



# THE INTERNATIONALIST

Undergraduate Journal of Foreign Affairs



CIRA

Volume IV, Spring 2020



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*Front cover photo: Needing a quick coffee break, my group and I stopped at the Wind View Cafe in Jaipur, India. Little did we know, this spot had rooftop access and a prime view of the iconic Hawa Mahal – a palace known for its beautifully carved honeycomb shaped windows. We spent a large part of our afternoon admiring its beauty and grandeur over good conversation and food.*

*Photo by Rodrigo Bustamante, Senior Global Studies major*





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## Undergraduate Journal of Foreign Affairs

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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Volume IV

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*“Veiled History”*

*While my grandma was guiding me through the streets of Medina Tunis, Tunisia, I saw two older women walking around wearing a safseri, a traditional Tunisian white veil worn by women covering the whole body. Having visited Tunisia many times over the years, this was the first time I saw it worn in person and in public. It was refreshing to see history and tradition within modern streets and society, as veiled women unveiled history. This photo was taken in Tunis, Tunisia.*

*Nour Zarrouk, Junior Biostatistics & Religious Studies double major and Mathematics minor*

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# ABOUT CIRA

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The Carolina International Relations Association (CIRA) is UNC's leading international affairs club, engaging undergraduates across the university on global issues of the day. CIRA is devoted to fostering critical thought, discussion, and debate on current international problems, stimulating creative and effective responses to them, and developing the analytical, communicative, and team building skills of its members and the broader university community.

Through our Model United Nations conferences and travel team, Campus Affairs branch, *The Internationalist Undergraduate Journal of Foreign Affairs*, general body meetings, campus-wide events, and social opportunities, there are a variety of ways to get involved!

If you are interested in learning more about what we do, please visit our website at <https://uncira.org/>. At this link, you can also subscribe to our listserv!

Moreover, if you would like to submit a paper for publication in the Fall 2020 issue of *The Internationalist*, please send your piece to [theinternationalistcira@gmail.com](mailto:theinternationalistcira@gmail.com). Articles must be at least seven pages long double spaced, and have been written since you began attending college. More information about the requirements can be found at <https://uncira.org/the-internationalist/submissions>.



CIRA



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# THE INTERNATIONALIST

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Dr. Jennifer Hazen—Department of Public Policy

Dr. Hazen kindly helped review *The Negative Effects of Economic Sanctions in Response to Human Rights Violations*. She is an Associate Research Professor of Public Policy whose research focuses on armed groups, conflict dynamics, transnational threats, peace processes, post-conflict peacebuilding, and post-conflict security challenges.

Dr. Wayne Lee—Department of History

Dr. Lee kindly helped review *Salting the Earth: Japanese Biochemical Warfare from 1932 to 1945*. He is a Distinguished Professor in the departments of History and Peace, War, and Defense. Dr. Lee's research focuses on military and warfare history.

Dr. Jonathan Weiler—Department of Global Studies

Dr. Weiler kindly helped review *Smoke and Fire on the Eastern Front: The Rise of Populism in Europe*. He is a Teaching Professor and the Director of Undergraduate Studies with the Faculty of Global Studies, where he specializes in authoritarianism, globalization, and human rights.

Dr. Cameron Ballard-Rosa—Department of Political Science

Dr. Ballard-Rosa kindly helped review *Coding Venezuela's Regime: An Analysis of Democracy*. He is an Assistant Professor in the Political Science department whose research interests include political economy, international relations, comparative politics, and formal theory.

An additional thank you goes to our parent organization, the Carolina International Relations Association, for their continued financial and organizational support. We also would like to thank the photographers who contributed their amazing photos to this edition of the journal, many of which were first featured on the Carolina Global Photography Competition website.

Lastly, the biggest thank you of all goes to our team of dedicated Design, Staff, and Managing Editors, whose diligence throughout this semester has made this publication possible.

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# FROM THE EDITOR

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Few could have anticipated the earth-shattering consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic when it first made headlines in December 2019. Since then, the world has been on virtual lockdown, with schools, businesses, and governments transitioning much of their work online. At the time of this issue's publication, close to two million Americans have contracted the novel virus; albeit, the number of new cases appears to be easing. The pandemic has heightened the importance of understanding and appreciating events abroad, for gone are the days when societies can completely isolate themselves from calamities transpiring in other parts of the world.

*The Internationalist* was founded in 2015 with the aim of cultivating a greater appreciation for global affairs among the UNC student body through its publication of biannual issues of selected undergraduate-written papers. 2019-2020 was very much a building year for the journal, and despite the early closure of UNC, our staff, design, and executive teams continued following through with many of the new processes established last semester. Among these included administering mandatory fact-checks for all citations, holding regular weekly staff meetings, and continuing to improve the level of executive oversight over the editing process. I am extremely proud of our team's accomplishments this year, and it was a privilege working alongside a group of such friendly, capable, and dedicated under-

graduates.

This issue contains articles ranging from a study of government corruption in Guatemala to an analysis of Venezuela's level of democratic attainment. It features both an account of Imperial Japan's horrific biochemical tactics during the Second World War, as well as a discussion on the rise of populism in Europe. Finally, it concludes with a synopsis of the consequences of economic sanctions in response to human rights violations. With authors from both Duke and Carolina, this publication offers an assortment of captivating and consequential papers from a variety of time periods and corners of the earth. We hope you enjoy reading them.

Sincerely,



Patrick Clifford  
Editor-in-Chief





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# New Anti-Corruption Strategies, Same Old Elites: Lessons from the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala

By Bo Carlson

*Robert (Bo) Carlson is a senior at Duke University, where he studies economics and political science. He is part of a research team investigating the obstacles that deportees face upon their return; in March 2020 the team spent seven days in Guatemala interviewing community leaders. Bo previously interned at the Organization of American States and the Latin America Working Group. He speaks Spanish and studied abroad for five months in Buenos Aires, Argentina.*

The economic and political future of Latin America depends largely on whether the region can successfully combat corruption. Political and bureaucratic corruption undermine economic growth, contribute to inequality, and degrade trust in government—so much so that in every country of the Americas, at least 23 percent of people would support a military coup in instances of high corruption.<sup>1</sup>

Given the importance of addressing corruption, Honduras, El Salvador, Ecuador, and other countries in the region have looked to the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala for inspiration (discussed in Part I). I propose a model of incentives and constraints to explain why leaders would accept such a commission, especially when they, themselves, are corrupt (Part II). Leaders have many

incentives to engage in corruption, including greed and the exigencies of political survival. However, they also face domestic and international pressure to tackle corruption. I argue that political leaders often square these incentives and constraints by creating an ineffective international anti-corruption commission. I show that this model fits Guatemala's recent anti-corruption initiatives well (Parts III-IV), and I propose several lessons that can be taken and applied to other contexts (Part V).

First, anti-corruption advocates should recognize the incentives, not just constraints, of corrupt leaders. Second, when leaders are threatened, they will lash out; commissions must choose whether to tread carefully or act boldly and risk termination. Third, international organizations should compromise the mandate of their commissions

only when they can rely on other independent judicial units. Finally, leaders who are not personally corrupt are a natural ally for international anti-corruption advocates. These lessons can help future advocates avoid the pitfalls of the Guatemalan case while replicating its successes.

## Part I: Motivation

### Why Corruption Matters

Rule of law, applied impartially, is an essential aspect to political development. It is key to the distinction that North, Wallis, and Weingast (2009) make between “limited access orders” and “open access orders.”<sup>2</sup> Rule of law partially differentiates Acemoglu and Robinson's (2012) “inclusive” institutions from those that are “extractive.”<sup>3</sup> Fukuyama (2012) emphasizes how “neopatrimonial” states dole out favors

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to political allies instead of the recipients who will put benefits to the most efficient use.<sup>4</sup> He also notes that rule of law must uniformly bind all actors in society, including leaders.<sup>5</sup>

Given that a robust rule of law is critical for a state to function well, political reform typically focuses on rooting out corruption. Reformers in Sweden, Denmark, and the United States put corruption at the top of their agenda in the 1800s. More recently, Hong Kong and Singapore have implemented reforms to significantly reduce corruption.<sup>6</sup>

Beyond its impact on political development, corruption erodes trust in democracy. Examining data from Latin American countries in 2012-2013, Fisman and Golden (2017) find a strong negative correlation between perceptions of corruption and the percentage of survey respondents who agree that democracy is “the best form of government.”<sup>7</sup> Distrust has serious consequences: a survey from the 2016-2017 Latin American Public Opinion Project found that a majority of Costa Ricans, Jamaicans, and Peruvians would support a military coup d’état “when there is a lot of corruption.” Even in the United States, that figure was 27.7 percent.<sup>8</sup>

Besides weakening faith in democracy, corruption also hampers economic growth. A bureaucracy that awards contracts to insiders diverts resources away from their most efficient uses.<sup>9</sup> More generally, Olson (1993) and North and Weingast (1989) have argued that poor rule of law tends to create an uncertain business environment, dissuading long-term investment.<sup>10</sup> Brada, Drabek,

Mendez, and Perez (2019) find this logic reflected in foreign direct investment patterns: between 2005 and 2009, multinational corporations were less likely to invest in more corrupt countries, controlling for year and home country fixed effects, as well as other factors.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, corruption increases inequality. Fisman and Golden (2017) find a positive correlation between countries’ GINI coefficients and corruption perceptions index.<sup>12</sup> Although a correlation does not necessarily indicate a causal relationship, evidence collected by Fisman and Golden suggests that at least some of the causation runs in the direction from high corruption to increased inequality.

There are two reasons for this. First, when corrupt officials demand bribes, they tend to levy a flat rate per service.<sup>13</sup> Rich and poor people may pay the same rate when asked for a bribe, but the bribe represents a greater fraction of a poor person’s wealth; thus, the burdens of corruption fall more heavily on the poor. Second, evidence suggests that officials target the poor more frequently for bribes. In one experiment, Fried, Lagunes, and Venkataramani (2010) had study participants commit a traffic violation in front of police in Mexico City. Half of the participants were driving expensive cars, and their dress and speech patterns suggested that they were from the upper class. The other half drove cheaper cars and gave officers the impression that they were of a lower class. Although police pulled over the two groups at similar rates, they more frequently solicited bribes

from the “lower class” drivers. The researchers hypothesized that police officers discriminated against the poor because they were less likely to have political connections. Interviews with officers confirmed this hypothesis.<sup>14</sup>

### International Commissions: A New Trend in Anti-Corruption

Citizens recognized the political and economic consequences of weak rule of law in Guatemala in the mid-2000s, and urged political leaders to act to control corruption. The resulting International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), backed by the United Nations, has attracted much international attention. Inspired by the CICIG model, in 2016 the Organization of American States (OAS) launched the Mission Against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras, and in 2019, Ecuador established its own independent anti-corruption commission staffed by international experts. El Salvador followed suit that same year, and signed an agreement with the OAS to create an international anti-corruption commission in the country. Latin American governments are increasingly resorting to international commissions to resolve their problems with corruption.

