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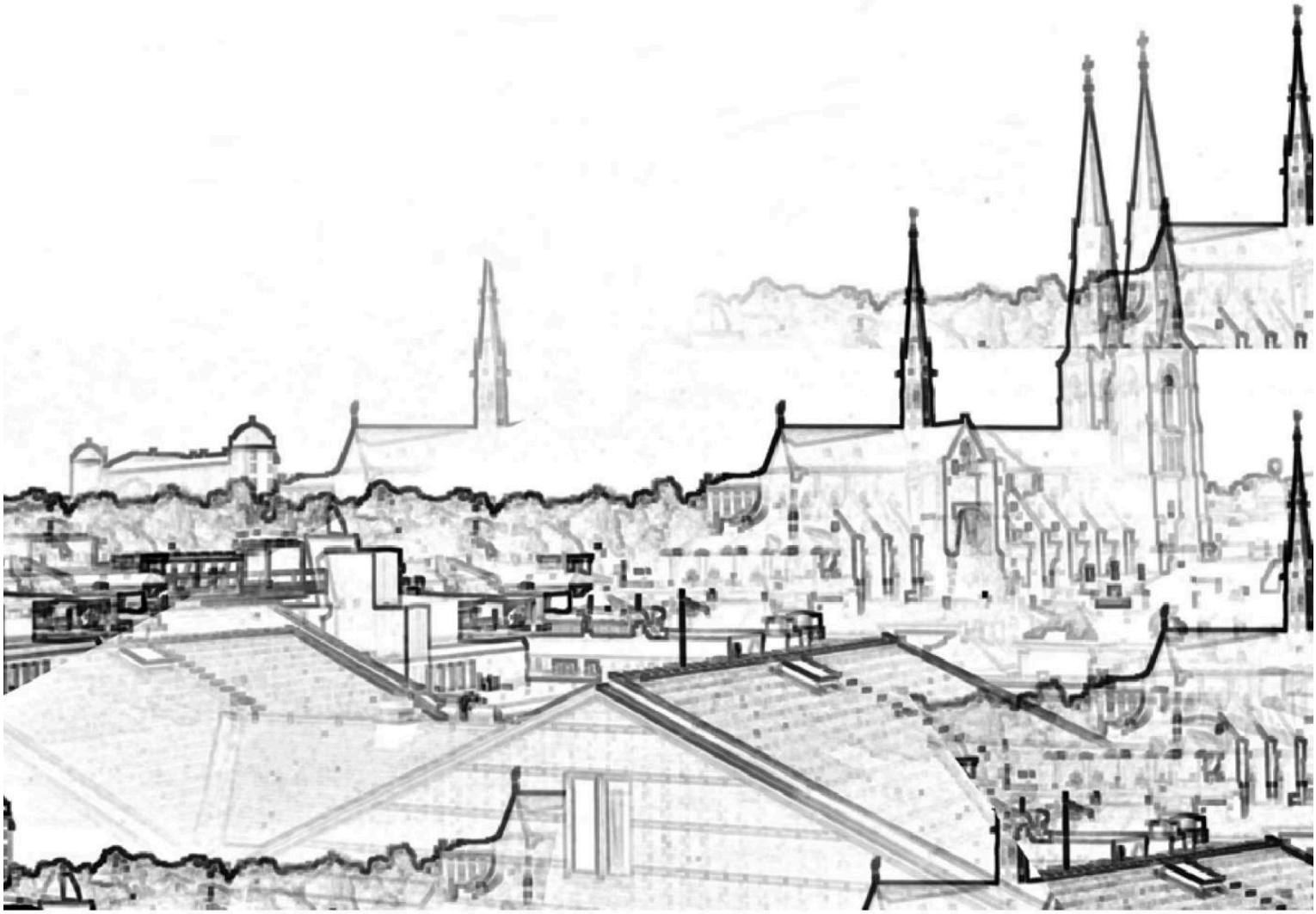

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Welcoming Words

We are pleased to present to you the fourth annual edition of the *Pax et Bellum Journal*. This year, we had a record number of submissions for the journal and we are excited to present you this edition with the very best of these submissions.

The field of Peace and Conflict Studies is unique for many reasons, but one of the things we love about our field is how diverse it is. We believe that recognizing the value in and lifting the diversity within the field of Peace and Conflict Studies is crucial for improving and driving the field forward. In this fourth edition of the *Pax et Bellum Journal*, we therefore strove to have the regions researched, the methodologies, and the authors reflect just a fraction of the diversity that exists in the field.

The articles in this issue are authored by young scholars from universities around the world, using different methodologies, and focusing on a range of topics. This edition of the journal starts off with a paper by Adriana Franco Silva from the Colegio de Mexico, in which she analyses how horizontal inequalities have influenced the Tuareg Resistance in Mali. Next, Daniel Wegner from the University of St. Andrews uses the theoretical framework of civilian self-protection to analyze how members of the Colombian Peace Community in San José de Apartadó have protected themselves from violence. His paper is followed by the work of James Petermeier from the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University, in which he analyzes whether water scarcity had a causal effect on the Syrian conflict or is a byproduct of the conflict. We continue with Nina Jernberg's article, also from the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University, which explores the puzzle of the variation in perceptions of femininities during wartime. Finally, Pedro Deniz Rocha, from the Department of International Relations at PUC Minas, contributes with an analysis of the relevance of variations in territory for understanding conflict. We hope that as you read these articles, you feel as we did: that they contribute to discussions happening within the field of Peace and Conflict Studies and reflect some of the diversity of topics, regions, and methodologies within our field.

As the journal board, we would like to thank the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University, its professors, and the Pax et Bellum student association for their support and encouragement during the creation of this journal. We would also like to thank everyone who submitted their papers for consideration, and the authors who are published here today, who have worked incredibly hard to prepare their papers for publication. Those of us who are students now will be the next generation of researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers, and it was uplifting to read the diverse work of so many students working on relevant and interesting research around the world.

Enjoy!

The *Pax et Bellum Journal* Editorial Board

Introduction

Peace and conflict research as a field of scientific inquiry has developed significantly in recent decades. The study of the causes, dynamics and outcomes of armed conflicts and related forms of violence has continued to grow, and this area of research has expanded to tackle longstanding as well as more recent challenges to peace and security in the world. For example, this area of research has seen an increase in the study of different types of political violence, which includes phenomena such as electoral violence, targeting of civilians, and inter-rebel fighting. The field is not only advancing in terms of better understanding war and various forms of organized violence, but we have also seen a development whereby various facets of peace is receiving increased scholarly attention, for instance, through the study of non-violent strategies for achieving political change, as well as the study of different forms of quality peace. Peace and conflict research as an area of inquiry is also expanding in terms of the various theoretical perspectives that have been developed and applied, and new and diverse sets of methodological tools are being used so as to further enhance our knowledge on issues of peace and war. Greater scientific rigor in our empirical investigations also means that we can provide better guidance to policymakers on how to prevent, mitigate and resolve armed conflicts.

The *Pax et Bellum Journal* is a student-led journal – with contributions from engaged students – devoted to sharing perspectives on these important matters relating to peace and conflict. This latest volume speaks to several of these issues and themes that we have seen being addressed at the research frontier of peace and conflict research. The contributions cover a wide range of key topics such as peaceful civilian resistance to limit the impact of violence, the potential relationship between water scarcity and conflict, and insecurity and structural violence in the form of horizontal inequalities in society. The volume also includes various theoretical approaches for better understanding peace and war, including territorial explanations and gender perspectives focusing on the role of militarized masculinities. In addition, the volume also spans different methodological approaches, such as comparative case studies, as well as more in-depth historical accounts from a single case.

The *Pax et Bellum Journal* is based at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, and it is encouraging to see that the journal has succeeded in attracting submissions from Sweden as well as from other parts of the world. The contributors to this issue come from different academic milieus and unite in the effort to provide scholarly insights on these critical matters. This volume provides a rich set of articles and offers a platform for stimulating discussions and debates on issues of peace and war.

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The Forgotten of the Desert: Tuareg Resistances in Azawad

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Author Biography

Adriana Franco holds a bachelor degree in International Relations from National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and is a master student at the Centre of Asian and African Studies at El Colegio de México. Adriana has been an assistant professor in undergraduate classes in Contemporary International Politics, Human Development and Africa and a Research Assistant in the Center of International Relations at UNAM.

Abstract

The Tuaregs have fought the Government of Mali in 1963, 1990, 2006-2007 and also in 2012. However, the Malian government has linked them to the non-institutionalized "savage" violence, omitting the exclusion, insecurity and structural violence in which they have lived. Considering that this violence is not irrational, this study aims to answer the following question: how do different dimensions of Horizontal Inequalities (HIs) influence the emergence of ethnic resistances and conflict? Horizontal Inequalities theories will be used to answer it, emphasizing that violent conflict is more likely when there are acute horizontal inequalities among different sociocultural groups. Therefore, I will analyze the four conflicts that have occurred in northern Mal since 1960 to identify and compare the principal His which promote Tuareg rebellions and conflict in the Azawad region.

Introduction

Tuareg are semi-nomadic groups inhabiting the Saharan desert in many parts of West Africa. Before the French colonization, Tuareg could move and interchange products freely in the desert (Knuts, 1982; Smith, 1970; Adeleyer, 1985), but after the independence of the West African States, which in general respected the borders imposed by the Berlin Conference, they were divided by the territorial spaces of five countries. Nowadays, they are dwelling in some areas of Libya, Algeria, Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso (Lecocq, 2004: 89).

In Mali, Tuareg live in the Azawad region, which is located in the north of the country. After independence in 1960, the Malian regime has considered the Tuareg as an obstacle to the modernization and development of the nation state (Hagberg and Körling, 2012: 115). Therefore, the Malian Government has not only excluded them from political power (Girons, 2008: 20-23), but also from the economic, social and cultural life.

Faced with this situation, Tuareg have rebelled against the Government of Mali in 1963, 1990, 2006-2007 and also in 2012. However, these rebellions have not been explained and have been linked to the non-institutionalized "savage" violence (Echeverría, 1998: 5), omitting the insecurity and structural violence in which they have lived. Considering that this violence is not irrational, I will identify which are the motivations of Tuareg resistances in Azawad and the principal causes of the conflicts in this region.

The existence of different HIs (political, economic, social and cultural), reflected through the insecurity and systemic violence in which Tuareg have lived, will be the independent variable, while conflict will be the dependent one. Even though the link between the variables omits the

role and interests of external actors, such as France and the United States, it will allow understanding the historical process of the inhabitants of Azawad and the reasons of their armed uprisings. I will avoid the modernist political discourse, which considers that the diversity of ethnic groups acts against development and encourages conflict (Jacqemont, 2013: 48) to better understand the four conflicts developed in northern Mali since its independence.

Horizontal Inequalities

After the end of the Cold War, asymmetric wars began to have more relevance in the study of conflicts (Kaldor, 2001), and civil wars were often understood as a consequence of ethnic nationalism. Wimmer et al. argue that between the Congress of Vienna in 1814 and the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 only one-fifth of the wars fought were related to ethnic autonomy or national liberation. From Versailles to 2001, ethnic conflict accounted for 45 percent of all armed conflicts, and after the end of the Cold War, they have reached 75 percent (2009: 316). Considering this historical process and that diversity is not a factor that appeared after the end of the Cold War, it can be attest that cultural differences and ethnic grievances do not lead automatically to violent conflict (Fearon and Laitin, 2001: 2) "unless there are also major economic and/or political causes" between specific sociocultural groups (Stewart, 2008: 11).

Theories of Horizontal Inequalities (HIs) analyze the multidimensional nature of inequality (Østby, 2008: 144) and suggest that sharp inequalities between identity groups will increase the likelihood of violent conflict (Østby, 2008: 148). Consequently, these approaches are more sophisticated because they do not reduce the conflicts within a state just as an effect of social and cultural differences, but also associate them with "inequalities in economic, social or political dimensions or cultural status between culturally defined groups" (Stewart, 2008: 3). Therefore, the central hypothesis of this paper is:

H1: Violent conflict is more likely in countries with acute horizontal inequalities between specific sociocultural groups.

The uneven distribution of social opportunities is not always reflected in the same proportion between the four different dimensions of HIs considered by Stewart (2008), and depending on the context, some of them would be more relevant for the outbreak of a conflict. Besides, conflict is more likely when HIs are persistent. Consequently, a historical analysis of the violent conflict is helpful to understand its causes, especially because these struggles increase according to the number of previous conflicts fought by a particular sociocultural group (Cederman et al., 2010: 12). As mentioned before, unequal allocation of political, economic, social and cultural opportunities does not always lead to social struggle and this is when the perception of HIs is more relevant. This is because "when a social structure is no longer considered legitimate, individuals with similar objective positions will come, through conflict, to constitute themselves into self-conscious groups with common interest" (Coser, 1956: 37-38) fighting against the ones who control that social structure.

In this way, the uneven distribution of HIs can be accompanied by intersubjective recognized grievances. Therefore, it is necessary to study the contribution of emotionally charged grievances, i.e., not only the objective inequalities but also the perceived ones (Cederman *et. al.,* 2011: 482). Likewise, Stewart (2008) argues that the presence of sharp HIs, especially the political HIs, would foster political mobilization in which group leaders may find that violence is the only

way to participate in political power.

> "Group inequality provides powerful grievances which leaders can use to mobilize people to political protest, by calling on cultural markers (a common history or language or religion) and pointing to group exploitation. This type of mobilization seems especially likely to occur where there is political as well as economic inequality" (Stewart et. al., 2005: 5).

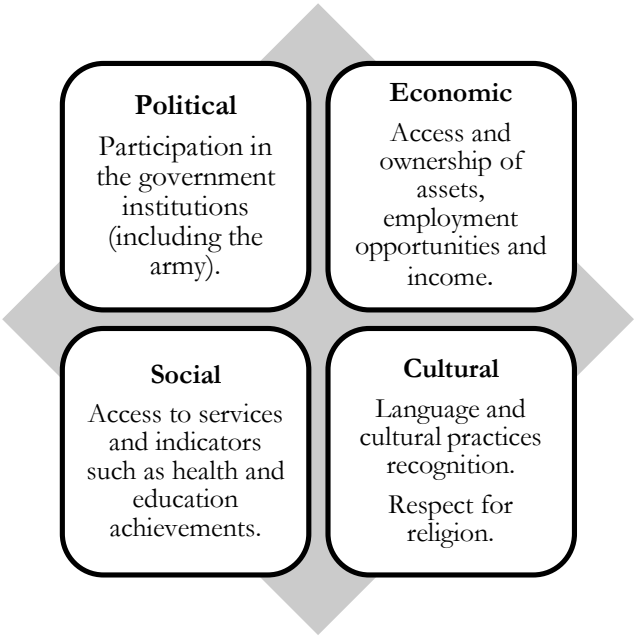

Figure 1: The different components of HIs theory

Methodology

In order to answer my research question, I will study the exclusion, inequalities, and structural violence in which Tuareg have lived in through a comparative analysis of four conflicts that occurred in northern Mali. For the study of the first three conflicts (1963, 1990 and 2006-2007) I will mainly use qualitative data from secondary sources because of the lack of statistical data during that period. Political HIs will be operationalized as marginalization from the participation in the government institutions using the access to power categories of Cederman et al. (2010: 14-15) with data from the EPR Atlas of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zürich (ETH Zürich) (Giradin, 2016). See table 1 below.

Table 1: Access to power categories

Absolute power	*Monopoly* Elite members hold monopoly power in the executive. Exclusion of members of other ethnic groups.	*Dominance* Limited inclusion of "token" members of other groups.
Power-sharing regimes	*Senior Partner* Major representatives in formal or informal power sharing.	*Junior Partner* Secondary representatives in formal or informal power sharing.
Exclusion		*Regional Autonomy*

from central power		Influence at the sub-state level (the provincial, the district level). *Separatist autonomy* Representatives of an ethnic category declared their territory to be independent of central government. *Powerless* No political power, they are discriminated against it (at either national or regional level).
Exclusion from central power		*Discrimination* Group members are subject to active, intentional, and targeted discrimination (it can either be formal or informal) to exclude them from power.

These categories are used as a measure for political horizontal inequality, comparing the political situation of Mandé or Malinké, Bambara, Peul and Songhai coded as black majority, and Tuareg and Arabs/Moors, coded as "white" according to EPR Atlas (Giradin, 2016). For the last conflict, I will also use quantitative data about unemployment, poverty and food insecurity rates from the World Bank (WB), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to study social and economic inequalities. Economic inequalities will be operationalized as lack of employment opportunities, whereas social inequalities will be understood as reduced access to social service, particularly health services.

Armed conflicts are intimately related to HIs and in this way with inequality, insecurity, and systemic violence. In this paper, the four dimensions of the HIs will be analyzed considering that the importance of one may be greater in a particular spatiotemporal context. Security will be used as a measure of social horizontal inequalities. In many studies on the subject, security has been defined regarding threats or vulnerabilities that have the capacity to reduce or weaken a reference object (what one wants to protect), (Ayoob, 1997: 130) which, depending on the approach used, might be the state or the people. Therefore, and for the purposes of this article, "security" will be understood from an integral perspective, where the reference object will be the people (Human Security Unit 2009: 5-6). Critical security studies reject the state-centric and military approach and equate emancipation with security (Booth, 1991: 319).

In this way, it could be argued that Tuareg have fought for their emancipation and consequently for their security, i.e. against the systemic violence and inequalities in which they have lived. Systemic violence is "not only direct physical violence, but also the more subtle forms of coercion that sustain relations of domination and exploitation, including the threat of violence" (Žižek, 2008: 9). As mentioned earlier, Tuareg resistances had not been explained, thus their violent actions have been condemned, while the ones of the Malian government have been justified. "The modern political sensibility is not horrified by all violence (…) what horrifies modern political sensibility is not violence per se, but violence that does not make sense. (….) Violence that cannot be illuminated by the story of progress that appears senseless to us" (Mamdani, 2003: 132).

Conflict will be understood as "any armed and organized confrontation between government troops and rebel organizations" (Wimmer et al., 2009: 326) which has resulted from the incompatibility and inequalities between the social structures of the rulers and a specific

group of the ruled. This opposition is not natural; rather it is a consequence of the connection between power and specific sociocultural groups. Since the European colonization, the cultural identities of the people inhabiting Africa were transformed to political identities linked to power in the framework of the state. This action hierarchized the relationship between the different social groups and allowed the domination of some people over others (Mamdani, 2003: 137).

