringing peace and long term stability in this geo-politically vulnerable region.





LOST IN TRANSLATION:

Fighting the Newest Social Media War

Tiffany Plusnick

The entire history of the 75 year old conflict between Palestine and Israel is one click away on your favorite social media app. The tension between the two actors has been occurring over the possession of land for decades. On October 7th, the global world took sides — Pro-Israel or Palestine. Ever since the attack from Hamas, it has divided people across the globe, specifically individuals from newer generations - Generation Z and Alpha. The internet has coin terms if one is on either side - Zionist or anti-Semitic. However, the meaning of these terms gets lost easily as individuals debate about the situation. Additionally, the mass spread of false pictures, memes, videos, and posts from the Israel-Hamas conflict—generally produced from inside the locale itself

—is making it troublesome to assess what is reality. Over the past few months, the wide spread of false information with these types of media has created tensions between sides of the conflict.

The development of communication technologies in civilians' lives over the last decade has enabled politicians, organizations, and advocacy groups to control and have a major effect on public opinion across various countries. The majority of civilians who consume news from social media are from newer generations, such as Gen Z and Gen Alpha. Such individuals, with varying degrees of knowledge about the conflict between Israel and Palestine, may consume information from their favorite social media apps. The Hill

reports that, "On TikTok, where half the users are under 30, #FreePalestine has 31 billion posts compared to 590 million for #StandWithIsrael — more than 50 times as many." Social media is a powerful propaganda tool in this century – this is both a good and bad thing. The positive role of social media is that it allows for a large audience and easily provides information to individuals. And as for the negative side, the provided information can be misleading. The misinformation spread about the Israel-Hamas conflict is important to be attentive towards because there are many casualties involved.

The use of social media as propaganda is not necessarily the worst thing to ever happen in this digital age; however, with new developments, it can lead to misinformation, which is dangerous. The technology of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a new development to the current generation. This technology "enables computers and machines to simulate human intelligence and problem-solving capabilities." The use of this development is heavily present in the Israel-Hamas conflict. For example, an artificial intelligence video exists of fashion model Bella Hadid, who is known for her advocacy for Palestinians, seemingly switching allegiances. In the video, the AI-generated Hadid says: "I apologize for my past remarks," and that "this tragedy has opened my eyes to the pain endured here." The video spreads false information, and in this society, there is currently little that can be done to prevent it. Another example of AI works such as these is a viral helicopter video. The video claims to show a Hamas fighter shooting down an Israeli helicopter, but in reality, it was merely a clip from the video game Arma 3. Such videos, thus, are being taken out of context or mischaracterized. With these types of information being present on social media, each platform is flooded with viral rumors, deluding pictures and recordings, and, by and large, often lies, making it difficult for individuals in Israel, the Gaza strip, and around the world to look for information and truths about the struggle.

For individuals who live in the United States, Canada, and Europe, Western media and the internet are all one may have access to. The meaning of 'West' traditionally indicates that these countries are advanced, industrialized, and have capitalist economies. In the article Western Media Systems by Johathan Hardy, it is stated that, "all these states currently have parliamentary systems based on representative democracy and the rule of law. The nature of the political system in which they operate fundamentally shapes the operation of media firms." Regarding coverage of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, it is very obvious that news sources in the Western media have a double standard. Firstly, as a well-developed country with a great economic system,

such sources do not have an emotional connection to Palestinians and hostages from Israel - many news outlets only focus on the proportion of the responses from each side. It is also important to note that Western media has adopted the Israeli point of view without questioning the propaganda that was produced. This is highly dangerous, considering it does not allow individuals to see the whole picture of the conflict.

In terms of efforts to produce the reality of the conflict, local journalists have convened in order to showcase the truth. Since 2008, there have been several developments in Arab journalism to let people access information on what is occurring in the Gaza Strip. According to a 2010 article from Global Media Journal: Arabian Edition, on citizen journalism, bloggers and other citizen journalists have begun to influence traditional media. This contributes to the shaping of public opinion, specifically during peaks of political events. This is beneficial in attracting both the attention of audiences and the government. However, in an article titled, On the future of journalism as a professional practice, by academic Hillel Nosssek, it states that, "...the rise of new technologies - the cellular phone with the built-in camera and internet- it seems that the threat facing journalism is de-professionalization, which means everyone can be a journalist and nobody is actually is" (5). With this being said, in addition to the benefits of more informal forms of journalism via social media, it can be concluded that there is a reasonable possibility of mass production of false information.