Given the importance of rule of law to political and economic development, as well as the growing tendency of governments to create international commissions against corruption, it is worth asking the following:

- What are the incentives and constraints of political leaders, and how are they related to corruption?

- How did the CICIG originate, and what effect has it had on the rule of law in Guatemala?
- How well does the model of incentives and constraints fit the Guatemalan case?
- What lessons can be applied to other countries that accept anti-corruption missions?

The remaining parts of this paper will be dedicated to examining these questions in greater detail.

## Part II: Leaders' Incentives and Constraints

### What is Corruption?

Before addressing the incentives of leaders in developing countries, it is important to define corruption and distinguish between two types. A common definition of corruption among social scientists is the abuse of public office for private gain.<sup>15</sup> An act constitutes abuse when it violates the law. Private gain may involve bribes forcibly collected from individuals, kickbacks from public works contracts, or money embezzled from public coffers. In some cases, private gain may not be monetary. Officials can win political support through clientelism (distributing services to favored constituents). They may also benefit by staffing important posts with friends, family members, or close associates.

Public office may include high officials, but it also includes low-level bureaucrats. When elected leaders abuse their office for private gain, scholars and jurists describe their behavior as grand corruption. When police officers,

customs agents, or other government employees engage in corrupt acts, their behavior is labeled petty corruption. Petty corruption can coexist with grand corruption, but each can also occur in isolation.

Bureaucrats often have strong incentives to engage in corruption. This is especially true in low-income countries, where governments frequently fail to raise enough taxes to adequately compensate public servants. In these cases, officials may accept bribes to supplement their meager wages.<sup>16</sup> Excessive government regulation enables - but does not necessarily cause - bureaucratic corruption, because it provides officials with more opportunities to solicit bribes.<sup>17</sup> The scope of my analysis will be developing countries, since it is in these states where corruption is most common. I will also only focus on democracies, so my analysis can account for domestic pressure from voters.

### Leaders' Incentives to Tolerate and Engage in Corruption

Why do political leaders tolerate petty corruption within their bureaucracies? Moreover, why do they engage in grand corruption, themselves?

There are at least three ways to conceptualize the primary incentives of political leaders. The first is greed - manifested by the desire for personal wealth accumulation. This leads them to accept bribes and kickbacks, in a similar manner as low-level bureaucrats.<sup>18</sup>

The second is the desire to both gain and stay in power. One way they might do this is by keeping key members of

their selectorate happy. Selectorate theory, elaborated by Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003), identifies the groups relevant to a leader's political survival. The nominal selectorate includes anyone who has a legal say in choosing their leader, such as the average voter. The real selectorate, however, is the group of political and economic elites whose support is critical for winning and staying in office.<sup>19</sup> To stay in power, a corrupt leader can buy off this key group with clientelistic programs, favorable contracts, or shared proceeds from bribery. The logic of political survival can also encourage leaders to accept illegal campaign contributions if regular sources of funding are insufficient to win an election.

The third conceptualization describes leaders as moral agents, and posits that they seek to act in accordance with socially acceptable modes of behavior. Mungiu-Pippidi (2015) argues that corruption may be a product of a society's normative values, rather than a deviation from them. Some countries, she argues, function according to ethical universalism, "where equal treatment applies to everyone regardless of the group to which one belongs." In these societies, corruption would be viewed as morally wrong. Others function according to particularism, "where individuals are treated differently according to particular ties or criteria."<sup>20</sup> In these societies, favoritism, connections, and exchange of favors are a reflection of values.<sup>21</sup>





*This photograph shows a woman off the cobblestone streets of Antigua, Guatemala. Weaving is a deep cultural tradition that is passed down from generation to generation. Here, we see the older woman weaving alongside her daughter in their shop.*

*Rachel HoTong, Junior Advertising & Public Relations and Chinese double major*

### Domestic and International Constraints on Corruption

Whether leaders engage in corruption as a reflection of societal values, or simply for greed or political survival, they often face constraints from domestic and international actors. Domestically, corruption is a salient issue for voters. In a 1999 survey of 15,000 people across 14 countries in Latin America, 69 percent considered corruption a very serious problem and 26 percent a somewhat serious problem in their countries.<sup>22</sup> Voters can highlight their demands by organizing in civil society

groups or participating in marches. Pressure from voters can reward leaders who promise to combat corruption, as well as punish incumbents who fail to make anti-corruption reforms a priority.

In addition to domestic pressure, foreign governments can push leaders to address corruption. First, they can make it illegal for their countries' firms to offer bribes in other countries—such was the approach of the United States through the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) of 1977 and the signatories of the Organization for Economic Co-

operation and Development (OECD) Anti-Bribery Convention of 1997.<sup>23</sup> Second, foreign governments can name and shame leaders who fail to adopt anti-corruption reforms. Third, they can make foreign aid conditional on good governance reforms, rather than simply “insulat[ing] aid projects from a country’s corrupt climate.”<sup>24</sup> These actions all serve to raise the costs for leaders who do nothing to combat corruption while increasing the rewards to those who promise reform.

Other international actors can also pressure leaders into prioritizing an-





*There were multiple wedding ceremonies, one after another, at the Hindu Temple, Bhadrakali, in Kathmandu, Nepal. I was absorbed by the brides decorated in red and the ground covered in gold, but the brides paid no mind, their eyes fixed on their new spouses. It was the most colorful wedding I had ever seen, and I was grateful that the family allowed me to photograph the occasion.*

*Ashton Eleazer, Class of 2019, Photo & Video Journalism and Dramatic Art double major*



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ti-corruption reforms. International press coverage, as well as “awareness raising” by non-governmental organizations like Transparency International, can increase salience among the public, indirectly influencing leaders.<sup>25</sup> Multilateral organizations such as the European Union (EU) can also make anti-corruption reform a prerequisite for accession.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, international financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank, can attach anti-corruption conditions to their aid packages.<sup>27</sup>

The problem with these constraints is that they reward leaders who pledge to enact reforms; however, once in office, leaders often fail to deliver on their promises. Committing to reduce corruption can earn a candidate votes, but if their anti-corruption initiatives fail, the now-incumbent can lay the blame elsewhere. The public may have other policy priorities, and may also lack the information necessary to accurately identify broken promises. I predict that domestic pressure for long-term reform will be particularly weak in systems that prevent retrospective voting, such as those that prohibit presidential reelection.

International actors are prone to similar behavior, rewarding promises but failing to punish leaders for failed implementation. Most of the impact of the FCPA and OECD Anti-Bribery Convention has been on firms, not on recipient countries.<sup>28</sup> Regarding aid conditionality, Alesina and Weder (2002), Easterly (2007 and 2009), and Mungiu-Pippidi (2015) find little evi-

dence to suggest that it has resulted in long term reductions in corruption.<sup>29</sup> They identify several reasons for this. First, it is easier to disburse funds than to get them back. Second, donor countries and institutions have other priorities besides corruption in allocating aid—the EU’s European Neighborhood Policy, for example, was aimed more at limiting immigration than at promoting good governance.<sup>30</sup> Third, it can be difficult for donors to distinguish lack of effort from lack of technical skills when recipient countries fail to reduce corruption. In a review of the literature on aid and growth, Burnside and Dollar (2004) find that “a corrupt, incompetent government is not going to use aid wisely and outside donors are not going to be able to force it to change its habits.”<sup>31</sup> Aid conditionality incentivizes leaders to publicly commit to reducing corruption, but it is unlikely to change their actual behavior.

### Reconciling Incentives and Constraints

How do leaders square the incentives they have to engage in corruption with the constraints they face? I argue that to satisfy domestic and international actors, leaders will publicly commit to combating corruption. When pressure is particularly strong, they may even authorize the establishment of a new anti-corruption agency. At the same time, corrupt leaders will want to ensure that the agency is toothless, preventing it from prosecuting the leaders’ own corrupt behavior or that of their allies.

Agreeing to authorize an anti-corruption agency is not without risks. Even if a leader is successful at limiting such an agency’s mandate, voters and international actors may protest and put pressure on the leader to concede. If the leader fails to limit the discretion of the agency, it could, in turn, prosecute them or their allies. But doing nothing in the face of domestic and international pressure carries its own risks as well. I predict that a leader will agree to a new anti-corruption body when they perceive the risks of inaction as greater than the risks of agreeing to the commission.

In Part III, I examine whether the case of Guatemala, especially from the establishment of the CICIG in 2006 to its expulsion in 2019, follows the logic that I have explained above.

## **Part III: The Case of Guatemala**

### Corruption before the CICIG (1960s to 2006)

Corruption was prevalent in Guatemala long before the International Commission Against Impunity began, both at the political and bureaucratic levels. From 1960 to the mid-1990s, the government was engaged in a civil war with a guerrilla group, the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG). In addition to permitting gross human rights violations on the part of state security forces, political leaders during the war received kickbacks from arms contracts, embezzled public funds, tolerated police corruption, and reserved teaching positions



*A cow walks itself home, with no guide needed, after a long day of grazing in the fields in a rural village of Tatarstan, Russia. Tatarstan is a Republic in Russia, and its native people are not Russians, but Tatars, one of Russia's 150+ ethnic minorities.*

*Ideliya Khismatova, First Year Environmental Science and Statistics & Analytics double major*

for party loyalists.<sup>32</sup> In 1984, the National Economic Research Center in Guatemala estimated that more than half of the defense budget was lost to corruption.<sup>33</sup>

Although the two sides reached a peace agreement in 1996, corruption persisted. So, too, did the wartime counterinsurgency militias, which became involved in drug trafficking after the conflict. Corruption and organized crime would merge into a lethal combination, as these illegal clandestine security apparatuses (CIACS) formed close

ties with Guatemalan politicians.<sup>34</sup>

The CIACS committed several high-profile attacks against human rights activists during the term of President Alfonso Portillo (2000-2004). Early in Portillo's term, violence attracted more attention than the corruption that underpinned it. In 2002, US diplomats, the UN Special Representative for Human Rights Defenders, transnational human rights organizations, and Guatemalan NGOs demanded that the Guatemalan government prevent future attacks.<sup>35</sup> Subsequently, the

Guatemalan government contacted the UN Department of Political Affairs in early 2003. Although Guatemala and the UN agreed to form a commission to dismantle the CIACS, the proposal faced opposition in Guatemala's legislature, where lawmakers alleged that the planned commission would violate Guatemalan sovereignty.<sup>36</sup>

In 2004, a new president entered office: Óscar Berger (2004-2008). The campaign had been a heated one, with center-right Berger and Álvaro Colom of the center left facing the right-wing



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former dictator, Efraín Ríos Montt.<sup>37</sup> Although Ríos Montt was constitutionally barred from seeking office, he called on his supporters to protest in Guatemala City on July 23, 2003. The riots that followed would come to be called *jueves negro* (Black Thursday); following the mobilization, the Constitutional Court decided to allow Ríos Montt to run.<sup>38</sup> In the 2003 campaign, violence continued to receive more attention than corruption. Berger and Colom focused on Ríos Montt's civil war-era crimes, successfully preventing him from qualifying for the runoff election. In the second round, Berger won against Colom with 54 percent of the vote.