Hence, identities are fundamental for HI theories because inequalities are analyzed between culturally defined groups. Therefore, cultural inequalities will be operationalized as the rejection of the cultural practices of Tuareg. Identities are constructed with building materials from history and geography, from institutions, from collective memories and personal fantasies, and from religious revelations and power apparatuses (Castells, 1997: 7). However, identities also create "boundaries between groups within a social system by strengthening group consciousness and awareness of separateness" (Coser, 1956: 34). For Tuareg, identity has been essential in their struggles, considering that "they" have been conceived as a threat to the security and development of the group in power and in this way they have been excluded from a certain type of welfare (Williams, 2017: 1024; Walker, 1997: 73).

> "While identity groups are socially constructed, they can nonetheless be deeply felt, or perceived to be "natural" or "age-old" differences and categorizations. Salient categories vary across societies and time, depending on historical experience, group leaders, the media, and the contemporary context, particularly in relation to how group members perceive their treatment by governments and others, and the way in which groups are used by potential leaders as a mechanism for mobilization and gaining power" (Langer and Stewart, 2015: 4).

However, this method will confront some difficulties. First, the theory focuses on a local or a national level without emphasizing the international interests that also play a significant role in certain localized conflicts as in the case of Tuareg resistances in Azawad. Second, there are problems of data availability for the Azawad, which may be due to the political indifference of the Malian Government or to the difficulty to obtain statistical information of semi-nomadic groups. Finally, even though this theoretical framework mentions the intra-group differences, it does not focus on this diversity. Hence, it homogenizes the personal identities within the framework of a particular group (Cederman *et. al.,* 2011: 483; Stewart, 2008: 12).

Analysis of the case study: Tuareg Resistances in Azawad

In this section, I will analyze the causes of four conflicts in northern Mali, linking them with the four dimensions of HIs mentioned before, to comprehend the connection between the Tuareg motivations and the unequal distribution of opportunities in the Azawad. Before doing so, it is necessary to analyze the sociocultural composition of Mali since according to HIs theories, conflict emerges because of the inequalities between different sociocultural groups. Bambara and Malinké have been the dominant ethnic groups since independence, and they represent 41 percent of the total population of Mali (Langer and Stewart 2015: 6). One of the main sociocultural groups inhabiting the Azawad region is the Tuareg. Raffray argues that in 2012 they represented 30 percent of the total population living in this area. However, there are also Songhai, Peuls and Moors (2013: 12).

As already mentioned, Tuareg are semi-nomadic groups which have been presented as an obstacle to the modernization and development of Mali. Therefore, they have been excluded

from political, economic, social and cultural power. Against this situation, Tuareg have opposed the Malian Government in four occasions since 1960. In the following section, I will answer how different dimensions of HI influenced the emergence of ethnic conflict in four instances in Azawad.

"Alfellaga" or the first conflict in Azawad (1963)

After independence, Modibo Keita became the first president of the Republic of Mali. Keita's policies were against an equitable distribution of social opportunities, and one of the most disturbed groups were the Tuareg. Modibo Keita promoted an anti-colonialist discourse to give meaning to Malian nationalism (Ake, 1981: 176-177), though Tuareg were excluded from this narrative, because Keita linked them with the colonial forces (Lecocq, 2010: 78-85). They were represented as the internal enemy which must be controlled to develop the country. The Tuareg accepted to be governed by Malian authorities because they thought that the regime would give them autonomy. Notwithstanding, Keita's government regarded things differently and did not give them political power (Lecocq, 2010: 91).

Keita reduced the representation and power of the *amenokal,* Tuareg leaders, and forbade the nomad associations (Boilley, 1999: 304). Even though some Tuareg were integrated into the Malian government because of their French-education, they were never trusted. Keita also attempted to "educate" Tuareg through sedentarization, i.e. the forced settling of a nomadic population (Hagberg and Körling, 2012: 115). He also set high taxes on them and fostered Mandé culture, to the detriment of Tuareg and other sociocultural groups' cultures, that is to say "mandefication" (Doqiet, 2013: 171).

> "The Malian attitude towards educating the Kel Tamasheq was entirely different. It was perceived as a first necessity to bring the Kel Tamasheq within the modern progressive world, liberating them from their 'backwardness'. (...) At school, speaking Tamasheq was forbidden. Only French and Bamanakan were allowed. The Mandefication of the state was in full swing in the Adagh. Therefore, his policies were perceived as illegitimate for the Tuareg, who encouraged a rebellion in 1963 demanding their autonomy" (Lecocq, 2010: 132-133).

For the Tuareg, Keita's policies were perceived as illegitimate, not only because they were excluded from political power, but also because independence did not bring them what they hoped: liberation from foreign rule. Besides, they considered that Keita's group had done nothing to earn supremacy, especially because they had not defeated them either by military or by political means (Lecocq, 2010: 121), and because Keita's group was imposing upon them an incompatible social structure (Baryin, 2013: 21).

It can be argued that the privileges and right of Tuareg were better before colonization, because they controlled their social and political structures (Vikør, 1982; Abdullahi, 1970; Adeleye, 1985). However, the independence of Mali came with a radical change in their sociopolitical structure, and the consequence was that they were established as a lower social class. Therefore, a Tuareg rebellion begun in 1963 demanding their autonomy (Boilley, 1999). This rebellion was a continuation of their resistance against foreigners, and as a consequence of *egha*, a Tuareg concept which is a "debt one contracts against those who have stained one's honor, and who have thus caused one shame" (Lecocq, 2010: 157). During this period, EPR

Atlas coded the "black" majority as "monopoly" and "white" Tuareg and Arabs/Moors as "powerless."

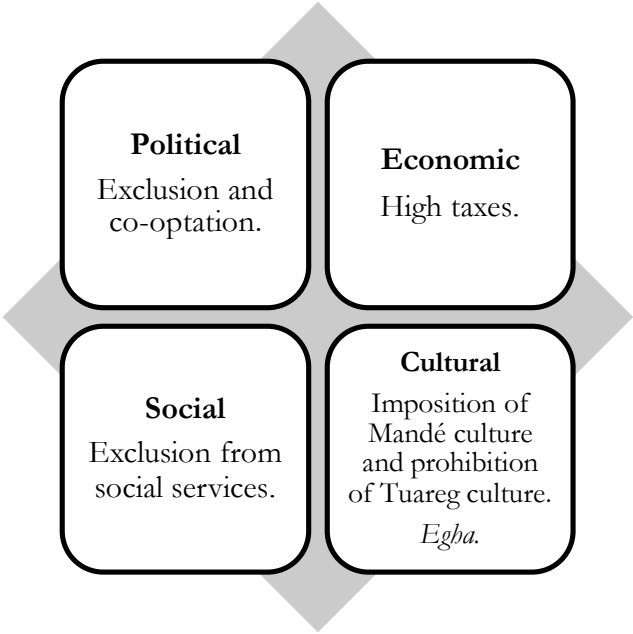

Figure 2: HIs that fostered the conflict of 1963

The military response against the Tuareg rebellion was disproportionate. The army killed civilians, poisoned wells (which are essential to living in the desert) and slaughtered the cattle to control the insurgency (Baryin, 2013: 28). Azawad was put under military administration until 1987 (Raffray, 2013: 41). People were agglutinated into zones of low agricultural productivity (Krings, 1995: 58) and were made to perform forced labor. In this way, many inhabitants of the region were forced to seek refuge in neighboring countries and Europe (Lecocq, 2010: 177-178), and the inequalities were widened. Indeed, "From independence up to 1990, only 4 'white' ministers were appointed, 2 Tuareg officers in the army and no 'white' heads of departments" (Giradin, 2016).

"Tanakra" or the second conflict in Azawad (1990-96)

After *alfellaga,* the centralization of power was intensified (Maïga, 2012: 69) and the general exclusion of Tuareg became acute as a result of the droughts of 1972-73 and 1980. Droughts severely impact the availability of water supplies and food production which directly impacts the security, development, and lives of the people who face it. Besides, the Malian Government did not act to protect the population in the north, and even though international aid began to flow to improve the situation, the Government of Bamako sold the aid, or used it to buy cars and houses for themselves (Baryin, 2013; Raffray, 2013; Barbet, 2015). When the aid was distributed it "was given unevenly between the sedentary and the nomadic population" (Lecocq, 2010: 200). Thus, systemic violence, marginalization, and insecurity were the context in which northern communities, and notably the Tuareg, were living.

At that moment, a new group emerged demanding a better quality of life and identifying the state as the principal cause of its problems: the *ishumar* (see Bamyeh, 2013: 190). *Ishumar* were young people who were excluded both from the policies of Mali and from those of the states to

which they had migrated (principally Libya and other neighboring countries) with the aspiration to have a better quality of life. Likewise, the word *ishumar* is linked with the French concept *chômage,* which means unemployment (Krings, 1995: 60). *Ishumar* were fundamental for the *tanakra* rebellion, because they started it. (Randall, 2005: 297; Saint Girons, 2008: 30). Therefore, this rebellion can be closely linked with economic inequalities, reflected by unemployment and the incapacity or lack of political will of the government (Saint Girons, 2008: 75).

The government response was, once again, indiscriminate repression (Boilley, 1999: 398-467). Hypothetically, the fight ended in January 1991 with the signing of the Tamanrasset Accords (Lecocq, 2010: 261-262). However, the struggle and repression did not stop (Saint Girons, 2008: 75). After the signing of this accords and the supposed establishment of democracy in Mali (Chabal, 2002) the EPR Atlas coded the "black" majority as "senior partners" and "white" Tuareg and Arabs/Moors as "junior seniors" from 1991 to 1993 (Giradin, 2016).

The second phase of the northern conflict began with the National Pact of 1992 and the implementation of the decentralization policy (Krings, 1995: 60). Nevertheless, decentralization became a strategy to co-opt several local leaders within the framework of national policy (Maïga 2012: 81), further disorganizing and dividing the population of Azawad, because participation in the national political structure operated as a disciplinary mechanism of the nation state. Thus, to participate, it was necessary to "empty" the local identities, to adopt the norms imposed by the national political elite (Fraser, 2005: 325). From 1994 to 1995, EPR Atlas coded the "black" majority as "monopoly" and "white" Tuareg and Arabs/Moors as "discriminated," which reflects the aggravation of political HIs. In 1996, the end of the conflict was achieved with the "Flame of Peace," a ceremony where the weapons used during the rebellion were burned (Lecocq, 2010: 249), but this action did not mean a positive social change for the people of Azawad, whose security and development continue to be threatened.

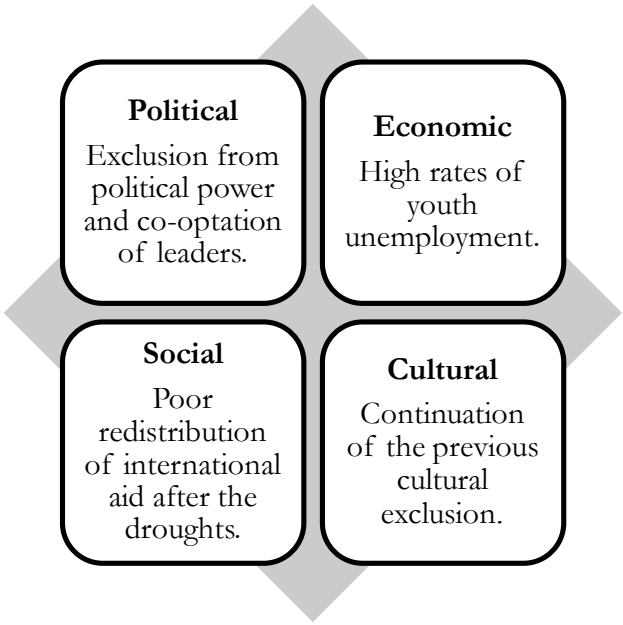

Figure 3: HIs that fostered the conflict of the nineties (1990-96)

2006-2007 conflicts

The continuous Tuareg exclusion from political and economic power drove the 2006 and 2007 conflicts in Azawad. This situation was fostered by United States' War on Terror. Therefore, the analysis of both conflicts is complicated, because of the intervention of foreign actors, and because specific groups of Tuareg were aligned with countries such as Algeria and the United States, as in the case of Iyad ag Ghali, a controversial Tuareg leader.

"By the start of the 21st century, the geostrategic and economic importance of the Sahara had increased dramatically. Tourism generated new income, as did migrants on their passage to Europe" (Lecocq, 2013: 428). However, since Tuareg were linked with terrorism in 2003, and their territory was considered as a space conducive for terrorism, the income they received from tourism was obstructed. The link between terrorism and Tuareg has also justified the direct and systemic violence from the Malian government against them, and even though some groups began to threaten the lives of the villagers of Azawad, the government did not protect them. As a result, the perception of the Malian government as an illegitimate regime for this sociocultural group was encouraged (Baryin, 2013: 47).

In 2006, a particular Tuareg group started a rebellion. It is said that other groups did not support this fight because of its association with the Kel Ahaggar, a Tuareg group that is led by Iyad ag Ghali. This group is also associated with the Algerian secret services, the American government and *Al-Qaeda* in the *Islamic Maghreb or AQIM* (Keenan, 2006; Beaugé and Tuquoi, 2003; Williams, 2012; Algerian-Watch, 2008). During the conflict of 2006, there were two main differences in comparison with the previous ones: firstly, there was not a firm repression against the rebels because Amadou Toumani Touré, the Malian president at that moment, asked the army to keep calm and not to attack civilians; secondly, the confrontation didn't last long. Some theories indicated that this was due to the photos that were shown to Bamako government by Algeria and the United States exhibiting the strength and weapons of the opposition (Saint Girons, 2008: 63), but others point out that the reason was that it was not a local initiative (Keenan, 2006: 764-765).

One year later, two Tuareg rebellions broke out separately in Niger and Mali. Keenan points out that these riots can be explained by the damage suffered by Tuareg population, especially in Niger, by the expansion of uranium mines in Arlit and Akokan, which are controlled by a French consortium called Areva (2013: 79-93). That year, a group of Tuareg declared the independence of Toumoujagha, a territory that included northern Mali and the northwest of Niger (Saint Girons, 2008: 67). This action reflects a change in their demands, due to the modification of the sociopolitical structure of Tuareg society, and their need to act under the logic of the international system. From 1996 to 2005, the EPR Atlas coded the "black" majority as "senior partners" and the "white" Tuareg and Arabs/Moors as "junior partners" (Giradin, 2016). Therefore, the economic HIs were the most relevant during this period.

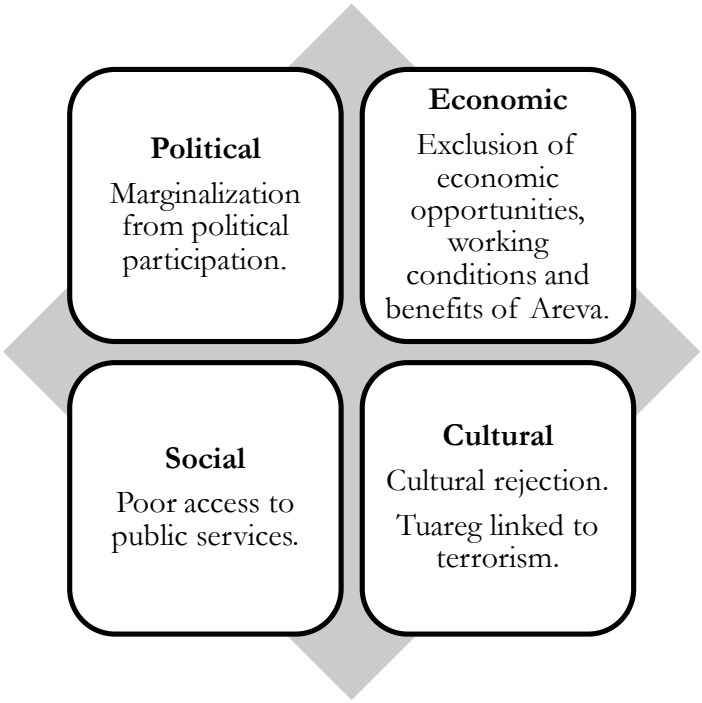

Figure 4: HIs that fostered the 2006-2007 conflicts[1]

Mali's 2012 conflict

What happened in Mali in 2012, has been analyzed as a direct consequence of the events in Libya in 2011 (Pellerin, 2012: 837). However, the Arab rebellions and the crisis in Mali should not be analyzed as a domino effect, because, in doing so, the structural violence from the unequal development, is once again hidden, which is beneficial for the Malian regime in particular and for capitalism in general (Smith, 2008: 134). According to the WB data, 8.1% of Mali's population was unemployed since 2010, and according to UNDP, 82.9% had a vulnerable employment. Since 2001, 80% of people has worked in the informal sector (Bidou and Droy, 2013: 256) and according to WB data, 43.6% of the population lived in poverty. Unemployment has been most pronounced in the region of Azawad (Krings, 1995: 60), for example, in Gao and Kidal, unemployment was three times that of the national rate (Barbet, 2005: 59-66). Likewise, Tombouctou had the lowest primary enrollment rate in 2011 (World Bank, 2015). By 2013, just over 75% of the households in Gao, Timbuktu, Kidal and Mopti were food insecure. Only 59% of Malians lived within 15 km of a health center, 36% within five and 46% had access to potable water (Perret, 2014: 203). In the region of Azawad, there are only two hospitals, one in Tombouctou, created in 2003, and another in Gao, while in Kidal there are only four health centers (Barbet, 2005: 59-66). According to the World Food Program, this region is also under high risk of food insecure.

At this time, Tuareg culture continued to be rejected, and they were still linked with terrorism. This image was not only presented in the national level but also at the international one through soft power, as in the case of the novel and movie "Sahara" (1992 and 2005 respectively) and in "Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice" (2016). This image allowed the government to repress them with impunity. Even though, the EPR Atlas coded the "black"

[1] See data from Minorities at Risk (MAR), "Assessment for Tuareg in Mali", UMD, http://www.mar.umd.edu/assessment.asp?groupId=43201

majority as "senior partners" and the "white" Tuareg and Arabs/Moors as "junior partners" during that period,

> "…the Bambara, Senofu, Soninké, and Malinké (that is, the dominant ethnic groups in the southwest and in/around Bamako) [were] doing somewhat better than the ethnic groups in the north. It is noteworthy, however, that the Tuareg appear to be doing worst of all ethnic groups, although not by a large margin compared to the Moors. Worsening performance over time is to be noted in Timbuktu, the area most affected by the ongoing violent conflict" (Langer, Stewart, 2015: 31).

