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EDITOR’S NOTE

THE VIEW FROM SOUTH LAWN

A fter another semester of hard work and dedication on behalf of our editors, it’s my pleasure to present the final issue of the 29th volume of The Journal of Politics & Society. The authors featured in this edition survived our rigorous selection process and then collaborated with our editors to polish their academic works for print. We are very pleased with the finished product, and believe our readers will be too.

The variety and depth of this issue’s essays reflects the Helvidius Group’s goal of amplifying a wide range of intriguing, insightful student voices in the social sciences. This edition contains contributions to a wide variety of academic fields, from postcolonialism to international relations to faith-based identity formation.

In our first essay, Margaret Poulos analyzes the complexities of decolonization through the framework of the coca plant, considering the policies of the Evo Morales administration in Bolivia. Poulos builds her study on theoretical literature relating to postcolonialism, including contributions from international relations and social movement theory, as well as her own field work, having conducted interviews with Bolivian coca activists for two months in 2017.

Ethnographic field research features heavily in Matthew Toland’s essay too, as he deploys the methodology for a study of social integration in Argentina. Using the Buenos Aires community “Villa 31” as his sample, Toland explores the state’s interaction with the residents of an “informal settlement” as the state attempts to engage with the residents, increase its presence in the settlement, and invest in the community through new construction. This essay is a fascinating contribution to urban policy.

Moving from South America to Western Europe, Rain Tiller’s paper considers the recent rise in nationalism and illiberalism in the European Union. The study focuses on the European Union’s interactions with its member states, exploring the methods the EU uses in attempt to promote democratic government and factors that contribute to member states’ ability to push back on these pressures. Tiller builds on political science theories on democracy and illiberalism, developing hypotheses about the EU’s leverage on member states and applying them to the case studies of Hungary and Poland.

Our next essay is another important contribution to the field of international relations. Richard Pedersen analyzes Chinese foreign policy, starting with the context that China has taken a more assertive and confident role in global affairs in recent years. Pedersen first lays out two basic hypotheses to explain China’s shifted stance in foreign affairs, a straightforward realist hypothesis, which argues China’s new stance is a result of increased confidence in China’s national power, and a constructivist hypothesis, which analyzes the increase in scholarly discussion of “tianxia”—a theory of China’s historical regional power—under the Xi Jinping regime. Pedersen argues for more serious analysis of the second hypothesis before proposing qualitative and quantitative methodologies to compare the two.

Turning from international relations, the next paper is a fascinating ethnographic study of a Chicago interfaith Sunday school. In this essay Will Davis analyzes the process of identity construction in dual-faith religious communities. His research includes interview and archival data collected from the school, which instructs students in the Jewish and Catholic faiths. Davis uses his findings to build on existing literatures on religion, identity formation, and interfaith marriage, making his work a broad and meaningful contribution to several fields in sociology.

Our final paper examines several important questions on the subject of terrorism and its interaction with democratic government. Mary Catherine Cook’s study focuses on the case of Tunisia, exploiting its unique status as a state with both a democratic government, resulting from the 2011 Arab Spring, and a significant source of foreign fighters for radical jihadist groups in the Middle East. Cook’s study is an incredibly thorough work, deploying both quantitative analysis, used to analyze trends in democratic variables across the region of North Africa and the Middle East, and qualitative analysis, to focus on Tunisia’s specific context and history.

This edition would not have been possible without our team of diligent student editors. Special thanks also to our Executive Board members: Kelly, Ciara, Stephanie, and Peter. It’s been a pleasure to work beside all of you during my time as Editor in Chief, and I am incredibly grateful for the knowledge, experiences, and friendships this group has given me. I wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

Ryan Joel

Editor in Chief

New York City
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CoCa, Capitalism, and Decolonization:
State Violence in Bolivia through Coca Policy

Margaret Poulos, Macalester College

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ABSTRACT

I approach Bolivian coca policy under Evo Morales, Bolivia’s first indigenous President, as a site to examine the broader issue of decolonization. My paper argues that the General Law of Coca, passed in March of 2017, is part of a larger systemic pattern of violence towards historically disenfranchised communities in Bolivia, despite Morales’s indigenous Aymara identity and pro-coca activism. Drawing both on interviews I conducted and a postcolonial theoretical framework, I analyze how Morales has rhetorically advocated for indigenous communities and the decolonization of Bolivia, while colonial legacies supplanted in the subjectivity of Bolivians and institutions of its government have nonetheless persisted. I suggest that it is not possible for any postcolonial state to decolonize if it embraces the forces of global capitalism that once drove the violence of colonialism. I use international relations theory and social movement theory to aid in the imagining of a path towards decolonization.
Over the past decade, Bolivia has implemented laws that make it difficult to forget that coca is simply a plant and complexity surrounding coca, so much so that it demonstrates the complexities that come with the initiation of decolonization in a globally interdependent world, where sovereignty is framed almost exclusively within the model of the liberal democratic state. In Bolivia, coca remains deeply polarizing, which is reflective of Bolivia’s five hundred-year struggle against colonial and neoimperial forces. Embarking on two months of field research, I conducted interviews with the active opposition to Law 906. My research revealed an incredible amount of controversy and complexity surrounding coca, so much so that it was easy to forget that coca is simply a plant.

Over the past decade, Bolivia has implemented a project of controlled coca legalization, in keeping with Morales’s broader political rhetoric surrounding indigenous pride. Morales’s articulated vision for the decriminalization of the coca leaf, though, has been easier said than done. He was immediately met with foreign disapproval, and faced the task of appeasing the various factions within the coca sphere, including cocaleros in ancestral regions and those in the Chapare. Through an analysis of the most recent coca legislation passed with Morales’s support, we can also examine the capabilities and tensions between the indigenous and Western worlds defining Bolivian state institutions.

My paper approaches the wider issue of decolonization through the lens of coca policy under Evo Morales. I will begin by providing a detailed history of Bolivia and Evo Morales’s political agenda in order to contextualize my case. The following chapters will, based on the field research I conducted while in Bolivia, describe current coca policy and its implications. I will then ground my qualitative research in postcolonial theory and apply it to relevant literature in the areas of indigenous politics, international relations, and social movement theory. I find in my paper that the General Law of Coca, Law 906 completely redefines how coca is regulated in Bolivia, modifying where coca can be legally produced, mandating how much can be legally produced, and removing the definition of ancestral growing zones. The law is an ideal site to examine both Evo Morales’s Bolivia and Evo Morales himself; it demonstrates the complexities that come with the initiation of decolonization in a globally interdependent world, where sovereignty is framed almost exclusively within the model of the liberal democratic state. In Bolivia, coca remains deeply polarizing, which is reflective of Bolivia’s five hundred-year struggle against colonial and neoimperial forces.

To properly grasp why coca has been the focal point of decades of political controversy, it is essential to understand its deep roots in Bolivia’s identity, culture, and tradition. Bolivia was one of the first countries to cultivate coca, primarily in the Yungas region outside of Cochabamba. The earliest evidence of coca production was discovered on the northern coast of Peru in the Huaca Prieta settlement (2500-1800 BC), confirming the presence of coca in pre-Inca times. Carter and Mamani note that, “nowhere else in the world do we find such a vital substance in social integration like coca in traditional Andean communities.” The leaf continues to hold a significant symbolic role in religious, cultural, and medicinal ceremonies. According to Inca legend, Mama Coca is the daughter of Pachamama, Mother Earth. Shamans chew and smoke coca leaves to attain higher levels of spiritual understanding and communicate with deities. Coca leaves are also widely used in Andean medical practices. As many as 70 different traditional Andean medicines incorporate the use of coca leaves, with roughly 80% of the Andean rural population relying on the medicinal uses of coca for their health.

Coca remains a powerful symbol of community solidarity and identification, functioning as a social lubricant during gatherings which often involve the chewing of coca among friends. It is said that the “handling, sharing, and consumption of coca leaves is governed by clearly defined rules of etiquette,” and that across Andean countries, social greetings are initiated with the symbolic sharing of coca. Coca plays a key role in the ubiquitous
Andean cultural concept of reciprocity. For instance, if an individual asks for ayni, or reciprocal help, they will offer a handful of coca to share in return. When coca is presented in the form of a petition, it indicates that the recipient already accepts the terms of the agreement. In daily life coca is chewed or brewed in teas to ease altitude sickness, provide a jolt of energy and focus, and suppress hunger. It is also considered an economic luxury, and the leaves are used as currency or to barter with in the countryside. Spanish conquerors made a brief attempt to eliminate coca cultivation due to its relevance in indigenous religion, but soon enough, they realized the stimulating effects of coca on labor productivity and exploited its use, which perhaps foreshadows the complicated relationship coca has with capitalism today.

To this day, coca has maintained its prominence in Bolivia culturally, politically, and economically, while concerns of legalization persist. Evo Morales, the native Aymara community, and other indigenous peoples of the altiplano - the high plateau that spans from Peru to Argentina - claim that its symbolic significance justifies its legalization; however, domestic and international tensions, forces of internalized colonialism, and mixed perspectives of social control have made it difficult for Bolivians to agree on a steady path of coca policy. The most recent legislation passed by the Morales administration, the General Law of Coca, is representative of a controlled legalization of coca cultivation, as coca growing zones in the area of Morales’s coca union are slowly expanded. The new law impacts questions of indigenous identity, state violence, and decolonization, because it is reflective of Bolivia's complex relationship to its history, its people, and coca.

Bolivia waves two flags, often side by side. One was adopted in 1826 as its official emblem, and includes red, yellow, and green stripes, to signify the bravery of its army, the abundance of its mineral deposits, and the fertility of its land, respectively. The second, known as the wiphala, is said to have derived from the Inca empire thousands of years ago. The multicolored flag unites indigenous ethnic groups across the Andean region on the basis of its multidimensional symbolic meanings and represents a history of indigenous solidarity. Most relevant to the current goals of Bolivia, this second flag represents a history of indigenous solidarity and their fight for equality. The government authorization of dual flags is a testament to the mosaic of culture, ethnicity and history in Bolivian heritage, but also demonstrates how pre-Columbian and post-colonial society have attempted to coexist in contemporary times.

Twice the size of France, Bolivia is a land of great geographical diversity and has a long history of human settlement. The country is composed of three regions characterized by distinct geographies: the Andean region, consisting of the altiplano highlands and the most ancient civilizations, the sub-Andean region, composed of lush mountains and valleys, and el oriente, or, eastern lowlands, an expanse of grasslands and rainforests. The yungas, an Aymara word meaning “warm lands,” is a subregion of the sub-Andean region where coca has been cultivated since Inca times. Throughout my paper I will refer to the yungas of La Paz and Vandiola, two locations granted the status of “ancestral coca zones” based on their long history with its cultivation.

Bolivia has been referred to as “a prisoner of geography and a victim of historical adversity,” “a constantly changing and vital multi-ethnic society,” and as bearing “a melancholic history repeatedly tinged with tragedy.” At the core of these opinions is knowledge of Bolivia’s diverse indigenous demographic and its struggle with colonization. Though Bolivia’s present hardships originate from the confrontation between its native people and colonizers, its rich plurinational quality can be traced back much farther in history.

When Spanish conquerors arrived in the early 16th century, the Inca empire was suffering divisions and internal feuding, allowing Gonzalo Pizarro’s forces to overpower the Inca army of 40,000. Lasting from 1532 to 1809, the impending Spanish Colonial rule would forever change the cultural, economic, and political landscapes of Bolivia. Extractive mining became the focal point of the colonial economy, setting a precedent for Bolivia’s economic future and stimulating the exploitative encomienda and mita systems, used to secure forced tribute labor. The encomienda system granted adelantados (Spanish governors) and soldiers possession of land, the ability to employ indigenous labor, and the power to extract surplus through taxes and silver, essentially creating a semi-feudal institution of colonial control. The Catholic Church and its missionaries also played a substantial role in colonization; it emphatically promoted religious values that coincided with, and often worked alongside, the system of economic and political control systematized by the crown. Numerous indigenous uprisings and revolts, such as the most the “Great Rebellion” of Tupac Amaru, during which an estimated 100,000 perished, followed the dawn of Spanish rule. Unparalleled across the New World, Bolivian indigenous uprisings caused a crisis of colonial power and provoked a wave of revolutionary insurrections throughout South America.

Native rebellions for independence, coupled with the invasion of Napoleon Bonaparte’s army in Spain, created the ideal conditions for independence in Bolivia. In 1809, Bolivians proclaimed self-rule with the estab-
lishment of a popular citizens’ council (cabildo abierto) and a governing junta (junta tuitiva), making it one of the first colonies to rebel against Spain; it was also, though, one of the last to be liberated over a decade later. The initial Post-Independence era, lasting from 1825 to 1880, was rife with corruption, violence, and economic hardship. Military strongmen referred to as caudillos centralized authority regionally, using resources to secure feudal-like control of land and to suppress civil society organization. This period of sustained instability and competition for power set the postcolonial country’s first precedent of hybrid military-authoritarianism. The following era of Republican rule (1880-1930) arose from the War of the Pacific, during which Bolivia lost its coastal territory to Chile, discrediting the military and leading to the emergence of Bolivia’s first major political parties.22

The Chaco War (1932-1945), which was fought with Paraguay over the desolate Gran Chaco territory, led to a massive political mobilization that precipitated the onset of the 1952 National Revolution. Bolivia’s food shortage crisis, largely owed to the hacienda system—a colonial legacy of the encomienda system—made unfair land distribution pervasive. According to Herbert Klein, “the six percent of the landowners who owned one thousand hectares or more of land controlled fully 92 percent of all cultivated land.”24 The majority of citizens, as a result, were disillusioned by the endemic exclusion, inequality and corruption that plagued politics, and rallied behind the MNR’s (Revolutionary Nationalist Movement) calls for radical reform. On April 9, 1952, this “multiclass, multi-ideological” coalition launched their revolution, with the objectives of land reform, nationalization of mines, and universal suffrage. Though these goals were met, within a decade factionalism within the party and military forces of counterrevolution challenged the consolidation of the revolution.27

A military coup in 1971 launched Hugo Banzer Suarez’s career as dictator. Banzer modeled his rule after Brazil’s military, aligning policies with U.S. interests and the free market while maintaining a “repressive stability.”28 By 1977, revolts of the peasantry, miners, and textile workers mounted pressure for democracy, but “a chronic pattern of underdevelopment” and extreme national debt prevented its crystallization.29 In 1985, Victor Paz Estenssoro began his presidency of authoritarian democracy, aligning with United States policy to eradicate coca.30

In 1985, Victor Paz Estenssoro began his presidency of authoritarian democracy, aligning with United States policy to eradicate coca. Regular labor stoppages pressured thousands of unemployed miners to relocate from the altiplano to the subtropics in an effort to join the coca economy, and as the cultivation of coca increased, Estenssoro responded with the Law on the Regulation of Coca and Controlled Substances.31 Also known as Law 1008, the decree made cultivation of coca illegal in regions that were not “ancestral” growing zones (areas legally designated as historic coca-growing zones) and in places that were “surplus areas in transition,” where coca was eradicated and replaced. Bolivian coca researcher David Pereira Herrera notes that “[i]t has been widely known that since the pre-Columbian, colonial and republican times of Bolivia’s history, there have been several coca leaf producing areas known as ‘ancestral zones,’ precisely because of their constant productive activity.”22 Under Law 1008, Coca grown outside of these designated areas became subject to forced eradication, facilitated by the militarization of the drug war and the guidance of U.S. advisors. Escalating violence led to severe human rights abuses perpetrated by militarized forces as the cocaine crisis continued to worsen. During Banzer’s 1997-2001 term as president, he solidified the eradication of coca with a “zero coca” policy outlined in his Dignity Plan.33 Violent confrontations between the military and coca growers resulted in soaring popularity for pro-coca presidential candidate Evo Morales, running with the MAS (Movement Toward Socialism) political party.34

Morales made attractive promises to end U.S.-backed eradication, support pro-indigenous policy, and nationalize privatized businesses, but lost the 2002 presidential race to former president Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, who ran on a platform of pro-market reforms and a continued, though moderated, eradication of coca.35 During his presidency, Sánchez authorized the U.S Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) to relaunch its coca extermination program, agreeing to $20 million of U.S. aid in exchange for 12,500 acres of coca to be eradicated by March 1994. Cocaleros were outraged and effectively organized protests and marches using their network of unions. The turn of the century witnessed civilian demand for de-privatization of domestic resources, as seen in the Water War (1999-2000) and Gas War (2003), foretelling future demands to decolonize and outright reject foreign influence. Postero writes that, “born out of a history of resistance to colonial racism, and developed in collective struggles [...] [indigenous activism has crystallized], as poor and Indian Bolivian citizens have engaged with the democratic promises and exclusions of neoliberal multiculturelism.”37 Morales’s unique position as an indigenous man and cocalero put him at the forefront of social movement organization in Bolivia at the turn of the twenty-first century.
In December 2005, Evo Morales was elected as the first indigenous president of Bolivia in a historic landslide election. At the time, he was a renowned coca activist and president of the Six Federations of the Tropic of Cochabamba (Seis Federaciones del Trópico de Cochabamba), a cocalero union located primarily in the Chapare that is responsible for producing coca using industrialized means outside of designated ancestral regions. Thus, he benefited from a solid consistency of robust horizontal social movements—composed of coca growers, labor unions, and indigenous campesinos—all of whom were applying pressure for progressive change.

Morales had been a vocal activist since 1981 after witnessing soldiers beat and burn to death a cocalero accused of cocaine trafficking. Angered by U.S. pressure for violent eradication and aid toward militarization, he refused the $2,500 for each acre eradicated offered to the cocaleros in his union. Instead, he continued to campaign for the right to grow coca, became increasingly active in his local coca union, and proclaimed “Long live coca! Death to the Yankees!” (“Causachun coca! Wañuchun yanquis!”). Between 1984 and 1991, coca unions, or sindicatos, commenced a string of protests against forced eradication by organizing mass demonstrations and marches, hunger strikes, roadblocks, and the occupation of government buildings, during which cocaleros were regularly beaten and killed.