Upon assuming the presidency, Berger sought to renegotiate the international commission with the UN. The United Nations and Guatemala signed a final agreement in December 2006, and in September 2007, the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) began operating.

#### The CICIG Addresses Organized Crime (2007-2014)

Under its first commissioner, Spanish jurist Carlos Castresana, the CICIG prioritized investigations of organized crime. The CICIG was also constrained by its charter. While the UN-staffed unit could investigate, prosecution would be left up to the Guatemalan Attorney General's office. And although the CICIG could recommend legal reforms, the ultimate decision would depend on the country's congress.

Given these constraints, Berger and his

successor, Álvaro Colom (2008-2012), reaffirmed support for the CICIG. Even as Mexican drug cartels funneled money into Colom's 2007 presidential campaign, the candidate marketed himself as an anti-corruption crusader.<sup>39</sup> Otto Pérez Molina (2012-2015), who took office after Colom, similarly offered rhetorical support for the CICIG while running a scheme of kickbacks and illegal campaign contributions. Prosecutors would later estimate that Pérez Molina and his vice-president took 60 percent of the bribes, and distributed the remainder to other powerbrokers.<sup>40</sup>

#### The CICIG's Renewed Focus on Corruption (2013-2015)

In 2013, the UN Secretary General appointed a more aggressive commissioner to the CICIG: Iván Velásquez of Colombia. Velásquez had achieved renown for his prosecution of the Parapolítica scandal, which implicated dozens of Colombian congressmen in crimes by paramilitary organizations. As the CICIG Commissioner, he announced that the unit would shift its focus from the CIACS themselves to the "illegal politico-economic networks" that supported them, through illegal campaign finance, administrative corruption, and judicial corruption.<sup>41</sup>

The Guatemalan public supported Velásquez's approach: from 2012 to 2017, public trust in the CICIG climbed from 37.3 percent to 70.6 percent.<sup>42</sup> International donors such as the US and the EU also expressed support, providing \$167 million to bolster the work of the CICIG.<sup>43</sup> Although Velásquez re-

ceived support from many international and domestic actors for his efforts to root out systemic corruption, he also attracted powerful critics. President Pérez Molina changed his tune on the CICIG, and by early 2015, he convened a board to investigate whether to renew the unit's mandate. His instructions to the board were to provide a justification for the president not to renew the commission. Recognizing the CICIG's precarious position, Velásquez released the results of an investigation documenting how President Molina and scores of congressmen and cabinet members had engaged in corruption.<sup>44</sup> The ensuing backlash guaranteed the survival of the CICIG and secured the resignation of Pérez Molina.

In the 2015 presidential campaign, the country was ripe for change. Comedian Jimmy Morales ran as an outsider, branding himself as "ni corrupto, ni ladrón" ("neither corrupt, nor a thief"). His principal opponent, Sandra Torres, was the ex-wife of former president Álvaro Colom, and she had been implicated in many of the same crimes as he had. On election day, Torres' links to illegal campaign financing and Morales' claims of honesty gave way to a landslide victory for Morales, 67 percent to 33 percent.<sup>45</sup>

#### The End of CICIG (2016-2019)

Despite Morales' promises of honesty, he proved to be just one more in a line of corrupt presidents. In May 2016, only five months after Morales' inauguration, an auditor for the Supreme Electoral Tribunal concluded that Morales

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had broken several campaign finance laws. The CICIG became involved in the case, and in August 2017, the commission petitioned Congress to withdraw the president's immunity from prosecution. Two days later, Morales declared that Velásquez was *persona non grata* in Guatemala.<sup>46</sup> Morales escalated his attack on the CICIG in 2018, announcing that he would not extend the CICIG's mandate and ordering army tanks to surround its headquarters as a show of force.<sup>47</sup>

While he undermined the CICIG within Guatemala, President Morales also attempted to fend off pressure from abroad. Morales viewed the United States, which had been a strong proponent of the CICIG under the Bush and Obama administrations, as a potential obstacle to his power-grab. However, Morales furtively used his relationships with US President Donald Trump and Congressional Republicans to his advantage. First, he spread disinformation about connections between Russia and the CICIG, which led US Senator Marco Rubio to suspend American funding for the anti-corruption commission.<sup>48</sup> Second, Morales, an evangelical Christian, attended the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, where he cultivated relationships with like-minded legislators.<sup>49</sup> Third, he became the only other world leader to join President Trump in moving his country's embassy in Israel to Jerusalem.<sup>50</sup> These efforts helped dampen criticism from the United States when Morales made moves to undermine the CICIG.

Morales encountered mass protests after threatening the CICIG, but he was never prosecuted. On September 3, 2019, the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala shut its doors. Jimmy Morales completed his term in January 2020; his successor, President Alejandro Giammattei, was previously the subject of a CICIG investigation. He has called the unit "completely illegal" and pledged not to renew its mandate.<sup>51</sup>

During its 12 years of operation, the CICIG has had great success. It has aided in the prosecutions of presidents, cabinet ministers, members of congress, and a Supreme Court magistrate. It also removed thousands of corrupt police officers and pushed forward a number of legal reforms. A 2018 report by the International Crisis Group credits the CICIG's reforms with a 5 percent average reduction in homicides each year, at the same time as Guatemala's neighbors experienced a 1 percent average annual increase.<sup>52</sup> Yet the commission's success also proved to be its undoing. After bringing attention to corruption in the highest levels of government, the CICIG was forced to leave the country when its mandate expired. It is unclear whether the changes that the CICIG brought to Guatemala will last.

#### **Part IV: Explaining the Case**

In Part II, I described how the incentives and constraints of leaders can help us understand leaders' decisions to engage in corruption. In Part III, I presented the case of corruption in Guatemala. In this section, I will explain how

well the logic of Part II applies to the case in Part III.

During the Guatemalan Civil War (1960-1996), political corruption was high. The model of leaders motivated by greed helps explain why leaders were prone to accepting kickbacks during this period: the defense budget was so vast that there were many opportunities for corrupt officials to syphon off funds. Presidents were also less constrained during the period, as domestic audiences were more focused on the war rather than on corruption allegations. Furthermore, international actors had not yet made anti-corruption a priority.

Alfonso Portillo's decision in 2003 to investigate the CIACS reflects changing constraints. Portillo's incentives—greed and political survival—were similar to those of past presidents, so he continued to accept kickbacks. But domestic and international pressure was rising to investigate criminal networks, so he attempted to open a UN-backed commission. Given that the commission would have had a limited scope on organized crime, it is possible that Portillo did not expect it to address corruption. It is also possible that he planned to leave office before the unit could begin investigating, or that he anticipated that Guatemala's congress would reject any CICIG recommendation to prosecute him.

There is little evidence to suggest that Óscar Berger was personally engaged in corruption. If he, indeed, refrained from participating in it, my framework fails to explain why. It does, however, shed light on why Berger acceded to the establishment of CICIG, since he

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was not putting himself at risk of prosecution.

The CICIG's initial priority—to investigate criminal organizations—explains why Álvaro Colom praised the commission even as he accepted illegal campaign contributions, which helped guarantee his political success. Additional limitations on the CICIG, such as its lack of prosecutorial power and its inability to directly influence legislation, may have helped assuage Colom further. At the same time, Colom likely viewed his illegal fundraising as outside

the mandate or capacity of the CICIG to investigate.

Otto Pérez Molina was in a similar position as Colom, subject to international and domestic pressure in favor of the CICIG. However, with Iván Velásquez's decision to investigate corruption - not just organized crime - the risks posed by the commission to Pérez Molina's political survival increased dramatically. However, it was too late for him to undermine the CICIG, and in 2015, Velásquez's revelations, and the popular outrage they inspired, forced Pérez Mo-

lina to resign.

Jimmy Morales' 2017 presidential campaign may be the most difficult part of the case to explain. The CICIG had just demonstrated it had a robust mandate to investigate corruption, as well as had a strong capacity to influence the removal of leaders from office. Yet Morales still accepted illegal campaign contributions, and did so while supporting the CICIG and using the slogan "neither corrupt, nor a thief." The logic of political survival may help reconcile this paradox. Shortly after winning



*I took this picture while on a month-long National Geographic Student Expedition in India. While there, I did a three-day hike through the Himalayas. During the hike, our guide explained the meaning behind Buddhist flags, and how they represent the carrying of good wishes when the wind blows.*

*Domenica Bayas, First Year Health Policy and Management major*



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his party's nomination in June 2015, Morales was polling between 7 and 10 percent, compared to 30 percent held by the leading candidate. Between May and September he reported only about \$77,000 in legal campaign expenditures while his two opponents raised over \$1.4 million and \$6.4 million.<sup>53</sup> If Morales had not received illegal campaign contributions, he likely would have never won the presidency. As great as the risks were in engaging in corruption, the rewards - in terms of winning the presidency - were enormous.

Morales seems not to have realized the full extent of the danger the CICIG posed to his presidency. When the commission turned its investigative powers toward him and his family, however, Morales acted swiftly to discredit the institution both domestically and internationally. By meeting with US policymakers and spreading falsehoods about the CICIG, he attempted to relieve many of the constraints that had forced his predecessors to accept the commission.

The logic of incentives and constraints offers a useful analytical lens to understanding the decisions political leaders in Guatemala made with respect to the CICIG. In Part V, I turn to lessons that can be applied to other cases where countries face systemic corruption.

## Part V: Lessons for Anti-Corruption Advocates

The first lesson that anti-corruption advocates can draw from the Guatemalan case is to recognize leaders' incentives and constraints when offering

policy recommendations. Advocates in the Guatemalan case focused on the constraints that could force leaders to accept an international commission. For the most part, these constraints worked: the United Nations, the European Union, transnational advocacy networks, Guatemalan NGOs, and public protests all provided strong backing for the CICIG. However, they paid less attention to the incentives that led Guatemalan politicians to participate in corruption. Otto Pérez Molina and Jimmy Morales both engaged in illegal campaign contributions for political survival. A question that deserves further investigation is whether a scheme of public campaign financing would reduce politicians' reliance on illegal sources and in what contexts it would be feasible.

The second lesson that can be learned is that when a political leader is threatened with removal from office, they will take extreme measures to protect themselves and their associates. Jimmy Morales lashed out at the CICIG when he, his family, and his backers in the business lobby came under investigation. Eventually, he refused to renew the commission's mandate. This presents international anti-corruption commissions with a dilemma: should they tread carefully so as not to risk a backlash, or should they follow investigations even if they lead to the president's desk? The Guatemalan case does not yield a straightforward answer for other countries that turn to international bodies to reduce corruption.