Besides, many Tuareg considered themselves to have been historically humiliated, and that the Malian Government has endangered their existence (NMLA, 2012). Therefore, the objective and perceived HIs were acute in the four dimensions, but particularly in the economic and social scopes, which legitimized the Azawadi declaration of independence by the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (NMLA) in April 2012, three months after an attack in Menaka (Perret, 2014: 37).

The Malian crisis was exploited both by groups known as terrorists, and by some foreign countries. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Movement for the Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA) expelled the NMLA from northern Mali in June 2012. Later, AQIM occupied the territory of Kidal; MOJWA captured Gao; and Ansar Dine took Kidal (Pellerin, 2012: 842). Foreign interests, like those of France (the control of uranium, water, and oil in the area), the United States (its anti-terrorist policy and full-spectrum dominance) and Algeria (the maintenance of its state borders), have no place in this article. Nevertheless, it is essential to point out that they disrupted the objectives of the conflict, by suppressing local demands and obstructing any potential for a positive outcome of the rebellion.

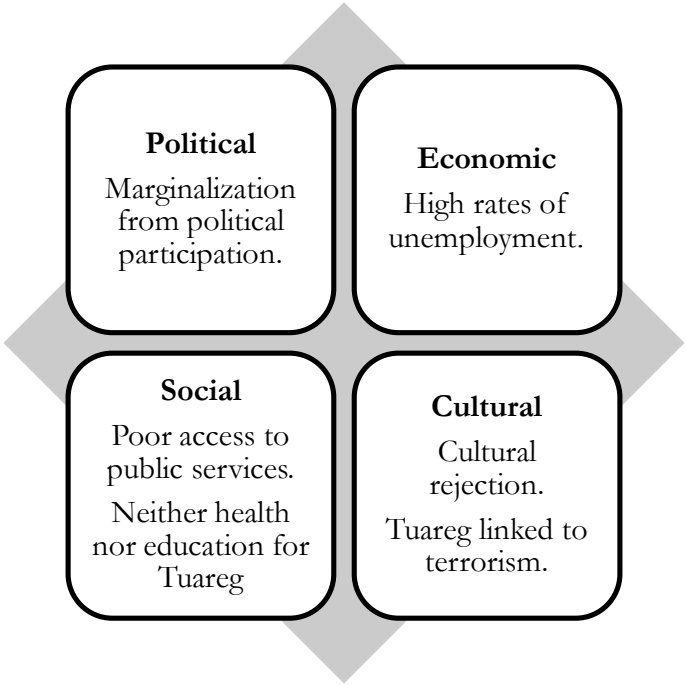

Figure 5: HIs that fostered the 2012 conflict

The four conflicts: similarities and differences

Objective and perceived dimensions of HIs have been present during all Tuareg rebellions analyzed in this paper. At the political level, Tuareg have been subject to active, intentional and targeted discrimination, which excluded them from political power. They have been made secondary representatives in power sharing, or they have been co-opted into the political institutions (symbolic inclusion). At the economic level, not only have their access and ownership of assets been limited, but also their income and employment opportunities. The Malian Government has not improved access to social services for the people of the north, and they have also been culturally rejected, because their identity is considered to be an obstacle to the development and modernization of the country.

According to the EPR Atlas of ETH Zürich, the first conflict in northern Mali after 1960 was linked with absolute power of the "black" majority. The second one coincided with the exclusion of Tuareg from the central government, whereas the last two were related with a power-sharing system, where the Tuareg have acted as secondary representatives (Giradin, 2016). The main demand during the first two conflicts was autonomy, although during the later conflicts they demanded self-government; indeed, the rebels declared the independence of Toumoujagha in 2007 and the Azawad in 2012.

Conforming to EPR data, sociocultural divisions in Mali are not politically relevant. Notwithstanding, the "only exception has been the conflict between the Malian state and the nomadic Tuareg and Arab and Moor minorities in the north" (Giradin, 2016: 905). Conflict in northern Mali has been more likely when HIs are consistent and when the gap between HIs among different identity groups increases. According to the information found, political inequalities were more acute during the conflicts of 1963 and 1990, when they had a limited inclusion in the power institutions and were subject to active discrimination to exclude them. During the conflict of 1963, the political exclusion coincided with the rejection of Tuareg cultural practices, which encouraged an identity sentiment to fight against the Malian government.

During the conflict of 1990, the role of *ishumar* and unemployment in combination with the political discrimination were the principal catalysts of the rebellion. Even though it is hard to find to find extensive information related to the conflict of 2006-2007, the main causes are generally linked with HIs inequalities and specifically with the exclusion from the economic gains of Areva. Finally, the last conflict is more related with economic and social inequalities, because of the high unemployment, poverty and food insecurity rates and the low access to health care of the population of the Azawad. However, the increased relevance of social inequalities for this rebellion can also be due to the lack of information to evaluate this dimension of HI during the previous conflicts. As Stewart argues, when there were significant political and economic HIs, conflict broke out more quickly (2008: 18). However, the relevance of each dimension was different in each of the four conflicts, because societies are not static and their demands change through time.

Conclusion

Violent conflict in the Azawad occurred when there were (perceived) acute horizontal inequalities between the Tuareg and the Malian rulers. The conflicts in Azawad are a consequence of the unequal distribution of life opportunities, reflected by HIs and therefore on systemic violence in which the inhabitants of the region have lived. The aforementioned does not mean that the people of the south have a high quality of life, as shown in UNDP data. Notwithstanding during

the analyzed periods of time, the Government of Bamako has been more interested in guaranteeing better privileges and rights for the inhabitants of the south, than for the population of Azawad.

The elemental grievances of Tuareg are political (they are marginalized from the participation in the government institutions), economic (they don't have good employment opportunities and income), social (they have reduced access to social services) and cultural (their practices are rejected and linked with violent and irrational groups). However, depending on the spatiotemporal context, some of these inequalities have been more relevant for the outbreak of some of the rebellions. In the conflict of 1963, the exclusion of political power and the educational policy of Keita and the Mandefication were the principal causes of Tuareg rebellion. During the conflict of the nineties, the political rejection of Tuareg in the political institutions and the lack of employment for the *ishumar* were the two principal HIs which fostered the *tanakra* insurgency.

The most important dimension of HI that promoted the insurrection of 2007, was the economic inequality. This was strongly linked with the international financial system, because Tuareg perceived Areva, a French corporation, as a second enemy in their fight against foreign domination. The last conflict was principally caused by social inequalities regarding food and health security but also by the high rates of unemployment and lack of access to economic opportunities. In all the conflicts, the Tuareg have played a predominant role, and they have risen in arms against the Malian Government because the inequalities, between them and the rulers, have been perceived as illegitimate. Likewise, their sociocultural identity has been the means to mobilize the group to demand autonomy or independence.

All the conflicts revealed that, objective and perceived, HIs between a culturally defined group, i.e. Tuareg and the government of Mali, are fundamental to the outbreak of an armed conflict. In general, power generates resistance, and the Tuareg have risen in arms against their government with the intention to recover their voice, to be visible and design a positive future for themselves. Nonetheless, while other actors like the United States and France continue to influence the social structure of Mali, the conflict will continue to be an essential element of their history, because it is a process which has not ended and which can give Tuareg the opportunities to demand a more equitable distribution of privileges and rights, and, in this way, reach a better quality of life.

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Rethinking Civilian Protection: How Residents of the Colombian Peace Community in San José de Apartadó Resist Violence

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Abstract

How can peaceful civil resistance limit violence against non-combatants during armed conflict? Prevalent theoretical approaches to the protection of civilians are largely based upon a neoliberal top-down paradigm and therefore neglect the potential of civilians to protect themselves. However, an emerging body of critical scholarship challenges this perspective and seeks to move beyond the Liberal Peace paradigm by presenting the benefits of bottom-up civilian self-protection efforts. This paper supports such an alternative viewpoint and analyses how residents of the Colombian Peace Community in San José de Apartadó have limited violence against them throughmeasures of peaceful resistance. Guided by Baines'and Paddon's (2012) theoretical framework of civilian self-protection, the case study reveals that three strategies were applied by the Peace Community to contain armed violence: remaining neutral, avoiding threats and implementing self-sufficiency mechanisms. These findings strengthen the perception that nonviolent civil resistance can indeed contribute to the limitation of violence in war zones.

Introduction

The mass killings of civilians during the 1990s in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia have illustrated that states are sometimes unable or unwilling to ensure the physical security of their citizens. In the aftermath of these atrocity crimes, notions about security and state sovereignty were reconceptualised by the international community (Bradley, 2016). Interventionist approaches that rest upon the logic of the Liberal Peace, particularly *Human Security* and the *Responsibility to Protect*, have become the most prominent conceptualisations of the protection of civilians (POC) and have received considerable attention by the research community (Bellamy, 2009; Bercovitch et al., 2009). Yet, these approaches have been criticized for being externally imposed, top-down constructs that victimise civilians (Pouligny, 2006; Nadarajah and Rampton, 2015). Hence, recent research increasingly concentrates on the importance of bottom-up civilian self-protection efforts (Barrs, 2010; Kaplan, 2013; Jose and Medie, 2015). Instead of understanding the POC as activities to be implemented by states or international institutions, these approaches shift their attention towards strategies used by non-combatants themselves. Consequently, they perceive civilians not as victims of violence or as passive actors, but as agents of change, who can establish peaceful mechanisms and institutions to "take the lead in their own

protection" (Jose and Medie, 2015: 516).

Against this backdrop, this article explores how peaceful civil resistance limited violence against non-combatants in the particular case of the Peace Community in San José de Apartadó. In order to illustrate the nonviolent mechanisms through which the residents of San José manage to contain violence, a qualitative, theory-oriented research strategy is applied, using a single case study design. The Civilian Self-Protection (CSP) framework, developed by Baines and Paddon (2012), is employed as a diagnostic tool to structure and guide the case analysis. Significantly, the aim of this article is not to reinforce the dichotomy between top-down and bottom-up concepts of civilian protection, but to exemplify that "the peace being constructed in the various contemporary conflict zones around the world looks very different from the perspective of local communities" (Richmond, 2005: 228). Furthermore, given that "literature on civilian movements remains under-theorized, without specifying causal mechanisms, or processes by which organized civilian resistance might affect substantively interesting outcomes" (Kaplan, 2013: 352), this paper strives to contribute to a better understanding of successful CSP-efforts. This consideration of grassroots-concepts of security and protection fits in well with endeavours of critical theorists to arrive at a post-Liberal Peace approach, which regards the agency of the local population, centres the interests of protection recipients and questions the motivations of interveners (Mac Ginty, 2011; Richmond, 2011).

The next section clarifies the key concepts. In the third part, the theoretical foundations of the paper are illustrated, with a particular emphasis on academic literature that investigates the POC from a grassroots-perspective. Subsequently, the research design and the case selection are elucidated. Thereafter, the case study analysis is conducted. A conclusion summarises the findings and outlines directions for further research.

Concept specification

The specification of two concepts is of particular importance for the remainder of this paper: The 'protection of civilians' and 'armed conflict'. First of all, the 'protection of civilians' is a contested concept that entails a wide range of distinct interpretations (Bradley, 2016). Depending on the theoretical lens used by scholars, different perceptions exist about the actors that realise the POC, the motives that drive their actions and the recipients of protection[2]. The common ground which all paradigms share is their aspiration to limit violence against non-combatants and preserve their physical integrity (Gordon, 2011). Thus, when using the term 'POC' in this paper, I usually refer to this protective aspiration of the concept. Second, the term 'armed conflict' describes a "contested incompatibility [...] where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a year" (Themnér and Wallensteen, 2012: 572). With these working definitions in place, I will now turn towards the research design.

Literature review

The dominant narrative in the theoretical literature at hand is that top-down, interventionist concepts are the best means to limit violence targeting non-combatants in armed conflicts (Jose and Medie, 2015). Proponents of this approach assume that international organisations, states and international NGOs are the principal agents of civilian protection (Bellamy and Williams,

[2] Section 4 elaborates upon these different theoretical conceptualisations within the academic discourse.

2009). However, a growing number of critical scholars queries this top-down understanding of protection. Their main contention is that top-down protection efforts are embedded within a salvation paradigm, which "fosters a false dichotomy between *saviours* (external actors who rescue and protect) and *victims* (internal actors who are in need of saving)" (Suarez and Black, 2014: 3). This concept of victimhood, as Suarez and Black underline, is so deeply ingrained in contemporary humanitarian and peacekeeping operations that it causes processes which construct 'deserving' and 'undeserving' victims (ibid.). The predominant concern with this narrative and self-representation of victimhood is that it disempowers vulnerable populations and reduces them "to a series of commodities and services provided by the international community" (ibid. 2014: 2). Therefore, Pugh concludes that humanitarian intervention in this liberal sense serves a narrow, problem-solving purpose that "seems to be part of the packaging in which Western security culture, self-perception and self-interest are wrapped" (2004: 50).

The persistent limitations of interventionist approaches to humanitarianism have led a number of scholars to turn their attention away from the 'top-down' macro-level towards the 'bottom-up' micro-level of analysis (King, 2004). Hence, instead of perceiving the POC as activities to be realised by states or international organisations, the focus is shifting towards the strategies used by non-combatants themselves. This grassroots-perspective provides a novel theoretical lens on the agency of civilians to limit violence during armed conflict.

Civilian Protection from the Bottom-Up

Proponents of the grassroots-perspective neglect to consider civilians as *victims* that need to be *saved* by external *saviours*. Rather, they investigate to what extent non-combatants on the community level ensure their own safety in wartime and how humanitarian action can support their efforts. Thus, protection is not perceived as "a conversation conducted above the heads of those affected by conflict" (Bonwick, 2006: 276), but as a process that acknowledges civilian agency. This section continues as follows. The first part presents the theoretical foundations of civilian self-protection – with a particular emphasis on the CSP-framework – while the second one presents a practical and conceptual critique of the bottom-up approach.

Civilian protection from the grassroots rests on the idea that those who suffer most are those who best understand how to resist. This emancipatory view derives from the critical impulse in International Relations and focuses on the liberation from oppression, domination and hegemony as the aim of human security (Richmond, 2007). Local ownership and civilian control of security are therefore its ultimate expression. Significantly, Mouly et al. (2015) note that the social tiredness of accumulated violence over years of war can push people to 'overcome the fear threshold' from passive acceptance of violence to clear resistance to it. Through this process of transformation from mere victims of armed conflict into agents of their own fate, civilians have repeatedly proven their capability to distance themselves from a war that is not theirs and take action to fulfil their right to live in a peaceful environment (Garcia Durán, 2006). The establishment of bottom-up protection efforts is therefore an exercise of autonomy that openly challenges the power and dominance of conflict parties. This bottom-up approach does not dismiss the relevance of external actors completely, but limits their role to the enhancement of self-protection by "providing or facilitating the distribution of the resources needed to self-protect" (Jose and Medie, 2015: 531). According to Williams, these resources include food, health services and other basic needs.

Furthermore, they also entail "preparing a flight strategy, keeping ID documents to hand,

burying possessions and/or prepositioning important survival items in areas where they can be retrieved later" (2013: 293). This emphasis on control non-combatants possess in responding to immediate threats is clearly reflected in common conceptualisations of CSP: "We define self-protection as the ability of civilians to assess and determine the best strategies to avoid, mitigate or thwart violence by armed groups" (Baines and Paddon, 2012: 234). While some researchers explicitly include violent engagement in their definitions of CSP (Jose and Medie, 2015), I hold the view that this contradicts the ultimate aim of self-protection, which is the limitation of violence, not its reinforcement. Consequently, I rely on a framework of peaceful civilian self-protection, which was brought forward by Baines and Paddon (2012). Their typology includes three CSP-strategies: **(A)** attempts to remain neutral, **(B)** avoidance of the threat and **(C)** accommodation of armed actors. Baines and Paddon suggest that access to local knowledge and networks is vital for being able to select the appropriate strategy of nonviolent self-protection. As this framework is used to structure the case study, it is now elucidated in more detail: First, neutrality entails "masking any allegiance to either side and seeking protection in non-combatant status" (ibid.: 237). Particularly in civil wars, the authors argue, it is often difficult to distinguish between different armed groups, as their uniforms are resembling. Nonetheless, being able to tell the difference is crucial to survival, and local knowledge is of utmost importance in this regard. Declaring the community's territory as neutral is another way of preventing abuse by armed groups. In sum, the strategy of remaining neutral depends "to a great extent on a nuanced understanding of the different parties and how to interact appropriately with them" (ibid.: 237).

Second, avoidance includes tactics of preparation and hiding, 'being ready to run' as well as using a community information network to share the whereabouts of warring parties. In addition, civilians rely on knowledge of the area, meaning inter alia that the absence of people in a particular area at a time of the day when it usually would by crowed causes non-combatants to hide. In brief, "a strong familiarity with their environment enabled civilians to respond when something was out of place within it" (ibid.: 239).