Next time one is scrolling through social media apps like Instagram and X, it is important to be aware where the information in one's feed is coming from. Many types of modern propaganda are much harder to spot than the kinds used earlier in history. This is because our technology has allowed us not only to communicate faster, and to a larger wide audience, but to fabricate stories. The phrase, "seeing is believing," has taken on an entirely new meaning, as even what one can see cannot always be trusted. Social Media reporting and global conflicts presents even more ethical challenges, and even more variety in the kinds of propaganda being pushed into the public.



SOFT POWER OF TURKIYE:

What is The Potential of Turkiye's Soft Power?

Sabina Sali and Aleksandra Kuzmanovic

INTRODUCTION

While Turkiye has historically been seen as a major power in Middle Eastern affairs, its new soft power and economic capabilities have made it a modern player in the region. In addition to measurable elements such as cultural exports, language popularity, tourism and freedom index, Turkiye's soft power cannot be considered without those factors that cannot be expressed through any measurable unit. The influence of Islam and Turkiye's connections with Islamic communities worldwide, the legacy of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans and the Middle East, its key geopolitical position, tourism, and the widespread dissemination of Turkish soap operas and other cultural content... All the aforementioned elements point to Turkey's great potential to, among other things, regain its lost position on the global scene that it held at the beginning of the 20th century. This article will analyze the potential of Turkiye's soft power and its relevance on the international stage in the context of strengthening Turkiye as a global actor. In this article, the authors will focus only on those segments of Turkiye's soft power that they consider to be of exceptional importance for understanding the particularities of this country in that context.

THEORETICAL CONCEPT OF SOFT POWER

The concept of soft power, as described by Joseph Nye, focuses on the idea that power can be achieved not only through hard methods such as military force or economic domination, but also through softer methods such as diplomacy, culture, values, and attractiveness. Nye emphasizes that soft power can be equally effective as hard power and can promote long-term goals such as stability, prosperity, and peace. This concept highlights the importance of the influence of ideas, values, and symbols in shaping international relations.

THE LEGACY OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE: IS THE OTTOMAN LEGACY EXCLUSIVELY TURKISH HERITAGE?

The Ottoman Empire was one of the largest and longest-lasting empires in history, spanning large parts of southeastern Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. The legacy of this empire is one of the key factors that significantly shapes the extent of Turkiye's soft power expansion on multiple levels, including cultural, political, and identity-related.

Turkiye's foreign policy towards the countries that were part of the former Ottoman Empire is partly based on emotions. The foreign policy of the state is



defined by its special relations with that region, including shared history, social ties, identity factors, and the legacy of the Ottoman Empire.

This emotional connection is primarily the result of Türkiye's historical interactions with the countries that were part of the Ottoman Empire. The Balkans are a prime example. This historical interaction is precisely the reason for the special relations that Türkiye has with the Balkans, especially with the Muslim groups in this region. Five hundred years under the Turks significantly shaped relations within the Balkans itself, as well as the entire region with Türkiye. A considerable number of assimilated populations during the Ottoman era, who are still Muslim today, speak to the strength and longevity of Ottoman influence in these areas. Besides Islam, the long period under Turkish rule also shaped the identity, culture, and customs of this population. One indicator is the fact that over 10,000 Turkish words are still in use in the languages spoken in this area today. In this sense, it is considered that the Ottoman legacy inherited by modern Türkiye belongs more to Balkan history than Anatolian or any other heritage associated with ancient imperial identity, including areas such as the Middle East. This connection is most simply illustrated by the fact that the very word "Balkan" is Turkish.

Türkiye sees itself as a multi-regional actor, and the Balkans are just one of the regions that Turks consider more internal than external. Türkiye exerts direct influence through ethnic groups inclined to the influence of Turkish soft power and lobbying for its interests in this region. The influence of Ottoman heritage can also be observed through the analysis of the relationships of states in this region with the European Union. Balkan states that spent a long period under Ottoman rule seem to have difficulty adapting to European values and culture. They mostly struggle with the development of democratic institutions and a democratic political culture, rule of law, and freedoms.

From all of the above, we can conclude that the influence of Ottoman heritage is significant for Türkiye's current impact in the territories of the former Ottoman Empire. The centuries-old influence on shaping the identity and culture of the peoples under Ottoman rule facilitates Türkiye's soft power uptake more easily and quickly in these regions.