The third lesson is that the mandate of

an international commission can make all the difference. The CICIG relied on the Guatemalan Attorney General's office for prosecutions and could only suggest reform legislation to Congress. That weakness may have been necessary for the CICIG to enter the country in the first place, but it also made the commission vulnerable to termination. This presents another dilemma: should international organizations press for an expansive mandate and risk rejection at the outset, or should they make compromises and agree - at least initially - to refrain from investigating a country's top political leadership? The answer may depend on the existing legal structure of the country. In Guatemala, the CICIG partnered with a relatively independent unit of the Attorney General's office and was able to prosecute many of the officials it investigated. If other countries have such an independent unit, or are willing to create one, compromise may be acceptable.

The fourth lesson is that leaders who are not personally involved in corruption are more likely to accept international assistance. Óscar Berger, who seems to be the least corrupt of the presidents I analyzed, was the same president who welcomed the CICIG to Guatemala. Other countries may have reformist leaders presiding over corrupt governments. Such countries would be ideal partners for another international anti-corruption commission.

## Conclusion

The next presidential term for Guatemala looks bleak, but that does not

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mean the long-term future is sealed. While Alejandro Giammattei will take several steps backward on the rule of law, Guatemalan attorneys and judges like Erika Lorena Aifán, Thelma Aldana, and Claudia Paz y Paz have risked their lives to fight corruption. One of them, or someone similar, may eventually win the presidency. In the meantime, the United Nations and oth-

er international actors should build up civil society and prepare for a Guatemalan leader who is more receptive to anti-corruption assistance.

Corruption reduces economic growth, exacerbates inequality, and undermines trust in democracy. While the CICIG has been a success story in some respects, it demonstrates the importance of understanding not just the

constraints, but also the incentives of leaders. International anti-corruption advocates must address the dilemma between treading lightly and risking backlash, as well as the challenge of how expansive a mandate a commission should have. When all else fails, waiting for a more receptive leader may be the best course of action anti-corruption advocates can take.

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# Coding Venezuela's Regime: An Analysis of Democracy

By Claire Wright

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Democracy today has many connotations and is often regarded as synonymous with the political systems of the United States and Western Europe. As a result, when faced with the question of whether a country is a democracy, people mistakenly determine their answer by comparing it to these baseline examples. Within this logic, the more similar a country's government structure is to those of the Western world, the more of a 'true democracy' it is. Although these countries may serve as useful examples, they can make people lose sight of the real meaning of democracy. In its purest sense, democracy means 'rule by the masses.' In order to accurately label countries as democracies or otherwise, it is necessary to take this definition into account during every step of the evaluation. The goal is to examine how much of a say the general population has when it comes to who is leading it, particularly in the case of elections for the executive and legislature. We have to take into account not only the inclusion of the masses in these decisions, but also the competitiveness that allows

for differing opinions to be heard, both of which are main tenets in political theorist Robert Dahl's definition of democracy.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, as Dahl insists, the determination of democracy should be based upon a minimalist view that focuses only on political institutions, rather than on their outcomes.

## My Measure of Democracy

The elements I chose to include in my own measure of democracy are largely inspired by Dahl's ideas, as I focus on the combination of inclusion and competition in elections. Each element is also directly related to the ability of the general population to decide who represents them in government, in order to ensure that my measurement is entrenched in the basic definition of - rather than in broader ideas about - democracy. To begin with, my first key feature of democracy is that the executive is either elected by the general population or is selected by an elected legislature. This is arguably the most important element of democracy, as rule by the masses means that whoever leads a country must be chosen by those

they are leading, or, at the very least, be selected by a body whose members were elected by the general population.

On a similar note, the second component I include in my measure is that the legislature is elected by the general population as well. This is particularly important for countries whose legislatures select the executive, but is still otherwise necessary because the masses must have a say in who can pass laws. By holding elections for the legislature, the government allows the people to pick whoever they feel will best represent their values in the lawmaking process. Both of these types of elections are forms of democracy that give power to the masses, and they are a fundamental requirement for a country to be considered democratic.

Beyond the existence of these elections, I also include universal suffrage as a third key feature of a democracy. Every adult should have the right to vote in order to give a voice to the entire population. This fulfills the need of democracy to have rule by the masses, which only works if all of the masses have the legal ability to participate

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in the political process. Additionally, universal suffrage achieves Dahl's inclusion dimension within democracy because anyone who wants to partake in the democratic process has the opportunity to do so.

The last two elements I incorporate into my measure of democracy cover Dahl's dimension of electoral competition. Primarily, there must be multiple political parties running in these elections. This not only reflects the ability of the people to peacefully organize under the regime, but it also means that there is actually a choice for voters to make, based on their own values and beliefs. Even if there are only two parties, the people still have a say in who will lead their country. This is also relevant to my final component of democracy, which is that there must be peaceful transitions of power for the executive. Not only must multiple parties run in elections, but also if the incumbent party loses, they must step down and allow the winner to take office without resisting. This shows that the regime is adhering to the will of the masses, and is therefore abiding by its democratic foundations.

For each of these elements of my measurement of democracy, I will give the country in question a tally of either 1, 0, or -1, depending on whether the country fulfills the given requirement completely, partially, or not at all. For example, the United States would receive a 0 on the element of universal suffrage because although it has nearly fulfilled this requirement, many felons are denied the right to vote.<sup>2</sup> I will also

specify that under the component of peaceful transitions of power, a country that has yet to experience a transition of power since the implementation of its most recent electoral rules can score no higher than a 0 due to a lack of data. Every point will be added together to create a total score that places the country on a continuous scale from -5 to 5. Countries scoring between -5 and -3 are considered autocracies (highly authoritarian regimes), those between 3 and 5 are democracies, and the remaining countries between -2 and 2 are of a mixed regime (a regime whose features include a combination of both autocratic and democratic elements).

### Democracy in Venezuela

Venezuela has experienced extensive struggles with maintaining democracy in its past, and the current situation is no different. President Nicolas Maduro came to power in 2013 shortly after his mentor and predecessor, Hugo Chavez, died while in office. Maduro narrowly won this first election by 1.6 percent of the vote, and quickly had trouble living up to the expectations set by Chavez, as the latter had been extraordinarily popular among the Venezuelan electorate.<sup>3</sup> Maduro's problems only worsened when the opposition won a majority in the legislature as a result of the 2015 elections, to which the president responded by attempting to have the loyalist Supreme Court usurp the legislature's power.<sup>4</sup> This did not last, as the Court decision was quickly reversed after domestic protests and intense international condemnation. However,

Maduro persisted, and in 2017, a new legislature titled the 'Constituent Assembly' was formed under the president through a "special election." Every municipality elected one delegate while state capitals each appointed two, regardless of their population sizes, which defies the concept of one person, one vote. There were also seats set aside "for selection by members of specific social organizations such as students, workers, and indigenous groups."<sup>5</sup> More voting power was given to these organizations as well as to the state capitals because they were more likely to favor Maduro, and therefore elect his supporters to the new assembly. The opposition boycotted the election and even held an informal plebiscite, in which 98 percent of the 7.6 million participants rejected the new assembly.<sup>6</sup> Even so, many citizens were forced to vote in the Constituent Assembly election under the threat of losing their jobs.<sup>7</sup> Shortly after the creation of this assembly, Maduro allowed it to take legal superiority over the preexisting, opposition-led National Assembly.<sup>8</sup>

These issues with democracy carried into the 2018 presidential election in Venezuela as Maduro took extensive precautions to avoid losing. The regime barred various candidates from running while jailing others, leaving only opposition candidates, Henri Falcon and Javier Bertucci, as eligible to run.<sup>9</sup> Maduro won the election with 68 percent of the vote under allegations of fraud and repression, with the opposition using these claims to argue that the presidency was, in fact, vacant.<sup>10</sup> As the

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leader of the National Assembly, Juan Guaido has since declared himself the rightful president under the Venezuelan constitution, and has received diplomatic recognition and support from over 50 countries.<sup>11</sup> However, despite Guaido's attempts to enforce his mandate to govern, Maduro still remains in office as the leader of a regime that is starkly less democratic now than it was when he first came to power in 2013.

### **Coding Venezuela I: My Measure of Democracy**

Using this information on Venezuela's most recent elections and electoral rules, I will determine how democratic this country is using the five requirements I previously outlined. Despite allegations of fraud in the 2018 election, Maduro was elected by the people according to the current electoral rules with 68 percent of the vote.<sup>12</sup> This fulfills my first requirement, which mandates that the executive is elected by the general population or by an elected legislature, giving Venezuela a score of 1 on this component. The second component requires that the legislature is elected by the general population. Although this was true for the National Assembly, the new Constituent Assembly was created through a mixture of election and selection by specific groups rather than a fair election across the general population. Because of this, Venezuela only receives a 0 since it only partially fulfills this requirement.

In terms of universal suffrage, there were some restrictions on voting in the election for the Constituent Assembly,

but Maduro had made clear that it was a "special election." All other elections under the current regime have been carried out with universal suffrage, so for this third section, Venezuela scores a 1.<sup>13</sup> Next is the measure of whether multiple political parties run in the country's elections. This is true of the 2018 presidential election as, despite Maduro's attempts to snuff out the opposition, there were three parties being represented among the three candidates. Multiple parties were not represented in the election for the Constituent Assembly, though, because the opposition decided to sit out the election, which lowers Venezuela's score for this category to a 0.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, given that there has not been a transition in power since Chavez created the new Venezuelan Constitution in 1999, there is not enough data to determine whether or not a transition would be peaceful. As a result, the element of democracy outlining that there are peaceful transitions of power for the executive results in a score of 0.<sup>15</sup> Combining these scores of 1, 0, 1, 0, and 0 gives us a total of 2. This places Venezuela just above the middle of the continuous scale, indicating that it is a mixed regime.

### **Coding Venezuela II: Przeworski**

I will also code Venezuela according to the Przeworski et al. system for measuring democracy.<sup>16</sup> It is similar to my own measure, but differs slightly in its components, as well in that it is a dichotomous rather than continuous

scale. The first component states that the chief executive must be chosen by popular election or by a body that was itself popularly elected. As previously explained, this is true as Maduro's 2018 election was one in which he was chosen by popular election, so Venezuela fulfills this requirement. Secondly, the legislature must be popularly elected. This is not true for Venezuela due to the recent creation of the Constituent Assembly, which I also discussed in my own measure of democracy. According to the Przeworski system, a country must meet each of its four requirements in order to be considered a democracy, so Venezuela's failure to have a popularly elected legislature automatically categorizes it as an autocracy.

Venezuela also fails to fulfill the remaining two requirements, the first of which is that there must be more than one party competing in the elections. This is only true for the 2018 presidential election and not the 2017 "special election" for the Constituent Assembly, which is why Venezuela falls short in this category. The final component states that an alternation in power must have occurred under the same electoral rules which brought the previous incumbent party into power. This is false because an alternation has not yet occurred, as the same party has remained in power since the creation of Chavez's 1999 Constitution. Venezuela fails to fulfill three of the four elements of the Przeworski system and therefore is clearly coded as a dictatorship due to its lack of i) a popularly elected legislature, ii) multiple competing parties, and iii)





*I got the chance to go on this amazing backpacking trip where we hiked all throughout the Dolomites mountain range in Italy. This photo was captured in the Three Peaks Nature Park, also known as Parco Naturale Tre Cime. The beauty of this hike and these mountains were absolutely breathtaking!*

*Shelby Casey, Senior Biology major and Neuroscience minor*

an alternation in power.