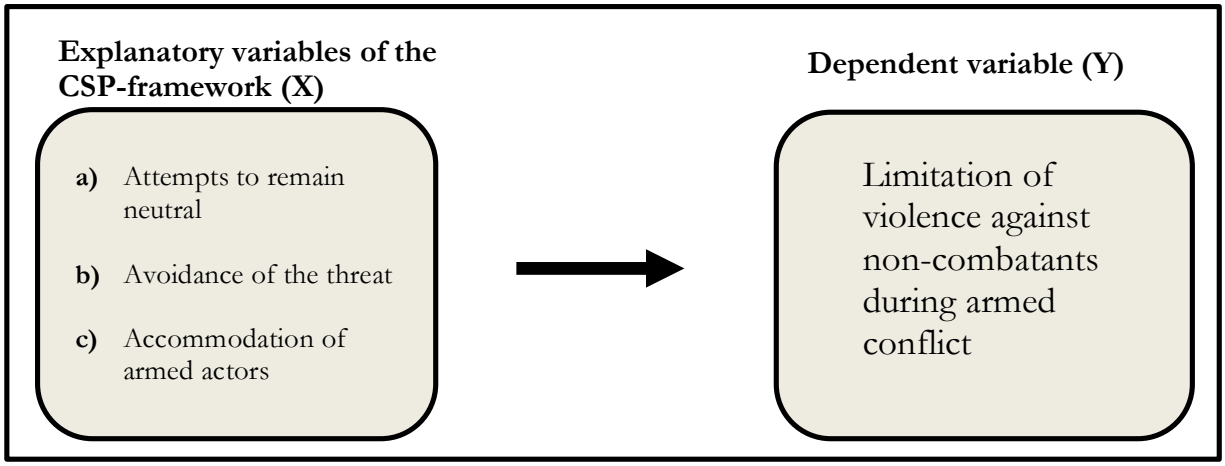

Figure 1: Summary of explanatory variables of the CSP-framework, own illustration

Accommodation constitutes the third strategy of the CSP-framework. It particularly applies when the first two strategies are not sufficient and describes interactions with armed groups in order to maximize protection, without joining as a fighter. This includes filtered information-sharing or limited economic cooperation. Thus, communities use their local knowledge and networks to collaborate with warring parties in a way that would prevent

violence. Taken together, the CSP-framework argues that civilians on the local level are better positioned to take care of their own protection than external actors[3].

Yet, it remains vital to understand why armed groups would respect civilian-led protection efforts and refrain from the use of violence? Kaplan stresses that a central condition for compliance with civilian protection from the grassroots is that "armed actors must share a minimal jointness of interests to not harm civilians so they will abide by civilian institutional arrangements" (2013: 352). He underlines that particularly armed groups depending on civilians for their resources or reputation might be more reluctant to harm civilians than groups that are "highly resolute in killing or winning, such as cases of genocide" (ibid.: 352). Thus, if armed actors see civilians as a constituency that can provide benefits to combatants' interests, for instance by acting as neutral arbiters or as a channel of communication, there are strong incentives to respect civilian-led protection strategies. This understanding is supported by Mouly et al., who contend that "guerrilla groups require the support, if not social recognition, of the local population in order to sustain their fight against the regime" (2015: 55). Non-recognition of the legitimacy of CSP and coercing the support of the local population through violence might therefore contradict long-term objectives of armed groups, as the benefits of violence decrease and the costs of preserving territorial control increase. From this perspective, the strategies of the CSP-framework make it more difficult for armed actors to rely on violence as an advantageous means to reach their strategic goals – given that some amount of joint interest among armed groups exists to not directly target the civilian populace. Conversely, Kaplan (2013) highlights that if armed actors have no incentives to abide by or agree to civilians' attempts to protect themselves, CSP-efforts are less likely to succeed in their endeavour to contain violence. Considering this necessity of a vested interest of armed actors to refrain from the use of violence in order to gain local support is thus an important scope condition which helps to understand under which circumstances CSP can be useful.

Critique of Civilian Self-Protection

The increasing focus on bottom-up views of security and protection is symptomatic of the overall ambitions of critical theorists to strengthen post-liberal forms of peace (Richmond, 2011). Richmond illustrates that local-liberal hybrid forms of civilian protection, in which bottom-up efforts are supported by external actors, offer great potential for an emancipatory peace to emerge. However, this grassroots-view has been criticized for being insufficient to prevent violence and for remaining rooted in the same epistemological assumptions as the liberal discourses it seeks to replace.

First of all, Begby and Burgess (2009) claim that proponents of the bottom-up approach fail to take into account that local communities are often highly fragmented. Consequently, there is no homogenous community with coherent interests, but rather a multitude of local groups with often contradicting preferences. This fragmented structure makes a unified answer to violent threats inherently difficult. For this very reason, Mac Ginty (2008) claims that any temptation to 'romanticise' local or indigenous approaches to peacebuilding must be resisted. The challenge for researchers is thus to "acknowledge the importance of bottom-up dynamics without idealizing them" (Autesserre, 2014: 495).

Second, there are concerns that the discourse on resilience and CSP is another form of

[3] See Figure 1 for an overview of the CSP-framework.

neo-liberal governance (Duffield 2012), as critics assert that civilian resilience must come from within and cannot by 'given' or 'enhanced' by outside actors (Chandler, 2013). Therefore, Chandler argues that the post-liberal bottom-up approach "remains entirely within the world of superficial appearances and ideologically erases structural constraints and power relations from the picture" (ibid.: 284).

Yet, despite this justified criticism, I claim that the bottom-up approach offers a theoretical view on limiting violence against civilians that is more empowering, people-based and decentralised, whereas international intervention is rather paternalistic, state-based and centralised. The challenge, however, is not to uphold one paradigm ('self-protection') at the expense of the other ('salvation'), but to comprehend their mutual dependence and discover strategies to reconcile them into one overarching framework, given that in practice both will often coexist (Mègret, 2009).

Research design

This paper relies on the case study method to explore the mechanisms of CSP in the Peace Community of San José. Usually, case studies are characterised by a trade-off between the explanatory potential of the study for a larger number of cases and "keeping the number of cases to be studied manageable" (George and Bennett, 2004: 31). I conduct a single case study analysis, as the epistemological interest of the paper is not to generalise or to establish causal patterns of behaviour, but rather to develop an in-depth understanding of how peaceful civil resistance limited violence against the residents of San José. The case study focuses on the time period since the foundation of the Peace Community in 1997 until 2016. The material used to answer the research question is composed of policy reports from civil society organisations and think tanks working with the Peace Community as well as of previous academic inquiries of San José.

Sample decision

Several reasons speak in favour of selecting the Peace Community of San José as the unit of analysis to illustrate the benefits of CSP-efforts[4]: First, the armed conflict in Colombia is characterised by a remarkable amount of peaceful civil resistance initiatives, which triggered scholarly interest for the phenomenon of CSP (García-Duran, 2006). Although Kaplan (2013) has described endeavours of civilians to protect themselves and confront armed combatants in cases as diverse as the Philippines or Mozambique, the quantity and the historic embeddedness of civilian resistance in Colombian society set the country apart from other units of analysis (Kaplan, 2010). Second, the Peace Community in San José is one of the country's first and best-known cases of civil resistance. Accordingly, it has received outstanding attention by humanitarian practitioners and the research community (Alther, 2006; Jose and Medie, 2015). Moreover, a vast amount of empirical material and academic literature on the case is available. This facilitates access to reliable information and opens the way for a thorough analysis.

[4] Generally, case study designs rely on the same logic: A sample of cases rests within a population to which a certain phenomenon refers. Here, the population consists of all cases that are listed in the DATAPAZ database (the databank includes information about all peaceful civil resistance initiatives in Colombia from 1979 until today). Available via: <http://www.cinep.org.co /base-de-datos-datapaz.html>.

The Peace Community of San José de Apartadó

The internal conflict in Colombia dates back to the 1960s and involves a number of warring parties: Besides the military forces of the Colombian state, two left-wing guerrilla groups still operate in the country: The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia and the National Liberation Army, known by their Spanish acronyms FARC and ELN, respectively. What started as an ideological uprising by small parts of the rural population has grown to a 20,000-strong drug-financed insurgency, which has largely left its initial ideals behind (Sweig, 2002). In the 1980s, right-wing paramilitary 'self-defence'-groups were founded by affluent landowners, who feared that the guerrilla violence could affect their economic interests (Bradley, 2016). In 1997, these paramilitary groups created a national umbrella organisation known as the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC). Although the AUC underwent a demobilisation process from 2003 to 2006, a significant number of former fighters remains part of the conflict, predominantly to engage in illegal activities, such as the trade of illicit drugs (Denissen, 2010). After more than 50 years of war, which displaced six million people and killed more than 200,000 (International Crisis Group, 2016), formal peace talks between the government and the FARC came to an end through the approval of a final peace deal by the Colombian senate and congress on 30 November 2016.

San José de Apartadó, an indigenous municipality on the Caribbean coast, is one of Colombia's oldest and best-known peace communities (Alther, 2006). When a left-wing political party won the elections in the region during the 1980s, members of the right-wing paramilitary groups reacted and tried to increase their influence in San José. For the next two decades, the fight for control over the area led to various acts of human rights violations against the civilian population (Sanchez, 2010). The violence reached a peak during 1996: An investigation conducted by the International Committee of the Red Cross found that only between May and August of that year, 91 grave human rights abuses were committed against civilians (ibid.)[5]. These atrocities led the people of San José to ask the Catholic church and national as well as international NGOs to support them developing self-protection strategies. In April 1997, 1500 villagers founded the Community of Peace of San José de Apartadó (Masullo, 2015). The community defines itself as "a non-combatant rural farmer civilian population" (Sanchez, 2010:2). In the following, I examine to what extent the peaceful civil resistance could contribute to the limitation of violence.

Attempts to remain neutral

Upholding their neutrality in the midst of the conflict appears to a be a centrepiece of the community's protection strategy. The inhabitants of San José designate areas where no armed group, legal or illegal, could trespass. These humanitarian zones are marked with signs, fencing, and flags to make clear to all warring parties that they cannot enter (Alther, 2006). Another purpose of this demarcation is to indicate "that the civilian population is non-violent and this non-violence must be respected" (Sanchez, 2010: 7). Not even police forces are permitted within the community, which has led to a *de facto* autonomous self-administration of the community (ibid.). Additionally, members of the Peace Community do not carry or own arms, ammunitions or explosives in order to reinforce the principle of non-violence (Masullo, 2015). Efforts to

[5] These human rights violations included 22 extrajudicial killings, 27 arbitrary detentions, 8 case of torture, one bombing of civilian areas and two mass forced displacements (Sanchez, 2010).

remain neutral even go as far as refusing to "give or sell survival goods or property to armed groups (ibid.: 67). Consequently, the small shops within the Peace Community do not provide products to any person that is considered a member of an armed group. The determination to maintain a neutral stance culminated in the abandonment of the town in 2005, when state security forces occupied the area forcefully and killed seven residents of San José (Mitchell and Rojas, 2012). The Community then set up a new village at some distance from their previous home, where they continue to resist endeavours to drag them into the ongoing struggle between state and insurgents (ibid.).

Avoidance of the threat

Particularly after the 2005 occupation of San José by government troops, it became clear that the idea of neutrality was insufficient in terms of guaranteeing lasting protection. The residents, therefore, increasingly relied on proactive strategies against all armed groups by "declaring themselves agents of non-violence and peace" (Sanchez, 2010: 4). This proactivity includes measures to enhance the community's resilience, such as travelling in groups, avoidance of areas where armed actors are present, using whistles to alert others to any armed incursion and gathering "every morning and evening to review the day's events and ensure that all members are present" (Alther, 2006: 283). Additionally, the Peace Community has promoted 'humanitarian zones' among various hamlets surrounding San José (Sanchez, 2010). The purpose of these zones is to prevent displacement and warn other villages about movements of armed groups (ibid.). Each humanitarian zone has a committee coordinator and a system of communication to quickly disseminate information about emerging threats (ibid.).

Accommodation of armed actors

The third strategy of the CSP-framework does not seem to apply to the Peace Community in San José, as the residents refuse entirely to accommodate armed actors or to collaborate with them (Sanchez, 2010). The community avoids any kind of cooperation through self-sufficiency mechanisms that guarantee their economic independence and food security. In particular, the residents of San José have established a parallel economic system that seeks to elude the embargo imposed by armed actors. Apart from producing everything they need to survive, the Community started "exporting its products by way of Fair Trade networks" (Masullo, 2015: 69). Since rural farmers who cultivate land on their own often become targets of armed groups, the residents of San José developed a system wherein cultivation of crops is done communally in groups of 100-200, which helps "to deter attacks and harassment from the armed groups" (Sanchez, 2010: 6). A further measure applied by the residents of San José to sustain their autonomy is to ally with various NGOs. In particular, civil society organisations raise awareness for the community's concerns, ensure the swift spread of information about human-rights abuses and create "safe spaces in which to discuss existing and potential safety and emergency procedures" (Alther, 2006: 289). The international NGO Peace Brigades, for instance, maintains a permanent presence in San José, with international volunteers continuously monitoring the security situation (Peace Brigades, 2016). Additionally, the residents of San José formed the 'Network of Communities in Resistance' in 2003 with the purpose of "exchanging views with other resistance communities set up by Afro-Colombians, indigenous peoples and rural farmers in other parts of Colombia" (Sanchez, 2010: 7). Masullo (2015) highlights that this external network of support has proven to

be paramount for the endurance and survival of the Peace Community. Significantly, through their cooperation with civil society organisations, the residents of San José have learned to address direct threats to their security (e.g. learning to de-mine) and educate themselves on human rights and humanitarian law (Alther, 2006). In fact, the Peace Community has founded a rural university that teaches residents of communities in resistance across Colombia about the non-violent principles and philosophy of peace that sustain them (Sanchez, 2010). In sum, these self-sufficiency practices have increased the resilience of the community and allow its residents to "withstand the pressures resulting from the economic and other blockades imposed upon them by the armed groups" (ibid.: 6).

In spite of these promising developments, it remains important to explore whether these self-protection measures have really had an impact on the level of violence in San José. Koopman (2014) outlines that the overall amount of violent acts perpetrated by armed groups has notably decreased since the foundation of the Peace Community, particularly in comparison to surrounding areas. This assessment is underpinned by one of the few quantitative studies that investigate the success of the Peace Community in increasing security and decreasing local violence: Valenzuela (2009) describes a clear pattern of diminishing assassination, forced displacement and disappearances between 1997 and 2009. However, Valenzuela's data suggests that other indicators of violence, such as armed incursions, blockades, and the level of harassment by armed groups have not changed significantly since the foundation of the Peace Community. Mitchell and Rojas argue that the clear objective in these non-lethal cases of harassment has been to "intimidate the community but to avoid the opprobrium that attends actual massacre of its inhabitants" (2012: 51). In this regard, the CSP-mechanisms of the Peace Community, combined with the considerable amount of attention their non-violent resistance has generated among international NGOs and national partner organisations, have seemingly made it more difficult for armed groups to rely on violence as a beneficial means to realise their objectives. Indeed, Sanchez (2010) describes that San José residents believe that without their peaceful self-protection model, "they would either all be displaced from the area or dead" (2010: 7). As one resident put it:

> "For me, the Peace Community has been the only alternative to be able to survive in the middle of war, because without it, it would be very difficult to live here and I think it would be very difficult to survive" (Hernandez and Salazar, 1999: 88).

Given this perceived success of the Peace Community on behalf of its residents and the empirically-proven reduction of lethal attacks by armed groups, it is hard to deny some independent impact of CSP-mechanisms on levels of violence in San José. Thus, if "survival is a measure of success, then San José has clearly succeeded" (Mitchell and Rojas, 2012: 52). In recent years, the Peace Community's self-protection model has served as an example for various other indigenous communities in Colombia, which have adopted similar strategies that are bottom-up, decentralised, emancipatory and sensitive to their own worldview (Sanchez, 2010; Kaplan, 2013).

In summary, the case analysis has shown that an aggregate of three strategies enables the success of civilian-led protection efforts in San José: Attempts to remain neutral, the avoidance of threats and self-sufficiency mechanisms that are supported by NGOs. While the first two strategies constitute relevant elements of the CSP-framework, the third one does not fit into this scheme. Thus, contrary to theoretical expectations, the case study revealed that bottom-up

protection can also be successful when civilians do not accommodate armed groups, but apply a rigid non-cooperation strategy. Although one might argue that this inconsistency in the CSP-framework limits its explanatory potential for a greater number of empirical cases, I suggest that this rather speaks in favour of conducting more systematic research about civilian self-protection mechanisms. This would contribute to a better understanding of the various ways in which non-combatants on the community level ensure their own safety in wartime.

Conclusion

This paper made contributions to two distinct, yet ultimately interconnected realms of the scholarly discourse on the POC. The first two contributions relate to the case study, whereas the last one is connected to the theoretical discussions of civilian protection: First, the analysis of the Peace Community in San José has illustrated how civilians in war zones can limit violence targeting them. In particular, the residents of San José have applied three strategies to protect themselves: Remaining neutral, avoiding threats and implementing self-sufficiency mechanisms. Second, the support of NGOs was vital for the effectiveness of CSP-mechanisms in San José, which exemplifies how external actors can support communities in developing self-protection capacities. These empirical aspects serve as the foundation for the third contribution, which is that my findings strengthen the endeavours of critical theorists to arrive at post-liberal or hybrid forms of civilian protection. Significantly, the results of this paper illustrate some of the mechanisms civilians on the grassroots-level might use to protect themselves in times of war, which underpins the recent 'local turn' in critical peacebuilding literature (Leonardsson and Rudd, 2015).

Existing explanations for the limitation of violence during armed conflicts tend to omit civilians as autonomous actors and discount their organisational processes to avoid conflicts and remain neutral (Kaplan, 2013). This paper constitutes a first step towards a better understanding of CSP; more comparative research is needed across geographic regions and conflicts to fully comprehend how self-protection initiatives can contribute to the limitation of violence against civilians. The findings presented here suggest that civilian self-protection is not *the* solution, but one that exists together with other strategies. Thus, I support a stronger focus on civilian agency "in times of imminent threat, along with a consideration of how humanitarians may aid civilian efforts to mitigate violence" (Baines and Paddon, 2012: 242).

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Water Scarcity and the Syrian Conflict: Cause or By-product?

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Abstract

There have been many studies exploring resource scarcity and its relationship to conflict. However, there are a variety of understandings regarding this relationship. This paper adds to this understanding by examining the role of water resource scarcity in the context of the Syrian conflict. Applying two theories, it explores the question of whether water scarcity was a contributing factor to, or a result of, the Syrian conflict. Based on this analysis, it seems that the relationship between water scarcity and the Syrian conflict is complex and provides support for both theories.

Introduction

In the context of conflict, the matter of resource scarcity is often a chicken versus egg debate: which comes first? Does resource scarcity, combined with other factors, contribute to social disorder and discontent, ultimately leading to conflict? Or do the strategic actions of warring parties lead to resource scarcity, which has the further potential to lead to discontent and conflict? Or rather, in the face of this framework, is there a third option that incorporates a combination of these two?