In 1992, Morales embarked on international trips in support of the coca cause. In one speech, he declared “I am not a drug trafficker. I am a coca grower. I cultivate the coca leaf, which is a natural product. I do not refine [it into] cocaine, and neither cocaine nor drugs have ever been part of the Andean culture.” He presented the coca leaf to the world as a symbol of Bolivian indigenous culture under threat by U.S. neocolonial oppression. Prevailing policies, he claimed, were not reflective of a true democracy; the majority of Bolivians wanted to decriminalize coca, and cocaleros were victims of the elite class who implemented neoliberal reforms to align with foreign interests. Morales's language of decolonization and reclamation of control over Bolivian land, history, and politics propelled him into office, though his current coca policies have not been an exact reflection of these ideas.

The idea of “decolonization” was and is the backbone of Morales's emancipatory political platform. It is the outcome of Bolivia’s struggles with colonialism and imperialism, followed by decades of neoliberal economic measures and military dictatorships and connotes liberation from existing, oppressive hegemonies. Rosaleen Howard identifies decolonization in the contemporary period as “[involving] overthrowing the exploitative, unjust, and discriminatory order that persisted beyond independence from Spain and into the twentieth century; it evokes a range of related meanings from liberation to emancipation, democracy, and autonomy.” To have an indigenous cocalero and union leader rise up from a grassroots activist to the President of Bolivia inspired hope for change across the country. To echo Benjamin Dangl, “the fact that Morales could be elected on a socialist, anti-imperialist platform after roughly 20 years of neoliberal economics was historic.” Evo Morales adopted a campesino identity as part of his political platform, utilizing widely recognized symbols of Bolivian heritage (such as coca) to convey his message of decolonization and indigenous pride. The socio-cultural symbolism of Pachamama is often referred to by the Morales administration to forge a national collective indigenous identity.

Morales's “post-neoliberal socialist agenda” was principally distinguished through the new constitution adopted in 2009, officially renaming Bolivia the “Plurinational State of Bolivia.” Article 9 Section 1 asserts the need “to construct a just and harmonious society, built on decolonization [...] in order to strengthen the Pluri-National identities.” The Constitution explicitly states the goal of the Bolivian state to decolonize in all spheres, taking care to specifically include reference to natural resources, land, indigenous sovereignty, and coca. Chapter Seven, titled “Biodiversity, Coca, Protected Areas and Forest Resources,” states that:

[t]he State protects the native and ancestral coca as cultural patrimony, as a renewable natural resource of the biodiversity of Bolivia, and as a factor of social unity. In its natural state coca is not a narcotic. The revaluation, production, sale and industrialization of coca shall be governed by law (Art. 384).

Morales codified Bolivia's plurinational identity and the protection of ancestral coca into the Constitution, emphasizing the country's sovereignty over efforts to cultivate the leaf.

One of Morales's first coca policies was the Strategy to Combat Drug Trafficking and the Revaluation of the Coca Leaf, which included the four pillars of “interdiction, integral development, prevention, and social control” to expand cultivation in some areas and eradicate in others. The government initiated the eradication of surplus coca in areas such as the ancestral regions of the Yungas of La Paz and the Yungas of Cochabamba, including the towns of Vandiola, Arepucho, Icuna, and Machu Yungas. Military confrontations provoked resistance from local cocaleros, leading to numerous injuries and deaths which government authorities excluded from
official reports about the new eradication policy. In August 2006, two cocaleros in the Yungas of Vandiola were killed defending their coca, and President Morales attempted to discredit the murdered cocaleros by labeling them “drug traffickers”—a strategy the administration has continued to employ.

In 2006, the Morales government approved the Fight Against Drug Trafficking Strategy and the Reappraisal of the Coca Leaf 2007-2010, establishing the National Council for the Revaluation, Production, Commercialization and Industrialization of the Coca Leaf (CONCOA), the first institution responsible for implementing the public policy of coca. The new Council carried out a policy simultaneously promoting the cultivation of the coca leaf and the vigorous reduction of the crop as well. The 2011-2015 Strategy to Combat Drug Trafficking and Reduction of Excess Cultivation of the Coca Leaf proposed capping coca production by region: 12,000 hectares in the Yungas region, 7,000 in the Chapare, and 1,000 in La Paz, far exceeding the European Union's estimate of the 14,705 hectares needed to fulfill domestic, traditional consumption of coca leaves. UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) officials have reported that 95 percent of coca grown in the Chapare is not used for traditional consumption, though it is unknown where it goes. The 2011-2015 plan created two legal instruments—The General Law of Coca and the General Law of Controlled Substances—to regulate the production, commercialization and control of coca growing. UNODC estimates that 20,400 hectares of coca were produced in 2014, an 11 percent decrease from the year prior, resulting from Bolivia’s program of eradication. The Vice Ministry for Social Defense (VMSD) was given the mandate to regulate coca production and fight narcotrafficking, and over 2,000 personnel assigned to the Joint Eradication Task Force were charged with manually eradicating coca plants.

In October 2013, military authorities apprehended twelve peasants from the municipality Apolo, in the Franz Tamayo Province of La Paz, whose crops were located within a previously legally recognized traditional area. The detainees were presented as “drug traffickers” directly responsible for “a cowardly ambush ... coldly planned” during which two soldiers were killed. Morales’ coca policy centers upon a combination of control and eradication, Morales's inciting violent confrontation between cocaleros and government authorities since his first term as President.

Adopted in 2015, Bolivia's most recent program of coca control is the 2016-2020 Strategy to Combat Drug Trafficking and Reduction of Excess Cultivation of Coca, which designates coca cultivation zones different from those of Law 1008 and mandates a legal cultivation limit per area. The new General Law of Coca passed in March 2017, pursuing similar strategies of controlled cultivation, has provoked controversy and intense dialogue. The law legalizes more hectares in the Chapare than in traditional cultivation areas and eliminates the legal distinction of “ancestral areas” of coca cultivation. Upon successful legalization of 22,000 hectares of coca through the new law, President Evo Morales said: “It is time to bury Law 1008, which seeks to bury the coca leaf in Bolivia.”

THE FLAWS OF LAW 906

Evo Morales speaks highly of Law 906, exclaiming that the new law “guarantees the cultivation of the coca leaf for life for the producers of the Yungas of La Paz and the Tropic of Cochabamba,” adding that there should not be “envy” between the two groups of cocaleros. The foreseen jealousy arises from opposition of ancestral coca growers to Article 16, legalizing 14,300 hectares of authorized growing land for the Yungas of La Paz, and 7,700 hectares for the department of Cochabamba, home to Morales's coca union and major constituency. Law 1008, passed in 1988, recognized only 12,000 hectares of the coca crop in the Yungas, an area designated legal to cultivate due to its codified status as an “ancestral zone.”

Morales's new law effectively eliminates the definition of the ancestral region, putting it in direct conflict with Article 384 of the Bolivian Constitution, which states that: the State protects indigenous and ancestral coca as a cultural heritage, a renewable natural resource of Bolivia’s biodiversity and as a factor of social cohesion; in its natural state it is not narcotic. Instead, the law approves cultivation in the provinces of Cochabamba, Chapare, Tiraque, and Carrasco, where coca has not been historically cultivated. By eliminating the distinction between ancestral and other zones, coca grown in regions once known as ancestral zones is no longer protected from forced eradication. In this way, Morales's policies have supported a program of regulated legalization in the Chapare, aiding in the fundamental transformation of the coca policy landscape. Morales is attempting to appease foreign concerns surrounding legalized coca, while addressing the needs of his primary constituents in the Chapare.

Internal colonization established a marked difference between the cocaleros of the ancestral zones versus the Chapare. The cocaleros of the Chapare are ex-miners who left their homes in Potosí, La Paz, and
El Alto in the altiplano during the late twentieth century to find jobs growing coca illicitly.60 Communities of cocaleros in ancestral zones, by contrast, have lived and worked there for generations, making coca cultivation inseparable from their heritage and livelihoods.61 By eliminating the designation of an ancestral zone, the Morales administration is also eliminating its extensive history, ultimately rewriting and replacing it.62

Law 906 does not distinguish between coca produced traditionally and coca produced with agrochemicals. The government has financed studies about certain aspects of coca, including research “discovering” it to be necessary for the government to regulate coca, but there have been no studies about the use of agrochemicals or the prevalence of narcotrafficking.63 The new law does not reflect indigenous interests in the ancestral zones, and instead demonstrates that the Morales administration has little motivation to advocate for coca policies that align with the indigenous value of vivir bien.

There is currently no market exclusively for organic coca. Though there are two legal markets located in La Paz and Chapare, when the coca is prepared to be sold, the leaves of organic and chemicalized coca are mixed.64 There is no incentive to create legal definitions differentiating between the two because the price of the industrialized coca would drop dramatically in the domestic market.65 In this sense, Morales is catering to his political constituency of cocaleros in the Chapare instead of responding to calls for traditional coca production.

The significance of producing coca organically also lies in the cultural relevance of coca. Silvia Cruz Huanca, the current leader of the union of Producers of the Coca Leaf of Los Yungas of Vandiola, elaborates on this by saying:

[o]rganic production is not only for coca, but for all the products we consume, especially for health and for Mother Earth. I believe that organic coca extends life to humans and avoids many diseases that are currently appearing mainly because of the use of chemicals in production at all levels. Also as producers of the oldest production area ancestral coca we know that pesticides, fungicides, and herbicides were never used in the past. Coca is a plant that existed 20 centuries before Christ, and at that time there were no chemicals. As producers of an ancestral zone, we recover its uses and customs.66

Law 906 supports the overall trend of increased coca cultivation in the Chapare region versus traditional growing zones. At the turn of the twentieth century, the department of La Paz was producing 97 percent of Bolivia’s coca, while the Chapare was exporting a mere 1 percent.67 By 2000, the Chapare would be producing over 80 percent of the total national production, likely a result of the booming cocaine industry.68 The new law legalizes an additional 7,700 hectares of coca growing territory in the Cochabamba department, home to the Chapare, while the Yungas has only seen a 2,300 hectare increase.69 The majority of Bolivians I interviewed agree that industrialized coca should be eradicated because this coca is likely leaving the pueblo and exported for the drug trade, a sentiment echoed by the United Nations.70

Coca policy is complicated indeed; there are several different coca unions, a variety of growing methods employed, and established loyalties to specific coca communities. Law 906 exhibits the inconsistencies between Evo Morales’s rhetoric of coca as a sacred symbol and the legislation passed during his administration that favors agroindustrial growers. Morales has struggled to balance indigenous values, continued support from his political constituency in the Chapare, and demand for coca by the drug trade, demonstrated by the legal departure from his rhetoric.

EXCLUSION FROM DISCOURSE
The Morales administration has excluded ancestral cocaleros from dialogue surrounding coca policy, conflicting with his promise to increase access to government for underrepresented Bolivians. Using its agenda-setting power, the government decides what kind of discussion it welcomes from campesinos and cocaleros, and which groups it wants to silence through exclusion from the political arena.71 Coca unions representing cocaleros from traditional zones across Bolivia have three major demands for the Morales administration: recognition of their coca as ancestral, a special market for organic coca, and attention to their demands and basic needs. However, without the capacity to formally vocalize their needs and demands, cocalero communities in traditional areas do not have the discursive space to express their opinions on coca legislation.

Exclusion of cocaleros from coca discourse is also a common occurrence under the Morales administration. For instance, Don Gregorio Cari, leader of the ancestral cocalero community of Apolo, was
removed by federal police from a public forum on coca policy in 2012. The power dynamic between the state and small coca growing communities has allowed for the Morales administration to dominate coca discourse. Since ancestral cocaleros are not given a forum to voice their opinions, they resort to organizing blockades and orchestrating public demonstrations to demand visibility. Groups that criticize the government are intentionally overlooked and marginalized, displaying a colonial legacy of silencing the voices of government opposition.72

Poor treatment of cocaleros is reminiscent of Morales's actions toward indigenous opposition during the 2011 Isiboro Sécure Indigenous Territory and National Park (TIPNIS) conflict, provoked by Morales's plans to build a highway through indigenous territory and protected land. The government did not consult local indigenous organizations about the development plans, and furthermore, the communities were eventually told by Morales that the road would be built regardless of their petitions.73 Earlier in 2017, Morales remarked that “those who coordinate with the ‘right’ are the enemies of the coca leaf,” directed at the leaders of ADEPCOCA (Asociación Departamental de Productores de Coca), the union of more than 35,000 cocaleros in the Yungas of La Paz, who have filed a petition through the Plurinational Constitutional Court against Article 16 of Law 906.74 Similar to the TIPNIS conflict, the Morales government has ignored the opposition of cocaleros to current coca legislation.

Carlos Crespo, a professor in the School of Social Sciences at the University of San Simon in Cochabamba, believes that “the history of Bolivia is based on the exclusion of the Indian and Evo’s policies are reproducing this logic.”75 In places such as the Apolo and Vandiola regions, communities feel abandoned.76 They receive little or no assistance with education or health, while the Chapare receives more aid.77 Alex Silva, a past leader of a union of cocaleros in the Yungas of Vandiola, echoed these sentiments when describing that “in [his community], there is little electricity, there are poor people, young people who are not studying.”78 Less attention is paid to the small ancestral zones because they are farther removed, and do not compose Evo Morales’s political electorate. According to Gregorio Cari, the current government never talks about them or the problems they face; “[i]t is a cocaine government that is eradicating coca, and traditional communities are forced to defend their crops.”79

The rhetorical foundation of Morales’s political platform was the inclusion of indigenous and cocalero voices in the legislative process, but this has not been the reality during his presidency. In the context of coca policy, it is apparent that the government is following a similar exclusionary path as past presidents.

VIOLENT CONFRONTATION

Clashes between ancestral cocaleros and militarized government forces have been a recurring consequence of Morales’s coca policies since his entry into office. The first death under his administration occurred in the Yungas of Vandiola two months after his inauguration in August 2006.80 The Joint Task Force, composed of members of the Armed Forces and Bolivian police, murdered two cocaleros in the Yungas, to which Morales responded by claiming they were killed for being drug traffickers who resisted forced eradication.81 Paradoxically, the administration enforces a policy of both controlled legalization and forced eradication. Campaigns of forced eradication have roots in violent programs supported by the United States in the late twentieth century, as well as even earlier connections to colonialism. Direct confrontation between government forces and cocaleros is an expected result of militarized forced eradication of “surplus” coca.

After Evo Morales was elected president, around 1,000 coca growers from the Chapare expanded their cultivation into traditional zones, to which Morales responded with vocal support of a forced eradication policy.82 Eradication of coca increased from 20,200 hectares to 23,100 hectares from 2015 to 2016.83 Rhetoric of nationalization has allowed the government to selectively eradicate coca in traditional areas such as the Yungas of Vandiola, since they are in the vicinity of National Parks or “protected areas.”84 The hectares of eradicated coca over the last 10 years adds up to 86,378 hectares, or an average of 8,637 hectares per year, but when combining the eradication and the amount of coca cultivation increased per year, there has only been a total of 7,700 hectares of coca eradicated in the past ten years.85 There is a controlled tension between coca eradication and expansion; each year the cocaleros plant the same amount, more or less, of the coca plants previously eradicated.

Eradication policies have had harmful effects on not only cocaleros, but entire cocalero communities in the Yungas. Gregorio Cari recalled to me an instance when the military entered his community in Apolo at 3 o’clock in the morning on May 23, 2013 to eradicate coca.86 The forces entered and burned houses, raped...
women, and committed other violations of human rights. From May to October, sustained forced eradication could not be stopped because the community did not have money to bribe members of the army. On the October 18th and 19th, Cari was imprisoned because he was the leader of the community opposition.87 Gregorio Cari described 2013 as a very difficult year for him and his community because he lost his home and could not afford to educate his son. He currently has 26 companions who, all but one, are incarcerated in cities other than La Paz. The community does not have the money to help release them, nor do they have the finances to travel to the jails.88 He also has comrades in the community who are under house arrest and cannot leave Apolo, which Cari noted as being a common punishment for people who speak out against government coca policy.

Following the passage of Law 906, there has been renewed violence in the Isiboro Sécure Indigenous Territory and National Park (TIPNIS), an area of land no longer protected from development. In 2011, TIPNIS was granted special status defending it from development projects under Law 180, also known as the law of “intangibility.”89 Article 5 of the law prohibited illegal human settlements in the National Park, stating that occupations carried out by persons other than the holders of the territory is grounds for eviction with intervention of the police force.90 The opposition says that this repeal “not only [breaks] the harmonious relationship of the government with Mother Earth, but openly authorizes the premeditated and systematic genocide of the Chimán, Yuracaré, and Mojeño Trinitario peoples.”91 Law 969, the repeal act, has provoked activists and indigenous peoples to protest in the streets of La Paz, Cochabamba, Santa Cruz and Trinidad, because they believe the proposed highway development will encourage the expansion of coca cultivation, and deforesting 600 hectares of protected land.92 The law has also divided indigenous populations into factions in favor of and against the road, causing ruptures in communities. Morales’s plans for the construction of the road follows a broader pattern of developmental expansion into protected indigenous lands.

TIPNIS is situated in the Cochabamba and Beni departments, encompassing the Chapare and part of the Yungas ecoregion. Coca cultivation has begun to encroach onto TIPNIS land, and it is not the only protected national park that has seen coca cultivation trespass; in fact, Carrasco, Catapata, and Apolobamba national parks each produced more hectares of coca than Isiboro Secure in 2016. Coca as a cash crop is far more profitable than any other crop produced in Bolivia, with the average price per kilo at $7.80, further encouraging its illegal cultivation.93 Ovidio Teco, a local farmer of cacao from the northeast of TIPNIS, said to reporters that “[the government] lied, nothing more. After the protest march we thought the park would not be touched. This situation is all lies.”94 He claims that it is not the road itself that is the problem, but what accompanies it—coca producers will settle on their land, clearing it of trees.95 Other opponents of the law repeal, such as Magali V. Copa Pabón, an Aymara constitutional lawyer, claim that Law 969 represents a new phase of colonial power exercised over indigenous peoples and nations, and that the government is going down a path of “greater authoritarianism, abuse of power, and use of violence.”96

It has been debated whether or not the indigenous groups were properly informed and given the opportunity to voice their opinions on the development of the road. Initially, the Office of the Ombudsman in place by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) claimed that the Bolivian government did not provide a prior consultation with TIPNIS residents. The Office has since changed its mind, saying that the majority of TIPNIS residents agreed on the development of the road.97 Throughout my time in Bolivia, I often came across signs and advertisements paid for by the National Park Service reading “Desarrollo + Conservación = Vivir Bien,” or “Development + Conservation = Living Well.” The slogan embodies the policy dilemma facing the Morales administration in that they are attempting to promote the implementation of two opposing approaches to land-use and protection. In development and in coca policy, the administration is assuming multiple, contradictory policy positions, leading to violent clashes between campesinos and the military.