### **Coding Venezuela III: POLITY IV**

POLITY IV uses a five-dimensional analysis of a country's government to determine both a democracy score and an autocracy score, which can then be combined to create a total polity score which exists on a continuous scale.<sup>17</sup> I will use this to determine one last coding of Venezuela beginning with the first dimension: the competitiveness of executive recruitment. For this, I

put Venezuela under category three, meaning the country holds elections. Although Maduro was Chavez's mentee, he was not selected for the position of president and instead ran in the 2013 election after Chavez's death in order to earn his place in office.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, in the 2018 election, Maduro ran against two opposition parties.<sup>19</sup> These election characteristics indicate that executive recruitment in Venezuela is competitive.

Within the second dimension of analyzing openness of executive recruit-

ment, I believe Venezuela falls under category four, as the chief executive is chosen by a competitive election. A potential issue is that Maduro did not have a full opposition in the 2018 election as the regime prevented some other candidates from running. Nonetheless, Maduro still faced two strong candidates from opposition parties which satisfies the need for a competitive election in this measure of democracy.<sup>20</sup>

The third dimension is that of executive constraints. President Maduro appears to have no limitations imposed



*Beyond the picture: Imagine five young Americans, readily equipped in REI hiking boots and technical gear, cautiously stepping down a muddy slope. Beside them, five Quechua women flew down the same hill, wearing sandals made from old tires, carrying children on their backs, and spinning llama wool as they went. So went my introduction to our instructors of a two-hour weaving course, where we would converse in broken Spanish between sips of mint tea. This photo was taken at the end of our course, the sun setting as our instructors expertly finished up the headbands we had been working on. Photo location: Huilloc Alto, Peru.*

*Helen Johnston, Sophomore Economics and Global Studies double major*

upon him, largely because he was able to create the Constituent Assembly. He can easily call or dismiss it, and Maduro specifically designed it so that its members would not oppose him.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, Maduro is not subject to constitutional restraints. He formed the Constituent Assembly with the intention of using it to rewrite the constitu-

tion, and when Guaidó claimed that he should be president under the existing constitution, Maduro ignored him with ease.<sup>22</sup> For these reasons I put Venezuela at a category one, meaning the executive has unlimited institutional authority.

The fourth dimension of POLITY IV concerns the regulation of participa-

tion. I argue that Venezuela is of sectarian participation, which falls under category three. There are incompatible interests between the government and the opposition, which have become clear as the opposition has regularly boycotted decisions made under Maduro in recent years.<sup>23</sup> The group in power favors only those loyal to Maduro,



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and has put heavy restrictions on the opposition by barring and jailing their candidates, as well as ultimately overriding the opposition-dominated National Assembly.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, the fifth dimension evaluates the competitiveness of electoral participation, whose fourth category best fits Venezuela due to its transitional nature. The 2018 election was the first in Venezuela to have notable political factions capable of disrupting the competitiveness of elections since the creation of Chavez's 1999 Constitution - particularly considering the opposition's decision to boycott the election for the Constituent Assembly.<sup>25</sup> This signals that the country is transitioning from competitive to factional elections, or elections that function as platforms for political blocs that are looking to advance their own agenda rather than work toward the common good.

Using the POLITY IV democracy indicator, I find that Venezuela has a democracy score of +5 due to its competitive and open system of executive recruitment. The lack of constraints on the chief executive and the regulation

of participation under the regime are anti-democratic, so they contribute to an autocracy score of +4. By subtracting the autocracy score from the democracy score, I find that the total polity score for Venezuela is +1 on a scale from -10 to +10, where -10 is strongly autocratic and +10 is strongly democratic. This central score indicates that Venezuela is a mixed regime.

### Conclusion: A Comparison of the Coding Systems

Of these three coding systems, the Przeworski system appears to be the outlier. Both my own measure of democracy and that of POLITY IV gave similar results, classifying Venezuela as a mixed regime that shows characteristics of both democracy and autocracy. In contrast, the Przeworski method coded Venezuela as a strict autocracy even though its criteria were very similar to mine. One cause of this discrepancy is the difference between a dichotomous and a continuous scale. Because the Przeworski system was dichotomous and necessitated that all four of its requirements be fulfilled in order

to classify a country as democratic, it missed any intermediate or transitional qualities. These qualities were taken into consideration for the other two systems though, since they were continuous scales using a point system that allowed for more intermediacy.

Furthermore, although it is a reliable measure, the Przeworski system fails to measure political inclusion. The POLITY IV system does take inclusion into account so it is more valid, and it is largely reliable with few subjective judgements needed in its coding. Similarly, my own measure of democracy includes both inclusivity and competition, and so it also minimizes subjective judgements, making it both valid and reliable. Seeing as all three systems are reliable but only two are valid, it is possible that the Przeworski system's lack of validity may have led to its differing outcome. Overall, I believe that both the POLITY IV system as well as my own are a better fit for Venezuela's regime because it is of mixed characteristics, which are not represented by the dichotomous and questionably valid Przeworski system.

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# Salting the Earth: Japanese Biochemical Warfare from 1932 to 1945

By Amanda Sin

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In December 1949, the Military Tribunal of the Primorye Military Area of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics tried twelve former members of the Imperial Japanese Army in the city of Khabarovsk.<sup>1</sup> The soldiers had either held senior roles in the Japanese Kwantung Army during World War II or had been deeply involved in the workings of Bacteriological Detachment Units 731 and 100. All faced charges of “preparing and employing [a] bacteriological weapon.”<sup>2</sup> While these legal proceedings laid bare Japan’s extensive use of biological and chemical weapons both prior to and during the Second World War, they only captured the tip of a proverbial iceberg. Scholars have since thoroughly sketched out Japan’s intensive investment in creating biochemical weapons caches, while civilians subjected to Japanese occupation have brought civil suits seeking compensation for atrocities incurred at the hands of the Kwantung Army. To

this day, the specter of Japanese imperial power looms large over the Pacific, and haunts the foreign policies of many of the region’s countries - none more so than China’s.

In this paper, I describe the origins of Imperial Japan’s biochemical weapons program, as well as its lasting effects on the post-war East Asian security environment. First, I argue that the country’s efforts to research, develop, and deploy such armaments were fundamentally grounded in cultural mores of deep-seated ethnocentric nationalism. Tokyo’s calculated attempts to increase its war-making capabilities were inextricable from ingrained beliefs about its political destiny: to dominate the region as the leader of the “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere.” In such a grand vision, Japan would be Asia’s hegemonic power, while ‘lesser’ Asian races would help maintain Japanese predominance.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, pre-existing understandings of racial primacy were

inherent in how the Japanese Army built its requisite infrastructure, “collected” and experimented on human test subjects, and deployed new biochemical weapons. Second, I contend that Japan’s brutal treatment of Chinese test subjects and civilian victims has contributed to a still-festering legacy: China remains mistrustful and hostile toward Japan, and views its potential military resurgence as an irrefutable, existential threat. Thus, it is apparent that Japan’s military conquests are still bearing their bitter fruit. Any analysis of Sino-Japanese tensions is incomplete unless one considers the downstream ramifications of the crimes committed by the Japanese armed forces between 1932 and 1945.

## Origins of Japanese Imperialism

The Kwantung Army began to develop biochemical weapons when Japanese Emperor Hirohito authorized his

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General Staff and Ministry for War to create Units 731 and 100 - two top-secret units stationed in Japanese-occupied Manchuria that were ordered to conduct “bacteriological warfare.”<sup>4</sup> Per Allied expert testimony, both bodies could manufacture 300 kilograms of bubonic plague material, 800-900 kilograms of anthrax, and 1,000 kilograms of cholera per month.<sup>5</sup>

The units, which were publicly referred to as the “Water Supply and Prophylaxis” and “Hippo-Epizootic” administrations of the Kwantung Army, were not

born in a vacuum.<sup>6</sup> After American Commodore Matthew Perry’s so-called “opening” of the Japanese islands in 1853, Japanese popular attitudes of racial and cultural superiority remained incredibly salient while the state rapidly adopted Western methods and precepts in technological innovation.<sup>7</sup> The Japanese state had long dictated inherently racially discriminatory public policy. For example, ethnic Koreans, who were natives of Okinawa, suffered considerable legal barriers to marriage, employment, property rights, and so-

cial assimilation.<sup>8</sup> Sheldon Harris succinctly captures this sentiment in his book, *Factories of Death: Japanese Biological Warfare, 1932-1945, and the American Cover-Up*: “the Japanese believed their islands were home to a special race of people...they were the lightest-skinned people in East Asia and disparaged Asians of darker hue.”<sup>9</sup>

Amidst pressing socio-economic crises in the 1920s, brought about by bank failures, industrial overproduction, and the 1923 Tokyo earthquake, disillusioned officers of the Imperial Army



*Morning walk around Kandy Lake, Kandy, Sri Lanka. This picture was taken outside the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic, which houses a tooth from the Buddha. It is considered one of Sri Lanka’s holiest sites*

*Photo by Jennings Dixon, Sophomore English and Political Science double major*





*In northern Iceland, Dettifoss roars over gray rock, creating an enormous mural in flux. "The collapsing waterfall" is cited as the second strongest in Europe, in terms of output. Camouflaged in the background, the fall's visitors become miniaturized by this monumental landscape.*

*Kyle Lambert, Senior Biology major*

blended long-held beliefs of absolute Japanese primacy with proto-fascism to fashion a new roadmap for future prosperity and stability.<sup>10</sup> They pointed to the supposed successes enjoyed by Mussolini and Hitler in Europe, and sought to replicate them in Asia. Subsequently, they formed emperor-worshipping organizations that called for increased Japanese imperialism.<sup>11</sup> These philosophies permeated the fabric of the Kwantung Army: ultranationalist officers declared that Japan ought to absorb Manchuria, China, and the rest of the region into a "Greater East

Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" to realize its manifest destiny.<sup>12</sup> It was this overwhelming, omnipresent hunger for an overseas empire that compelled Japan's General Staff to simultaneously draft the 1931 invasion and occupation plans of Manchuria, and to adopt more effective means of inflicting lethal violence against uncooperative populations.