Much of the previous literature on these issues has explored the debate on whether it is resource scarcity or abundance that influences conflict. Other areas of literature address resource scarcity as a question of degree of influence (that is, does it have a minor or major influence on conflict). In response, the analysis of this paper addresses two research gaps. First, it addresses these debates by exploring the relationship between resource scarcity and conflict. Second, it focuses on a question that has only recently received attention: can conflict itself also produce resource scarcity? Throughout, this paper provides insight into, and addresses, these gaps by investigating whether water resource scarcity is a cause or by-product of conflict, or both.

The examination of this paper explores these two dimensions – cause and by-product – within the context of the conflict in Syria. The first dimension examines how scarce water resources may have contributed to social tensions and growing discontent among the Syrian population, ultimately resulting in the conflict. This is compared to the second dimension, which explores how warring parties in Syria may have used water as a weapon, thereby possibly contributing to water scarcity and violence.

The overall question explored in this analysis is what role water scarcity has played in the Syrian conflict. It finds that it is a combination of the two dimensions that best describes the

influence of water scarcity in the current Syrian conflict. The ensuing examination shows that while there may have been water scarcity prior to the onset of the conflict, the actions by warring actors exacerbated these scarcity issues.

It should be noted that the scope of this examination is limited to resource scarcity. While broader questions of resource abundance are discussed below, this is only as a basis of comparison and to briefly shed light on alternative explanations of how resources might influence conflict.

This paper will proceed as follows: first, it will explore in greater depth the theory of resource scarcity relevant to the question presented. Doing so will provide a framework to examine the scarcity factors at play in the Syrian conflict. Second, a brief discussion will be provided for why the Syrian conflict was chosen to examine this theory. Third, an in-depth evaluation of the Syrian conflict will be presented and explored through the lens of water scarcity theory. The aim of this section is to provide an answer to the question presented above. Finally, the conclusion will summarize the analysis provided by the previous sections.

Theoretical/Conceptual Analysis

Prior to discussing the theories applied in this analysis, it is important to conceptualize what is meant by "water scarcity." There are several ways to define "water scarcity" (UN-Water, 2006: 1), some being very scientific, while others are more causal. The definition applied in this paper is simply that water scarcity is "an excess of water demand over available supply" (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, 2012: 6). This minimalist definition provides an understanding that conforms to the demands of this examination without requiring prior knowledge or further analysis that is outside the scope of this paper.

Issues of water scarcity and abundance can pose fundamental challenges to any country, let alone a country experiencing social tensions or conflict. Unlike other forms of resource scarcity, which can have more long-term consequences, the lack of water can have immediate and detrimental consequences – be they related to matters of hygiene, food production, or the very necessity of water to sustain life. In short, the lack of water can more quickly lead to death. At the same time, water resource abundance can pose questions of control and distribution (for instance, who safely purifies water and stores surpluses, how is it distributed, and also issues relating to environmental abundance, such as flood control). A related but distinct matter to scarcity and abundance concerns the economic costs and environmental impact of water desalination and/or purification. While this paper focuses on water resource scarcity, it is important to keep these factors in mind when examining the relationship between water resources and conflict.

There is a variety of responses that countries or groups can offer to water scarcity issues; these can range from innovative approaches and cooperation to outright conflict. For example, Alexandratos explores the issue of agricultural resource challenges across the African continent, the Middle East, and Afghanistan, and discusses potential solutions to these challenges (Alexandratos, 2005). One such possible solution would be adopting policies that support the generation and diffusion of improved technologies (Ibid.: 248). This is also what Homer-Dixon and Blitt refer to as "Social and Technical Ingenuity" (Homer-Dixon and Blitt, 1998: 7).[6] In terms of cooperation between nations or groups, Yoffe, Wolf, and Giordano argue that "between

[6] For a general discussion of social and technological ingenuity, *see* Homer-Dixon (1995).

1948 and 1999, cooperation over water, including the signing of treaties, far outweighed conflict over water" (Yoffe et al., 2003: 1112). In their conclusion, they are referring to international actors and international freshwater resources.

In contrast to these possible innovative approaches and cooperation, previous research demonstrates that resource scarcity (including water scarcity) can lead to conflict through several possible pathways. In their work on this question, Homer-Dixon et al. find that scarcity of renewable resources has contributed to conflicts in many parts of the developing world and that this unrest will continue into the future (Homer-Dixon et al., 1993: 38-45). These authors note a particular challenge with water scarcity in the Middle East (Ibid.). They present several paths down which renewable resource scarcity can lead to conflict; the two most relevant paths are discussed presently. First, scarcity of renewable resources can lead to displacement/migration, resulting in social disorder, ethnic conflict, civil strife, and insurgency (Homer-Dixon et al., 1993: 39). These tensions can stem from distribution and access problems within urban centers, and poor government response an administration in response to migration. Some of the scarcity related motivators for this migration are constrained agricultural output and economic hardships (Homer-Dixon and Blitt, 1998: 10). A second pathway is that renewable resource scarcity can trigger changes in the political and social governance of resources (Homer-Dixon et al., 1993: 38). This includes actions taken by small yet powerful groups who act to protect their interests without considering the interests of broader society (Homer-Dixon and Blitt, 1998:8). These small, powerful groups may also attempt to hinder reform efforts that do not coincide with their interests (Ibid.). These conflicting interests have the potential of creating and exacerbating social tension, potentially resulting in conflict.

From a more contemporary understanding of these issues, Swain and Jägerskog argue, in situations of scarcity, "water has increasingly become a source of social tension as users are worried about the present or future availability of water resources…water scarcity has the potential to bring about further competition and create conflict that can destroy the ongoing arrangements of water sharing" (Swain and Jägerskog, 2016: 65). It is this anticipation or fear of uncertain water supplies in the future, which can lead to violent action in the hopes of ensuring future water security.

Against this backdrop, there is a history of countervailing research on the influence of resource scarcity. Homer-Dixon et al. admits of skeptics who challenge the significance of resource scarcity, claiming that it is only a minor variable (Homer-Dixon et al., 1993). Others, such as Koubi et al., suggest, "it is resource abundance rather than resource scarcity that is linked to conflict" (Koubi et al., 2014: 234). However, these authors refuse, perhaps pragmatically, to rule out the possibility that resource scarcity is related to conflict. They assert, "the literature also tells us that natural resources seem to be part of a more complex set of factors that can predispose a state or subnational region to armed conflict, but whose combined effect may not be fully understood" (Koubi et al., 2014: 234-238).

Given this complexity and lack of complete understanding, it is important to further exami ne resource scarcity and its relationship to conflict. Doing so through the lens of the Syrian conflict will provide a very relevant and indispensable test of resource scarcity theory. This will not only help to mitigate the complexity, it will also build upon the theoretical relationship between resource scarcity and conflict.

Examining the relationship between conflict and water scarcity, Swain posits that there are two dimensions linking water scarcity to conflict. In the first dimension, "water resources

have the potential to cause or contribute to the emergence and/or escalation of conflict among human groups" (Swain, 2015: 443). Under this dimension, this emergence and/or escalation is the result of tensions for access to, and consumption of, water resources. The second dimension explored by Swain is that, "in a conflict, the deliberate targeting of water storage facilities may be directly responsible for inducing water scarcity or reducing the water quality of opponents" (Ibid.: 443). In this dimension, the warring parties essentially use water as a weapon of war. As these dimensions demonstrate, regardless of whether the first or second dimension, water scarcity is linked to conflict with regards to quality, quantity, and control (Ibid.: 443).

It is important to recognize that conflict is rarely, if ever, the result of one single factor. According to Gleick, "any analysis or effort at reducing the risk of conflict must consider a multitude of complex relationships and contributing facts" (Gleick, 2014: 331), including water resource scarcity. Concerning the first dimension of this paper, there may be factors at play fueling conflict that are independent of water scarcity – such as religious or ethnic tensions. At the same time, because of the importance of water in everyday life, its scarcity can result in the loss of crops and livestock, loss of employment, and displacement in search of greater access to water. Concerning the second dimension, the deliberate targeting of water infrastructures by warring parties may lead to similar results – the loss of crop and livestock, employment, relocation.[7] There is also the possibility that these deliberate actions could lead to additional factors that exacerbate conflict – such as water contamination making it unfit for consumption and/or agricultural uses, reduction of electricity output, and violent reaction by the targeted group.

A final factor that must be considered when discussing the relationship between water scarcity and conflict – especially in the context of the Syrian conflict – is how water management practices impact both dimensions. While scarcity is a challenge, it can be argued that water governance is an even more important challenge (Swain and Jägerskog, 2016: 66). Improper water management (such as poor water storage, poorly maintained infrastructure, or practices of flood irrigation) may be one contributing factors to water scarcity. At the same time, improper or poor management of water systems may result in the government's inability to respond to the deliberate targeting of water infrastructure by warring actors.

Research Design

To explore whether water scarcity was a contributing factor, a by-product, or a combination of the two for the Syrian conflict, I will review qualitative data in the form of scholarly/peer-reviewed journals, reports distributed by IGOs, and news articles (both international and regional). Background information concerning the Syrian conflict and matters of water scarcity were also gathered from reports distributed by advocacy and humanitarian groups such as ICRC, IRIN, and UNICEF.

It is important to point out that relying on sources such as news and advocacy group reports does come with the risk of source bias. While there is an inherent risk of bias in these sources, there is the potential risk of bias in any form of reporting. For this reason, these sources should not be disregarded. Rather, this potential bias should be recognized and these sources should be appreciated for the more nuanced information they provide. These sources offer a

[7] While these factors are important to recognize, their individual and narrow discussion is beyond the scope of this paper.

wider scope of perspectives and deeper investigation about conflict that might not otherwise be retrieved by solely relying on scholarly works (*see generally* Öberg and Sollenberg, 2011).

The Case

The case selected for this analysis is the Syrian conflict. While the first demonstrations that led to this conflict may have begun in 2011, there are a variety of factors that had been building for years, even decades, before the first shots of the conflict ever being fired.

The first reason this case is selected is also a reason it is very challenging to examine. Often the conflict is viewed through the lens of social movements sweeping across the Middle East and North Africa (Gleick, 2014: 331). It is also often viewed as a mix of political, social, and religious tensions (Ibid.: 331). These tensions were and are made all the more complex by the influx of foreign fighters, the Islamic State (IS) and its former al-Qaeda counterpart, Jabhat Fateh al-Sham[8], and the numerous warring factions divided between the opposition forces and the regime of Bashar al-Assad.

However, one aspect of the Syrian conflict that is often glossed over is the influence of water scarcity – and the interplay between the factors briefly discussed above and water scarcity. Gleick (2014: 331) argues that "water and climate conditions are also relevant because of the role they have played in the deterioration of Syria's economic conditions."

The second reason this case is selected is how it equally reflects the two dimensions explored by Swain. Concerning the first dimension, in the years prior to the onset of the conflict, drought, water mismanagement, and the resulting mass-displacement of Syrians, created numerous social tensions as competition and conflict over water availability grew. Concerning the second dimension explored by Swain, throughout the conflict, all parties to the conflict have deliberately targeted water storage facilities, treatment facilities, and hydroelectric stations.

The short reason this case is selected is that present-day and challenge test on the relationship between water resource scarcity and conflict. Examples of conflict beyond Syria may demonstrate how drought or water scarcity has been a significant catalyst in triggering conflict[9]. Other examples may demonstrate how ongoing conflict results in water scarcity when warring parties deliberately target water and use it as a weapon of war. The Syrian conflict is a single case that reflects both dimensions of water scarcity. These dimensions are explored in greater depth in the following section.

Discussion

Dimension One: Water Scarcity Influencing The Onset of Conflict

Between 1900 and 2005, Syria has experienced six droughts; five of these droughts have lasted only one season, and one drought lasted two seasons (Gleick, 2014: 332). Beginning in 2006, however, Syria began to experience a multi-season drought that lasted until 2011 (Ibid.: 332). The increased water scarcity that resulted has been felt by several sectors of Syrian society and has resulted in agricultural and economic failures, and mass displacement (Ibid.: 332).

As a country, Syria is one of the driest in the world (Ibid.: 332). Because of this characteristic, the Euphrates-Tigris river system is of strategic importance for Syria (Swain and Jägerskog, 2016: 74). However, due to large-scale, up-stream irrigation systems and hydroelectric

[8] Previously called Jabhat al-Nusra.

[9] It is important to remember that it is likely not the only factor.

power projects, the Euphrates-Tigris river system experiences extreme variations in flow (Ibid.). Accounting for the Euphrates-Tigris and other river systems, around 72 percent of Syria's water stems from outside the country (Ibid.). In addition to these factors, over the past quarter of a century, because of population growth, internal displacement, and expansive irrigation practices, pressures on Syria's water sources have grown (Gleick, 2014: 331).

Taken together these factors have made Syria's water scarce and vulnerable to the drought that began in 2006. Making matters worse, according to Swain and Jägerskog (2016) and Gleick (2014), projections for the future of Syria predict the situation to become even bleaker: these projections predict even higher temperatures as well as more frequent and severe droughts – resulting in reduced water availability.

But water scarcity in Syria is not caused by the recent drought alone. According to Saleeby (2012), the Syrian government's inefficient agricultural practices, even in the face of decreased rainfall, have resulted in increased ground water salinity and desertification. These problems, and water scarcity specifically, have been exacerbated by the use of outdated and wasteful irrigation methods (Irinnews.org, Feb. 17, 2012), water mismanagement, poor planning, and policy errors (Gleick, 2014: 334) at both the individual and governmental levels. An example that covers many of these factors is the use of "flood irrigation." According to Gleick (2014), "Most of Syria's irrigated agriculture is in need of modernization, still relying on highly inefficient flood irrigation. Overall, less than one-fifth of the irrigated area [in Syria] uses modern sprinklers or drip systems" (Ibid.: 334). Another example is the Assad regime's use of large agricultural subsidies for water-intensive crops such as wheat and cotton (Ibid.), which can lead to excessive and wasteful water usage. The issue of water scarcity is summed up by a clear lack of strategy or proper water management (Irinnews.org, Mar. 25, 2010). According to Francesca de Châtel, a Damascus-based water expert, in Syria "there is no forward thinking" (Irinnews.org, Mar. 25, 2010). While it is recognizable that practices such as flood irrigation are inefficient, and it is known that agricultural subsidies can result in the over use of water, these concerns, according to de Châtel, are simply disregarded by the Assad regime.

Because agriculture accounts for almost 90 percent of Syria's water consumption (Irinnews.org, Mar. 25, 2010), the impact of Syria's drought and its water consumption practices have been felt primarily by farmers and those living in the country's rural areas. Saleeby (2012) might even argue that the government, through its policies and actions, has specifically marginalized these groups. As a result of Syria's drought, many farmers had been forced to abandon their fields and relocate to larger cities (Hammer 2013). For example,

Between 2006 and 2009, around 1.3 million inhabitants of eastern Syria were affected by agricultural failures…by late 2011, the UN estimated that between two million and three million people were affected…More than 1.5 million people – mostly agricultural workers and family farmers – moved from rural areas to cities and camps on the outskirts of Syria's major cities of Aleppo, Damascus, Dara'a, Deir ez-Zour, Hama, and Homs (Gleick, 2014: 334).

This displacement has had several implications contributing to the emergence of the present Syrian conflict. Foremost, the displacement of rural Syrians to urban areas has resulted in increased pressures on many resources, including food, living space, and water (Hammer, 2013). With this displacement, the pressure on water resources essentially transferred from the drought affected rural areas to these urban centers. Combining the effects of the Syrian drought with other social and economic pressures created a "perfect storm" that has led to greater instability in Syria (Gleick, 2014: 334). Analysts argue that many of the water scarcity issues discussed so far

have played "an important role in contributing to the deterioration of social structures and spurring violence in Syria" (Ibid.: 332-333).

In the context of Syria, the social pressures created by displaced families and farmers have likely contributed to the onset of the current conflict. These pressures include insecurity of urban resources (including and especially water). Swain and Jägerskog sum up this insecurity by suggesting that,

> "The lack of water affects almost all aspects of life and the likelihood of one's survival. Due to the extreme link to one's survival, it is also easier for water to mobilize along regional or sectarian lines. The management of water resources in the Middle East is thus often eclipsed by power politics and sectarian rivalry" (2016: 86).

Dimension Two: Conflict Actors Influencing Water Scarcity

The use of water as a weapon by warring parties can be motivated by aims to achieve one or many objectives. It can be done to cut off vital water and electricity supplies to the enemy. It can be done to damage the enemy's morale by inflicting pain onto its constituency. It can also be done for more sinister reasons such as the desire to simply exterminate a civilian population. During the conflict in Syria, nearly all parties involved have used water as a weapon. But a review of existing research seems to show that this practice has been carried out more extensively by terrorist groups[10] and by anti-Assad opposition groups involved in the fighting.

While water has been used as a weapon throughout Syria, this section will focus primarily on the cities of Aleppo and Damascus. The section will close by focusing on the civilian impact of the use of water as a weapon and how it has exacerbated the conflict within Syria.

Since the conflict began in 2011, IS has gained control of numerous dams and water infrastructures throughout Syria (Swain and Jägerskog, 2016: 84). After capturing these infrastructures, IS has used them to gain advantage in several ways. First, the group has used these infrastructures to increase the vulnerabilities of their enemies (Ibid.: 85) by, for example, controlling access to and distribution of water. An enemy can maintain its fight for only so long if it lacks access to water. In addition, after gaining control of these facilities, IS has cut water supplies to villages and has flooded agricultural plains to destroy crop yields (Ibid.: 84). This practice is a slightly more forward thinking strategy. Just as it is impossible for the enemy to continue its immediate fight if it lacks access to water, so will it lose its long-term fighting capacity if it lacks potential recruits and food. It is important to note that while this discussion has focused on IS, these practices have not been limited to IS. Other terrorist groups such as Jabhat Fateh al-Sham have also undertaken similar practices.