Instances of eradication in ancestral areas following the initial passage of Law 906 were all too common. On May 4, 2017, military forces entered the Apolo region once again. Government officials eradicated more than six hectares of coca in the communities of Tierra Blanca, Miraflories, and Copacabana, affecting 120 families and a total of about 1000 people.98 In early July 2017, a confrontation between police and cocaleros from five municipalities occurred at a blockade, leading to the death of a young man.99 Cocaleros from Poconá, Pojo, Tiraque, Colomi, and Cocapata—
all small municipalities in Cochabamba—demanded that the Minister of Rural Development, César Cocarico, allot them 700 hectares of coca, an amount that according to leaders had previously been agreed upon with Evo Morales’s coca union, but had been targeted for forced eradication.100 Cocaleros, campesinos, and community members are demanding justice for the death, and for respect from government officials.101

In late October 2017, clashes between Bolivian police and residents of Chamaca, a municipality in La Paz, resulted in eleven cocaleros arrested and an undetermined number of community members injured.102 The altercation arose from the forced eradication of coca that had supposedly been agreed upon by the government, cocaleros, and ADEPCOCA leadership. The Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, José Luis Quiroga, commented that cocaleros appeared in the early morning and tried to take over the police camp, later dispersed with tear gas.103 However, the cocaleros claimed that soldiers entered their houses violently, and eradicated legal coca. Franklin Gutiérrez, leader of the cocaleros of Chamaca and president of ADEPCOCA, said that he was unaware of any agreement with the government for a military camp to be settled there, adding that the location where forced eradication took place was indeed a legal area to grow coca.104 Gutiérrez noted to reporters, “The government should attack the coca fields of the national parks and the Chapare, which are the places where illegal coca grows. In the Yungas we have traditional coca, but the government abuses the peasants.”105

Current coca policy has resulted in the conceptualization of a “new dynamics of exclusion and marginalization, social division, and violent confrontation.”106 In an interview with Theo Roncken, a researcher for Accion Andina, a cocalero noted that the primary motivating factor of state violence is maintaining political order.107 Cocalero communities are questioning the legitimacy of Morales’s policies, and as a result, authorities have resorted to intimidation and violence. Roncken asks, “Is it a priority of the Bolivian common good to eradicate coca crops in traditional areas and simultaneously expand in the lowlands with the growing use of agrochemicals?”108 The ancestral cocalero unions are organized and prepared to list their demands, but the Morales’s administration has not extended them the opportunity to do so. Given the current trend of state violence toward cocaleros, it is hard to imagine fulfillment of these demands under existing conditions.

NARCOTRAFFICKING

The least publicly recognized dimension of coca policy, but perhaps the most formative, remains the global drug trade. A mechanism of state violence, narcotrafficking is intricately tied to the forces of capitalism and the economy of Bolivia. Most of the coca and cocaine produced in Bolivia is exported, establishing drug-related exports as a critical source of income for the country.109 Coca policies that cater to the Chapare region, reinforcing the simultaneous, paradoxical expansion and eradication of coca, exemplify Bolivia’s complex relationship to the drug trade and its own national values.

It is unclear where the majority of coca in the Chapare ends up, leading many to believe that it is used in cocaine production. In an interview with Carlos Crespo, he describes the new law as corrupt because even the government minister acknowledges that more than 90 percent is exported for trafficking. While there are 17,000 tons of coca produced in the Chapare, the legal market only receives 1,800 tons, meaning that 89 percent of the coca produced in Chapare is not entering the legal market.110 In the Yungas of La Paz, on the other hand, 20,600 tons are produced and 20,091 enter the legal market.111 According to economist Carlos Hoffman, Morales claims that controlled legalization of coca is for traditional coca consumption, but the government will collect an estimated two million dollars in taxes from trafficked coca through the new law.112 Around 58% of the total coca produced in Bolivia is legal while the rest goes toward the drug trade. Producing only legal coca would be prohibitively expensive; it currently costs 500 dollars per cato, or 10 dollars per kilo, but if fully legalized, the price would drop greatly.113 Therefore, it is in the best interest of the Morales administration to control the legalization of coca because cocaleros will leave the market if there is a dramatic price decrease.

A majority of the information I gathered about drug trafficking in Bolivia is from interviews I conducted with Gloria Rose Mary Achá, lawyer and member of Acción Andina, a Cochabamba-based organization dedicated to research of pertinent social issues in Bolivia. Figure 5 is a drug trafficking pyramid she drew to help visualize the components of Bolivian drug trafficking. Only 2 percent of the cocaine produced with Bolivian coca goes towards “micro-trafficking,” or domestic drug trafficking; the rest of the cocaine is exported to neighboring countries to be sold and
traded, making it a major source of income. A widely known problem with drug trafficking in relation to social control is that only the most visible groups are arrested, including groups of poor and young individuals who are mules, sellers, and consumers. The Bolivian government has not concentrated its resources on stopping drug trafficking at its origin: the top of the pyramid. Morales has endorsed minor arrests instead of targeting drug cartels because it is a way to superficially “address” drug trafficking without ending the economically advantageous export of cocaine. Rose Mary Achá and I visited San Sebastian prison in Cochabamba, a small colonial-era building, where nearly 900 men are imprisoned in poor conditions for minor drug-related crimes. Some do not have money for prison cells or food and are forced to sleep on the floors. The criminalization of marginalized youth is characteristic of neoliberal countries with a war on drugs, where strategies of social control are used to direct violence at poor segments of the population.

During the colonial era, the governing criollo elite adopted an anti-narcotics policy as a means of targeting the cultural beliefs and economic vitality of indigenous people. Similar policies have continued to be reinforced through mechanisms of internal colonization and neocolonialism. In the late 20th century, the governing elite imposed U.S.-backed anti-coca legislation that authorized forced coca eradication, largely punishing poor indigenous communities. Bolivia underwent a symbolic change when Morales was elected, as poor, marginalized campesinos and indigenous people felt politically represented and included. The policies of Evo Morales include symbolic themes of Mother Earth and indigenous pride, but also neoliberal development and support for the drug trade. A majority of the Bolivians I interviewed believe that the Morales administration has co-opted the symbol of the coca leaf, and that the government manipulates the historic relationship between coca and ritual in its social control policies.

Bolivia’s economic reliance on the drug trade ties the country to global forces of capitalism, despite Morales’s rhetoric of nationalization. The War on Drugs, a product of neoimperialism in Bolivia, caters to the desires of rich cartels and encourages neoliberal programs of social control to criminalize poor populations. Law 906 strengthens the ties between Bolivia and the cocaine trade because it legally expands the coca growing area of the Chapare. Reminiscent of legislation passed in the late twentieth century, it encourages the militarization of government forces and forced eradication of coca through mechanisms of social control. Law 906 reflects the flaws of the Morales administration, which emphasizes inclusion and indigenous values but codifies neoliberal principles. The exclusion, violent confrontation, and reinforcing of the drug trade, precipitated by the passage of this new law, exhibit this underlying tension.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES
NATIONALISM, SUBJECTIVITY, AND COLONIALITY
Postcolonial theory provides a framework for analysis of Bolivian coca policy as a site of neocolonial state violence. Conceptions of postcolonial nationalist thought and subjectivity, as well as the colonial impact on Bolivian selfhood, aid in the examination of Morales’s rhetoric of decolonization combined with his support for neoliberal legislation. Scholars such as Zavaleta Mercado, Tapia Mealla, and Aníbal Quijano connect the powers of colonialism and capitalism, problematizing how decolonization is imagined and carried out. I also will refer to theories surrounding structural state violence to assist my analysis of why Bolivia continues to oppress traditional cocaleros despite Evo Morales’s indigenous ethnicity and platform of decolonization.

Partha Chatterjee’s account of nationalist thought following the independence of colonial states is useful when examining nationalism in Morales’s Bolivia. The three steps Chatterjee emphasizes, the “moment of departure,” “moment of maneuver,” and “moment of arrival,” describe the nationalist thought process postcolonial nations undergo. Chatterjee outlines how nationalism assumes colonial values due to its origins in colonial society, eventually becoming a component of state discourse. While there are aspects of colonialism that nationalism explicitly seeks to rectify with self-determination over territory and resources, there are other factors, such as the power of indigenous elite classes or colonial institutions, that are not challenged by nationalist rhetoric. The Westerner and the native have separate domains, and there is an understanding that this difference subordinates the position of the native.

Frantz Fanon’s ideas of postcolonial subjectivity complement Chatterjee’s argument that colonial values are deeply entrenched in both the minds and institutions of postcolonial states and societies. He echoes Chatterjee’s claim that during the struggle for liberation, there is a moment when the native intellectual
rejects Western values because they are “worthless simply because they have nothing to do with the concrete conflict in which [their] people are engaged.” Yet his work on the violence of decolonization positions the national bourgeoisie of newly independent states as a class supportive of neocolonialism. Upon liberation, native intellectuals restore pride in the national culture as a means of rehabilitation and building hope in the future. Natives begin to recover their pre-colonial past that colonizers were previously intent on destroying through epistemic and physical violence. But the psychological trauma of oppression lingers on. Fanon’s approach considers the long-term implications of the colonization of the mind, examining why the national bourgeoisie of the postcolonial state has difficulty negotiating its identity. Though there are forces of independence in motion in the newly postcolonial state, there are also mechanisms of continued coloniality. Fanon argues that the national middle class identifies with the Western bourgeoisie, and takes on the role of intermediary: “[the role of the middle class] consists, prosaically, of being the transmission line between the nation and a capitalism, rampant though camouflaged, which today puts on the mask of neocolonialism.” While the native elite class is recovering native identity, it is also solidifying ties to capitalism, as seen in the example of Evo Morales’s Bolivia. The legacy of the colonial period continues through the class inequality of native peoples and the elite classes’ embrace of capitalism and its social relations. Despite this, Fanon argues that the process of decolonization brings capitalism and neocolonialism into question, because there is a new possibility for a fundamental transformation towards anti-colonial options for political and economic systems.

The theory of colonización interna, or internal colonialism, as introduced by Pablo Gonzalez Casanova, reflects the tension between coloniality and nationalism in postcolonial states. He posits that colonial values are present in the phenomenon of subjectivity formation and the institutions of newly independent societies. Internal colonization is destined to repeat itself after the fall of regimes or political independence due to the interconnectedness of colonizing and colonized forces. Ruling classes preserve their relationship to minority ethnic groups while the continued embrace of capitalism promises enthusiasm for the terms “progress,” “development,” and “modernity”—the same concepts that justified colonization of Bolivia hundreds of years ago. At the same time that Morales and Bolivia’s ruling class have worked to strengthen its relation to indigenous groups, they have also prioritized state-centric power and capitalistic endeavors.

Mignolo writes that “it may have been the end of the colonial period (like 1947 was for India), but it was not the end of coloniality and of coloniality of power” in Latin America. In Latin America, nation-building was in the hands of the powerful Creole elite, whose very existence was based in the process of decolonization from colonial powers; it was this elite class that reproduced colonial values and encouraged internal colonialism in relation to indigenous groups. The independence of states, especially in Latin America, was a rearticulation of the coloniality of power through newly established institutional bases. Though legal and political changes have taken place during the transition from colonialism, the “structure of power” continues to be organized around the colonial structure.

Although there are cycles of liberalism and populism in Bolivia, colonial structures remain in the stratification of society and in the mechanisms of structural violence and domination. Enduring colonial governance structures are observed in Bolivia through the exclusion of marginalized voices and violence toward poor campesino communities, such as those in ancestral regions. The official discourse on coca emphasizes a nationalized shift towards self-determination, but existing governmental structures have hampered these objectives for marginalized groups. Bolivian philosopher and political scientist Luis Tapia Mealla writes that although there is a coexistence of different cultures and authorities in the neoliberal state, not all voices are articulated because there are some that are not recognized or lack access to mechanisms of democracy. The plurinational nature of the Bolivian demographic makes its situation more complex because there are a variety of loyalties to different native groups. There is support for the reform of the nation-state toward economic and legal pluralism, but there is also Aymara nationalism present in Morales and his main constituency which likely drives his decision-making as well. In the beginning of Morales’s leadership in the 1990’s, the cocalero movement shifted from “fully peasantist” discourse to clearly indigenist.

Bolivian theorist René Zavaleta Mercado’s notion of sociedad abigarrada, or, diversified society, refers to the disarticulated overlapping of various types.
of societies, including historical periods, modes of production, and forms of government, through the processes of colonial domination and capitalism. Capitalist social structures coexist alongside pre-colonial political and social forms, though certain socio-economic formations (such as capitalism) dominate over others and rearticulate previous patterns in an economically “functional” and “productive” way. Tapia Mealla also considers Bolivia to be multi-societal, with internal borders and exclusions established in the model of the modern liberal state as a product of colonization. This multi-social condition is categorized by the basic recognition of the autonomy of different peoples, but the central state remains unchanged and maintains the elemental structures of a colonial government.

Tapia Mealla characterizes the neoliberal multicultural democracy in Bolivia as attempting to paradoxically decolonize under the multi-social condition; people of diverse cultures are considered inferior to the federal government, contradicting Morales’s rhetorical support of indigenous autonomy. Mealla uses Zavaleta’s sociedad abigarrada to frame his definition of social motley by writing that, “the overlapping of diverse types of society that coexist in a disjointed way, establishing relationships of domination and distortion of some over others.” Bolivia’s state and society are an amalgamation of precolonial and postcolonial ideas and institutions, creating an array of complicated relationships. Bolivia’s shared yet opposing value system consisting of both indigenous and Western beliefs creates the conditions for paradoxical coca policies.

These socioeconomic structures continue to generate inequality into the 21st century. Mealla claims that as long as there is capitalism, it will be increasingly difficult to dismantle inequality entirely, due to the fact that states need to develop more land, resources, and labor opportunities. The MAS party simultaneously encourages national development and the expansion of capitalism, yet it would be difficult to finance the plurinational state without nationalization. Quijano argues that the democratization of society is a necessary condition in order for it to successfully nationalize, but in neocolonial states this is impossible. He believes that because the coloniality of power is based on the use of race as an instrument of domination, the postcolonial state is not able to properly, or fairly, nationalize. In this way, capitalist modernization is a foundational component of structural inequality in the Bolivian state, directly connecting the postcolonial state to forces of neo-colonialism and internal colonialism.

The concept of hybridity in the context of postcolonial subjects is of relevance to my analysis of Evo Morales and his administration, in that it speaks to the complexity of subjectivity formation in postcolonial subjects. Similar to Zavaleta Mercado’s concept of sociedad abigarrada present in Bolivian institutions, the process of subjectivity formation blends indigenous and colonial values as well. Homi Bhabha refers to the hybrid identity as a “third space” in which traces of other meanings and discourses merge to create new culturally negotiated spaces for identity and a place where internalized colonization is apparent. From this approach, we can see that histories, values, and meanings can be opposing forces but also components of the same subjectivity. Similarly, Achille Mbembe argues that the postcolonial subject has several fluid identities that it mobilizes at a single time and are constantly evolving. It is not surprising, then, that Morales’s own subjectivity is negotiating competing value systems, emphasized by the divergence between his rhetoric and policies. Tapia Mealla eloquently claims:

The consideration of the diversity of stories within a social phenomenon makes it possible to think about the problem of intersubjectivity of a way that should not only consider individual and collective subjectivities within the same cultural matrix, but also considers the confrontation of collective subjectivities of diverse cultural matrix.

Postcolonial identities are thereby in constant states of evolution and negotiation on both the individual and collective scales. The process of subjectivity formation occurring on a national scale through which Western and indigenous values are mixed, is similar to that of Morales himself. Hybridity speaks to the complexity of postcolonial subjectivity; this negotiation of traditional and colonial value systems underlies the paradoxical coca policies in Bolivia.

Theories of nationalism, subjectivity, and coloniality aid in establishing a connection between Law 906, Evo Morales, and broader postcolonial processes. Similar to Zavaleta Mercado’s conception of sociedad abigarrada, the new law has components of indigenous values as well as of neoliberal ideas of eradicating surplus coca crops. Ideas of the coloniality of power and the persistence of colonial values through state institutions, as introduced by Mbembe, Mignolo, Quijano and Tapia Mealla, are also present in the
The law was drafted by excluding the voices of cocaleros from ancestral regions and entirely removes the designation of ancestral zone, eliminating the discursive space previously granted to cocaleros in these regions. Violent clashes between the military and cocaleros are also reminiscent of colonial violence toward indigenous peoples. State institutions that were adopted during the period of independence from colonialism, and the form of nationalism that developed, assumed the colonial values of capitalism and elite social classes. Chatterjee’s idea of nationalism and Pablo González Casanova’s concept of internal colonialism speak to how Law 906 assumes colonial values such as the exclusion of cocalero voices, outright violence, and forced eradication of coca.

The postcolonial concept of subjective hybridity is interesting in the context of Evo Morales and his administration, in that we are able to observe a blend of indigenous and colonial values in their policies. Though Law 906 does represent further legalization of coca and coca growing area, it more benefits Morales’s political constituency and the foreign demand for coca leaves for narcotrafficking than ancestral cocaleros. Indigenous and colonial values are components of Morales’s subjectivity and are often mobilized simultaneously, leading to such paradoxical policy measures. The tension present in Law 906 between national and foreign interests is reflective of Morales’s constant negotiation between opposing value systems existent in his subjectivity.