### **Ethnocentrism & the Biochemical Weapons Program**

This culture of Japanese nationalistic ethnocentrism propelled the country

toward building up its arsenal of biochemical weapons. The nation-state's imperialist and racist leanings are evident in the three phases of the weapons' production program. First, Japan had to acquire the necessary land to house and test these lethal substances. Inspired by Germany's successes with chlorine gas at the Battle of Ypres in World War I, the Japanese Army prioritized efforts in weaponizing potent chemical and biological agents. They coveted the power they could wield if they mastered this "higher form of killing" and glimpsed a significant feedback loop: the more



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they increased their capacities for territorial conquest, the more they could invest additional resources in weapons development projects.<sup>13</sup> After all, Japanese military elites saw their colonized lands as all the more valuable for two main reasons: first, they were sources of human subjects for experimentation and labour, and second, they were sites to test deadly substances far away from the home islands. Shiro Ishii, the director of Unit 731, promulgated this view when he stated that biological “assault research” could only be done abroad on non-Japanese subjects.<sup>14</sup> These underlying premises drove him to found multiple laboratories after the Kwantung Army’s 1931 occupation of Manchuria: Ishii established his Beinho and Pingfan facilities in 1932 and in 1938 respectively, while also setting up a testing site at Anta.<sup>15</sup> These borderland populations, which the Japanese saw as particularly inferior, were now set to become Ishii’s living “experimental laboratory.”<sup>16</sup>

The second phase of the weapons program involved acquiring and using human test subjects. The Japanese Army’s attitudes and methods in carrying out these two actions are proof of how their cultural beliefs had influenced their chosen tactics. When Ishii took the next step of acquiring human test subjects, he “collected” men, women, and children from several sources. The first source was the Hogoin detention camp, which primarily housed Russian prisoners of war. The second was Japanese military police (Kempeitai) branches, which provided Ishii and his unit with

detained Chinese soldiers, intellectuals, worker agitators, and other “disloyal” criminals. Finally, the multi-racial areas surrounding the laboratories themselves were also sources of human test subjects, whose unsuspecting civilians were sometimes lured to the facilities with the prospect of employment.<sup>17</sup>

While the Kwantung Army’s acquisition of human subjects in and of itself constituted gross cruelty, the means by which they systematically dehumanized their captives is fully illustrative of the Japanese ethnocentrism of the era. For example, in the detailed Kempeitai Operations Order No. 224, Chinese prisoners were referred to as “special shipments.”<sup>18</sup> The document’s repeated references to these captives as chattel is indicative of the extent to which beliefs framed by racist doctrine influenced the Army’s tactics. Moreover, the Army’s chosen language is horrifyingly consistent with Ishii’s treatment of his subjects. In keeping with the official cover that they were operating a lumber mill, Ishii and his personnel referred to their human subjects as logs of wood (maruta) in both verbal conversations and written records.<sup>19</sup> All in all, it is evident that these dehumanization tactics were byproducts of Japanese cultural beliefs at the time.

In a similar vein, Japanese understandings of their captives as subhuman allowed the administrators and personnel of Units 731 and 100 to employ cruel and unusual methods of experimentation. In the first instance, Ishii infected and tested his subjects through various inhumane means,

among which include forcing them to eat anthrax-filled chocolates, ordering them to engage in sexual activities so that the woman might be infected with syphilis, and transferring human infected plague material to other prisoners.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, Units 731 and 100 personnel engaged in countless vivisections on live prisoners.

At the time, military researchers were interested to see how disease progressed inside the human body in real time and did little to hide their grisly sacrificial experiments. For example, one Japanese scientific paper published a description of “hemorrhaging in the kidneys in experimental monkeys,” which were observed with the naked eye.<sup>21</sup> Medical experts later confirmed that the paper’s “monkeys” were actually human subjects, as the specific hemorrhage can only occur in humans.<sup>22</sup> It is estimated that at least 580,000 Chinese civilians died from these experiments and the disease outbreaks resulting from them.<sup>23</sup> In short, the Army’s ultra-nationalistic racism enabled them to callously disregard the value of civilian life.

The final phase consisted of deploying these weapons against civilian population centers. According to both evidence presented at Khabarovsk, as well as later analysis, the Army engaged in at least seven large-scale biochemical attacks against Chinese civilians. For example, in November 1940, they sprayed bubonic plague-infected fleas from aircraft and initiated an epidemic in the coastal Chinese city of Ningbo.<sup>24</sup> In August 1942, they dropped glass





*Nyboder is a historic neighborhood in Copenhagen, Denmark, well known for its bright yellow houses. Copenhagen is one of the most bicycle-friendly cities in the world, and the bikes scattered across this neighborhood reflect the city's sustainable lifestyle.*

*Chelsea Castor, Junior Chemistry major*

containers filled with various bacteria, including anthrax, typhoid, and cholera, into reservoirs, wells, rivers, and houses in towns that lined the Central Chinese railway.<sup>25</sup> Finally, even after

Japan's unconditional surrender to the Allies in 1945, Unit 100's officers set free thousands of rats and horses, which had been infected with glanders and the bubonic plague.<sup>26</sup> Per author

Daniel Barenblatt's analysis, the release of these animals caused multiple plague epidemics in the nearby city of Changchun, which lasted well into the late-1940s.<sup>27</sup>



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Additionally, Kwantung Army elites viewed the “real-world” use of their porcelain flea bombs, anthrax-tainted foodstuffs, and other instruments of death as crucial in refining future iterations of their bacteriological and biological weapons. At Khabarovsk, Nishi Toshihide, who had served as the Chief of Unit 731’s Training Division, revealed the extent to which such cold and calculating attitudes governed the Kwantung Army. According to him, Ishii recorded the 1940 Ningbo attack as a documentary film and included frames of Chinese newspaper coverage on the resulting epidemics.<sup>28</sup> Nishi’s testimony indicated that this film, along with other records of Japanese attacks against both Chinese civilians and combatants alike, served to corroborate the “deliverables” that Ishii claimed to have produced.<sup>29</sup> Akin to how researchers invited spectators to travel to witness their vivisections at Pingfan, Ishii’s film highlights how the Army viewed its actions in clinical, non-emotional terms: they were merely doing what needed to be done to advance their empire’s expansionist dreams.<sup>30</sup> This specific refrain echoed long into the late twentieth century, as Japanese veterans of Units 731 and 100 declared they were proud to have been a part of “the world’s first unit to use biology in combat.”<sup>31</sup> While some former members of the Kwantung Army have expressed profound regret for their actions, others still underscore the fact that wartime circumstances overrode the most basic ethical values.<sup>32</sup> Ultimately, it was the era’s cultural norms that allowed

them to eliminate the feelings and emotions that could have made them reluctant to experiment on human beings and deploy their instruments of mass destruction. To divorce this key nuance from the picture would be to render an incomplete account of how and why the Japanese soldiers of Units 731 and 100 committed such horrific atrocities.

### **Unhealed Wounds: The Lasting Impact of Japanese Imperialism**

The Japanese Army’s tactics during World War II still contribute to tensions within the East Asian security environment, today. For example, at the interstate level, the Chinese government remains convinced that there are three distinct impediments to a complete Sino-Japanese reconciliation: first, the perceived insincere and insufficient nature of the Japanese state’s various attempted apologies for their conduct in the war; second, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology’s omission of Japanese responsibility for instigating the conflict and committing war crimes; and finally, high-ranking Japanese officials’ continued visits to Tokyo’s Yasukuni Shrine, which is the “spiritual home” for 14 of Japan’s 28 World War II Class-A war criminals.<sup>33</sup> For these reasons, China’s Second World War wounds remain salted. Beijing’s official argument is that the Japanese have not “addressed their historical sins, confessed their crimes, sought the forgiveness of their victims, nor done real penance as well as the Germans have.”<sup>34</sup>

Although Sino-Japanese relations are presently stable, the “bad history” between the two states has directly influenced Chinese foreign policy. More specifically, China has been extremely fearful of a potential Japanese military resurgence. For example, in 2005, Japan petitioned for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. Then-Chinese Premier Wen Jia Bao explained China’s veto of the bid as justified, for “only a country that respects history, takes responsibility for history and wins over the trust of peoples in Asia and the world at large can take greater responsibilities in the international community.”<sup>35</sup>

Beyond vying for greater political power within the international community, Japan has also contemplated enhancing its military capabilities: officials have debated whether the state should revise its post-war pacifist constitution, re-arm, and become a “normal country” in military terms.<sup>36</sup> China has met these developments with assertive efforts to claim the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku islands, located between Taiwan and Okinawa, as its own sovereign territory by increasing submarine activity and creating an air defense identification zone around the island chain.<sup>37</sup> The islands bear great strategic, political, and economic value, for they are home to Japanese shipping lanes, fishing resources, and potential oil and gas traps.<sup>38</sup> In sum, China has responded to Japan’s attempts to increase its political and military clout with wariness. While current Chinese President Xi Jinping has indicated that he is open

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to pursuing a more amicable bilateral relationship between China and Japan, meaningful reconciliation between the two states is yet to be seen.<sup>39</sup>

At the societal level, Chinese civilians do not believe that the Japanese people, state, and monarchy have adequately repented for Japan's atrocities in World War II. Both intellectual elites and laypeople alike have participated in historical activism, wherein citizens have engaged in large-scale mobilization to supposedly right the wrongs seared into China's collective historical memory. These "activists" have expended tremendous effort in publicizing Japan's wartime atrocities and the perceived inability of the Japanese state to apologize. For example, they have imitated

the Nanjing history museum's practice of blowing air sirens to commemorate the start of the Nanjing Massacre of 1937, with a particularly conspicuous similar public event held in San Francisco every year.<sup>40</sup> Chinese academics, such as historian Su Zhiliang, have used such gatherings to advocate for a more confrontational approach toward militarist right-wing groups in Japan, and for an international court to try surviving Japanese war criminals.<sup>41</sup> Chinese civilians have also engaged in compensation litigation cases against Japan. They, along with Filipino, Taiwanese, Korean, and other East Asian nationals, have been and currently are plaintiffs in at least 54 civil suits.<sup>42</sup> All in all, the final battles of the Pacific War are still

underway in courtrooms around the world, with aggrieved civilians seeking redress.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the Japanese cultural beliefs that undergirded ethnocentric nationalism compelled the Army to research, develop, and wage biochemical warfare against supposedly racially inferior civilians and combatants. Until said underlying sources of tension have been reckoned with, the bitter fruits of historical memory may further poison the East Asian security environment and contribute to future sparks of conflict.

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# Smoke and Fire on the Eastern Front: The Rise of Populism in Europe

By Jona Boçari

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A common term in today's political discourse is "populism." Many political parties, groups, and leaders are dubbed as "populist," and it appears as if this new wave of leadership and political mobilization is threatening to overtake Europe. According to a 2017 Bloomberg study of 22 European countries, support for populist, radical-right parties is higher than it has ever been over the past 30 years.<sup>1</sup> This is particularly noticeable in Eastern Europe, where populist parties have been making consistent gains throughout recent electoral seasons. Such a rise in populism in Europe reveals complicated truths about the nature of today's political order, and has troublesome implications for the European Union (EU) as a whole. This paper will analyze different aspects of populism and its manifestations in Hungary, Poland, and Italy, while seeking to address the possibility of the European Union moving past populist sentiments.