Opposition groups have particularly caught the spotlight for their practices of using water as a weapon. This may be in part because there is an increasingly large number of opposition groups, or because it is possible to include all parties who are not government-affiliated as part of the opposition. While examples abound, one situation is worth noting in regards to the interplay of terrorist and opposition groups using water as a weapon. The water transportation route leading from the Euphrates River to the city of Aleppo creates a great concern for the town's water security. As of October 15, 2015, the pumping station located on the Euphrates River was controlled by IS; the next pumping station was controlled by Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (a rival

[10] Such as IS and Jabhat Fateh al-Sham.

insurgent group); the final pumping station was controlled by the Syrian government (which has targeted both groups throughout the Syrian conflict) (Malla and Davison, 2015). Aside from each group targeting civilians and rival groups held up within Aleppo, IS could use its control of the pumping station to target Jabhat Fateh al-Sham and government forces controlling downstream pumping stations. Likewise, Jabhat Fateh al-Sham could use its control to target government forces controlling the remaining downstream pumping station. The government could use its control to target civilian and opposition fighters within the city of Aleppo (Ibid.). As explained previously, these groups are using the control of pumping stations to put pressure on rival groups (ICRC.org, Sept. 2, 2015). Given the multiple levels of rival group control of pumping stations, this situation created an elevated risk for water scarcity within the city of Aleppo.

The targeting of water infrastructures connected to the cities of Aleppo and Damascus has received specific attention. In Aleppo, "where fighting has…crippled water pumping stations," (unicef.org, Aug. 25, 2015) and where water treatment facilities (such as the al-Khafseh water treatment plant) have specifically been targeted (unicef.org, Dec. 1, 2015), water scarcity has become an increasing issue and civilians have borne the brunt of the issue (Malla and Davison, 2015). For example, increased scarcity has resulted in water price increases of approximately 3,000 percent in the city (unicef.org, Aug. 25, 2015). When water has been available from street standpipes and collection points, civilians – especially children – have waited hours for the uncertain possibility of access to water (unicef.org, Aug. 25, 2015). When water is not available, residents have resorted to digging their own wells and consuming untreated water (Malla and Davison, 2015). This consumption has resulted in kidney infections and increased cases of typhoid fever and salmonella poisoning (Ibid.).

Similar issues of water scarcity have been increasingly experienced in Damascus. As a result of the fighting since 2011, the city's water infrastructure has been severely damaged (icrc.org, Sept. 2, 2015). Using water as a weapon, opposition groups have captured the pumping station located at the village of Ain al-Fijah – a suburb located approximately 24 kilometers northwest of Damascus (Reznick 2016). This put significant control of government forces and its Hezbollah affiliates into the hands of the opposition. For example, in August 2015, opposition forces shut off the pumping station at Ain al-Fijah and reduced the water supply to Damascus by 90 percent for three days (Ibid.). Controlling the water pumping satiation at Ain al-Fijah has given the forces in control of the station the strategic power to demand the release of prisoners and the withdrawal of government forces (Ibid.).

As in Aleppo, the residents of Damascus have realized the impact of water used as a weapon. During times when water had been cut to the city, increased water scarcity has created panic and the perception among residents that Damascus was "going to be like Aleppo" (Ibid.). A final example of the opposition's use of water as a weapon is how the blockage of water has prevented the chlorination of water in and around Damascus, which has increased sanitation concerns (Ibid.). As a result, Cholera and Hepatitis A cases have increased in villages around Damascus (Ibid.).

In the context of the Syrian conflict, the deliberate targeting of water infrastructures (such as water storage, treatment, and transportation facilities) by warring parties has been responsible for inducing water scarcity in a number of ways – explained through this section. Whether intentionally or not, the civilian population realized the brunt of this increased scarcity. Similar to the effects of the Syrian drought, this induced scarcity has increased tensions and the possibility of conflict. This increased tension and possibility of conflict may be the result of retaliation by

warring parties harmed by the deliberate targeting of water infrastructures. It may also be the result of increased competition for water, as it became an increasingly scarce resource. At the broader level, Swain and Jägerskog (2016: 76) explore how IS's efforts to capture water is delaying the possibility of water sharing cooperation in the Middle East. This alone creates the possibility for conflict further down the road.

In the end, the efforts of warring parties to use water as a weapon of war will increase tensions and the possibility of conflict. These efforts are exacerbating the effects of the drought that, as explained above, was a contributing factor to the onset of the conflict. According to a report by UNICEF, "Syria's water crisis has deepened along with the conflict; water availability is about half what it was before the crisis began in 2011" (unicef.org, Aug. 25, 2015). Based on this claim, unless efforts are taken to halt the use of water as a weapon, the water scarcity that initially contributed to the Syrian conflict will only continue to exacerbate the conflict.

Conclusion

With this discussion in mind, I return to the question that began this examination: which came first, the chicken or the egg? In the context of the Syrian conflict, did drought induced water scarcity initially contribute to the onset of the conflict? Or did the actions of warring parties result in increased water scarcity, exacerbating the conflict?

As this analysis demonstrates, there is a clear interaction between these two dimensions. The drought that began in 2006 and lasted until 2011 resulted in mass migration, increased competition for resources, and increased social tensions. These factors likely influenced the onset of the Syrian conflict. The tactics later carried out by warring parties of deliberately targeting water infrastructures in Syria not only exacerbated these social tensions, but also, itself, likely led to increased water resource scarcity.

To answer the question of which came first is not as straightforward as it seems. While water scarcity may have contributed to the onset of the Syrian conflict, the targeting of water infrastructures by the warring parties increased this scarcity. Focusing on the Syrian conflict, this conclusion establishes a need for further exploration into how water resource scarcity influences conflict. While the previous research is inconclusive regarding the effect of resource scarcity on conflict, this paper demonstrates that water resource scarcity plays an important role in conflict and demands even further exploration.

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Femininity in Wartimes – to Love or not to Love? A Theoretical Explanation of the Variation in Perceptions Regarding Femininity: Precious and Despised

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Abstract

This essay aims to address an overlooked topic within Peace and Conflict Research: femininity in wartimes and its relation vis-à-vis militarized masculinities. A particular empirical puzzle is discussed, namely, how femininity, as a trait in general, is sometimes despised and sometimes highly valued. To answer the research question "How can variation in perceptions regarding femininity during wartime be explained?", a theoretical framework, using existing theories on the construction of militarized masculinities, is presented, where identities and hierarchies serve as the causal link between the independent variable socialization and the dependent variable variation in perceptions of femininity. The essay illustrates the puzzle and theoretical frameqork by using empirical examples, focusing on male soldiers' perceptions.

Introduction

This essay will focus on social institutions and norms shaping identities during wartime, and this focus will be on one aspect of these norms that constitutes an empirical puzzle; the values associated with femininity. The discussion will focus on how femininity – as a trait in general – is sometimes despised and sometimes highly valued. The empirical puzzle sets the foundation for building a theoretical framework in this essay, with the aim to explain the variation in perceptions and how and why they arise. On the one hand, femininity is perceived as *the* most precious thing, in terms of encompassing the value of home; and on the other hand, femininity is expressed as something that is despised, in terms of using feminine attributes and references in a humiliating fashion (Goldstein, 2001: 356). This dual process regarding femininity is what this essay aims to explain, how femininity can be perceived as the most valued phenomenon – inherent in the construction of the militarized masculinity – at the same time as it is despised and disparaged. Thus, the research question guiding the discussion in this essay is: *How can variation inperceptions regarding femininity during wartime be explained?*

The issue of militarized masculinities has been widely discussed in research during the last decade, and the social construction of gender and gendered war roles has been brought up in

academia (ex. Coulter, 2009; Enloe, 2013; Goldstein, 2001; Melander, 2005). Much focus has been put on how boys and men are socialized into becoming warriors (Melander, 2005); already in the early childhood are boys encouraged to engage in competitive games and sports, and they are socialized into being aggressive, to prepare them for fighting in a potential war in the future (Goldstein, 2001: 290-299). While the construction and effects of masculinities have been in the spotlight, femininity and its role has been largely overlooked. How femininity is perceived, understood and constructed is an issue in need of more attention in order to be able to further the understanding of gender roles in general, and gendered war roles in particular. It is highly relevant in the field of Peace and Conflict Research to further the understanding of the causes and effects of identity construction. If identity construction explains some of the root causes of conflict or why conflicts play out in a certain way, this issue has to be addressed in a targeted manner, and research plays a crucial role in finding plausible explanations of the consequences of the construction of gender roles in wartimes. The construction of militarized masculinities is highly dependent on the dichotomy between masculinity and femininity (Melander, 2005), where the battlefield is conceptualized as masculine and the peaceful domestic sphere is considered to be feminine (Goldstein, 2001: 301). However, what makes the issue of femininity puzzling is the different perceptions regarding femininity that are being expressed. This is a theoretically driven essay, using existing theories on the construction of militarized masculinities to build a theoretical framework, in which *identities* and *hierarchies* function as the causal link between the independent variable *socialization* and the dependent variable *variation in perceptions of femininity*. The discussion uses empirical examples to illustrate the theoretical arguments put forward. The aim of this essay is to initiate a discussion on an overlooked topic within Peace and Conflict Research, thus this essay should be understood as a contribution to that discussion, and as a critique in the sense that research has given more attention to masculinities than to femininities – which in itself reinforces gender hierarchies. The first section presents the scope of the discussion, followed by the theoretical framework. Thereafter, the puzzle is illustrated with empirical examples, an evaluation of the causal chain follows, and then the essay ends with some concluding remarks.

Scope of the Discussion

The puzzle this essay aims to explain is how femininity is considered to be the most precious thing, at the same time as it is despised. On the one hand, there are expressions about that femininity should be protected at all costs and, on the other hand, the negative perceptions of femininity are expressed through the feminization of enemies as a strategy for domination, be it humiliation, imitation, rape or sexual violence (Solangon and Patel, 2012; Goldstein, 2001; Cohen and Nordås, 2014). This essay will illustrate the puzzle and theoretical framework by using empirical examples, focusing on male soldiers' perceptions. Although, if one would make a thorough investigation, a relative difference in variation in perceptions and expressions regarding femininity should be possible to observe across different socio-cultural contexts.

Before entering the discussion, one important clarification has to be made. The discussion presented in this essay will treat masculinity and femininity as independent from biological sex, and rather as different expressions anyone can adopt independent of space or time. Although the approach in this essay is that gender is a social construct, masculinity is empirically very strongly associated with men (i.e. the biological sex men) and femininity with women (i.e. the biological sex women). However, the constructivist view is distinct from the essentialist approach (Melander, 2005). Even though something is socially constructed, it is not easy to change or less

important to discuss, assuming that would be equal to assuming that we could end poverty in the world today, or remove all cash flowing in society right now – just because it is socially constructed. The underlying assumptions related to identity construction are often the ones causing disagreements, thus it is important to be clear about those assumptions in each and every discussion on gender.

Theoretical Framework

A plausible explanation to the puzzle – variation in perceptions regarding femininity – will now be provided. The explanation will be presented with reference to the model below: the causal chain. In the model, the acronym IV is short for independent variable and DV for dependent variable. The box in the middle is the causal mechanism explaining how the variables are connected to each other. This is a micro-level explanation, since it deals with individual perceptions, however, important to note is that this is a structural explanation, which means that individual expressions become aggregated and can explain behaviour at the macro-level as well. The hypothesised relationship is that *gendered war role socialization causes paradoxical perceptions regarding femininity*, due to hierarchies embedded in the construction of identities. While this section presents the theoretical framework and discusses theories addressing militarized masculinities, the section after will illustrate how the concepts presented have played out in reality.

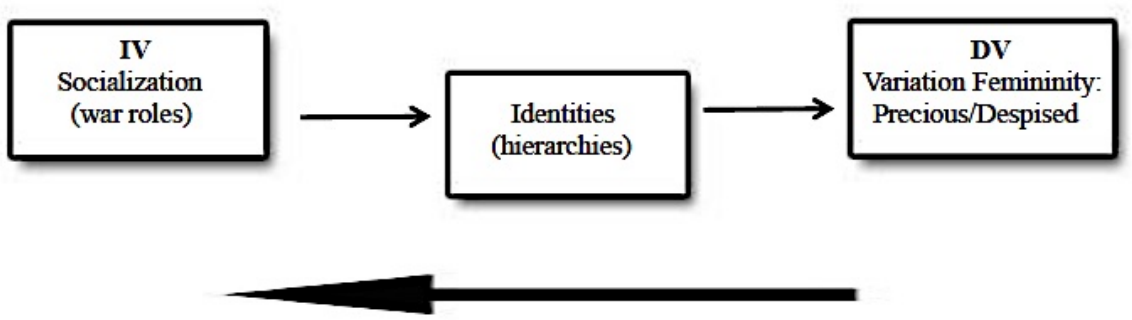

Figure 1: The Causal Chain

The Independent Variable: Socialization

The fundamental assumption for the understanding of the construction of gendered war roles is that every society faces the possibility of war in an imminent or distant future. This creates a need to produce potential soldiers ready to defend the community, soldiers who can overcome their fears and function in battle (Goldstein, 2001: 256). This need leads to a type of 'division of labour' where one part of the population – men – are socialized into taking on responsibility for security of the community, while another part of the population – women –are socialized into being responsible for taking care of the home, the children and all the nurturing aspects related to that.

Gender segregation is enforced early on when children are young, this segregation then creates two clear categories – boys and girls and later men and women. At the young age the gender segregation is enforced through peer pressure, adult promotion as well as self-reinforcement (Goldstein, 2001: 235-237). This is the cradle for the militarized masculinities, femininity, however, is not as clearly developed in this context; besides being the antithesis to

masculinity, femininity has no clear meaning, mainly because it can contain so many different values, and can be addressed and referred to in different ways, with different agendas. Even as an inherent concept in the construction of militarized masculinities, the construction of femininity is a dual process. The protection of the 'feminine sphere' – considered to be 'home' is central for a soldiers' motivation to fight, at the same time as misogyny is an important part of the same type of masculinity (Goldstein, 2001; Walton, 2012).

In the socialization process, boys are the ones who have to be transformed and remodeled, in order to be prepared for defending the nation and the state. Boys are in an early age taught to suppress their emotions, and they are taught to be disciplined and brave – in order to be able to overcome fear in a potential upcoming battle (Goldstein 2001: 288). Boys are in early childhood taught to withstand pain – especially psychological pain – in order to be able to '*violently defending one's name, and the interest of the group*'; femininity in contrast, is defined by submission and empathy (Melander, 2005: 154). A society would not be able to evolve if all people were socialized into warriors who suppress their emotions and are constantly ready to fight, because no one would be able to take care of children and have the nurturing and caring roles in the society. This is how gender segregation takes place: dividing the population into two groups with different roles. This is also the explanation to why the 'normal sphere of life' (i.e. not the battlefield) is seen as feminine, and the boundaries between the battlefield and home become gendered (Goldstein, 2001: 301-304).

The whole society plays an important role in this socialization process – and the construction of the gendered war roles. Male bonding is a particular form of peer pressure for adults, which intensifies the socialization process, even though it is not an explanation in itself for the gendered war roles (Goldstein, 2001: 203), it serves to highlight a particular part of the socialization. The 'band of brothers' describes male bonding with camaraderie, where the members of the group develop loyalty, face great risk with courage and have little, or no, empathy for outgroups; the artificial kinship developed can even lead to experiencing 'joy of war' (Potts and Hayden, 2009). Women also play an important role in the socialization and the construction of the militarized masculinities – both as mothers raising their sons, and as girlfriends – especially through processes of shaming or hero-making (Goldstein, 2001: 309-310).

This socialization process – dividing boys and girls, and men and women, and giving them different roles – explains the gendered war roles, thus being the independent variable. This in itself does not explain the variation in perceptions regarding femininity; however, the causal mechanism *identities* will explain the relationship.

The Causal Mechanism: Identities

Identities serve as an answer to *why* socialization causes the variation in perceptions regarding femininity. Identities are developed in relation to femininity and masculinity, and are dependent on the status hierarchies connected to sex and gender. The patriarchal system is the structure these identities exist and are developed within, limiting peoples' choices of self-identification, pre-assigning certain gender characteristics to certain sexes. Patriarchy as a system simply means the hierarchical organization of sex and gender, where men and masculinity are superior, and women and femininity are inferior. The dichotomy that gender roles constitute is dependent on this contrast (Melander, 2005). Gender inequality and identities are interlinked, and the hegemonic model portrays men as powerful and dominant, while the conceptualization of women is that they are subordinate (Solangon and Patel, 2012).

Enloe (2013: 118) describes the patriarchy as a '*system that links militarized femininities to militarized masculinities in a way that sustains the domination of certain brands of masculinity while keeping women in their assigned places',* highlighting how the gendered war roles are connected to each other. The reinforcement of patriarchy is constant and, even though it is an oppressive system for women especially, it also comes with rewards. Enloe (2013: 14) writes that patriarchy is constantly perpetuated since it is rewarding, not only for men, but also for women; as an example it is rewarding to be called '*a good wife*' or '*a good woman*'.

It is, however, very problematic to construct the gender categories as binary and dichotomous, since this construction then facilitates the limitation of individual choice regarding self-identification. Coulter (2009) problematizes the binary division of gender and the traditional gender roles, and compares it to other perceived dichotomous categories, such as strong and weak, war and peace, human and non-human, and victim and perpetrator. Her point in doing this is to illustrate that none of these divisions are definite, and it is equally problematic to decide when a war turns into peace, as to state that only masculine men are soldiers. Coulter's (2009) anthropological study shows how the militarized masculinities have negative consequences for the female combatants in Sierra Leone, since they induce a stigma due to the female combatants' biological sex, because of the norm that being a combatant is not compatible with norms about femininity. An important aspect in relation to patriarchy is the debates currently taking place; where different versions of feminism threaten to demolish the fundaments of the patriarchal system through highlighting how women are regulated into inferior positions – and advocate change. Many societies move away from traditional gender roles, even though the gendered war roles are more reticent to change. Change, however, is vulnerable to pushbacks, and one of the most prominent ones can be observed in Anders Breivik's manifesto, where he describes feminism as breaking down the structure of the family, and as an instrument for the collapse of civilization (Walton, 2012). This view has to be taken into consideration when trying to understand the dual process involved in creating the perceptions regarding femininity.

However, when individuals shape their identities, they do so in relation to the status hierarchies inherent in the patriarchal system. When 'home' becomes feminine, and you are identified as a masculine male soldier protecting 'home' – you cannot protect the feminine sphere, and at the same time be feminine, since that would jeopardize your identity and status. This means that rather than having a nuanced identity in relation to gender (i.e. a mix of feminine and masculine traits) – you have to despise your femininity inside in order to keep your identity intact. Male soldiers who have been subjected to sexual violence often describe that they experience a destruction of their gender identity (among many other feelings) as a consequence (Solangon and Patel, 2012), this indicates how masculinity and femininity along with identity making processes are closely related to actions of sexual violence.