ISLAM: TÜRKİYE AS A LEADER OF THE ISLAMIC WORLD

Due to the fundamental components of Türkiye's identity, one element stands out among the most crucial: Islam. As one of the world's most

widespread religions, Islam boasts a significant number of followers. In our euro-centric world, where predominantly Christian countries dominate, the question arises: is there a possibility of uniting the Islamic world under one umbrella, under one leading country? Türkiye is a country whose position offers the potential for this title.

Türkiye sits at the crossroads of two worlds, bordered by Christian countries on one side and Sunni Islamic countries on the other. After World War I, Kemal Atatürk came to power, implementing secularization as part of his modernization project. A prime example of this process is the establishment of the Diyanet, the Directorate of Religious Affairs, which took over the activities of the Shaykh al-Islam. Islam regained its dominance in political leadership with president of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and his Justice and Development Party (AKP).

It's inevitable that Türkiye holds a significant position among both predominantly Muslim nations and Western European countries. Many authors argue that the AKP government, by transforming Türkiye's identity, has created a "synthesis of nationalist discourse and nostalgic passion and promoted domestic political issues through religious apparatus."

Türkiye instrumentalizes Islam to connect with Islamic countries and thus strengthen its position on the global stage. It does so by providing assistance to Islamic nations, building mosques, and establishing connections based on preserving Islamic values. Türkiye has financed the construction of mega-mosques in Ghana, the largest in West Africa, and in Kyrgyzstan, the largest in Central Asia. Interestingly, a complex funded by Türkiye in Maryland, United States, is the largest in the Western Hemisphere. In Europe, Türkiye is the largest financier of Islamic communities in Germany and other countries.

Its networks and connections extend to Global South countries, leading to a polarized view from Western countries, many perceiving Türkiye as a "problem child." Türkiye has also been building and strengthening ties with Balkan countries (Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina), African countries, and Middle Eastern countries.

Erdoğan is perceived as a potential leader of the Islamic world, but the dynamics among Islamic countries make this a complex issue. Türkiye's greatest threat to assuming the position of leader of the Islamic world comes from countries such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, as confirmed before the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. Muslims worldwide awaited the Turkish president's reaction, believing he would save the Palestinian people from Israeli massacre. Erdoğan made extremely harsh statements about Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, saying he was no different

from Hitler and that he had entered history as the “butcher of Gaza.”

The multidimensionality of Turkish foreign policy, its orientation towards both the West and the East, is one reason for this perception. Erdogan is a leader who insists on Islamic values and Turkish uniqueness in relations with Western countries, thus exerting a much broader influence than competing Islamic countries. It's also worth noting that Türkiye is a NATO member, and its integration into this system significantly strengthens its position in the Islamic world.

Fear of the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Europe and the world has led European leaders to take various measures and to sometimes perceive Türkiye as a “problem child.” For instance, French President Emmanuel Macron announced that from 2024, France would no longer accept imams of other nationalities (besides French imams), especially those coming from Türkiye. This measure was taken in the name of combating radicalism in France.

Although the instrumentalization of religion for political purposes has been used for centuries, we can observe that Türkiye, and especially Erdogan, by constructing an image as a protector of Islamic values, strengthens the cohesive factor in its state and in foreign policy. Such a narrative from Turkish authorities makes Islam an indispensable element of both Turkish identity and its influence and soft power.

THE POLITICAL SYSTEM OF TURKIYE: IMPORTANCE OF DEMOCRACY FOR SOFT POWER AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The expansion of Türkiye's soft power represents a complex process deeply intertwined with the country's political system, its level of freedoms, the policies of the ruling party, and relationships with key international partners such as the European Union and NATO. Türkiye, as a key regional player at the crossroads of East and West, has a rich history, culture, and geopolitical significance. However, the country's political system plays a crucial role in shaping its influence in the world. In recent years, under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Türkiye's political system has undergone significant changes. Transitioning from a parliamentary democracy, Türkiye is increasingly being labeled as an authoritarian or semi-authoritarian state, where freedoms are increasingly restricted, and political power is concentrated in the hands of the president and the ruling party.