## What is Populism?

According to political scientist Cas Mudde, populism is a "thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus the 'corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people."<sup>2</sup> However, the general will of the "people" and their interaction with the "elite" is context-specific. Populism in Europe looks very different from its manifestation in Latin America because of historical, cultural, political, and sociological differences. Despite these local specifics, it is clear that "populism is not just a reaction against power structures, but an appeal to a recognized authority:"<sup>3</sup> that of the general people. Yet, as scholar Jean Comaroff notes, there is general hesitation by politicians who profess to be "of" or "for" the people in labelling themselves as "populist," because of the

term's association to extremist political views.<sup>4</sup> In many ways, the use of this term depends on its juxtaposition in political rhetoric as it is often applied in contexts where opposing political groups, namely the "people" and the "establishment," trade barbs over who bears responsibility for a nation's ills, be they real or imagined. As such, although populist groups experience difficulty defining themselves as detached from traditional political dichotomies, their tactics are often the same: scapegoating, fear-mongering, and mobilizing discontent and anger among large segments of a population.

When analyzing populism, it is important to keep in mind exactly who supports it and for what reasons. Statistical evidence from Spruyt, Keppens and Van Droogenbroeck suggests that relative wealth, cultural security, and education are good metrics by which one's support for populist parties can be predicted.<sup>5</sup> Populism finds support

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in economically vulnerable populations who strongly believe the world is unfair and/or that globalization is spreading at an alarming rate. It becomes akin to a coping strategy for people who feel overwhelmed by economic drives and cultural shifts in their countries.<sup>6</sup>

A central feature of populist rhetoric is the framing of immigration as the culprit behind a nation's economic woes. According to a 2019 European

Commission report, the Czech Republic and Slovakia have the lowest rates of income inequality in the European Union. In addition, both Poland and Hungary have GINI coefficients below the European average.<sup>7</sup> As such, Eastern Europe presents an interesting case for scholars and policymakers. While there are no indications of particular economic vulnerability or increased migration in these countries, popu-

list parties have nonetheless managed to mobilize these citizens' feelings of discontent and uncertainty. This is in line with Jean Comaroff and Jacques Rancière, who note that "the people themselves tend to disappear precisely at the point at which they are invoked. The concept...is 'an artifice': like 'the community,' it is an empty supplement, separated from the actual 'laboring, suffering' populace."<sup>8</sup> Steven Erlanger



*This photo was taken in Venice, Italy right as the sun was setting! Everyone around me was in masks and extravagant costumes celebrating carnival! It was an incredible experience and one that I will not forget. I got the chance to capture this photo as everyone around me was singing and dancing.*

*Shelby Casey, Senior Biology major and Neuroscience minor*

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of The New York Times links Eastern Europe's affinity with populism to its precarious position with regards to its national identity.<sup>9</sup> Having gained independence from the Soviet Union only recently, Erlanger claims that Eastern European nations are eager to remain in the European Union as a source of economic support and freedom of movement, but are also weary of Brussels' influence over local governance. In fact, according to the Migration Policy Institute, "anxiety has grown among voters for whom 'Europe' has come to mean an imposition of austerity and a loss of control over tools, such as monetary policy."<sup>10</sup> This mobilization of Euroskepticism, economic unrest, anti-immigrant sentiment, and inflammatory rhetoric have been critical aspects of the political discourse in recent European elections and possesses tremendous implications for the future of the European Union.

## Populism's Challenge to the European Union

Since liberal governmentalism is a key tenet of the European Union, the rise of populist and radical right-wing parties, particularly in Eastern Europe, presents complex challenges to the integrity of the Union. As political scientists Milada Vachudova and Sophie Meunier note, Hungary and Poland are embracing an "illiberal turn" with their dismantlement of democratic institutions.<sup>11</sup> In turn, the presence of illiberalism in the European Parliament will jeopardize Brussels' ability to make decisions and formulate policies as a

united front. As Vachudova and Meunier point out, "when it comes to hard power, member governments will have more disparate preferences, which may complicate agreement on common policies that are anchored in democratic values (such as sanctions on Russia) and on the use of tools that have enabled the EU to influence other states (such as empowering liberal allies and supporting a free press)."<sup>12</sup>

The effect of illiberalism in creating a lack of consensus among European lawmakers can be seen clearly in the response to Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) in Europe.<sup>13</sup> With Hungary receiving 40 percent of China's investments in Europe, Chinese FDI can very well act as a replacement for European funds - a possibility which Hungarian national-conservative right-wing party Fidesz has framed as evidence of Hungary's reducing economic dependence on Europe. This departure from the Union is actively supported through Fidesz's "Eastern Opening Strategy." Furthermore, in June 2015, Hungary became the first EU country to participate in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).<sup>14</sup> Also referred to as the "New Silk Road," many view the BRI as an attempt by Beijing to expand its geopolitical influence by bankrolling major infrastructure investment projects throughout the world.<sup>15</sup> Despite growing concerns over the national security implications of Chinese investments in the European Union, populist-led Italy, too, signed onto the BRI in March 2019.<sup>16</sup> As EU member states continue to unilaterally strike deals with China,

the EU is increasingly finding itself unable to put up a unified strategy toward addressing growing Chinese influence on the continent. As a consequence, its bargaining power in bilateral negotiations with China is progressively being undermined.<sup>17</sup>

Trust in the European Union as an institution is also likely to diminish given the increasingly pervasive presence of illiberal democracies - along with their blatant disregard of democratic values and human rights - within the bloc. This will have direct implications on EU enlargement - particularly in the Western Balkans, where Hungary has a vested interest in seeing the illiberal regimes of Serbia and Montenegro join the EU before other candidate countries.<sup>18</sup> Beyond interests in having more illiberal allies to consolidate power, illiberal European governments are undermining the validity of the prerequisites to join the EU. After all, why should a candidate country "allow an independent media, tolerate civil society, bolster checks and balances, treat opposition parties fairly, or dismantle rent-seeking networks when others are doing even worse within the EU?"<sup>19</sup>

## Addressing Populism

It should not be surprising that a phenomenon as complex as populism has no simple or clear policy solutions. On one hand, the European Union could retaliate against these illiberal regimes by imposing sanctions or other restrictions on their privileges as EU members. However, this retaliatory stance would almost certainly play right into





*Located near the Plaça d'Espanya and Poble Espanyol de Barcelona, the Magic Fountain of Montjuïc in Barcelona, Spain hosted an exuberant Pride celebration with festive music and joyous smiles for as far as the eyes could see. Located right below the Palau Nacional (National Palace, in the center background), the Magic Fountain featured an unforgettable light show further into the evening.*

*Tushar Varma, Sophomore Advertising/PR and Anthropology double major*

the populists' agenda of vilifying the EU and framing it as a domineering institution that unjustifiably violates its member countries' sovereignty. On the other hand, Brussels cannot simply sit back and let illiberal governments under its belt cause more division and consolidate more power within the bloc.

Despite Europe appearing to have its

hands relatively tied on this matter, it is important to remember that there are populist elements in virtually all forms of community organizing and protesting. For particular historically marginalized groups, populist methods are sometimes the only feasible outlet of political engagement, as has been the case with workers and labor unions. Therefore, socialist democratic

parties, who used to be a mainstream political voice in almost all of Eastern Europe, could start by restructuring their platforms to highlight the support their countries receive from the European Union, as the supranational organization typically does a poor job marketing itself. In addition, non-populist parties should try to address some of the underlying factors that have re-





*During my study abroad program in Nijmegen, Netherlands, I went to Bruges for a few days with my friend Carley, where I took this photo at the end of a guided city tour. The city is known as the “Venice of the North” for its striking canals and is located in the Dutch speaking region of Belgium. Carley was one of my close friends that I met while studying abroad in Nijmegen, Netherlands. She is now a Junior, studying global relations at UNC Wilmington. We had a free weekend without anything to do, so we decided to take a trip to Belgium. We first went to Antwerp, did a food tour and stayed the night there. The next morning, we took a train to Bruges and were blown away by the history of the city. The basic structure of the city hasn’t changed since the 1500s.*

*Spencer Stone, Junior Business Administration major with concentrations in Entrepreneurship and Operations Management*

sulted in widespread discontent among large segments of European society. One possible avenue for this would be to provide enhanced infrastructure, education, and job training opportunities for the rural areas of Eastern Europe that have been most impacted by globalization and trade. Presently, it is up to member states to ensure that different economic sectors have the tools

and resources to adapt to shifts in the economy. Receiving support from the European Union in this regard could perhaps re-establish some of the trust that has been lost in the midst of the populist rhetoric of the last decade.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, the rise of populism in Europe presents difficult challenges

for the order, integrity, and influence of the European Union. While the political future of illiberal, populist-led countries, such as Hungary, remains uncertain, the continued concentration of power in the hands of parties like Fidesz highlights the unwelcome fact that populism will likely persist as a political phenomenon for some time. The center right and the center left parties, as well

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as the EU, will have to seriously mobilize in order to mitigate the damage that illiberal populist regimes have already caused, and will continue to cause, in

the future. Unfortunately, while it only takes one election season to bring a populist party into power, it will likely require a much greater concerted effort

to return a country to its former democratic order.

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# The Negative Effects of Economic Sanctions in Response to Human Rights Violations

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By Aida Al-Akhdar

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Human rights have been of great concern to Western, democratic states since the end of World War II. The Second World War provided many opportunities for atrocious violations of modern human rights concepts to transpire. Due to the domestic American response to the poverty of the Great Depression, universally declared standards of human rights began to emerge. In order to uphold these rights, as has been the prerogative of strong democracies since the end of World War II, states and intergovernmental organizations use name-and-shame tactics, as well as diplomatic coercion in the form of economic sanctions, to enforce internationally recognized human rights laws.

Multiple studies conclude that diplomatic coercion through economic sanctions negatively impacts a state's human rights record. While naming-and-shaming tactics and diplomatic coercion are meant to impel states

to treat its citizens in a more humane manner, this paper will argue that such practices do more harm than good. In fact, the United States' application of economic sanctions to enforce human rights laws unintentionally serve to further deteriorate human rights abroad.

## What are Human Rights?

Human rights are innate to all individuals by virtue of being human, regardless of one's country of origin, geographical location, or organizational membership.<sup>1</sup> As outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), these rights include: shelter, food and water, political rights, as well as gender equity and class equity.<sup>2</sup> Adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 1948, the UDHR defines a "common standard of achievement for all peoples" that forms the foundation of modern human rights law.<sup>3</sup> This liberal set of rights have been considered the norm of politics since the end of World

War II. The American government was at the forefront of defining the rights outlined in the UDHR in the postwar period. US President Franklin D. Roosevelt recognized the hardships of the Great Depression and outrageous human rights violations of the war and Holocaust, and sought to create a just basis under which all humans should live. Similar to Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, presented at the end of the First World War, President Roosevelt laid out his famous freedoms that outlined the foundation of the American mission to protect human rights. These freedoms are the following: "freedom of speech and expression, freedom of every person to worship God in his own way, freedom from want [poverty], and freedom of fear [specifically aggression and war]."<sup>4</sup> These four points transitioned to the rights available to all, as laid out in the UDHR, including rights "without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion,



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political or other status.”<sup>5</sup>

It is important to note that the UDHR is not an international treaty, and is therefore not legally binding to UN member states. Additionally, the United Nations is a soft-law governing body. This means that it lacks obligation and precision in enforcing human rights, because the UN cannot claim sovereignty over already sovereign states. States that chose to ratify the Declaration are the entities that hold one another account-

able; however, states still have complete control over their domestic policies.