In summary, the theories above help put the case of Bolivian coca policy into conversation with established theories of postcolonial institutions and the production of selfhood. Chatterjee’s theory of accepting the “material” in postcolonial nationalism, Fanon’s idea of the dominance of the bourgeoisie in postcolonial society, and Bhabha’s ideas of hybrid subjectivity development help to frame Evo Morales and Bolivian society as a complex blend of colonial and indigenous values. It would be impossible to separate the identity and nationalism existent in Morales’s Bolivia from the colonial history it is seeking liberation from. This interpretation of subjectivity formation extends to the larger Bolivian public as well, whose selfhoods are also complex blends of indigenous and colonial values. The national bourgeoisie and Bolivian governmental institutions, with founding power originating from colonialism, have upheld their status by deploying both colonial values and indigenous ones, consciously and unconsciously.

Postcolonial theory also helps us conceptually solidify the intimate relationship between colonialism and capitalism. Contemporary versions of colonialism, such as neoliberalism and neocolonialism, have allowed colonial values to persist in Bolivian society. The state continues to launch racist campaigns of violence against marginalized communities due to its institutionalization of colonial principles, Morales’s embrace of neoliberal economic policies encourages and justifies these campaigns. Morales’s violent coca policy is a point of convergence for all of these issues; the hybrid subjectivity of Morales (as well as other Bolivians) is faced with institutionalized colonial values and an embrace of global capitalism, an inherently violent economic system.

DISCUSSION
To broaden the discussion about Morales’s political and social policies, as well as suggest possibilities for alternative socio-political paths Bolivia and other indigenous states can take towards decolonization, I will place my case about coca policy into conversation with arguments presented by Nancy Postero in her recent book *The Indigenous State: Race, Politics, and Performance in Plurinational Bolivia*, Marisol de la Cadena’s *Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice Across Andean Worlds*, and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s *Assembly*. Postero’s text focuses on Morales’s relationship with indigenous communities and the meaning of indigeneity, while de la Cadena examines how ontological difference in modern Peru frames its multiplex of social and political understandings. Hardt and Negri’s text provides a framework for imagining forms of modern social movement organization that could support national decolonization.

In the next section, I will use Postero’s analysis of Evo Morales’s complicated relationship to indigenous groups as a means to examine the similar alliance between Morales and cocaleros, followed by a discussion of how de la Cadena’s book provides insight into potential alternative paths postcolonial indigenous states can take to carry out the process of mental and physical decolonization. From there I will segue into a discussion of David Blaney’s critique of dependency theory, to conclude with an application of Hardt and Negri’s calls for action presented in Assembly. Current literature in the fields of indigenous politics, international relations theory and social movement theory aid in the contextualization of Bolivian coca policy and reveal its broader implications in the realm of decolo-
nization.

THE INDIGENOUS STATE

Postero establishes the basis for her analysis of Morales’s relationship to indigenous communities and indigeneity by reminding her readers that Morales promised to inaugurate a “cultural democratic revolution” as president. While it is likely that Morales believed his own words when stating that Bolivia’s “communitarian capacity” was something the world could learn from, his treatment of indigenous peoples more closely resembled a weak attempt to incorporate all Bolivian voices. Postero’s work seeks to answer several questions about the current political realities of Bolivia: What does decolonization mean? How has the Morales administration instituted this idea, and has it fulfilled its promises? What socio-political alternatives might an indigenous state produce? Similar to my analysis pitting Morales’s coca policy against his rhetoric of decolonization, Postero places Morales’s Bolivia at the forefront of conversation surrounding decolonization in postcolonial indigenous states, raising similar questions about the possibility of success in decolonizing liberal states.

Postero explores why Bolivia has yet to achieve its dream of decolonization by examining how the Bolivian indigenous state remains fundamentally liberal. Similar to my analysis of the politicization of the symbol of the coca leaf, Postero argues that Morales invokes “indigeneity” through performances of a state-controlled version of indigenous culture that legitimizes state power. She also raises the issue of suppressed indigenous local autonomy rights and state support for development projects despite indigenous disagreement. There are four central sites of contestation that she approaches, including: the fluid meaning of indigeneity, the multiple definitions of decolonization, what alternatives an indigenous state could produce, and the current political struggles in Bolivia. For the purposes of my discussion, I will elaborate on the first two areas she addresses. Postero’s analysis of these sites through the lens of indigenous issues parallels the paradoxes about identity, state institutions, and decolonization that I present in my argument about coca policy.

One of Postero’s main arguments is that indigeneity in Bolivia has been altered from being a site of emancipation to one of liberal democracy-building. In recent years, inclusion in Bolivian social and political life has taken place in terms of class, rather than ethnicity, and Morales has focused his discourse of “economic liberation”—a blend of anti-neoliberalism with development—on the new indigenous middle class. Not all indigenous people share these values, as many communities still wish to reassert their local sovereignty and oppose liberalism. Postero references Robert Albro, who focuses on indigenous cultural policy in Latin America and claims that Morales’s strength as a presidential candidate derived from his ability to bridge “local, collective, and culture-based indigenous communities and identities, on the one hand, and an urban pluralist recognition of indigenous heritage not tied to specific localities, on the other.” Also critical to Morales’s reconceptualization of indigenismo, or indigeneity, are state-sponsored performances of indigenous cultural rituals. Though Morales does emphasize indigenous pride, performances such as symbolic collective marriages give the state the opportunity to appropriate and enact customs to domesticate them, reformulating indigenismo into an essentialized notion of a prideful, yet obedient, Indian. Postero frames indigeneity as a “relational field of governance, subjectivities, and knowledges,” meaning that the cultural performances put on by the Morales administration are also key discursive sites that play a role in forming a government-approved indigenous national identity. She notes that instead of promoting a variety of knowledge forms or epistemologies, national performances of indigeneity act as a mechanism of state-making and establishing a pan-indigenous identity not separate from the Bolivian state, or MAS. As both an indigenous and liberal state, these issues raise questions about whether or not Morales is truly able to advance revolutionary politics or decolonization.

The concerns raised in Postero’s discussion of indigeneity are not dissimilar to those presented in my analysis of current coca policy. The first resemblance lies in Morales’s identity. Morales ran on a political platform emphasizing his identity as both an indigenous man and a coca union leader, establishing a strong constituency composed of both groups. At the same time that he reaffirmed the importance of indigenous pride and increased political opportunities, he also promised the legalization of coca. It became clear early on in Morales’s presidency that the boundaries of distinction between different indigenous communities and different groups of cocaleros were blurring, as the administration made clear which type of indigenous person or cocalero would be accepted by the new government.
Postero quotes Anna Tsing when saying that “powerful frames for indigeneity are also spaces for disagreement. Not everyone can fit into these frames.”\textsuperscript{152} The same argument holds for cocaleros, in that some are traditional growers while others relocated to the Chapare in the late 20th century to grow coca industrially. Though Morales has sought to categorize all cocaleros and types of coca under a singular definition—as we have seen by the removal of the designation of “ancestral zone”—it would be impossible to encompass them all. The creation of pan-identities is almost always exclusionary, especially in Morales’s case, as he specifically represents the Aymara indigenous group and the cocaleros of the Chapare. Indigenous activists from the lowlands claim that the MAS has only embraced plurinationalism rhetorically, but in its policies has reinforced a liberal, centralized state.\textsuperscript{153} For instance, in the past the MAS party has vetoed proposals for indigenous autonomy and established strict limitations on indigenous self-determination.\textsuperscript{154} Morales has co-opted the terms, histories, and meanings of indigeneity and coca to reformulate their fluid meanings in an economically and politically beneficial manner to the state.

Morales’s poor treatment of certain indigenous communities echoes in his bias against ancestral cocaleros. In the same vein as his nationalist, anti-neo-colonial coca rhetoric, Morales denounced capitalism as being the source of climate change in 2009 and 2010 at two different climate summits.\textsuperscript{155} He proposed a model for sustainable development that aligned with indigenous values and respect of Pachamama, but this has proven to be a mostly symbolic, rhetorical maneuver, because the government continues to exploit its natural resources and invite transnational corporations to develop Bolivian land. The legalization of coca has followed a similar path: Morales has stressed the cultural and traditional importance of coca in Bolivia, though he has instead pursued the expansion of industrial coca grown using agrochemicals. Morales has been able to use language surrounding the relationship between legalizing coca and decolonization to further the coca growing abilities of his fellow cocaleros in the Chapare. Similarly, the government has linked natural resource extraction to decolonization by combining language of vivir bien and economic development, such as in The Law of Mother Earth and Integral Development for Vivir Bien.\textsuperscript{156} By doing so, Morales effectively silences groups outside of the government who are searching for alternatives to development that better align with indigenous values.

The recent passage of the General Law of Coca acts to censor ancestral cocaleros who want government recognition and acknowledgement of their sole legal right to grow coca. In co-opting language surrounding indigenous values and traditions, Morales defines what should be included in its definition; this is what Postero defines as “partial connectedness”—the ability for terms to mean “radically different things to the various actors who use them […] it is this ambiguity, this ability to project various meanings onto them, that makes them such useful tools.”\textsuperscript{157} Utilized by the Morales’s administration, partial connectedness allows for Morales to rhetorically advocate for indigenous values by defining what they actually are, such as in the case of coca use or The Law of the Mother Earth. Jean Comaroff defines resistance as a “struggle for the possession of the sign,” or an attempt to reclaim meanings from the government, which we have seen by indigenous and cocalero groups opposing Morales. Postero also refers to Elizabeth Povinelli’s understanding of “indigeneity” as an “ethical substance,” or a shared and contestable idea around which subjects, including the state, can frame particular opinions.\textsuperscript{158} The concepts and identities presented by the Morales administration are fluid, and have the potential of being framed differently in varying contexts depending on the will of the speaker.

Postero dedicates a portion of her argument to the explanation of Morales’s various interpretations of decolonization, framing her commentary through the understanding that “the discourse of decolonization is a way of representing or orienting these efforts, by drawing attention to past injustices and the forms of knowledge, power, and subjectivities that persist into the contemporary era.”\textsuperscript{159} She contends that the central paradox of Morales’s efforts to decolonize is in the existing tension between Morales’s “desire to overturn coloniality and all its legacies and the use of liberal state mechanisms to do so.”\textsuperscript{160} It is impossible to completely decolonize, especially if the government is empowering liberal ideology by further consolidating state power. In this way, she argues that decolonization can be a form of “policing”—this echoes Jacques Rancière’s idea that laws can secure both participation and exclusion.\textsuperscript{161} For instance, the government has a focus on the reversal of neoliberalism but remains “enmeshed in an extractivist capitalist development model that adversely affects indigenous communities.”\textsuperscript{162} The state has the capability to employ rhetoric of decol-
onization to solidify its own power, transforming decolonization from a process inclusive of alternative epistemologies to one recognizing government-backed multiculturalism.

In returning to a point I made earlier, the cultural democratic revolution Morales has sought to spearhead paradoxically relies on a Western liberal framework. According to Postero, MAS chose to “embrace a model of the state that it felt would give it as much power as possible to accomplish its goals, while protecting its political hegemony,” meaning that indigenous autonomy has been simultaneously limited by the Morales administration. Autonomy is only granted to municipalities that are majority indigenous, and follow procedures legally approved by the federal government. The same tensions exist at the core of Bolivia’s development model, which attempts to incorporate and merge neoliberal economic conceptions with indigenous visions of vivir bien, as well as Morales’s coca policy. He has articulated a policy of “controlled legalization,” but it caters to his political constituency and the cocaine trade more than the legal growers of ancestral coca. The majority of Morales’s policies represent the paradox of dually embracing neoliberal and indigenous values.

ALTERNATIVE ONTOLOGIES

Marisol de la Cadena’s book Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice Across Andean Worlds, based on fieldwork she carried out in the Peruvian Andes with two renowned traditional healers, Mariano Turpo and his son, Nazario Turpo, is helpful when considering the future of decolonization in Bolivia. Since Peru is a country socially, economically, and politically similar to Bolivia, the themes de la Cadena raises surrounding indigenous politics and the national shift from 1950 socialism to the neoliberal multiculturalism of the 2000s parallels issues raised by Postero. Both authors draw on the phrase “partial connectedness” to describe how language and ways of life can be translated; although they exist as different and distinct, they are “partially and asymmetrically connected.” Across epistemic and hegemonic divides, societies have varying understandings of realities, so how do overlapping modes of understanding interpret different, yet intertwined, worlds? She claims that alternative ways of looking at reality should not be dismissed or celebrated, but rather, be an intentional and accepted means of ethnography.

De la Cadena recalls her experiences with Mariano and Nazario as being, at various times, moments that taught her about differences in communication and understanding. The medicinal knowledge and practice they offered were political and ethical obligations to both human and nonhumans. De la Cadena grasped that “[their] communication did not depend on sharing single, clearly identical notions — theirs, mine, or a third new one. [They] shared conversations across different onto-epistemic formations.” In keeping with this, she notes that there were limits to their mutual understandings, as well as ideas that eclipsed their abilities to translate. In communicating their work and livelihoods, the Turpo’s and de la Cadena had to accept that their communication did not rely on the clear overlapping of understandings, nor the creation of equivalent notions. De la Cadena notes that:

[Their] ways of knowing, practicing, and making our distinct worlds—[their] worldings, or ways of making worlds—had been “circuited” together and shared practices for centuries; however, they had not become one. In the circuit, some practices have become subordinate, of course, but they have not disappeared into those that became dominant, nor did they merge into a single and simple hybrid.

Essential to de la Cadena’s ability to learn about the work of Mariano and Nazario was her ability to explore difference in a shared setting, where limits to each other’s understandings were overcome by mutual acceptance of alternative ontologies.

Their work together revealed to her that “the historical ontology of modern knowledge” is exclusionary of “unreal” understandings that fall outside of its domain. She highlights that while equivocations—the misunderstandings that usually occur in communications across worlds—are an important part of anthropology, it is essential to take note of the concepts we use to think other concepts. For instance, Nazario’s versions of historical events more closely resemble the Western definition of “story,” also made evident by the two terms used to refer to myths by anthropologists: willakuy and kwintu. The Quechua term willakuy refers to the act of narrating a past event to make it present, through which the act itself is evidence of the event. In contrast, kwintu is used to define a narration of events that could or could not have occurred; but this does not revoke its eventfulness, even though the story is not necessarily classified
under modern history. The discussion of these two terms helps frame the issue of assumed onto-epistemic sameness, in that indigenous Andean understandings of history are not always relatable to Western conceptions of history.

The divergence of Western and Andean understandings is also apparent in imaginings of the political sphere. According to de la Cadena, the Andes region is a historical formation of indigenous and Spanish culture which hybridize to create the third space of the mestizo. Andean nation-states, such as Peru and Bolivia, have implemented policies that, whether intentionally or not, address the plurality of domains. Instead of being inter-related, these realms of identity are intra-related, and respective policies acknowledge the various parts of the whole of society. This acknowledgement of plurality aligns with neoliberal interpretations of multiculturalism in that there is symbolic recognition of the parts of the whole, but not necessarily the implementation of ontologically inclusive policies that could threaten state sovereignty.

The Western conception of what is ahistorical, or a “non-event,” affects how indigenous leaders and knowledge are treated in the political sphere. While the leadership of campesinos and indigenous intellectuals has been accepted because they struggle for better socio-economic positions, which falls within the boundaries of modern politics, medicinal healers are far less widely acknowledged. “Non-modern” natives are not compatible with modern politics, meaning that Mariano’s political activities have been largely ignored. Chakrabarty’s term asymmetric ignorance refers to instances such as this, when those recognized as the sovereign leaders of a country do not acknowledge projects or leaders associated with socialist movements. By not recognizing such entities, the state effectively eliminates the socio-political possibilities that are not imagined by modern liberal democracies, thus defining what is legitimate political leadership. Present political forces shape the knowledge of the masses, leading people to ignore even what they see; the “implicit organization of the world and its inhabitants” is largely based on a dominant ontology reproduced by the modern state. Acknowledgement of plurality would encourage the visibility of traditional Andean socio-political beliefs that fall outside of the form of the modern liberal state, thus threatening the supremacy of the current system.

The ontological division established by the West between humans and nature sets a correspond-
er the relational condition of difference—they disrupt the boundaries of what the modern state has identified as historical or real, transforming the “limit.”

De la Cadena’s insight into the significance of onto-epistemic understandings assists us in reimagining the process of decolonization in Bolivia as it relates to a pluri-national identity and the sovereignty of its indigenous communities. To echo Viveiros de Castro, we need to “understand that understandings are necessarily not the same, and that they are not related to imaginary ways of ‘seeing the world’ but to the real worlds that are being seen.” Accepting that there are concepts and terms that are not possible to translate without losing part of their true interpretation, will be a step towards this. What has been defined as underdevelopment is a term based in Western ideals, values, and visions. Political awareness of how differing ontologies shape realities could catalyze pro-coca policies in Bolivia that preserve its pluri-national identity and the autonomy of indigenous groups.

DEPENDENCY THEORY

David Blaney’s elaboration of dependency theory illustrates how Western ontologies have dominated those of other societies whose notions of development are considered unequal and different. Dependency theory and other theories surrounding the “development of underdevelopment” speak to the persistence of international power inequalities. In these developing and dependent countries, existing social structures reflect the paradoxes present under global capitalism; social dynamics represent external and internal influences, interests, and pressures. This paradox exists partly in the tension between the opposite logics of capitalism and of sovereignty. More specifically, in how developing states see global capitalism as a form of imperialism that frustrates efforts towards complete sovereignty. Put succinctly by Cardoso and Faletto, who succeed in describing Bolivia’s current predicament: the decision by local forces to rebel against colonialism and to create a nation implies an attempt to influence local history according to local values and interests. Economic links with external markets still impose limits to decisions and actions even after independence. The contradiction between the attempt to cope with the market situation in a politically autonomous way and the de facto situation of dependency characterize what is the specific ambiguity of nations where...
knowledge to counter oppressive systems with dominating ontologies. Blaney’s elaboration of dependency theory helps us to imagine how alternative ontologies can be harnessed by both local communities and peripheral economies to assert the legitimacy of their local values. A true expression of Bolivia’s pluri-national identity would be state recognition of the autonomy of local communities, as well as a form of national development that more closely aligns to Andean values of vivir bien and respect of coca, rather than an extractive economy that relies on accumulation by dispossession.