The level of freedom in the country, including freedom of the press, freedom of speech, and political

rights, is crucial for the expansion of soft power. However, political freedoms in Türkiye are increasingly under pressure. Faced with repression against journalists, limitations on political freedoms, and political polarization, the Turkish government endures criticism from both domestic and international actors. The process of democratization is one of the primary driving forces for Türkiye's soft power expansion, and strengthening governance is crucial for Türkiye. However, since Erdogan came to power, according to a Freedom House report, Türkiye has fallen from partially free to the ranks of unfree countries. This decline in freedom of expression and political pluralism may limit Türkiye's ability to expand its influence through soft power.

President Erdogan's often perceived aggressive and nationalist policies have a negative impact on the expansion of Türkiye's soft power. Although Erdogan's stance towards the EU has shifted during his presidency, Türkiye seems to be drifting further away from the organization. During his early years in power, Erdogan showed great interest in strengthening ties with the EU and implementing reforms in Türkiye to support its membership. However, in recent years, especially after a failed coup attempt in 2016, relations have deteriorated. The worsening relations with the EU, due to various issues such as human rights, the migrant crisis, and political freedoms, reduce the potential for the expansion of Turkish soft power in Europe.

Türkiye's relationship with NATO also plays a crucial role in the process of expanding Turkish soft power. While Türkiye remains a member of NATO, its relations with the alliance are strained due to issues such as the procurement of Russian weapons and military interventions on the Syrian border.

All of the aforementioned negative moves by the Turkish government in its relations with the West lead to the creation of a negative image of Türkiye as portrayed through media across the Western world. Steps towards increasing freedoms and democratization would certainly contribute to a values-based approach and reduce stigma from Western populations. However, it raises questions about whether only Türkiye is at fault. Does a Eurocentric worldview leave room for considering that what is different from us may also have value? Is Türkiye a bad student because it refuses to change for Europe, or is Europe's thesis that ‘you must be like us to be with us’ hypocritical? We have seen, for example, in the case of the Arab Spring, that democracy may not always be applicable to all societies at every moment, and the replacement of dictators can lead to states of anarchy.



It seems that the thesis applicable to individuals is that everything imposed by force and from the outside, and not matured through internal processes and individual experience, cannot be fully accepted. Perhaps accepting Türkiye as it is, with all the diversity it offers, leaving room for change and showing a good example without pressure, would enable mutual exchange and progress for both sides.

TURKISH TV SOAP OPERAS: ENTERTAINMENT OR HIGH POLITICS

Machiavelli, during the Renaissance in Italy, formulated the notion that ends justify the means, and that motto still has its followers today. With the development of technology and increased contact among people, as well as the growing awareness of the existence of others and different cultures, and even whole worlds, on the globe, a series of changes has occurred. In this process, TV series have emerged as a widely spread form of entertainment where space is created not only for their connection but also for their political instrumentalization.

Although TV series may seem to represent a creative space for artistic expression, their scope goes beyond mere entertainment and becomes a subject of high politics. Cultural diplomacy, as one of the important segments of soft power, has embraced the conceptualization of TV series as a significant element of soft power and provided space for further maneuvering for states. At this point, Türkiye steps onto the stage.

Türkiye intensified its TV industry after 2010, leading to both the expansion and deepening of this activity. On one hand, the increase in the number of series produced by Türkiye saw exceptionally high growth, reflected best in the fact that from 2020 to 2023, global demand for Turkish series increased by 184%. The demand from viewers resulted in Türkiye being the third-largest exporter of series globally last year, just behind the USA and the UK. The series are most popular in the Middle East, Europe (with an emphasis on Spain and the Balkans), Latin America, and Central Asia. The geographical spread of this content gives Türkiye the opportunity to expand its influence in the world and, above all, to influence the perception of its image and thus increase its reputation in the eyes of non-Turkish citizens.

Turkish production has also “deepened” the content it broadcasts, focusing on historical and romantic series. Historical series explore the motifs of Turkish culture and traditionalism through the portrayal of significant historical events. The series “Magnificent Century” gained immense popularity with its story about one of the greatest Turkish rulers, Suleiman the

Magnificent. The emphasis was not on battles but on what happened at the court in Istanbul. In this way, the softer sides of the main characters were portrayed, as great artists who faced the same problems in their families as an average person does today. The revision of the myth about the Ottomans as strict, merciless rulers creates and spreads a new perception of this dynasty and its rule, thus forming a new image of the empire at that time. The essence is to bring people closer to Türkiye. In other works, cultural, historical, and religious symbols create a new and special field of exchange and interaction among people. By combining these symbols, Turks have fascinatingly worked on political influence that will reflect both on the audience and indirectly on a broader range of political events.