### Criticisms of Human Rights Laws

In his essay “The Fragility of International Human Rights Law,” Lorenzo Zucca states that “the problem is not that international human rights law is robust, and as a consequence calls for trade-offs; the problem is that it is weak, and as a consequence does not matter

enough.”<sup>6</sup> Because of the inability of any international institution to claim sovereignty over an already sovereign and recognized state, states do not have to adhere to international laws. Zucca furthers this point by saying, “in case of a conflict between international human rights law and domestic law, the former is in principle meant to trump the latter.”<sup>7</sup> However, this seldom happens, according to Zucca. It can, therefore, be argued that the UDHR treaty is fun-



*In Kyabirwa, Uganda, the life cycle of the village was dictated by The Great Nile. The river brought life and took life away. Entire communities relied on the water for drinking, washing, and energy, but the water was also selfish. She guarded herself with fast moving currents and microbial agents. In a way, she was like a sleeping dragon — if you acknowledged her power and took care not to disturb her, you might just sneak away with her riches of life.*

*Parker Vigé, Senior Global Studies and Entrepreneurship double major*





*After finding a stretch of what appeared to be stunning coastline on Google Maps, my wife and I and our two little boys set out on a 20-hour drive from our home in Malawi to a beautiful little island off the coast of Mozambique in Southeastern Africa. We spent our days enjoying breathtaking beaches and exploring the oldest European architecture in the Southern Hemisphere. We were thoroughly smitten by the friendly and relaxed vibe of the island and, like the local in this picture, were captivated by the delicious smells escaping the windows of quaint cafes and restaurants lining the cobblestone streets, and frequently indulged in a most delicious Portuguese-inspired local cuisine.*

*Ryan Seguin, MPH 2017; UNC Project-Malawi*

damentally flawed, because it is upheld by a soft-law governing body. With the lack of accountability, apart from being named-and-shamed by the treaty's other ratifying members, the treaty acts as a symbolic deterrent of bad governance, rather than a legally binding code. This maintains the idea that all international politics occur in anarchy, as sovereign states cannot be forced by external institutions to abide by any given set of laws. To counter this anar-

chy, states could be required, under additional preambles to the treaty, to pass the standards outlined in the UDHR in domestic law or to allow the UN broader oversight and power. In the absence of such accountability, states resort to diplomatic coercion to maintain human rights standards.

Applying diplomatic coercion, in the form of economic sanctions, is done differently across governments, depending on the executing state's inter-

ests. Both the US and China use foreign aid to invest in developing regions worldwide, but with strategic stipulations. Before providing a state with aid, the US requires that the country adhere to conditions surrounding oversight in how the aid is spent, as well as attaches human rights requirements that the state must maintain. According to Abrams et al., "the [US] foreign aid program...rewards nations for furthering human rights, does not discriminate

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on the basis of race or religion, and responds to national security interests of the US,”<sup>8</sup> qualifying US foreign aid as a form of diplomatic coercion for national security interests. China, a rising player on the world stage, offers similar foreign aid, but does not attach the same human rights conditions as the US. This allows authoritarian regimes to receive aid at the expense of China, furthering China’s international claims to resources abroad and overlooking human rights abuses.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to the positive reinforcement of foreign aid investments, policymakers try to enforce economic sanctions to “punish” states that do not abide by the UDHR. Economic sanctions, however, are considered to be a controversial response to human rights violations due to their general ineffectiveness, as explained in the next section.

### **The Failure of Economic Sanctions to Combat Violations of Human Rights**

In response to states violating human rights, intergovernmental organizations, such as the Human Rights Cabinet of the United Nations, used to support the usage of economic sanctions. Specifically, the United Nations Security Council “applied sanctions to support peaceful transitions, deter non-constitutional changes, constrain terrorism, protect human rights and promote non-proliferation.”<sup>10</sup> However, given recent research, these reasons for supporting economic sanctions have been contested. New research indicates

that sanctions, in many cases, correlate with an increase of human rights violations.

In his research on economic sanctions and human rights abuses, Dursun Peksen states that an economic sanction “enhances the repressive capacity of the regime allowing political elites to escape the cost of economic pressure and improving the ties between the political leadership and its constituency.”<sup>11</sup> This means that political leaders and those sympathetic to the given regime are not the ones hurt by the sanctions. Rather, the overpowered people experience further repression in order to sustain the way of life of the ruling party. Furthermore, Peksen states that the “consequences of economic coercion show that sanctions create unintended consequences of greater poverty, higher levels of unemployment, and poor health conditions for ordinary citizens.”<sup>12</sup> Not only do the repressed people experience more domination at the hands of the government, but they are also economically hurt by the sanctions placed on their state, through their inability to obtain goods and services, such as food and healthcare. Peksen’s research concludes that “extensive sanctions, especially those imposed multilaterally, appear to trigger greater integrity rights abuses than limited sanctions.”<sup>13</sup> To support these claims, Peksen provides empirical data from his longitudinal study on economic sanctions on human rights violators. His data show that “the predicted probability of frequent violations of disappearances...becomes 138% more likely

when extensive multilateral sanctions are in place. The effect of the same variable on frequent violations of extra-judicial killings and torture is 117% and 88%, respectively.”<sup>14</sup> Therefore, in his multilateral study, Peksen finds a direct correlation between economic sanctions, intended to act as diplomatic coercion, and an increase in human rights violations.

In relation to Peksen’s research, Cristiane de Andrade Lucena Carneiro sought to test the theory that economic sanctions hinder the betterment of human rights, in their past application to Latin American states. Carneiro not only studied the effects of sanctions in the states they were imposed, but also the reactionary effects of economic sanctions on neighboring states’ human rights observations. The data from Carneiro’s study, which include statistics from 1976-2004 and were collected in the same empirical style as Peksen’s research, concluded that “the 12 Latin American countries that were not targeted by economic sanctions between 1970 and 2004 saw their level of rights protection improve during this time period; the empirical analysis conducted here suggests that this result is related to sanctions imposed in neighboring countries.”<sup>15</sup>

Carneiro’s research is inconclusive on whether or not economic sanctions directly affected the treatment of a regime’s people in regards to human rights. However, states with economic sanctions imposed upon them have a 48.7 percent likelihood of scoring lower in the Political Terror Scale (PTS), as





*We fumbled around to collect our stuff in the darkness before climbing into the jeep – it was 2:00am. Our morning started early so that we could catch a glimpse of Mt. Bromo at sunrise. Though our hike was supposedly long, it went by in the blink of an eye in between bites of mouth-watering Nasi Goreng and piping hot cups of coffee mixed with Milo shared with strangers and friends from around the world. Location: Probolinggo, East Java, Indonesia*

*Amruthansh Sriperumbudur, Junior Statistics & Analytics and Computer Science double major with an Entrepreneurship minor*

opposed to their score before economic sanctions were imposed.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, according to Carneiro, imposing economic sanctions may increase a region's regard for human rights, as neighboring states of a sanctioned state will show improvements in their upholding of human rights. It is important to note, however, that just because political terror decreases in response to sanctions does not mean that the quality of life for oppressed citizens increases. In fact, when combining Peksen and Carneiro's

findings, it appears that while applying sanctions lowers political terror, it also lowers service delivery to ordinary citizens. Therefore, ordinary citizens still face human rights violations on a daily basis.

Additional case studies point to the same conclusion. In 1990, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 661 to protect Kuwait from further territorial aggression by slapping sanctions on Iraq.<sup>17</sup> According to Mohamed H. Al-Jawher, the sanctions

were financially crippling and resulted in problematic health complications from poor diets and increased levels of stress among Iraqi citizens.<sup>18</sup> To prove that the severe sanctions harmed the citizens of Iraq, Al-Jawher analyzed the number of duodenal ulcers the year before sanctions were imposed and the year afterwards. He found that within the same hospital, diagnosed cases of the ulcer went from "54 in the first period [before sanctions]...and 138 in the second period [after sanctions]..."<sup>19</sup> Al-



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Jawher concluded that the economic sanctions and their negative effects on the average Iraqi citizen is demonstrable by the increase in duodenal ulcers, because the increase in diagnoses “reflects the increase in the stress of life, changes in nutritional state and diet and also reflects the shortage of drugs and the increased price of therapy.”<sup>20</sup> Al-Jawher links the economic effects of the sanctions to a decline in the well-being of Iraqis, as the sanctions resulted in poorer food and fewer medical resources.<sup>21</sup>

Given the empirical data, as well as case studies, it is evident that while economic sanctions seem like an effective tool to end human rights violations, they seldom work out as intended and often worsen the existing situation. While imposing sanctions may deter a state from using political terror against its citizens, as Carneiro observed, sanctions correlate with increased violations of human rights, as Peksen and Al-Jawher explicate.

## Conclusion

International declarations are helpless to uphold human rights when sovereign states can easily refuse to comply. To reverse the consequenceless state of anarchy in which international pol-

itics dwell, many policymakers try to enforce the upholding of human rights through coercive economic sanctions. While sanctions can theoretically be used as coercive diplomacy to improve international human rights, they end up having the reverse effect, as empirical data and case studies demonstrate. Therefore, in the promotion of international human rights, economic sanctions are often more harmful than helpful.

Previously, entities of the United Nations, such as the Security Council, pursued economic sanctions as a means to enforce human rights and prevent territorial aggression.<sup>22</sup> However, on May 6, 2019, the Office of the High Commissioner for the United Nations Human Rights Council (OHCHR) released new concerns about the use of economic sanctions to progress the application of human rights.<sup>23</sup> The OHCHR appointed Idriss Jazairy, an Algerian international relations scholar, and through his employment, discovered and published unnerving statistics. According to a report cited by Jazairy, “40,000 people may have died in Venezuela since 2017 because of US sanctions.”<sup>24</sup> Moreover, Jazairy “expressed deep concern at the recent imposition of unilateral coercive measures on Cuba, Venezuela and

Iran by the United States,” and that “the use of economic sanctions for political purposes violates human rights and the norms of international behaviour. Such action may precipitate man-made humanitarian catastrophes of unprecedented proportions.”<sup>25</sup> As the Jazairy report demonstrates, the UN is beginning to recognize that sanctions, despite often intended to reduce human suffering, usually only exacerbate it.

The United States spear-headed modern human rights treaties and their enforcement in the postwar era by means of intergovernmental organizations. Yet, as the decades progress, the United States seems to have moved further and further away from its intent to protect human rights on an international scale. Whether or not its intentions are to harm foreign citizens’ access to health-care, shelter, clean drinking water and nutritious food is beside the point. In many societies, such as in Venezuela and Iraq, the damage has already been done. In trying to police the world and protect countless individuals from the monster of governmental oppression, has the United States, itself, turned into the monster it has so vehemently sought to slay?

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