**SMASHING THE STATE**

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s Assembly aids in the conceptualization of a path towards true decolonization in Bolivia; they call for “strategy to the movements, tactics to the leadership,” modeled from the idea that social movements and political institutions can be interwoven in such a way that it eliminates the people’s need for political representatives.200 Hardt and Negri express dissatisfaction with populist political formations, stating that it is “the operation of a hegemonic power that constructs ‘the people’ as a unified figure, which it claims to represent.”201 While populist projects often recognize their origin in social movements, they always end up detaching themselves, explaining that political power is in a sphere other than the social and that state power is essential to political organization.202 In this manner, Evo Morales’s administration and the ideology of evismo are reflective of a populist formation that paradoxically speaks to both the power of the people and of the state.

Hardt and Negri outline their “calls and responses” to clearly communicate the steps for social movement success, including: a transformation of leadership through inversion of strategy and tactics; an invention of non-sovereign institutions that unite multiple subjectivities; a taking of power; re-appropriation of capital; and sustaining cooperative forms of social life. In response to these calls, Hardt and Negri contend for a need to investigate cooperative networks that animate social organization, emphasizing the “plural ontology of social being” and affirm the “common,” a collective of knowledge and space.203 The freedom, autonomy, and self-determination that “smashing the state” requires is only compatible with non-sovereign power, insofar as sovereignty was born of colonialism.204 Their idea of “smashing the state” means dismantling the gap between the rulers and the ruled; political and administrative institutions would be organized only as a means to organize the collective established from the bottom up.205 The pair argue that:

> [we] have other options, and, specifically, a non sovereign and truly democratic organization of society is possible. Instead of resurrecting the autonomy of the political, the political must flow back into and be reclaimed by the social: political rationality and political action can no longer be considered autonomous but always completely embedded in the circuits of social and economic life.206

Effective reform can only be a result of threatening ruling sovereign powers and institutions, forcing substantive transformation.207 For example, past struggles for decolonization, such as the Kurdish Liberation Movement of the mid-20th century, have successfully defined decolonization in non-sovereign terms.208 Abdullah Ocalan, a Kurdish nationalist leader, advocates a shift from national liberation, or sovereignty, to a form of democratic autonomy.209 Existing indigenous networks of organization can serve as a models for the establishment of non-sovereign institutions in Bolivia.

Private property, a foundational component of sovereignty, supports a “monopoly of access and decision-making,” warranting Hardt and Negri’s argument for preserving the common.210 Restoring the life of the commune is a focal point of their overall argument, insofar that it has the capacity to replace the centralized sovereign power bourgeois state.211 The creation of new and different institutions that focus attention on the protection of the commune and the collective would allow resistance against neocolonial and capitalist forces.

The production of subjectivity is a terrain of struggle full of potential for resistance.212 Hardt and Negri believe that the inversion of social movement strategy and tactics must begin through the process of subjection. In the case of Morales’s Bolivia, the reproduction of subjectivity in each new generation represents an opportunity for building a multitudinous subversive, social struggle. They note that subversive actions operate within a biopolitical terrain and serve as the basis of reconceptualizing political realism—the idea that power is a set of social relationships that hold the capacity for resistance, creation, and conflict.213 Relationships then become political through the power of the multitude, and this biopolitical transformation has the opportunity to imagine new forms of social organization.214 The sociocultural tools for this trans-
formation already reside in Bolivians, who have a long history indigenous autonomous organization and networks for social movements; in order to harness this potential power, there first needs to be a unifying process of subject creation across different, or “partially connected” ontologies.

The multitude will counter capitalism’s privatization of social life by constructing a common, relying on horizontal democratic and autonomous administration. Transformed democratic institutions and their newly developed capacities will then administer the common, and support an expression of societal plurality. The counterpower that the multitude claims represents an altermodernity, an ontology that opposes dominant historical narratives. Hardt and Negri note that modern examples of this type of resistance are seen in the Zapatistas of Chiapas, the Occupy movements of 2011, and in Bolivian cocaleros, adding that the crucial element they share is the ability to build a strong, plural coalition. Counterpowers work to make a non-sovereign claim on power and establish institutions with this in mind, which is an important element of Hardt and Negri’s vision of social movement organization.

Current literature in the areas of indigenous politics, international relations theory, dependency theory, and social movement organization connect Morales’s Bolivia to future possibilities for reimagining governance. Postero’s book elaborates on the ways Morales has defined indigeneity for Bolivia, while de la Cadena approaches the subject of international relations through alternative worldings, a model inclusive of subaltern ontologies. Blaney’s conceptualization of dependency theory, along with Hardt and Negri’s understanding of horizontal social movement organization, aid in the imagining of a path towards decolonization in Bolivia.

CONCLUSION
Coca policy under Evo Morales is an engagingly multi-dimensional site through which to approach the broader issue of decolonization. As the first indigenous president of Bolivia, the country with the most indigenous people in South America, President Morales represents postcolonial hybridity in subjectivity and state institutions. The underlying tension present in Law 906 between national and foreign interests, and the resulting violence toward ancestral cocaleros, exhibits the tension between Morales’s rhetoric and policies resultant of the paradox of decolonizing in a liberal state framework.

My paper has sought to weave together qualitative research with theory and current literature to engage various disciplines and knowledge. Based on field work I conducted while in Bolivia, the project has roots in pedagogical research methodologies intent on creating discursive space in academia for historically marginalized voices. I applied the interviews to a framework of postcolonial theory, hoping to further contextualize coca policy in Bolivia and place it in conversation with scholarship in the areas of nationalism, subjectivity formation, and the coloniality of power. Next, I engaged my case with current literature in a variety of disciplines, including indigenous politics and international relations theory, to speak to broader Bolivian society and its future prospect of decolonization.

Bolivian indigenous values align well with the possibility of reorganizing national institutions around plural ontologies—a process of decolonization focused on the pluri-national nature of the collective. Nancy Postero quotes Fanon when saying that “decolonization is a continuing constituent process carried out by actors whose subjectivities are only formed in the process of struggling for revolutionary change.” Hardt and Negri echo this sentiment, emphasizing that prior to any power or institutional change, the multitude must unify through a process of subjectivity creation. The model of alternative ontologies presented by de la Cadena clarifies the sociopolitical significance of creating these understandings, while Postero’s analysis of indigenous politics and indigeneity provides insight into the complexity of Bolivia’s race relations. Bolivia has a number of qualities that make it a good candidate for an application of Hardt and Negri’s call to assemble and smash the state: its affinity for indigenous pride; public support for decolonizing policies; shared indigenous ontologies; and a history of social movement organization. If the Bolivian multitude were to unite on the basis of its indigenous ontologies and use its power in numbers to establish non-sovereign institutions, a process of decolonization unmarred by the forces of global capitalism (assuming there to be an autonomous, autocentric national economy as a consequence of indigenous assembly) would ensue.

I was also initially motivated to research coca because as my relationship to Bolivia deepened, so did my understanding of the cultural significance of coca. I remember being guided into the vast silver mines of Potosí with a handful of leaves packed into my jaw, and
more in my pockets to offer to El Tío, the lord of the underworld. When I had salmonella poisoning, my host family brewed me coca tea to soothe my stomach. In religious ceremonies honoring Pachamama, indigenous Andean priests offer Mother Earth coca leaves. Bolivians have a special, historic relationship to coca, placing even more relevance on the issue of coca regulation today. My field research surrounded reactions to Law 906 and served as the first component of my project, while the theory I applied upon returning to the United States supported those interviews. Born out of a desire to shed light on the realities of coca policy in Bolivia, my research expanded to become a deliberation on the future of decolonization and indigenous politics.

Philosopher Gilles Deleuze writes that, “[e]very institution imposes a series of models on our bodies, even in its involuntary structures, and offers our intelligence a sort of knowledge, a possibility of foresight as project,” echoing the significance of subjectivity formation in relation to reimagining institutions. If the understanding that only sovereign institutions are valid is challenged, Bolivia would be better equipped to pioneer a new form contemporary governance compatible with their national values. The site of coca allows us interrogate this possibility on a micro-scale, while the paradox of decolonizing within the model of the liberal state is the larger issue currently impacting Bolivian indigenous politics. If the multitude assembles, demanding political and economic autonomy through non-sovereign, plural institutions, Bolivia may effectively reimagine modern governance.
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In Buenos Aires, specific plans for this project proceeded from a conversation I had with Julián Varas, who told me to have a taxi drive me along the highway that cuts through the center of Villa 31 so that I could witness public policy underway in the city’s most emblematic slum. From that point onward, friends and colleagues in Argentina put me in touch with those who would become a part of this study. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Pablo Vitale, María Mercedes di Virgilio, María Cristina Cravino, Kelly Olmos, and Danilo Rossi. Intent on sharing their culture and work with me, these people helped ground this essay in the local context out of which Villa 31 has grown.

This essay is dedicated to my parents and Sebas.

ABSTRACT

In rapidly urbanizing communities of the Global South, residents of informal settlements confront the challenge of state efforts to integrate their communities into the broader city/state project. In this paper, I draw on ethnographic field research carried out from May-August 2017 and December 2017-January 2018 to analyze how state and non-state actors – such as residents, local cooperativas, and government employees – negotiate the social integration of Villa 31 in a context of increased state presence and capital being channeled toward building projects. This immersive approach to the study of the politics of integration uncovers how the state addresses the fundamental challenge
of gaining entry to Villa 31 necessary for carrying out public policy, catalyzes participation with residents, and seeks to generate compliance. By charting change from the perspective of community residents, I bring decisions made by diverse actors into sharp relief, exposing the power dynamics within Villa 31 that underpin human agency. I analyze these issues primarily through the prism of the Programa de Mejoramiento de Vivienda (PMV), which promises upgrades to existing homes in Villa 31 that are carried out by local cooperatives. Social tensions between state and non-state actors center on residents pursuing access to resources and opportunities (such as those provided by construction contracts), on the one hand, and the preservation of their individual and collective autonomy in defining their urban space, on the other. I also show how attempts to carry out such upgrades in Villa 31 are shaped by a system of political representation (consisting of delegados, referentes, and consejeros) that was formalized in 2010, previous policies that provided access to material resources, the commercialization of the informal housing market, and a legacy of political patronage.

*If today you wanted to carry out research using exact figures to determine trends and projections concerning Villa 31 of Retiro (population, poverty indices, unemployment, illiteracy, birth/mortality rates, delinquency, etc.), no consulting company or government agency could depict the real situation, as we know it, live it, suffer it, fight it, we who are its true owners.*

- Nelly Azul Benítez, resident of Villa 31, since circa 1970, Buenos Aires

“...And I threw myself in front of the tractor,” recalls Atena, the president of a local construction cooperative. When the government employed non-resident workers to carry out construction projects in the slum, she had to put these workers, and the government, in their place. A resident of the slum herself, Atena had told government officials they could employ outside companies on such projects only if residents, including her workers, were also given jobs. When she saw the privately-contracted company in her area of the slum—“tuk-a-toon, tuk-a-toon, with its huge tractor”—she intercepted. Standing in front of the tractor, she threatened the workers, “You guys don’t know who you’re messing with, get out, get out, get out! Get out or I’ll call!” By call she meant that she would summon her followers to back her up, who she assures would have responded at once. To signal her resolve, she shouted again, demanding a meeting with high-ranking government officials. When she finishes her story, she tosses her hands into the air and asks, “What are my workers supposed to do? How are they supposed to eat?”

In Argentina, as with elsewhere in Latin America, a pressing challenge of rapid urbanization has been the growth of informal settlements, where-in informal refers to “exceptions to the order of formal urbanization.” Villa 31, one of Buenos Aires’ oldest informal settlements, was first settled in the 1930s when the government began to lodge immigrants in sheds near the Port of Buenos Aires. Immigrants and railroad workers continued to arrive in the 1940s and 1950s. By the 1960s, the state began designing plans for expulsions and, under the military dictatorship of the 1970s dramatically reduced the population of Villa 31. Yet, following Argentina’s return to democracy in 1983, squatters began reoccupying Villa 31. As they constructed makeshift dwellings out of wood and tin, they challenged institutional norms, amassing the political power necessary for making collective demands to secure their right to space.

Today, Villa 31 is Buenos Aires’ most emblematic slum. Home to 43,290 people, it stretches across...
thirty-two hectares of federally-owned land paradoxically situated in Retiro, one of the city’s most affluent neighborhoods. The settlement is divided into ten sectors consisting of seventy-four manzanas (blocks), 8,502 homes and 13,015 families. Its residents are 51 percent Argentine, 25 percent Paraguayan, 13 percent Bolivian, 10 percent Peruvian; 1 percent of the population is from other countries.4 While Villa 31’s central location in the city and proximity to major transportation networks provide opportunities for economic growth, the settlement remains socially and spatially marginalized. The community suffers from frequent stigmatization in the media, discrimination by other parts of the city, a lack of streets connecting it to the city, inadequate and narrow internal streets, environmental and security risks, poor access to basic services, and precarious building structures.5

Residents of Villa 31 have relied on a system of informal agreements and survival tactics to make innovative advancements toward a better quality of life. Such progress includes the construction of homes out of concrete and brick, tapping into basic city services, such as electricity and cable, and improving access to water.4 Social activity has also led to local businesses, restaurants, and public spaces, such as soccer fields and parks, that are important to the local economy and culture of this community.

Policies over the last few decades have inched toward social and spatial integration, or improvements to the built environment and access to basic city services to promote development and inclusion.5 In 2009, Ley 3.343 (Law 3.343) was unanimously passed by the city legislature, calling for the social, economic, and spatial integration of Villa 31 into the rest of the city. Yet, until recently, a lack of coordination between the national and city governments had left Ley 3.343 largely unimplemented. However, after the former Jefe de Gobierno de CABA (Chief of Government of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires), Mauricio Macri, won the presidential elections in 2015, the national and city governments came under the same political party.6 In April of 2016, the recently formed center-right government announced plans to implement new policies—in line with Ley 3.343—to promote the social and spatial integration of Villa 31.7 The ambitious plan put forth by the Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires (CABA) includes site interventions, such as improvements to infrastructure, public spaces, and homes, as well as social programs designed to formalize economic activity and promote social development.8 Such improvements are being carried out by local construction cooperatives and construction companies contracted by the government. Under CABA, the Secretaría de Integración Social y Urbana (SECISYU) was created to implement these policies. Since 2016, SECISYU has emerged as an important actor in Villa 31. Working with residents to gain entry to urban space, government employees are charged with informing residents about policies slated to affect them and creating a nexus of participation, both of which are also used to gather information, calibrate, and implement policies. These policies present an opportunity for residents to improve their quality of life.

However, these policies are also highly contested by the local population of Villa 31, who see them as threatening to the status quo. Despite their challenges, existing homes, businesses, and infrastructure are products of the economic and political arrangements that have made them possible. These arrangements have created winners and losers who vie for opportunities to improve their quality of life. Since the early to mid-2000s,8 policies that simultaneously channel resources toward infrastructural improvements9 and

4 Residents have achieved, through political organization, access to better quality of water delivered in cisterns as well as, in some cases, been involved in carrying out improvements to infrastructure for running water.

5 The word used in Spanish to refer to this process (urbanización) would be directly translated as “urbanization.” To avoid confusion, I use “integration” throughout this essay, even when quoting respondents who used the term “urbanización/urbanizar” in interviews or participant observation.

6 In fact, all three levels of government in Argentina – national, provincial, and city – came under the same party, the Propuesta Republicano (PRO). The Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires has its own government.

7 Macri took office in December 2015; Social integration refers to the social inclusion of this community into the rest of the city (or, de-marginalization). Spatial integration refers to the inclusion of the urban built environment of this community into the rest of the city through upgrades to the built environment, such as improvements to housing, infrastructure, and parks.

8 Particularly since Argentina’s sovereign debt and economic crisis of 2001.

9 Such as improvements to streets, drainage sys-
create employment opportunities for local residents that work with maintenance and construction cooperatives in Villa 31 have helped some local political actors solidify their power within this community. Given the local political economy of carrying out improvements to the built environment, current integration policies lead to social tensions. They present important changes for residents of Villa 31, not only because they involve construction companies from outside carrying out improvements in a community long guarded by local actors, but also because they draw construction cooperatives from Villa 31 into new building projects geared toward mitigating precarious living conditions. Moreover, these policies present an opportunity for local actors to compete over the benefits of integration because they entail an increase in material and technical resources being channeled into Villa 31. Thus, recent integration policies provide an opportunity to study how local politics in informal settings shape residents’ responses to changes within their community.

Part of the government’s current integration project, the Programa de Mejoramiento de Vivenda (PMV, Home Improvement Program) was created in 2016 to mitigate precarious living conditions by providing upgrades to existing homes in Villa 31. The PMV is a significant policy development because it stands to benefit residents living in homes slated for improvements as well as presidents of local construction cooperatives and their workers, who have been contracted by the government to carry out the upgrades. The PMV provides incentives to construction cooperatives, who were not previously engaged in carrying out improvements to existing homes. Since its rollout in 2016, the PMV has helped the government carve out its presence within Villa 31. While some residents feel that it has improved their quality of life, it has also led to increased tension as local leaders move to capture resources and redistribute benefits among their followers. Tension has also arisen out of these construction cooperatives carrying out upgrades to existing homes in Villa 31 because many of them have limited or no experience in home construction.

Few works analyze the local politics within Villa 31. Rather, most arguments either address the structural factors that lead to urban informality—such as a lack of affordable housing and land as well as inadequate land use planning—or pit actors against the state to describe collective action and policy outcomes. This paper seeks to address this gap by focusing specifically on the internal politics of integration policies in Villa 31 through the prism of the PMV. Put another way, the primary research question that this study seeks to answer is, how do state and nonstate actors negotiate the integration of Villa 31 within the context of increasing state presence and resources being channeled toward upgrades to the built environment inside this community? Drawing on more than three months of ethnographic field research carried out during the summer and winter of 2017, I analyze government entry into this community, participation between local actors and government employees, and compliance on the part of residents, uncovering the perspective of construction cooperatives carrying out upgrades as well as residents living in homes slated for improvement. I also draw on ethnographic research to chart interactions in this community from the perspective of government employees.