On the other hand, romantic series are no less popular, and not just because of the plot. Besides their propagandistic importance for the internal dynamics of this country by making a clear distinction between the rich and the poor, presenting wealthier people as corrupt, while the poorer class (which, according to research by Turkish agencies, represents a good portion of President Erdogan’s voter base) as honorable, honest, and family-oriented people. However, the series exude luxury that attracts viewers, along with various stories that show all sides of Istanbul, making this city and Türkiye an attractive tourist destination. Seemingly mere entertainment has shifted the Eurocentric view of the world a little towards Türkiye, showing the possibility that people can live in line with the times and still maintain basic values and a traditional framework.

The high level of popularity in Muslim countries is due to the way key characters are portrayed, presenting Muslims in historical series as honorable, brave, and courageous people who fight for honesty and honor. What makes them so popular in the Balkans to such an extent is that this area was part of the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, preserving the traditional family connected with a modern way of life creates an ideal picture for observation from what seems like a paradox. Showing that it is possible to live modernly, keep pace with the world, and still preserve basic values and a traditional framework is what makes this country an even more ideal place for people from this part of the world.

In addition to the fact that the instrumentalization of series becomes an indispensable part of Turkish cultural diplomacy due to its effectiveness and raises the reputation of this country to a higher level, they also have a positive impact on the entire Islamic world. As previously mentioned, Muslims and Islamic countries are portrayed in a positive light overall,

indirectly influencing a reduction of Islamophobia worldwide, as their content transcends geographical boundaries and becomes an indispensable element of Turkish soft power.

THE UNIQUENESS OF TURKIYE – ITS STRONGEST ASSET

The capacity of Turkiye's soft power lies in its uniqueness and in what it can offer that is different, which can intrigue and interest others. This position stems from the fact that Turkiye is more fittingly described as a civilization rather than a modern state. It also arises from Turkiye's geopolitical position, which is such that it is not too distant from either the East or the West, yet different enough to make it unique. This allows for greater influence and a higher degree of identification for peoples on both sides, as it belongs to everyone as a border state, yet in reality belongs to no one.

The soft power of this country is built on its rich history, culture, and tradition, which it nurtures and preserves. Their appropriate instrumentalization leads to the achievement of foreign policy benefits on the global stage.

Although Turkiye has much to offer to the world, it continues to work on its image and how it is perceived by others, although still creating a distance from people

with pro-European and pro-American orientations. As a member of NATO, it is the only Islamic country in such institutionally-close relations with the United States, but on the other hand, it maintains relations with Russia, as well. As far as influencing citizens of these countries of different poles in this polarized world, the soft power of the country still plays a major role and makes Turkiye a unique actor in global affairs.





THE HAVES, THE HAVE-NOTS, AND HISTORY:

Bong Joon-ho's *Parasite* as Seen Through the Lens of Global Affairs

Briggs Murray

Writer & Editor for the Pendulum's
Americas Desk

Right before the COVID-19 pandemic reset the global focus in March of 2020, all eyes were on Bong Joon-ho's *Parasite* (2019). Joon-ho's instant-classic provides a thrilling tale of tense class conflict, as seen through the perspective of the Kim family. The Kims use their cunning to slowly attach themselves to the wealthy Park family and leech off of their finances. While the film was well-received domestically, it was even more applauded on the world stage: At the 92nd Academy Awards in February 2020, the film won the Oscars for Best Director, Best International Feature Film, Best Original Screenplay, and Best Picture. *Parasite* had shattered the glass ceiling for global cinema, making history as the first non-English language movie to ever win the Best Picture Oscar. The film's dominance was not relegated to the American cinematic landscape, either—*Parasite* also notched top prizes at France's Cannes Film Festival and the United Kingdom's revered BAFTAs. To understand how this class-

critical South Korean film resonated so drastically in the global marketplace, one must assess the current state of global affairs that has seen wealth inequality explode in the last few decades—particularly in South Korea and the United States—thus transcending national boundaries and inciting envy and discontent from the lower classes.