An interesting question that arises is whether male soldiers in the end actually fight to protect 'the feminine sphere' called 'home' or if the socialization and identity making processes have been so heavily influenced by norms and structures into shaping their senses rather than fighting for their fellow comrades. Wong (2006) made a study on soldiers' motivation to fight, and one of the interviewees stated that '*Men do not fight for a cause but because they do not want to let their comrades down'* and a soldier's answer to the question of why they fight was '*Me and my loader were talking about it and in combat the only thing that we really worry about is you and your crew*' (Wong, 2006:661), which could indicate this. This would than perhaps mean that the variation this essay aims to explain might just be a smoke screen, and that the only thing that really matters to men is

the well-being of other men, which could be a consequence of the status hierarchies and norms imposed by the patriarchal system.

The Dependent Variable: Variation in Perceptions Regarding Femininity

The socialization process, based on the segregation of the sexes, created the dichotomous division between masculinities and femininities; this is then further enhanced in the process of creating identities within the patriarchal system. Since the segregated socialization takes place due to the need to protect the group, the nation and 'home', the 'feminine sphere', this value somewhat persists even though men are taught to despise femininity in the identity making process. Therefore, socialization and identity together explain the variation in perceptions regarding femininity.

It is not a particular 'value' relating to the process of socialization creating the variation in perceptions; it is gender segregation and hierarchies related to identities that create the segregation between men and women, and the division between femininity and masculinity, putting masculinity higher up in the hierarchy. The consequence is that femininity is only considered to be valuable when it relates to women and the 'female sphere', and it is considered to be despicable associated to men, and particularly male soldiers and the enemy. Although, femininity is valuable associated with women, it is still less worth than masculinity, because of the hierarchies embedded in identity making. The following two sections illustrate the variation in the dependent variable through showing how femininity is considered to be precious when associated with women and 'home', indicating that femininity is something that is only valued when it is expressed in the private sphere, and disparaged related to men and public display.

The Precious Femininity

Goldstein (2001) emphasizes that an important concept of the construction of the militarized masculinities is the gendered boundaries between the battlefield and the 'normal' sphere of life. The protection of women, the nation and what is labeled as the 'feminine sphere' – considered to be 'home' – is deemed to be central and pivotal for the soldiers' motivation to fight. The psychological compartmentalization – making the battlefield masculine, and 'home' feminine – helps to keep the soldier motivated (Goldstein, 2001: 301-308). The compartmentalization is necessary for the soldiers' motivation and it is also reinforcing the dichotomy between men and women, and masculinity and femininity.

Goldstein (2001: 308) illustrates how female nurses were seen as a reminder of 'home' during WWII for American troops. Goldstein (ibid.) describes how a wounded soldier expressed his gratitude of being in contact with a nurse and that the soldier described her as from 'heaven-sent' and that she had 'a marvellous smile, a reassuring attitude, and gentle hands'. Through these expressions it is clear that femininity is something valued and something the soldier appreciates.

A common denominator – feminine values such as love and peacefulness – can be identified in letters from soldiers written in a moment when they knew they were possibly facing death, one soldier from WWI wrote '*Try to forget my faults and remember me only as your very loving son*', indicating that he wants to be remembered through the lens of more 'feminine values' – rather than as a warrior. Another soldier from WWI, in a letter to his girlfriend, wrote '*My Mary, let the recollection console you that the happiest days of my life have been from your love and affection*', indicating that he valued the feminine softness delivered from his beloved one (Reynolds, 2012, 2 February).

Another story is about a Vietnam veteran who gave credit for his survival in the war to his girlfriend, and the mail correspondence between them is what gave him the motivation to keep on fighting and to stay alive (Zamora, 2015, 18 May). This indicates how 'home' with its feminine values is highly valued and that the motivation to fight can be derived from there.

The Despised Femininity

In the search for psychological domination over the enemy, gender can be used to symbolize that domination, and the feminization of enemies is very commonplace. This strategy has played a robust role across times and cultures (Goldstein, 2001: 380), which makes this something interesting and important to discuss further within the field of Peace and Conflict Research. The question is why this is such a frequent strategy; is it because it is really efficient, since it strikes where it hurts the most? What is it then that is so bad with being feminine? The answer this essay offers to this question is that it is effective to use feminization as a strategy for domination, because of the hierarchies that are embedded in gender identities.

In the ancient world, castration of male prisoners was commonplace, which is a strategy in line with the feminization of the enemy (Goldstein, 2001: 357). Castration, as a form of sexual violence to show conquest, was carried out by Chinese, Persian, Amalekite, Egyptian and Norse armies (Solangon and Patel, 2012). Homosexual rape is also a common strategy for domination, and this was a widespread strategy in various ancient Middle Eastern and Greek societies (Goldstein, 2001: 359). Violence during wartime can in itself be gendered, and domination of a whole population can also be done through the feminization. In ancient Middle East and Greece this was a common pattern – men were executed, while women were raped or taken as slaves along with the children. It is possible to observe similar patterns in our contemporary world and the massacre and deportations in Srebrenica, Bosnia, is an example (Goldstein, 2001: 357). Feminization has commonly been used in imitations and other attempts to humiliate the enemy, and gendered insults are widespread; meaning that the enemy is portrayed with feminine characteristics, as an attempt to belittle the adversary. One example is from the 1991 Gulf War is that many of Saddam Hussein's adversaries pronounced his name '*Sodom*' in order to humiliate him (Goldstein, 2001: 360-361).

The under-reporting of sexual violence against men is likely a consequence of the stigma associated with being a 'victim' of sexual violence, which is incompatible with the notion of masculinity. The media also plays an important role in creating the stigma. During 1992 and 1993, the Croatian mass media only published six articles about male victimization, and the Serbian media presented none, despite claims of its incidence. Sexual violence against men is a widespread phenomenon and it has been documented in over 25 armed conflicts, in countries such as Guatemala, Burundi, Northern Uganda and Northern Ireland (Solangon and Patel, 2012).

Evaluating the Causal Chain

The gender segregation taking place during socialization of women and men, the creation of the gendered war roles, and thereafter the identity making processes where femininity and masculinity are hierarchically ordered, make the male soldier value femininity associated with women and home, and they are willing to be considered in more feminine terms only in the private sphere relating to family and close relationships. The other side of the coin is that male soldiers perceive femininity as despicable associated with themselves, other men, and when it is displayed in public. This variation is rooted and explained as part of a survival strategy, where

men have to be prepared to fight, and the consequence is that femininity is valued less over all, and is only considered to be precious under very specific circumstances, while masculinity is highly valued in a broader and more general sense.

In concluding the discussion about the causal chain, some questions regarding causality related to the theoretical framework have to be put forward. It is difficult to tell whether the steps are as clear as they are depicted, or whether identity rather is an intervening or a second independent variable rather than the causal mechanism, and as a result we do not fully have the answer to *why* we can observe the variation in the outcome. It might also be the case that the causality is close to correct, although a feedback loop plays an important role in the causal story, where each step reinforces the next one and the outcome in itself influences the independent variable.

An alternative explanation to the narrative presented also has to be highlighted; that there are no *de facto* differences in *perceptions* regarding femininity, only in *expressions*. The expressions of the paradoxical values discussed in this essay might just be a false front covering the real perceptions of male soldiers, which might be that they only care about other men, since the patriarchal system has taught them that men should always be valued higher than women.

Conclusion

As this paper has shown, socialization and identity-making processes play an important role in creating a variation in perceptions regarding femininity. Femininity becomes assigned to women, and masculinity to men, meaning women can be valued when they express feminine values, while men can be humiliated through feminization. In the status hierarchies prescribed by the patriarchal system, men are taught that they should not take on feminine traits since they have a subordinate position compared to masculine traits, which means that they are taught to despise the feminine traits they have inside. Women are, however, not offered a similar choice within the system since when they take on masculine traits – something that can be done in order to gain a higher position in the system – they are often seen as less of a woman, taking the value of identity away from them. The interesting dilemma here is that women can also expose *too much* femininity, something that can be ridiculed.

This essay has aimed to contribute to the discussion on how and why militarized masculinities are created, through highlighting the issue of femininity – an issue largely overlooked within the field of Peace and Conflict Research. This topic should be highlighted more within research in order to further the understanding of how and why particular types of identities are created in wartimes, and the consequences of those identities both for the conflict and the post-conflict setting – where it is assumed that peacebuilding is to be sustainable.

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The Role of Geography in International Politics: an Issue-Led Territorial Explanation for the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88)

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Abstract

The main goal of this paper is to demonstrate the importance of the variable territory for the emergence and escalation of interstate conflicts and war. The working hypothesis is that when a divergence over a territorial or territorial-related issue is present in a dyad, given the high salience of this nature of issues, states tend to hold on more aggressive positions, which makes reaching peaceful mutually satisfactory agreements more complicated and, consequently, increases the parties'willingness to go to war. To exemplify and test the hypothesis test, this paper is expected to show that in today's still Westphalian International System territory can be a relevant variable researchers need to look at in order to understand state interaction and conflict.

Introduction

Territoriality as an intrinsic characteristic of human being has been for a while a popular research topic. Over the years, academics let aside previous assumptions that a kind of human biological instinct was the variable responsible for driving humanity towards territory and started to address the political characteristic of human territoriality. Defined by Sack (1986: 19) as "the attempt by an individual or a group to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area", human territoriality and its consequence, territory, can be seen as the basis of the International System and central to understand the relationship between its territorial political units, the states (Sack, 1986).

It's have been already well addressed by different researchers[11] the correlation between the presence of territorial issues and the emergence of Militarized Interstate Disputes (MID) (Hensel, 1996). Departing from this set of empirical results, the main goal of this paper is to demonstrate the importance of the variable territory for the emergence and escalation of interstate conflicts and war. It is believed that in today's still Westphalian International System, they may be a relevant factor to explain latest developments in disputes between states, as in Kashmir (India-Pakistan), South China Sea, Caucasus (Armenia-Azerbaijan), South Ossetia

[11] See Hensel (1996), Vasquez and Henehan (2001), etc.

(South Ossetia-Georgia), Kosovo (Kosovo-Serbia), South America (Bolivia-Chile) etc. (Foucher, 2016).

This being said, the research question can be asked as follows: how do territorial or territorial-related issues affect states' willingness to go to war? The working hypothesis is that when a divergence of interest over a territorial or territorial-related issue is present in a dyad, given the high salience of this nature of issues, states tend to hold on more aggressive positions, which makes reaching peaceful mutually satisfactory agreements more complicated and, consequently, increases the parties' willingness to go to war. In order to carry out the working hypothesis, the Iran-Iraq conflict over the Persian Gulf and the Shatt al-Arab river, leading to the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88), will be analyzed.

This article will be divided in four sections. The first one will highlight the research design. The second will discuss a basis for an issue-led perspective in International Politics and present the Territorial Explanation for War. The third will present a historical background for the conflict and then analyze the Iran-Iraq positions, the conflict escalation and the war's outbreak. Finally, it will be presented some final thoughts and results withdrawn from the analysis.

Research Design

Operationalization

The dependent variable of this paper is "war". As a matter of working definition, war will be seen "as organized violence carried on by political units against each other" (Bull 1977: 184). It will also focus on Bull's (1977) understanding of war as an international political institution, adopted by the states as common practice in the international society to solve conflicts of interest. It should be noted that an international political institutions can be defined as a set of habits and practices commonly adopted by and oriented toward states' common objectives (Bull, 1977).

The independent variable of this paper is "territorial or territorial related issues". For the one side, an issue will be defined as the point in dispute, the subject of controversies between one or more international actors (Diehl 1992; Hensel 1996). For the other side, territorial or territorial related issues will be categorized in the following terms of Holsti (1991): i) Territorial issues: territory, boundary, strategic territory and indivisible territory; ii) Territorial-related issues: national liberation, secession, national unification, maintain integrity of state and dynasty/succession.

Case Study

The history of Iran-Iraq relation and border dispute is an ancient one. Since the Ottoman and Safavid empires, Arabs and Persians periodically fought to push their borderlines. Especially towards the nineteenth century clashes over the Shatt al-Arab river navigation rights and possession grew exponentially. Historically, the ottoman rights over the river were granted by the Treaties of 1847 and 1913, due its dependency in that region: it was their way to access the Persian Gulf.

Since the 1930s Iran continually contested previous treaties and after the British withdraw in the end of the 1960s the country could change and reinforce the status quo in its own benefit: Iran invaded the islands of Abu Musa and Tunbs located in the Persian Gulf and pressured Iraq to sign in 1975 the Treaty of Algiers, which traced the borderlines in the middle of the Shatt al-Arab river, pushing back Iraq's position. However, in the end of the decade Saddam Hussein tried to change this new adverse *status quo* and as Iran hold tight its position, the war erupted in

the beginning of the 1980s. In order to carry ou the working hypothesis test, it will be analyzed the described conflict between Iran-Iraq over the Persian Gulf and the Shatt' al-Arab river, leading to the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88). The hypothesis will be confirmed if it is detected the impact of a territorial issue into both parties' willingness to go to war in early 1980s.

Sources

In order to improve the conceptual and theoretical framework and access information and data about the case study, an extensive bibliographic research was performed. The research focused in two main areas: i) scientific literature regarding the role of issues, specially territorial and territorial related issues, in the unfold of war. What brought to the uncover of many academic books, journal articles and conference papers published by authors as John Vasquez, Paul Diehl and Paul Hensel; ii) scientific literature that could provide reliable secondary sources regarding the history of Iran-Iraq relation and border dispute until the war outbreak in 1980.

Geography, Territory and War

The Importance of issues in International Politics

Within the field of International Relations little attention is given to the impact of the issues in dispute, their salience and the negotiating process in the dynamics of war and peace. The focus is given to the analysis of how variables outside the negotiating process can influence states' behaviour. Namely, their focus is on the unity (human nature or internal political regime/institutions) or system-structural level. For example, whereas classical realism has the human nature as independent variable that causes state behavior, the structural realism takes the international system's structure (Morghentau, 2005; Waltz, 1979).

Here, in contrast, it is argued that conflicts are always related to contentious issues at stake and that state actions are mainly driven by its objectives and positions towards each specific issue. Thereby it is defended that states don't always follow a unique and congruent national interest and don't merely react to structural constraints. Decisions are made primary bearing in mind objectives (sometimes foggy) to be achieved specifically in the issues at stake on the negotiating table. Thus, according to Holsti (1991: 14), "rather than looking at antecedent conditions we search for purposes and objectives. The explanation then becomes teleological: wars occur not 'because of' but 'in order to'" (Diehl, 1992; Hensel, 2001).

As reported by Hensel (1996), issues under conflict can only affect state behavior as they vary in salience, its value or intrinsic importance (objective or subjective) attributed by actors engaged in the dispute. States tend to act differently according to the nature and salience of the issue at stake. The more salient the issue, the more decision makers are willing to take risks in order to succeed. Moreover, the more salient the issues at stake, the more difficult it is to reach a cooperative agreement that satisfies both parties and, thus, more often than not, the conflict of interest will escalate. In other words, when a set of high salient issues are at stake, decision makers tend to hold on more aggressive positions, wich makes reaching peaceful and mutually satisfactory agreements more complicated and war a more attractive mean to solve the conflict (Hensel, 1996).

However, it should be noted that although it could be said that divergences of interest are preconditions to war, it's not true to say that every conflict will result in war. Wars are political institutions socially created and over time adopted by states as a mean to solve conflicts (Bull 1977). Nonetheless, it cannot be understood as the only one. A rich normative context that

promotes more efficient pacific ways to solve conflicts can impact the willingness of states to go to war. So, when constructing an issue-led perspective first it's mandatory to understand which are the most war prone issues. These issues Vasquez (1993) call *underlying causes of war*. Secondly, it's important to understand how the states will handle the conflict according to the global normative context. The author regards the global normative context as the *proximate cause of war*. It creates, then, the following causal chain: the Underlying Cause (the issue in conflict) > the Proximate Cause (the normative context) > War (Starr, 2005; Vasquez, 1993).

Although Vasquez in *The War Puzzle* (1993) identify the presence of a rich global normative context as the proximate cause of war, he didn't profoundly analyze the topic and let open for future research reflections over the dynamics between territorial issues and the normative context in which states interact. In the last couple of years, an extensive research program over this topic is being developed by authors as Gary Goertz, Paul Diehl and Alexandru Balas. This research culminated in their book *The Puzzle of Peace: the evolution of Peace in the International System* (2016). In the book, they attempt to understand the international system's rich normative context in the post-Second World War as a cause for the relative reduction of wars between 1945-2010, even if in the same period territorial issues were still present.

The Territorial Explanation for Wars

Vasquez (1995) starts his argument from the empirical observation that wars between neighboring states are more regular than between geographically distant ones. Having said that, the author wonders about the causes of this phenomenon and postulates that three different perspectives can give us an answer: i) the proximity perspective; ii) the interaction perspective; iii) the territorial explanation for wars perspective. I would also argue that the first two perspectives can be seen in the scope of what Diehl (1991) calls *geography as facilitating condition to conflict,* since they emphasize that variables related to geographical aspects are the drivers or pre-conditions for war. In contrast, the later is related to Diehl's (1991) *geography as source of conflict*, since it emphasizes that variables related to geographical aspects can be seen as primary causes of conflicts and war (Diehl, 1991; Vasquez, 1995).

The proximity perspective argues that as distance decreases state capabilities, wars are more likely to erupt between neighbors. The more distant state's forces are from its core territory, the more logistical difficulties they have to deal with. It is in this scenario that a Loss of Strength Gradient, whose logic assembles the stopping power of water argument from Mearsheimer (2001), is created (Sakaguchi 2011). This postulate that proximity is a facilitating condition to conflict does not necessarily mean that states will fight wars simply because they are geographically close. Distance can ensure the opportunity for war, but distance by itself does not affect states willingness to enter a MID (Diehl, 1991; Starr, 2005; Vasquez, 1995).