This study illuminates urban politics in Latin American cities for several reasons. First, given its historical significance and central location in Buenos Aires, Villa 31 is emblematic of structural economic and institutional factors that have led to the growth of informal settlements, not only in Argentina, but throughout the region. Not only has Villa 31’s central location drawn migrants looking for economic opportunity, its situation in affluent neighborhoods of the city is a persistent reminder of how poverty and Development Bank, and the Secretaría de Integación Social y Urbana.

10 Such as working with construction cooperatives on infrastructural improvements or by working with cooperatives on waste recollection and maintenance of public spaces.
11 During the time of my field research construction cooperatives were involved in carrying out upgrades to existing homes under the PMV. In 2018, although still contracting local construction cooperatives, the government also began contracting outside construction companies to carry out upgrades to existing homes under the PMV. Prior to publishing this paper, I learned of these more recent developments from government employees and residents with whom I have maintained ongoing contact.
12 These details of the PMV are included in reports prepared by the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the Secretaría de Integración Social y Urbana.
13 For a succinct overview of these structural factors see the chapters 6 (on territorial planning in) and 8 (on housing) of the World Bank’s 2017 report, Leveraging the Potencial of Argentine Cities.
inequality come to define urban space, making these findings applicable to studies of politics and urban informality beyond Buenos Aires. Second, a study of the politics of integration, including those related to implementation of the PMV, can help us better understand similar programs underwritten by multilateral development banks (MDBs) elsewhere in the region and in the Global South. Finally, this study seeks to contribute to a growing body of knowledge about informality and integration, which are global phenomena.

My analysis focuses primarily on the PMV and the interactions between government employees, local cooperatives made up of residents, and those living in homes targeted for improvements. Drawing on participant observation and semi-structured interviews from May through August of 2017 and a two-week follow up trip made to Buenos Aires in December of 2017, I chart interactions among these actors surrounding improvements made to the built environment under the PMV, as they unfold. Where relevant for analysis, I also include other sites involving the actors under study, such as public parks, streets, government offices, and the periphery of Villa 31.

At the time of writing this essay, the government has been engaged in the forced removal of residents living on blocks of the settlement where a new highway is supposed to be built.7 The new highway is supposed to replace Autopista Illia, which currently cuts through the center of Villa 31. The goal of the government from the onset of the integration project was to relocate residents that fall within the proposed path of the new highway— as well as those that live beneath Autopista Illia—to newly-constructed homes, build a new highway that does not cut directly through the center of the settlement, and convert the old highway into a park. While this aspect of the integration project was not initially the focus of this essay, it is now essential to address it, not only because it represents a bargaining failure related to housing in Villa 31, but also because it presents an opportunity to compare compliance between those who have been offered housing improvements under the PMV and those the government seeks to relocate. To analyze these recent events, I draw on interviews and participant observation that I carried out with some of these residents that have been involved in talks with the government over relocation. Following the sections on entry and participation in the findings sections of this essay—that mainly focus on the PMV—the compliance section introduces data related to those who live beneath the existing highway and in the path of the proposed highway. In the conclusion, I reflect on these recent developments within the broader context of the PMV, housing, integration policies, and the norms of this community.

Making improvements to the built environment in Villa 31 is inherently political because effecting or resisting change in contested space requires power. As residents move to capture resources necessary for improving their quality of life, they simultaneously seek to preserve their individual and collective autonomy to define urban space. Meanwhile, as state actors interact with residents with the goal of bringing state institutions into Villa 31, the foothold they gain—couched in resources enticing to some local actors—stands to transform a longstanding way of life. While migration, economic and political instability, and inadequate access to housing create the preconditions for urban informality, collective action by residents who live under such conditions is crucial to their livelihoods. Whether pressuring the State to act on their behalf through collective demand-making or challenging the State through collective resistance, these local actors engage in political behavior that alters the course of State intervention in their community. Politicized as a means of survival, residents have the power to shape policies carried out in Villa 31 and to determine the distribution of resources and opportunities across their community.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Scholarly debates over urban integration and housing policies often focus on the participation of different actors in their design and implementation. In his seminal book, Housing By People, John F. C. Turner called for a self-help approach to housing in poor communities.8 While carrying out field research on housing in Peru in the 1960s and 1970s, Turner observed how the poor made shrewd decisions that improved their living situations. This led him to argue for “development from below,” wherein the government’s role would be reduced to ensuring “equitable access to resources which local communities and people cannot provide for themselves.”9 Part of the zeitgeist of the 1960s and 1970s, Turner’s work, alongside the work of his contemporaries, such as Charles Abrams and William Mangin, propelled integration policies spearheaded by the World Bank toward reducing the role of local governments in housing policy.10 Since then, scholarly debates on housing informality and integration policies in the developing world, and particularly in Latin
America, have emerged against a backdrop of military regimes, populist backlashes, democratization, economic crises, and urban growth. These broader trends have pushed scholarly literature and policies toward a "holistic, pluralist approach" to urban development centered on "participation of inhabitants," and "cooperation between public, civic, and private sectors."11

In a rapidly urbanizing world, the causes of informality and approaches to housing policy have drawn considerable attention in academia.14 Scholars have become attuned to different types and degrees of informality based on country-specific factors, such as levels of development, governing regimes, and policy approaches.15 In this vein, much of the current literature on housing informality in Latin America, and particularly in Argentina, tends to focus on the structural and institutional factors leading to urban informality as well as critiques of housing policies.16 This work builds on the assumption that informality is rooted in the absence of the state and institutional processes, or "defining the informal not by what is, but rather by what it is not."12 Such a framing focuses on a "lack of property titles or rental agreements" and a "breach of the rules, subdivision, use, occupation, and construction of the city, as well as the environmental requirements for the location of urban issues."13

Perhaps it is because of these theoretical assumptions that considerably less attention has been devoted to studying how local politics inside informal communities affect the way that housing policies are carried out. To be clear, this is not to say that considerable work has not been devoted to the study of collective action and its policy consequences. Collective action has been a key focal point in literature that addresses how poor communities gain access to land and resources necessary to improve their quality of life as well as studies that locate collective uprisings as key policy impetuses.17 Nor is it to say that ethnographic studies on the implementation of housing policy have not been carried out. In her qualitative study on El Programa de Mejoramiento de Vivienda in Colombia, Martha Inés Sierra Moncada employs ethnographic methods to trace the policy process and make recommendations on how such policies can be improved.14 In Argentina, studies have focused on both federal and city-government housing programs, including those carried out under the national Kirchner governments from 2003 to 2015 and the Macri government of the City of Buenos Aires from 2007 to 2015.18 However, there is scant literature that focuses on the local politics and political economy of integration policies from the perspective of the community that such policies most affect.

To address this gap, my study builds on this literature and other scholarly works that have advanced our understanding of local politics in informal urban settings. Asef Bayat’s concept of “quiet encroachment” is a useful starting point because it assumes that those living in informality, “squatters,” seek to achieve two goals: “redistribution of social goods and opportunities” and “attaining autonomy, both cultural and political, from the regulations, institutions, and discipline imposed by the state and by modern institutions.”19, 15 This framing emphasizes a central tension that motivates political behavior of actors endogenous to this community. Given the Argentine context of this study, Javier Auyero’s influential book, Poor People’s Politics, provides an essential slant to political behavior of my research subjects because it shows how a legacy of clientelist networks has led to the politicization of actors in informal settings as they exchange favors.16 What remains to be seen is how actors in Villa 31 behave within the context of increased resources being channeled toward their community through recent integration policies.

I also build on the concept of “spatial capital” geography of this paper.

14 Urbanization here refers to growth of cities and their populations.
15 For more on housing policy in Argentina see various works by Mercedes di Virgilio listed in the bibliography of this paper.
16 For more on housing policy and urban informality in Argentina see works by María Cristina Cravino and Denise Brikman listed in the bibliography of this paper.
17 For more on collective action in informal settlements in Argentina see works by María Cristina Cravino and Mercedes di Virgilio listed in the bibliography of this paper.
18 For more on these programs see Entre el arraigo y el desalojo: La Villa 31 de Retiro. Derecho a la ciudad, capital inmobiliario y gestión urbana by María Cristina Cravino.
19 While Bayat’s concept “quiet encroachment” —which he developed while studying informality in the Middle East— describes individual autonomy, his framework, as applied in this essay, refers to both individual and collective autonomy. This distinction is particularly important given the democratic context of Argentina.
used by scholars to describe changes to the built environment in informal settings. Typically, spatial capital identifies the “capacity of the population to give form to urban space,” such as when residents gain access to resources through collective demand-making and use such resources to improve the built environment. What has scarcely been explored is how local politics determine how access to such resources is distributed across an informal community.

If accumulated spatial capital is evidenced in a population's ability to give form to urban space in informal settings, it has also led to the commercialization of the informal housing market in Villa 31. In her master’s thesis in urban economy at Universidad Torcuato Di Tella, Raquel Kismer uncovered the growth of the informal housing market in Villa 31. Through interviews with local actors inside Villa 31, Kismer learned that construction projects had been carried out by residents with the express purpose of obtaining rents.18 This commercialization of the housing market, she concluded, would complicate attempts to carry out policies geared toward regularizing and improving living conditions due to the “interests of homeowners” and their “possible actions toward preventing a change to the status quo.”19 Following these hypotheses, lingering questions deal with how the commercialization of the informal housing market in Villa 31 affects current integration policies as residents vie for access to resources while also moving to safeguard investments they have made in the built environment.

María Cristina Cravino and Valeria Mutuberria Lazarini’s ethnographic research on construction cooperatives is essential for understanding how they function because it sheds light on their administration, organizational autonomy, and institutionalization.20 Cravino and Lazarini conclude that lasting challenges center on “access to resources and a lack of technical capacity” needed to build homes from the ground up.21

Finally, while less ambitious, my study aims to pick up the torch where Danilo Rossi left off with his undergraduate thesis on housing in Villa 31.22 While studying anthropology at Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA), Rossi spent three years carrying out ethnographic research on the local politics of infrastructural improvements involving construction cooperatives in Villa 31. He concluded that the local system of political representation that was established in 2010 as well as a “game of favors or coordination” between cooperatives and the city government not only contribute to a fraught political culture as cooperatives seek to maximize their influence over the local population, but also help determine how resources are distributed to cooperatives that carry out such improvements.23

Overall, scholarship on informality in the developing world leaves unaddressed important questions for ethnographers concerned with the local politics of urban integration. These questions center on the political economy of construction cooperatives that have been drawn into the policy process by multi-lateral development banks, local governments, and their own agency. The recent increase in resources channeled toward integration policies in Villa 31 provides an opportunity to study how residents in this informal setting respond to these policies. To chart policy implementation while it is underway, this paper focuses on government entry into this community, participation between local actors and government employees, and compliance on the part of residents. By analyzing entry, participation, and compliance from the perspective of this community, this paper seeks to uncover informality for what it is rather than what it is not.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

After arriving at the street market in front of Villa 31, I navigated toward a wall near vendors selling second-hand clothes, where I waited for someone sent by María to fetch me. With my back against the wall, I scoured the crowd before glancing downward. I peeked through the opening of my jacket at the interior pocket that held my phone. Still no response to the text I had sent María thirty minutes ago before boarding the train. María, one of my key interlocutors, is an elected referente and president of one of the cooperatives carrying out improvements to existing homes and public spaces in Villa 31. She moved to Villa 31 in 2005 from Jujuy, a province in the north of Argentina. With an even voice and square stature, she moves through Villa 31 with the confidence of someone who knows that it would take a force greater than their years of experience to topple them. I had met María a few days prior—still early on in my project—while walking through the settlement with a government employee. After initially mistaking me for a new employee working with the Secretaría de Integración Social y Urbana...
(SECISYU), María was quick to tell me that I needed to hear the perspective of the vecinos (residents), not just the government’s, regarding the implementation of public policies geared toward the integration of Villa 31. I obtained her cellphone number, and, via text, arranged to meet a few days later. She advised me that, due to the risk of being robbed or injured by walking through the settlement unaccompanied, I should text her when I was on my way and then wait at the entrance located near the bus terminal, where she would have someone meet me to escort me inside.

Over the course of three months, waiting by the wall at the entrance to Villa 31 for someone sent by María became a ritual. While I had initially hoped that this tedium would give way to my traversing Villa 31 alone, María and my other interlocutors insisted that they needed to look after me. As it turns out, waiting

21 One might argue that my interlocutors, including residents and government employees, were motivated by an opportunity to control the direction of my research, rather than protecting me from crime. Over the course of my fieldwork, I came to the conclusion that this notion would be misguided for several reasons. First, while presidents of cooperatives undoubtedly benefited from moving through the villa with a visible outsider from the United States (as many people throughout my study pointed out, being seen with me was a boost to their reputation and influence), they remained open to me talking to different actors, including those who presented possible threats. For example, they regularly delivered me to the offices of government actors. They also allowed me to interact with their employees and ask questions, often without monitoring my discussions with these actors. Moreover, I was transparent from the onset that I needed to conduct interviews with their employees and other actors without their oversight or presence to help ensure that people were comfortable being open with me (of course, my respondents sometimes demonstrated reticence about sharing their opinions about these powerful local actors, despite them not being present at the interview, which was a testament to the power of these local political actors). Presidents of cooperatives were also incredibly busy. They seemed more occupied with ensuring the progression of their own work under the PMV and related projects versus monitoring or controlling the direction of my research. Finally, it’s not uncommon for tourists to stumble into Villa 31 accidentally. On these occasions, I observed how local political actors behaved similarly with them for, and moving through the settlement with, different actors supported data from interviews and thus informed many of my conclusions about local politics inside Villa 31. Because of the significance of these interactions outside of strict interview settings, narrative description of my experiences in the settlement serves to more-completely communicate the origins of my findings. Not only did these experiences allow me to witness firsthand the challenges to entry, they provided an opportunity to observe and participate in interactions between and among this community and government actors. By oscillating between these different perspectives, I experienced local power dynamics at play. For example, when residents go out of their way to greet the president of a cooperative who happens to be walking by, it suggests that they respect her. Or when government employees make nervous jokes about how she has kept them in line throughout the project, it may suggest that smoothing relations with this powerful local actor is a key part of their job. Finally, waiting for María helped me empathize with her followers and employees, that is, those who wait and hope that her decisions, made on an uncertain path to opportunity, will ease their vulnerability, if not help them make progress toward their goals.

Ethnographic methods are best suited to the study of local politics in informal settings because, unlike quantitative and large N-scale studies frequently used in the study of politics, ethnography collapses the distance between the researcher and the subject as they did with me, ushering them or sending one of their followers to usher them safely out of the villa. My overwhelming feeling with María by the end of my research is that she wanted to look after me to make sure I was not harmed, and to foster a relationship with me because it was intriguing to her that she could engage with an odd researcher from the United States. On the other hand, with government employees, it’s important to underscore that the majority of my interactions were with employees, rather than higher-ranking officials. These employees invited me to critique government activity. They shared sentiments with me that clearly went against the dominant philosophy of government activity in Villa 31. They warned me regularly about security risks and shared their own stories about being robbed. But they did not try to control the direction of my study, rather, they encouraged me to move around freely and uncover the inner workings of the integration project—to shed light on it so it could be improved.
of inquiry. With respect to Villa 31, an ethnographic study of how state and nonstate actors negotiate upgrades to existing homes as part of the Programa de Mejoramiento de Vivienda (PMV) is essential for several reasons. First, by immersing oneself in the local social context of Villa 31, the researcher can observe how the State interacts with residents to address the fundamental challenge of gaining entry to Villa 31 necessary for carrying out public policy in informal settings. Residents’ control over the urban fabric of Villa 31 is directly related to the spatial capital—that is, the ability to give form to urban space accumulated over time. Indeed, leading up to current integration policies, residents carried out improvements to homes and infrastructure within Villa 31 and, in the process, gained access to resources, asserted their right to space, and defined local norms. I argue that such control by residents over urban space influences the decisions made by government employees. Thus, this study also presents an opportunity to interrogate participation as a function of decision-making by state and nonstate actors. On the one hand, participation may improve the quality of residents’ lives by providing them with access to resources and opportunities, while on the other, it may take on a tyrannical hue as state action erodes a culture of autonomous individual and collective decision-making in defining urban space. Both potential outcomes fit within the framework of compliance, which when studied from the perspective of those living and working in Villa 31 can lead to a better understanding of how residents in these types of settings are either motivated to comply (or not comply) with state intervention and the policies being carried out.

Fourth, an in-situ approach to the study of the politics of social integration in Villa 31 also promises to peer into the lives of those most affected by policies slated to include them. Perhaps too often, a monochromatic view of those living in precarious conditions produces a flat account of the protagonists of change, shortchanging explanations of the social nuance that underpins human agency. Charting change from the perspective of those under study brings decisions made by diverse actors into sharp relief, revealing how they respond strategically to the increased flow of capital into building projects in their neighborhood. This approach thus allows for a deeper understanding of social stratification and empowerment from the perspective of this community, whereby agents of change endogenous to Villa 31 emerge not only vis-à-vis the power of government actors, but also each other.22 This mode of analysis is particularly useful for uncovering how some stand to benefit from site interventions, while others are further marginalized. Fifth, because politics produces change to the built environment, a study of the social integration of Villa 31 should not be divorced from it—that is, this study also presents an opportunity to interrogate how changes to the built environment influence the behavior of those actors who inhabit it. Finally, this analysis of the process of access, participation, and compliance within the social and spatial contours of Villa 31 will contribute to our understanding of how recent policies oriented toward economic and social development—marked by increasing state presence and resources channeled toward building projects—have unfolded on the ground.

To address these research concerns, this study draws on fourteen weeks of field research carried out in Buenos Aires during the summer of 2017 and the winter of 2017-2018. From May through August 2017 and from December 2017 to January 2018, I spent a total of fifty days in Villa 31, during which time I conducted forty-two semi-structured interviews and engaged in participant observation.23 Of the forty-two interviews, twenty-four are with residents, ten are with government employees, and eight are with other actors, such as NGO’s, local academics, a police chief, and architects not employed by the government. Of the twenty-four interviews with residents, three are with presidents of local cooperatives, seven are with locally elected representatives in Villa 31, three are with residents living in recently improved homes, and two are with construction workers from the local cooperatives.24 I also carried out brief interviews with numerous actors I met, such as residents and government employees, while engaged in participant observation. Much of this data—including semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and brief interviews—was collected in and around activities occurring in Galpón 1, the block in the sector of Playón where the

22 Indeed, situating the concept of spatial capital within the local context of Villa 31 shows how it explains not only the distribution of resources to this community vis-à-vis formal sectors of society, but also the distribution of resources across the community itself, creating space for political contention as actors move to capture these resources.