One may first look at class disparity in the Republic of Korea to understand why Seoul presents a perfect setting for *Parasite* and its plot. Recorded data shows that the proportion of net personal wealth owned by the top one percent of South Koreans compared to the proportion of net personal wealth owned by the bottom half of the population has stayed relatively constant over the past two decades; however, it is also shown that just the top one percent of South Koreans own over six times more wealth than the entire bottom half of the population. This would suggest a strong discontent with contemporary society: South Koreans are frustrated

by both a strong perception of social mobility inertia and a belief that the wealthy few have enjoyed a vastly disproportionate share of the fruits of the economy for decades, with no indication that their financial hegemony will be challenged any time soon.

When looking at measures other than net personal wealth, one starts to get a better picture of just how pervasive wealth inequality is in contemporary South Korea. Analyzing class disparity through the metric of individual income, researcher Hagen Koo found that “the ratio of income share for the upper 10% to that of the bottom 10% has changed from 3.30 in 1990 to 3.75 in 2000, to 4.90 in 2010 and to 5.01 in 2016.” Therefore, from this data it is shown that income inequality has not remained constant in the past few decades: it has accelerated “more abruptly than most other advanced economies have done in recent years,” to the point that South Korea’s class disparity is almost on par with the United States’, igniting a plutocratic rat race—that is, societal control by the richest among us—that nobody but the exceptionally privileged are egging on.

When comparing South Korea to other countries by using wealth inequality metrics, one begins to understand *Parasite*’s outsized reaction in the international landscape. The traditional and most frequently used measurement of wealth inequality is the Gini index, which measures if an economic distribution is “stretched” (indicating wealth inequality) or “squeezed” (indicating relative economic equality). On the Gini index, a “0” corresponds to perfect equality, whereas a “1” corresponds to perfect inequality. Frustrations with wealth inequality and a perception of the infallibility of the rich work to offer a compelling reason for why *Parasite*, a film built upon messages of “common man” class discontent, resonated so deeply in the United States, for instance. The United States has experienced the same trend that the Republic of Korea has in terms of accelerating income inequality: Congressional Budget Office data shows household income since 1979 has increased by around 50 percent for the middle 6 income deciles—not half bad! But the top decile has seen their incomes more than double at the least, with the top 0.01 percent seeing their household incomes surge by over five hundred percent. These data are all calculated as income after taxes, too, providing irrefutable evidence that, as the American economy has grown, it has not grown equally for all its citizens. As such, this all works to illustrate numerically how the American lower classes feel left out of purported economic gains. The top one percent have gained immensely more wealth year-on-year than all the rest of their social counterparts.

However, even though the United States is ubiquitously recognized for its disproportionately large

wealth gap, the nation does not lead the pack. Data on Gini indices show Africa and South America as the world’s “winners” of the plutocratic rat race. Interestingly, both of these regions have historically suffered at the hands of Western colonization and imperialism. The countries of Brazil, Colombia, Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Zambia all have Gini values of over .50, the highest in the world. The United States, for comparison, has a Gini value of around 0.40, putting it on par with countries like Mexico, Chile, Peru, and Turkey. South Korea’s Gini value is in the .3 range, comparatively less than the aforementioned countries. The inexorably high Gini values of these several countries in southern Africa, as well as in the Americas, show how economic inequality is not an issue relegated to a certain nation—it is a global phenomenon that seems to know no bounds.

As such, in bringing to light the pervasive and easily hidden problem of wealth inequality, *Parasite* was a movie that people were primed to sympathize with, not only in Korea but also in the global marketplace. Even though the Gini index of the Republic of Korea appears to be comparably low when considering other nations like the United States, the fact that their class disparity has been decades in the making due to persistence of inequality shows how Korea is a perfect stomping ground for the creation of mass-media that pushes back against the prevailing power of the wealthy. In South Korea, the film was a commercial frenzy upon release: its box-office total was \$72.2 million, becoming the country’s highest-grossing film of the year. The film set box-office records in the global scene, as well—it became the highest-grossing opening weekend for a non-English language film in the United Kingdom, was the first Korean film to draw more than one million moviegoers in Japan since the early 2000s, and set a record on opening weekend in the United States for the highest per-venue box-office return for an international feature film. Thus it is seen that, not only did film critics see the genius of the film, but moviegoers from all around the world did, too. There has never been a better time for media visionaries like *Parasite* director Bong Joon-ho to use their platforms to increase awareness of the rise of the global plutocracy; by getting people around the world to talk about the issue of wealth inequality, it can only be hoped for that governments take note of these headwinds and begin reversing a decades-long slide into wealth inequality that helps the few while hurting the many.

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