Through the interaction perspective we can apprehend the understanding that if war is a mean to solve conflicts and if conflicts increase when there is more interaction between parties, then there is a bigger likehood that more wars will be fought between geographically close states since they tend to have a deeper level of interaction. Although this poses an intuitive assumption, we are dealing with opportunity and probability and not direct causality. This opportunity needs to be converted into willingness and concrete action for a MID to emerge. Thus, interaction does not lead directly to the outbreak of war, but increases the likelihood of conflicts of interest and, as a consequence, of those in which decision makers are willing to enter into a MID (Diehl, 1991; Starr, 2005; Vasquez, 1995).

Finally, the territorial explanation for wars argues that in between all the potential issues states can go to war for, territorial and territorial related issues are the most war prone ones, due to its unusual high salience. In other words,"territorial issues are more apt to give rise to disagreements and those disagreements have more often ended in war than disagreements over other issues" (Vasquez, 1995: 285).

According to Hensel (1996), conflicts over territory or territory related issues are the most war prone issues because there are usually present three groups of factors – tangible factors, intangible factors and reputation – that contribute to the increase of its salience. In terms of tangible factors, territory can be seen as valuable as far as contain natural resources such as oil, minerals, water, fertile land, etc.; is located in a strategic point that give geopolitical advantage for the state that controls it; and has natural characteristics that can contribute to the state's security. Thereby, we can infer that the more the geostrategic and geoeconomic importance of a territory, the more the salience of the issue and, consequently, the parties' willingness to go to war increase (Hensel, 1996; Walter, 2003).

In addition, intangible factors can also affect the salience of territorial issues. Certain geographical areas may have strong symbolic and historical value to certain nations, ethnic and/or religious groups, which makes them indivisible and perceived as unique. Thereby, we can infer that the more the symbolic value of a territory, higher the parties' perception of invisibility. As a consequence, the salience of the issue and each side willingness to go to war increase (Hensel, 1996; Walter, 2003).

Reputation calculations also contribute to the salience of territory. How a state handles a territorial issue might be related to the expectation it has for possible future disagreements. Decision makers may be more willing to enter a military confrontation at first as a way to deter possible future challengers. When they don't yield at first, they may affect the cost-benefit structure for future conflicts, indicating that it will be costly for future challengers to carry on their demands. Thereby, we can infer that the more the expectative for future challengers, higher the salience of the issue and, thus, each side's willingness to go to war (Hensel, 1996; Walter, 2003).

The three factors mentioned above (tangible, intangible and reputational) are important for the perspective, as it makes it possible to demonstrate the salience of territorial issues. However, even if, given its salience, it could be said that territorial issues are more likely to produce MIDs, war is not always present in a dyad. Once solved the territorial issue in a mutually satisfactory way, wars become less probable in a dyadic relation, as the underlying cause is eliminated. In contrast, if the resolution doesn't satisfy both parties equally, it creates a perennial rivalry and throughout the years the unsatisfied party tends to continually present its demands in order to change a *status quo* that it is not perceived as favorable. It should also be noted that violence is not always inevitable in a dyad. Even if a territorial issue is present in the rivalry states can still opt for other means to solve the conflict. According to Vasquez (1993) the presence of a rich global normative context can be an efficient way to solve states divergences and, thus, can impact its willingness to go to war (Vasquez, 1993).

The Iran-Iraq War

An Historical Background to Iran-Iraq Border Dispute

The Fertile Crescent and the Persian Gulf have been disputed for centuries between Persians and Arabs. In 1639, the Treaty of Peace and Frontiers was the first attempt to draw borders between

the Ottoman and Safavid Empires. At that time, however, instead of a hard and rigid boundary, the two empires possessions were defined according to local tribes' loyalties and the frontier had a zonal characteristic. After the collapse of the Safavid dynasty in 1722, Ottoman forces advanced throughout Persian territory. However, after some clashes a new treaty was signed in 1746, reaffirming the 1639's deal (Bakhash, 2004; Edmonds, 1975; Melamid, 1968; Swearingen, 1988).

Divergences erupted again during the rule of the Qajars in today's Iran and an anglo-russian commission was formed in 1843 to help find a way out for the conflict. As a result, in May 1847 the Treaty of Erzurum was signed and for the first time the Shatt al-Arab issue was noted. Arguing that the Persians had a long frontier and plenty access to the Persian Gulf, the commission let the river navigation rights and possession for the Ottomans instead of following the thalweg line. In return, the sovereignty over the Abadan Island and the ester bank of the river was granted to the Qajars (Bakhash, 2004; Edmonds, 1975; Melamid, 1968; Sirriyeh, 1985).

Before the beginning of the First World War, another treaty was signed between the Qajar Dynasty and the Ottoman Empire, albeit the Turks never ratified due its entrance in the Great War. This treaty was created under the scope of the Constantinople Protocol and while maintained the Ottoman rights over the river, established Persian sovereignty over the island of Muhalla (Edmonds, 1975; Melamid, 1968; Schofield, 2004; Swearingen, 1988)

In the early 1930s, the political situation of both Iran and Iraq changed. While Reza Shah came to power in the Persian side, Iraq became independent from the United Kingdom. The Shah soon started to adopt an offensive posture toward the Shatt al-Arab river issue and tried to change this early pro-Iraq *status quo* arguing that both treaties from 1847 and 1913 were obsolete and unjust since they didn't adopt the *thalweg* as the border line, a common practice in international law. In response, Iraq denounced Iran's supoosed acts of aggression to the League of Nations (Bakhash, 2004; Edmonds, 1975; Melamid, 1968; Sirriyeh, 1985; Swearingen, 1988).

However, beside some sparkles the conflict didn't escalated at the time. In July 1937, the two countries agreed to establish two treaties regarding the issue. The first agreement dictated that the border must be demarcated at the thalweg of the Shatt al-Arab – creating, then, a new *status quo* close to Iranian position –; whereas the second agreement prescribed the creation of a joint administration for the river. It is worth highlighting that while the first opened a period of stability in Iraq-Iran relations towards the region, the second was never adopted due to Iraqi non-ratification (Bakhash, 2004; Edmonds, 1975; Melamid, 1968; Sirriyeh, 1985; Swearingen, 1988).

After 1937 until 1958, even if there was no peace, at least a truce was reached between Iran and Iraq. During this period, the treaty of Saadabad established friendship, non aggression and noninterference as principles in their relation. Furthermore, the Baghdad Pact signed in 1955 deepened their relationship. However, after the Free Officers Movement's coup d'état in Iraq on July 1958, the monarchy was overthrown and once more the *status quo* regarding the Shatt al-Arab issue was challenged (Bakhash, 2004; Schofield, 2004).

As a result of the coup d'état, Abd al-Karim Qasim came to power in Iraq and evocated Baghdad's rights over the Shatt al-Arab river and the Iranian city of Khuzestan. Qasim was already mindful that a further expansion through the area was a matter of national security and importance to the future development of the country. Still, both Mohammed Reza Shah and Qasim agreed to work on the divergence through negotiations. Until the Baath Party coup d'état in 1963, several visits were exchanged but no deal was reached (Bakhash, 2004; Schofield, 2004).

After 1963, with the Baath party now in power, the negotiations ceased and in the next couple of years the conflict escalated for mainly two reasons. First, Baghdad postulated that, as

the Shatt al-Arab was rightfully Iraqi, Iranian ships must low their flags while navigating in the river. Secondly, a day before UK withdraw from the Persian Gulf in November 1971, the Iranian army seized the Islands of Abu Musa and Tunbs at the Strait of Hormuz, which endangered Iraqi access to the Arabian Sea, even if their ships could access the Persian Gulf through the Shatt al-Arab (Al-Lihaibi, 1989; Bakhash, 2004; Schofield, 2004).

In early 1972, diplomatic ties between the two countries were already broken and several clashes were seen throughout the border. However, while confronting Iran in the South, the Iraqi government had to deal with a Kurdish insurgence in the north. To worsen the position of Iraq, Mohammed Reza Shah started to get involved with Iraqi Kurds giving them support. As a result, the perennial insurgency became a real problem. Iraq couldn't fight in two fronts at the same time and, with a big leverage in hands, the Persians forced a resolution in their favor (Al-Lihaibi, 1989; Bakhash, 2004; Sirriyeh, 1985).

In march 1975, during an OPECs meeting in Algeria, and through Hawai Boumedienne's (at that time Algerian president) mediation, Saddam Hussein (Vice-President at the time) signed a withdraw and settled with the Shah the beginning of a series of negotiations that lasted three months. Then, in June 1975, both governments signed a Treaty on International Boundaries and Good Neighborliness in Baghdad. However, deeply reinforcing the *status quo* in Persian favor, the treaty was seen by Saddam as humiliating and just palliative. Iraq was obliged to give up its claims concerning the Shatt al-Arab issue in exchange to Iran's commitment to stop supporting the Kurds insurgency (Biger, 1989; Swearingen, 1988).

Notwithstanding, the Algiers agreement had a short life. After the Iranian Revolution in 1979, Saddam Hussein, then president of Iraq, began to adopt an offensive posture in order to challenge the status quo determined by the aforesaid treaty. Early in 1980, the Iraqi Revolutionary Command Council announced abrogated the agreement and its intentions to restore its rightful control over the Shatt al-Arab river. As a form of retaliation, the new Iranian government immediately closed the Strait of Hormuz.It was the sparkle necessary for the outbreak of war, Iraq considered Khomeini's order a declaration of war and in September 1980 Iraqi forces invaded the Iranian territory (Schofield, 2004; Al-Lihaibi, 1989; Biger, 1989; Swearingen, 1988).

The path to War: the Shatt' al-Arab and the Persian Gulf as a territorial issue

The Shatt al-Arab and the Persian Gulf issue can be characterized as a territorial issue in the terms of Holsti (1991). The issue has an intrinsic high salience due the presence of tangible and intangible factors that impact the costs of losing each side's position. Iranian invasion of the Abadan and Musa after British withdraw in 1971 and Iraqi's response, as well as Iraqi invasion of Khuzestan in the beginning of the war after Iranian ships close the Strait of Hormuz in 1980, can show us the intrinsic importance of the issue for both sides.

On the one hand, concerning the tangible factors, the region is located in a strategic point which gives both countries access to the Arabian Sea towards the Strait of Hormuz. Especially for Iraq, as a landlocked state, the Shatt al-Arab river is its main access to the Persian Gulf and thus to the high sea. In relation to Iran, the control over the Shatt'al-Arab and the Islands of Abu and Musa in the Strait of Hormuz could be the key to defend its interests and to influence the dynamics of the Persian Gulf. Furthermore, Abadan and Khuzestan were both important locations to Iran due the presence of oil fields and refineries in the region. Thus, given this geostrategic and geoeconomic importance of both the Shatt al-Arab and the Persian Gulf, we could see throughtout history both parties' increasingly willingness to go to war (Bakhash, 2004).

On the other hand, in reference to intangible factors, the border in the Shatt al- Arab is not just a border between Iran and Iraq, but between Sunnim and Iranian Shi'ia groups. Over the years, the border acquired a sort of last barrier preventing the spread of Iranian Shi'ism and, since 1979, its revolutionary ideals. Another important aspect is the prominence of Shi'ism in the south of Iraq and in the city of Basra, what makes Baghdad vigilant over local and Iranian movements towards the region, increases the salience of the issue and, consequently, both parties' willingness to go to war (Saouli, 2014).

Throughout the Iran-Iraq dyad history, different treaties related to the issue were signed by both parties. However, despite their presence, they were unable to create a mutually satisfactory solution and a perennial rivalry arose. In the benning of the 20th century, Iran tried to change the early pro Iraq *status quo* and, later, in the treaties of 1937 and 1975 could assert its position. However, it ended up creating a new *status quo* unfavorable to Iraq, that continually started to present demands in order to reverse the new situation.

Despite the salience of the issue and although there was a high tension in the mid 1930s and in the period between 1958 and 1975, it wasn't until the end of the 1970s that the war arose. In both 1937 and 1975 conjunctures Iraq had to yield to Iranian pressure due to internal political instability. While in 1936 after the coup d'état the new government opened negotiations and signed a treaty a year later, in 1975 Iraq had to yield due to a Kurd insurgency in the north of the country. However, in 1980 Saddam could finally be in a better position to sustain Iraqi demands and secure its objectives toward the issue and since Iran didn't yield, a deadlock was created in the conflict (Saouli, 2014).

The accords of 1975 strongly reinforced the *status quo* in Iranian advantage, settling the borderline in the *thalweg* and granting its sovereignty over the Islands of Abu Musa and Tumbs. Saddam, present in the negotiations at that time, interpreted the treaties as a necessary evil and palliative. Some years later, after the Iranian Revolution of 1979 he miscalculated Iraqi position of strength over Iran and, among other objectives, tried to solidify Iraqi position and sovereignty over the river and, as a consequence, guarantee its access to the Persian Gulf; and re-affirm United Arab Emirates (UAE) sovereignty over the Abu Musa and Tunbs islands, releasing Iranian pressure over the Strait of Hormuz. However, Iran couldn't yield for Iraq's offensive and hold tight trying to maintain the status quo. It was, thus, the beginning of a costly and bloody war that would have deep consequences into Iranian and Iraqi society, the gulf region, the middle east and the international system (Al-Lihaibi, 1989; Swearingen, 1988).

Conclusion

The main goal of this paper was to demonstrate the importance of the variable territory for the emergence and escalation of interstate conflicts and war. To do so it relied in an issue-led theoretical framework that has in the presence in a dyad of a territorial or territorial related-issue the underlying cause for war. In the last section, the working hypothesis was tested and confirmed throughout the analysis of the Iran-Iraq conflict over the Persian Gulf and the Shatt al-Arab river.

The Shatt al-Arab and Persian Gulf acquired an economic and strategic importance for both Iran and Iraq during the 20th century, what contributed to increase the issue salience and, as a consequence, to both parties willingness to hold on more aggressive positions and go to war. Before 1980 we can recognize two other conjunctures where the war could have erupted. However, due to Iraqi internal political instability and its incapacity to sustain its position, in both

situations (1937 and 1975) an agreement was reached. In contrast, in the end of the 1970s Saddam came into power and could finally pursue Iraqi demands toward the Shatt al-Arab and Persian Gulf. But, as Iran didn't yield for Iraq offensive and both sides held tight its own positions, the conflict entered in a deadlock that culminated in the Iran-Iraq war.

Finally, its important to underline how geography and geographical variables can fulfill our analysis and be important instruments to understand today's world. Unlike many I still hold tight the premise that we are far from overcoming a Westphalian International System. Be it in the Far Orient and the tensions in the South China Sea, in Eurasia and the tensions in Caucasus or in South America with Bolivian demands for sea access, the issue-led territorial perspective applied here can play a great role making sense of state actions.

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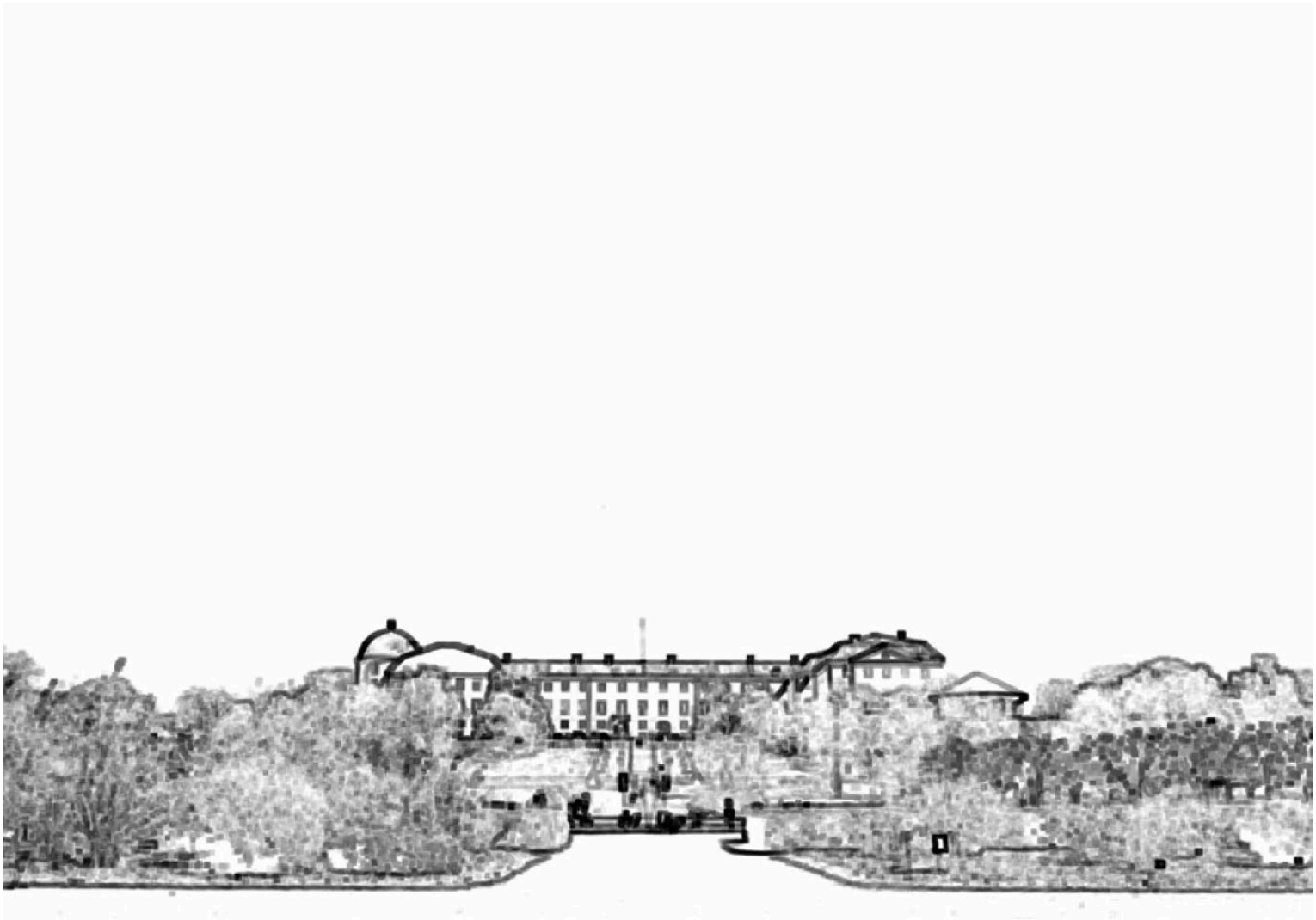

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