23 I recorded all but four interviews.

24 Two are carried out with couples; one is carried out with an individual.
PMV was first rolled out. However, daily interactions with residents and government employees also regularly drew me into experiences across other sectors of Villa 31.

Participant observation put me at the center of daily life in and around Villa 31. I regularly traversed the area – always accompanied – on foot, by motorcycle, or in a gas-powered cart used to transport materials. I met with my key interlocutors to observe their daily activities, both related and unrelated to the integration project. I attended meetings between the government and residents, ate lunch in residents' homes, and spent time in the government's offices, located both inside and in front of Villa 31. I also participated in workshops that provide educational opportunities to youth in Villa 31, helped with political campaigns that my interlocutors were involved in, and met with government employees outside of Villa 31, in their homes, and at local bars in Buenos Aires. Together, these types of data amount to roughly 50 hours of audio recordings, 230 pages of typed field notes, 100 pages of handwritten field notes, 900 personally-taken photos, and 3 personally-taken videos. While in the field, I also collected fliers and marketing materials related to government policy and political campaigns. During interviews with government employees, I collected maps drawn by residents, flowcharts designed by government employees, and gained access to a host of other rich data related to the implementation of the PMV from 2015 to the present. Finally, during an interview with an architect that works with a local cooperative, I downloaded data, such as photos, plans, and documents, related to his work with the cooperative from 2011 through 2015. Beyond data collected through ethnographic methods, I also analyzed advocacy papers published by NGOs, legislation, government reports, and documents published by multilateral development banks.

Both in and out of the field, I faced overarching limitations and tradeoffs. In the field, these related to language and gaining access to the local population. While I had prepared extensively through coursework in Spanish leading up to my project, Spanish is not my native language. Thus, while I could engage fluently with my subjects, there were undoubtedly small gaps in my initial absorption of the local context. I tried to fill these gaps by gathering other sensory data, for example, by paying closer attention to tone and body language than I might have otherwise. As I spent more time with my subjects, I became more accustomed to the local vernacular and ways in which people in this community communicate. I also mitigated these challenges by explicitly following up with my subjects where glitches in communication seemed to hinder conclusions. Thus, this barrier has an important tradeoff worth mentioning, namely, that those unfamiliar with a given local context, including its language, bring a fresh lens to perception and analysis. Finally, I obtained verbal consent to record meetings and interviews, which contributed to a finer-grained approach when working with my data outside of the field.

Reliable access to the local population also proved to be an ongoing limitation. For one, despite meeting residents and arranging interviews regularly while in Villa 31, I was not able to interview renters displaced by the PMV, as their precarious living conditions made them less accessible. Moreover, those living in Villa 31 must often deal with unexpected challenges stemming from their precarious living situations. For example, if it rained my interviews were often cancelled because inclement weather provides an opportune setting for robberies and other crimes. I learned this only after waiting for interlocutors who, locked up in their homes, did not arrive to meet me at the front of the settlement. While these frustrations contributed to data on the structural challenges and decisions facing the poor, they also curtailed other field experiences, such as interviews or participant observation, that I could have otherwise engaged in.

Outside of the field, primary limitations related to language, transcription, and translation. Some ethnographers prefer to transcribe their own interviews, which arguably provides an opportunity to become more intimate with one's data. In my case, I chose to rely on transcription services so that I would have time to code, analyze, and write my senior essay within the span of two semesters, during which time I also

25 On June 16, 2017 I attended a campaign meeting for the political party that María’s cooperative is associated with. While there, I helped prepare campaign mail. On July 13, 2017, I painted a wall with the name of a candidate for the political party associated with María’s cooperative when members of the cooperative – worried that their writing would not be legible – asked me to.

26 For specific archival materials analyzed, see attached Bibliography.

27 Title of approved IRB protocol is “Urbanization of Villa 31,” ID number 2000021030.
had to keep up with other coursework. I contracted a company in Mexico to carry out the transcription of all interviews and meetings, which were completed in Spanish. I used these transcripts, produced in the original language in which data was collected, throughout my analysis. While writing up my findings, I translated quotes that are included in this essay into English, working carefully to preserve the original meaning of my respondents’ words. Meaning was derived not only from the original Spanish text included in the transcript, but also from audio recordings including tone, my field notes, and photos that I took. I reviewed these other data throughout analysis and during translation so that the experiences underpinning the text in the transcript would come alive again, in turn, contributing to a richer translation of this data. Finally, I consulted with a bilingual Argentine where doubts as to the meaning of the words used, within their proper context, persisted.

CONTEXT

THE LOCAL POLITICS OF BUILDING A BETTER LIFE

“We took over this land here in 2006, during the World Cup in Argentina. We organized with other neighbors that didn’t have houses and that needed a dignified home, a roof over their heads. We organized, we held meetings, and we took over the land. At first, we didn’t have water or lighting, we didn’t have anything. Thus, it was very precarious at the beginning. We lived in a tent, like camping, adrift. Then we started building little box structures made of wood. Sometimes we went to the city center to collect wood and sheet metal. First, we’d build the wooden structure with the sheet metal and line it with carpet inside, so we didn’t get cold. Then, little by little, I started to put bricks on all sides here, mostly here on the side of the street because there were many robberies and sometimes they’d steal everything, the few things we had.”

“First, we constructed the whole perimeter with bricks, and afterward, we built a room, in 2008. From there, little by little, we continued to build. In 2010, we were finally able to start building a roof, where the first floor is now, where I originally lived. Little by little I built the roof.”

-María, political representative/president of cooperative

Changes to the built environment carried out by residents in Villa 31 are evidence of their ability to gain access to land, resources, and opportunities necessary for improving their quality of life. These activities are inherently political because they involve individual and group action centered on influencing or resisting the influence of other actors, be they individuals, groups (such as cooperatives or other actors who engage in political behavior) or the state. For example, residents often engage in collective action as they take over land (as María’s account above suggests) as well as in making demands for access to resources, be they in the form of demonstrations in the city center or by cutting off access to the city by crowding the highway that passes through Villa 31.30 Before describing how these local politics function within the context of the PMV and other recent public policies—the focus of the findings sections in this paper—it is essential to revisit two policy innovations from 2010 that grew out of and have contributed to Villa 31’s tense political culture.

The first of these is the Estatuto de Barrio 31 Carlos Mugica that, in line with Ley 3.343 calling for the integration of Villa 31, sought to legitimize a set of electoral rules and normalize representation, decision making, endorsement, and consensus for residents of Villa 31.31 The statute divided the settlement into nine sectors and established a democratic system of representation at the level of the manzana (block), sector, and barrio (neighborhood), with the number of

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28 Residents decided this was an opportune moment because they anticipated that local police patrolling the area would be caught up in the excitement of the game.

29 Across my interviews, it was revealed to me that many residents, such as María, rent in the informal housing market after moving to Villa 31. Later, they either “purchase” a home or land through an informal system of agreements or “take” (occupy) land. The lack of available land for occupation, in conjunction with the commercialization of the informal housing market, has led to the vertical growth of Villa 31 as residents have constructed multiple story homes.

30 The process of arriving and becoming established in the villa was revealed across interviews with residents, wherein I asked them to explain their personal stories about moving to Villa 31.

31 The statute was elaborated across “more than fifty open public meetings, sectoral meetings, and meetings with referentes and delegados” under the direction of a legal team assimilated by Judge Roberto Andrés Gallardo.
representatives per manzana determined by the number of its residents. The second policy innovation is the Programa de Mejoras de la Villa 31 y 31 bis, created in 2010 by Decree 495, which channeled resources toward infrastructural improvements, such as streets, pavement, sewage lines, drainage systems, and water lines. The program created employment opportunities and led to an increase in construction cooperatives involved in improvements to the built environment because it stipulated that local cooperatives, made up of residents of Villa 31, carry out such improvements.

Together, the Estatuto and the Programa de Mejoras led to competition and benefited local political leaders by helping them consolidate their power through the formation of cooperatives to carry out public works. Relative to the rest of the city, where public goods are provisioned by the government, the provision of water, electricity, streets, and other public goods by cooperatives, while likely desired by the whole community, stands to benefit some more than others. Even if paved streets benefit the whole community, cooperatives and residents who subsist on building such infrastructure enjoy access to resources and employment opportunities, particularly those that are relatively close to home. Thus, while the Programa de Mejoras generated employment, improved the built environment, and provided opportunities for social and economic development, it also led to competition among local cooperatives in pursuit of contracts.

Such competition grew within the context of the system of political representation that was designed to promote and formalize democratic culture within Villa 31. As anthropologist Danilo Rossi has pointed out through interviews with civil servants, elected representatives, and community activists that worked on the Programa de Mejoras in Villa 31, elected delegados and consejeros held regular meetings with government officials to determine which sectors and which sites would be awarded resources for improvements to infrastructure. Technical representatives from the government would convene to determine the funds available and the feasibility of the site intervention based on its practicality and whether it would resolve the problem it supposedly sought to mitigate. Afterward, residents would elect a cooperative to carry out the work. As presidents of cooperatives were also often elected representatives, such as delegados or consejeros, they not only enjoyed the power of determining which sites of intervention would make it onto meeting agendas, but also of awarding jobs to residents living in their sector once resources for site improvements were won. Naturally, this system helped determine which cooperatives would benefit from the proposed site interventions, as well as which representatives were likely to be elected.

In an interview with a delegada from manzana 101, Rossi points out that “outside of the control of civil servants, the goal of presidents of cooperativas is always to expand their network of influence over the vecinos as much as possible.” This has contributed to a fraught political culture between different sectors and actors in the settlement, one marked by a “game of favors and coordination” between actors in this community “with the city and national governments.”

The Estatuto and the Programa de Mejoras not only explain the recent trajectory of political competition over access to resources in Villa 31, but also suggest that the political landscape within which the PMV is implemented lends itself to strategic gains and losses. First, cooperatives and other local actors who are used to competing for access to resources continue to engage in competitive behavior under the PMV. One notable example of such competition is presented in the next section of this paper, wherein a leader of a cooperative paid off other local actors so that his construction workers could carry out improvements in a sector of Villa 31 where they would not have otherwise gained access. Second, powerful political actors

32 Originally, 150 residents per representative.
33 Some of these local political leaders already headed cooperatives that were working in waste management (an older policy geared toward environmental safety in the city’s villas). Moreover, some political leaders have enjoyed a history of managing access to social security plans and other redistributive programs, participating in clientelist networks between government and residents, and spearheading collective action and political manifestations, among other activities that center on generating political and economic influence.
34 As members of María’s cooperative explained to me, they were drawn by the opportunity to work close to home when they saw that she was carrying out local infrastructural improvements.
35 Architects working with the cooperatives would visit the sites and determine the feasibility. Such site interventions stand to benefit the cooperative and the architect with whom the cooperative works.
36 Elections are held every year. As Rossi (2017) points out, these are sometimes contested and lead to disputes that can overturn electoral outcomes.
have a special hold over the local population, that is, they can induce them to act politically. In this way, we see how government power may extend through this community by way of the cooperative, as well as how the cooperative may check government power. On the one hand, the government selects which cooperatives receive construction contracts, while on the other, cooperatives that might not otherwise be selected due to their political affiliations maintain a firm enough grasp on the local population, particularly in their sector, to impose political costs on the government for excluding them from the PMV. Such costs may come in the form of demonstrations, threats of retaliation, or cutting off access to the local population.

At the same time, we see how government intervention through the PMV presents a risk to local actors. As government actors insert themselves within a community fraught with political competition, cleavages between actors of the community may present opportunities to gain a foothold. Moreover, as government actors engage with members of this community to become involved in the provision of resources and basic services, including those related to upgrades to existing homes through the PMV, direct linkages with residents threaten to undermine the power of local actors, whose relevance could be diminished.

CURRENT INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF INTEGRATION POLICIES

In April of 2016, the recently formed center-right government under President Mauricio Macri announced plans to promote the social and urban integration of Villa 31. In line with the administration’s broader goal of promoting economic and social development by moving away from trade protectionism toward reinsertion in the global market, current integration policies include agreements with multilateral development banks (MDBs). The total estimated cost of social integration of Villa 31 from 2016-2019 is 500 million USD, to be financed by the World Bank (WB), Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), and CABA. Policies target four core areas for development: 1. housing, 2. social and urban integration, 3. sustainable economic development, and 4. urban integration, mobility, and public space.

The Programa de Mejoramiento de Vivienda (PMV) is one of several housing policy interventions, each of which broadly falls into one of two categories: those that target the construction of new homes and those that target improvements to existing homes. The PMV is projected to provide exterior and interior improvements to 6,902 existing housing units in Villa 31. Exterior improvements address risks associated with multilevel homes, inaccessibility, precarious staircases, and unsafe balconies. Interior improvements target risks associated with poor ventilation, structural deficiency, humidity, accessibility, and security.

At the time of my field research, such improvements under the PMV were carried out by local cooperatives who had not previously been involved in home improvements in Villa 31 and who thus moved to capture building contracts as part of recent policy developments. The PMV is financed by the IADB and WB at an estimated cost of 88.9 million USD. A central tenet of the proposed policy trajectory of the PMV is to promote participation among residents. Appointed officials and government employees engage with residents with the aim of gathering information and performing ongoing analyses of the viability of interventions. After designing a strategy, an initial meeting is held with political representatives from Villa 31 to determine the political feasibility of the proposed interventions. From this point forward, employees of SECISYU meet regularly with political representatives and residents to continue pitching the project and gathering information about its viability. Ongoing questions deal with whether the proposed site is a home, whether it has inquilinos (renters), the number of people living in the home, its structural condition, and whether residents choose/are able to move out of the home during the construction process. Overarching goals center on informing residents about policies in order to generate consensus, both on the part of political representatives as well as those living in homes slated for upgrades. Finally, SECISYU also provides technical and material resources to cooperatives carrying out improvements to homes.

Manzana (block) Galpón 1 located in the sector Playón Oeste is the first block, or “pilot” block, where the PMV was rolled out, starting in April 2016.

37 Macri took office in December 2015.

38 These figures were taken from multiple CABA, World Bank, and Inter-American Development Bank project documents. Estimates across policy documents are not consistent.

39 In multiple meetings with government officials, they showed me policy flowcharts, which I documented and analyzed in tandem with other observations to make this conclusion.

40 An internal report prepared by SECISYU indi-
Of 129 housing units surveyed, eighty-nine received exterior improvements and seventy-nine received interior improvements, in two phases. When I started my fieldwork in May 2017, construction work in Galpón 1 was well underway. By the time I left the field in August 2017, some work was still outstanding, but the majority of the construction work had been completed. During my follow up visit in December 2017, I observed that work in Galpón 1 had come to an end, although internal reports prepared by SECISYU suggest that residents living in Galpón 1 have outstanding concerns regarding the quality of materials and work carried out. The other three manzanas where the PMV had been preselected to advance at the time of my fieldwork were manzana 4 and 12 of Güemes and manzana 3 of Playón Oeste (Ministerio de Hacienda 2017). Manzana 4 has a total of sixty-two homes, manzana 12 a total of forty homes, and manzana 3 a total of 274 homes. It was unclear at the time of my fieldwork how many of the residents on each of these blocks had agreed to participate in the PMV, nor do policy documents I have reviewed reveal this information.

This study includes state and nonstate actors. Within the sphere of residents, there are both political and non-political actors, including homeowners, renters, members of cooperatives, presidents of cooperatives, non-elected neighborhood leaders, and political representatives that residents regularly elect at the neighborhood level. Those elected at the block level, the basic unit of territory, are called delegados, and are elected every three years through direct elections in which residents of each block are free to participate. There are ten sectors, made up of units of blocks, at which level representantes are elected. Finally, the representantes elect ten consejeros to represent Villa 31 at the neighborhood level, that is, to represent the unit of territory that includes Villas 31 and 31 Bis. Also made up of residents, cooperatives with a legacy of maintaining and carrying out upgrades to public spaces are important political actors in Villa 31. Presidents of cooperatives are involved politically, usually fulfilling roles as delegados, representantes, or consejeros. They also sometimes act as local political brokers, punteros, or as non-elected political representatives.

State actors include elected and appointed officials as well as government employees working with SECISYU to carry out public policy, such as architects, city planners, and social workers. Non-state actors (that are not residents of Villa 31) include advocacy groups and architects with a history of working with cooperatives in Villa 31.

**BARRIERS TO ENTRY**

“Beginning last year, the government started working [in Villa 31]. They called up the consejeros to have them explain the project to the rest of the vecinos, but the vecinos didn’t want to have anything to do with it... there were some people in my sector that wanted to assault them [the government employees], rob them, cut them, they wanted to kill them.”

Throughout my time in the field, the term puntero was used by residents and government actors to refer to some local political representatives (elected or not) in Villa 31. It became clear across interviews that this term is often used as a pejorative. For a detailed discussion on the etymology and cultural meaning of the term, see Julieta Quirós, 2008.
"Any activity that is carried out in the villa is first communicated through the political system [the political system of the villa], this system is the first gateway to any involvement in any of the sectors."

-Adriana, government social worker

"If you don’t let me enter your home so that I can’t carry out improvements, then there won’t be integration ... the principal actor is the vecino, the protagonist who says, "yes, I approve of the integration project and I’ll allow them to improve my home,” then the state can enter, then the cooperative can enter."

-Rodolfo, president of cooperative

On the face of it, initial challenges for government entry into Villa 31 relate to security risks, such as material threats to outsiders, that hinder the ability of government employees to interact with the local population. Outsiders are easily spotted by locals, either by their physical attributes, such as skin color or the clothes they wear, or subtler identifying characteristics, such as an apparent lack of familiarity with the urban space around oneself. For example, outsiders may appear naïve or carry themselves in a relatively open manner compared to residents, who are used to keeping their distance and guarding themselves from potential threats in the street. Paco, a government employee who became one of my key interlocutors, was robbed four times in the span of three months.31 Having worked in the settlement since 2015, Paco’s compassion has grown amid structural changes that, for many, have yet to mitigate poverty. When I asked if he was okay after learning about the robberies, he brushed off the incidents, reminding me that he’s more fortunate than people in need—that getting a cellphone stolen comes with the territory of his job.32 Other government employees have explained that violence is a constant issue, especially in poorer sectors of the settlement where the reach of government is still limited by illicit drug activity and threats by local actors. Another immediate challenge to entry stems from residents’ fears that the government has come to remove them from their homes.46 As Adriana, a social worker involved in the

As Agustín goes on to explain, the power that cooper-lized local actors to resist such threats. For an example, see Eva Camelli, 2016.

47 Agustín began working with María’s cooperative under the Plan de Mejoras and has continued working with her cooperative under the Programa de Mejoramiento de Vivienda.
atives have generated through collective action meant that the government had to work with them to gain entry to Villa 31:

"It's very difficult to avoid using the cooperatives [to carry out construction projects], I believe that their [the government's] goal was to avoid using the cooperatives, but there's no way, there's no way they can enter the territory without working with the cooperatives... because the cooperatives have power. They have the power to convene, they have the power to interrupt the construction projects... I've participated in many demonstrations [over the years] on the highway [that cuts through and above Villa 31], people went up to the highway and blocked it off. It was chaos."35

Government social workers also expressed the need to work with cooperatives to gain entry to the settlement. As Adriana recalls:

"The only way to be able to work in harmony with the norms of the neighborhood was through the cooperatives because they facilitated our first encounter with the neighborhood." 34, 36

From the perspective of cooperatives, facilitating entry to the settlement was linked to a legacy of capturing resources and distributing jobs among their followers. As Atena explained, at one point the government wanted the cooperatives to contract labor from construction companies outside of Villa 31 to carry out improvements to homes under the PMV. This led her to argue with the undersecretary for Planeamiento y Gestión Comunitaria, Gastón Mascias. She apparently reminded him that the vecinos needed work and told him "What do you guys [the government] want? Do you want them [the vecinos] to lynch us [local political representatives/presidents of cooperatives]?"37 In the words of María, "they [the government] had to give us something [some kind of work], if they didn't, all of the cooperatives were going to rise up."38

If these accounts suggest that entry into Villa 31 depended on working with cooperatives, what do they reveal about the policy design and implementation of the PMV? Did the PMV incentivize or merely require that cooperatives carry out improvements to homes?49 The Plan Integral dating back to 2016 (prepared by SECISYU) explains that—given the context of Ley 3.343, the Plan de Mejoras, and the importance of cooperatives within the community—cooperatives should be involved in the homebuilding process.50

Policy documents from the World Bank dating back to 2016 reflect similar sentiments.51 Both of these documents provide a snapshot of the policy trajectory leading to the implementation of the PMV and indicate that, by 2016 (at least), the PMV was designed to require the participation of cooperatives. In fact, from 2014 onward, the government had begun contacting architects and other actors, such as social workers, in Villa 31 to collaborate on policies that would abandon the Plan de Mejoras and promote urban integration more broadly.52 As Agustín explains, these policies were to be laid out:

"...in the plan of integration [the Plan Integral], which is composed of several parts, a master plan for urban development, a plan for infrastructural projects that includes streets, public lighting, sewers, drainage systems, and potable water, and another important part, which is improvement of homes." 39

Recalling these early meetings leading to the Plan Integral, Agustín explains that in 2014, Gaston Mascias told his team that they couldn't plan anything without first talking to the architects that work inside the settlement with the cooperatives.40 Thus, as architects working with cooperatives – essentially technical representatives that had enjoyed a legacy of collaborating with cooperatives on building projects – stood

49 This section deals with entry as it relates to the PMV. In the next section I discuss, in depth, the participation of cooperatives and other actors in homebuilding.
50 See Plan Integral Retiro-Puerto Evaluación de Impacto Ambiental; The historical importance of these topics is discussed in the context section of this essay.
51 The Project Appraisal Document (Report No. PAD2086) explains that, “the plan [to improve existing housing stock] includes a program [the PMV] aimed at supporting incremental improvements of the housing stock within Barrio 31... it will be executed through a participatory process involving cooperatives, residents and final users.”
52 These events were referred to repeatedly across interviews and participant observation involving government and nongovernment actors.
to benefit from urban integration involving resources being channeled into Villa 31, they acted as a critical nexus of information and negotiation between the government and cooperatives. This meant working with local political actors, who by a function of their representation within the community, were best positioned to grant or deny entry to the settlement.

It is also essential to recall that cooperatives were not the only actors carrying out improvements to the built environment in Villa 31 at the time of my fieldwork. Outside construction companies were involved in infrastructural improvements (streets, water, sewer, and electrical lines) as well as improvements to housing under other programs (not the PMV). Thus, how important are cooperatives to the entry of the government into Villa 31 when other actors have also gained entry? Taken together, the evidence presented in this section and the next suggest that the government provided the cooperatives with the PMV to mitigate collective action, thereby reducing the transaction costs of carrying out improvements to other spaces in Villa 31 via construction companies. Indeed, given a legacy of self-management for gaining access to resources, the collective power of local political actors, and dealings between these actors and technical representatives, entry into Villa 31 became a crucial process through which local actors acquiesced through participation in building projects under the PMV.

Moreover, even though the PMV requires that cooperatives be involved in carrying out improvements to existing homes (as policy documents suggest), it does not stipulate which cooperatives should be contracted.

53 In an interview with Atena (president of construction cooperative), she told me that the architect Agustin had at one point suggested that she hire workers outside the villa, which she refused to concede to. Across other interviews with Maria, as well as participant observation involving her, Agustin, and government actors, it became clear that Agustin was in favor of awarding contracts to cooperatives for improvements to parks, homes, and eateries. Thus, initial bargaining with between the government and Agustin may have led him to suggest that cooperatives hire outside workers. It is unsurprising that the cooperatives would reject this idea and that he and the government would have to go along with allowing the cooperatives to hire residents instead.

54 See context section of this essay for overview on integration policies and appendix for types of housing programs.

In this way, the PMV allows room for incentives that are determined on the ground as local actors move to capture resources and the government awards construction contracts based on political support. As the following sections on entry make clear, these arrangements set the political stage for the PMV and explain how local actors sought to wield entry as a bargaining tool while the government, seeking to reduce the transaction costs of policy implementation, used entry as a mechanism for local control.

A BARGAINING TOOL

As the anecdote at the beginning of this essay suggests, residents of Villa 31 depend on the power they have gained over their environment to compel the behavior of others. In this instance, Atena, the president of a local cooperative, threatened a construction company hired by the government to carry out site improvements. She implied that there would be corporeal consequences if the workers did not put down their tools and immediately leave the settlement. Her ability to wage such threats—by expecting that those she summons as backup will indeed come through—is rooted in her influence within the local community.

A longstanding figure in Villa 31, residents display reverence and/or fear when she combs through the streets and pathways of her sector. While making rounds with her one afternoon, she stopped and spread her arms, inviting me to pause and appreciate the plaza and homes that her cooperative had been improving. When presenting me to her construction workers or the vecinos living in her sector, she allowed me only a brief moment to—as if on command—introduce myself, before interjecting and steering the conversation.41 Atena’s reputation stems from providing jobs and access to food, spearheading collective demand-making, protecting the interests of residents vis-à-vis the state, and rumors that she may be involved in illicit behavior within other trades, such as those related to drug-trafficking, that occur in Villa 31.42 More recently, she has been touting the PMV to residents, providing a nexus between government employees and those living in homes slated for improvements.43 Following the public scene she made with the construction company, she earned a meeting with high-ranking government officials to argue over the number of contracts her cooperative was receiving as part of the PMV and other improvement projects related to public spaces.44 The
extent to which such tactics result in concessions on the part of the government is suggestive of how local politics in Villa 31 affect public policy; that is, she is able to affect hers and her followers’ access to resources and opportunities tied to public policies by demonstrating her ability to influence the decisions of other actors in Villa 31. The behavior of these other actors, either through collective acquiescence or collective resistance, stands to reduce or increase transaction costs of integration policies carried out in Villa 31. Concessions on the part of the government may come in the form of meetings with government officials, construction contracts, or other resources and opportunities distributed to actors in this community that originate with the state. Whether entering the settlement or homes, government access to urban space – and thereby residents – necessary for carrying out the PMV has become a bargaining tool for actors within Villa 31 as they seek to minimize costs and maximize gains associated with the project.

Opportunities for actors to engage in political bargaining with respect to entry arise from the different levels at which the PMV requires entry. Entry begins with government employees gaining access to Villa 31. Government actors must also gain entry to residents’ homes, where planning and improvements are carried out. Third, because the PMV involves cooperatives carrying out such improvements, it also entails cooperatives entering residents’ homes. Fourth, in addition to gaining entry to homes, cooperatives must also gain entry to the sector of Villa 31 where the homes they are improving are located. Finally, cooperatives carrying out improvements sometimes face barriers even within their own sector, where social tensions along manzanas (blocks) may also present challenges for entry. In short, entry may present a barrier for any actor seeking to gain access to an area of the settlement where they are not already established.

From the perspective of this community, entry changes the status quo, which can threaten residents’ livelihoods or lead to opportunities to derive benefits from these changes. For political representatives inside Villa 31, this meant initially protecting their local interests (including their constituents) by denying the government entry. What’s essential to understand about this initial response is that it fed into a longstanding impulse of local political actors to intercept information originating from outside Villa 31, decipher it, and disseminate it within. If the system of political representation (discussed in the context section of this essay) bolstered local actors who represent the vecinos before the government, in meetings and through direct contact, it also created linkages between the government and certain residents, affecting the flow of information into the settlement. This provides an opportunity for political representatives to capture and distribute information, just as they would any other resource. This also creates an opportunity to strategically provide misinformation that aligns with actors’ goals. As Rodolfo explains, “the delegado of the oppositional political party [oppositional to the PRO] said, ‘they’re [the government] going to enter your home, they’re going to fix your house, and then afterward they’re going to charge you, they’re going to sell your house, and they’re going to throw you out.’”

At the same time, the notion that rumors by local political actors were the only force at play affecting initial attempts at entry by the government would be ungenerous and inaccurate. From the perspective of those who live in precarious conditions—with respect to their illegal tenancy on the land, a general lack of security, and a history of state-led expulsions in Villa 31—concerns over state-led activity in their community are certainly founded. Moreover, even if elected representatives meet regularly with the government, this does not mean that the information the government chooses to share is perfect. As María explains, “this government sometimes does things without consulting us… they made that mistake when they entered the neighborhood.” In this view, representatives left in the dark about how policies will be implemented may surmise the worse. Finally, responding to the concerns of their constituencies in Villa 31 would be an example of a democratic system functioning as it should.

Policies that employ companies contracted by the government to carry out infrastructural improve-

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56 The next section addresses the designs of the PMV with respect to inter-sectoral and sectoral barriers.
57 I assume that for those living in precarious situations any change in the status quo presents a risk or threat.
58 In multiple interviews with residents and government employees, they explained how asymmetrical information between this community and the rest of the city leads to this phenomenon.
59 The word rumors was frequently used by state and nonstate actors to describe the flow of information through the villa.
ments, such as those to streets, sewer lines, and drainage systems, create a visible reminder that the work in Villa 31 is being contracted out to non-residents. Some of these improvements include demolishing similar improvements previously carried out by construction cooperatives, even when local actors do not necessarily agree that such changes need to be made. While an analysis of the trajectory of government decision-making related to this policy design (the contracting of construction companies for these types of projects) is outside the scope of this paper, the evidence presented here suggests that contracting construction companies opened space for political backlash that has been mitigated by awarding cooperatives the necessary convenios to carry out improvements to other public spaces, such as those to parks, plazas, and athletic fields, as well as to existing homes. Once local political actors learned of the economic benefits of participating in the PMV, that is, how they stood to earn money and distribute jobs through construction contracts—particularly those representatives that also have cooperatives—many of them were compelled to get on board. In some cases, this meant working with technical representatives to set up construction cooperatives, which has led to an increase in cooperatives carrying out improvements in Villa 31. In the case of all three

60 While making rounds with María, she pointed out streets in her sector that her cooperative had previously improved under the Plan de Mejoras, arguing that they were already sufficient, and that the government did not need to have them redone by construction companies.

61 As footnote xiii briefly explains, in 2018 the government began contracting outside construction companies as well as local cooperatives to carry out upgrades to existing homes under the PMV. It is important to affirm that, despite these recent developments, the contracts awarded to cooperatives before and leading up to my time in the field were instrumental in assuaging the interests of local cooperatives. Moreover, recent developments, such as contracts being awarded to outside construction companies, provide opportunities to carry out additional research in Villa 31. Lines of inquiry should explore possible shifts in local political dynamics given the flow of capital into this community as well as the implications of the further commercialization of construction cooperatives, including their organizational structure, that comes about as a consequence of competition with outside construction companies.

62 Some construction workers also had experience working outside the villa in related projects, such as drywalling or as electricians. Notwithstanding, my data suggest that the PMV was ambitious given the minimal technical training that cooperatives initially brought to the project.

63 Despite not having legal tenancy on the land, local norms acknowledge residents’ rights to their property. For example, as I observed, government employees and cooperatives gain permission to enter homes, which is usually done by knocking or clapping with one’s hands to gain the attention of residents inside. Moreover, many residents have thick metal and/or barred doors used to keep intruders out of their homes.
win concessions from government actors, entry as a mechanism for local control refers to how the advancement of the PMV through Villa 31 is wielded to influence the behavior of local actors. In a private meeting I attended in the government’s architect office in Villa 31 in July of 2017, María and Agustín negotiated the terms of construction contracts with a government official. The meeting had been called to discuss opportunities that could assure María, whose cooperative had been marginalized in recent PMV projects awarded to other cooperatives. At the beginning of the meeting, responding to comments made by the official about how María’s cooperative had not been given contracts in Güemes, the second sector of the settlement where the PMV was deployed, María told him that she knew she was left out of these projects for political reasons. The government official then provided an overview of current housing construction projects in the settlement and pitched one of these opportunities to María and her architect, offering to arrange for funds to be provided via “convenio” versus “decreto.” The difference between a “contract” and a “decree” is of consequence for cooperatives. While contracts result in resources necessary to carry out site improvements funded by the government up front, decrees require that the cooperative come up with expenses out of pocket, which are reimbursed when the work is complete. This can make or break an opportunity for cooperatives, who may lack the material resources necessary for fronting the costs of construction. Meanwhile, Agustín also sought to have the government award contracts for improvements to two comedores (eateries), María’s and Atena’s. As these negotiations make clear, entry by way of local political actors has had lasting effects on the development of the PMV – and related integration projects – as local actors move to protect their interests and continue capturing resources. These arrangements extend government power through this community because resources empower cooperatives to distribute jobs and benefits among their followers.

On the other hand, the government has used entry as a mechanism to exploit local political cleavages and make strategic gains, undermining the power of these local stakeholders. Within the PMV, these goals have gathered steam in two ways. First, the government has assigned cooperatives to work in sectors where they previously exercised little political and economic influence in an attempt to break with local spheres of power that political representatives have enjoyed. As María explained to me one morning, Diego Fernandez, the head of SECYISU, told her early on in the project that she needed to end sectoral feuds by letting other cooperatives work in her sector. Atena also complained one day that the government wanted to send her to another part of the settlement to carry out improvements, forcing her to “meddle” in these areas versus sticking to work in her own sector. While attempting to break with sectoral divisions in Villa 31 has brought cooperatives into sectors where they otherwise probably would not have carried out improvements, it has also had consequences for the redistribution of capital across this community. For example, to gain entry to Playón to carry out the PMV, Rodolfo paid off local political leaders. This was because his cooperative lacked power in this sector. The delegados of the manzana where improvements were to be carried out leveraged their demands with threats that they would send chorros (robbers) to sabotage the project by stealing materials. In short, just as the government increasingly brought residents into direct contact with government employees and appointed officials. This is particularly true as the PMV got underway and the

64 As it happens, the political affiliations of these cooperatives align with the PRO government, versus María, who rallies local support for an independent political party.
65 This framework creates opportunities for private construction companies, who presumably have more material resources than many local cooperatives, to absorb the risk of such projects.
66 Public policies, separate from those included in the integration of Villa 31, provide resources for cooperatives to open eateries. These resources go toward feeding their members and their families. Under the current integration policies, improvements to eateries have been billed as improvements to public spaces and provide another opportunity for local political actors to capture resources.
67 President of cooperative
68 This story was related to me by María (president of cooperative/local representative) on January 12, 2018. Other unnamed participants were present at the interview; when asked by her they confirmed some of the details.
need to rely on local political actors to gain access to the population diminished. Direct linkages between the government and residents undermine local power because they interrupt the brokering that often occurs, both on the demand and supply of politics. Whereas the distribution of goods and services often moves through local political representatives/brokers, or punteros, direct access to government on the part of residents opens new channels for political patronage and clientelism. On the demand side of politics, direct linkages with government temper collective demand making as well as the value of “access” to the government that local political representatives provide.

A STRATEGIC LOCATION
The main route that traverses Villa 31 is usually abuzz with activity. Pushcarts or buggies driven by residents transport foodstuffs and restaurant inventory. They share the street with larger trucks, driven by construction workers, that transport materials for building projects into the settlement. Dense pedestrian traffic—mostly residents, a few government employees and/or appointed officials moving in groups, a police officer or two, and perhaps some visitors—slows the way. The street is lined on both sides with multiple-story structures, mostly made of brick or concrete. On the ground floor of their homes, many residents operate local businesses, such as hardware stores, convenience stores, hair salons and barber shops, or restaurants. The upper floors might have rooms for rent as well as provide space where the owner of the building lives. From the feria (street market) at the settlement’s entrance, the walk along this route to Playón Oeste and Playón Este, the two sectors where the PMV was first carried out, is about ten minutes. Standing at the point where these two sectors meet, Autopista Illia—the highway that cuts through the center of Villa 31—passes overhead.

Many residents I spoke with argue that the decision to begin deploying the PMV in Playón Oeste and Playón Este (commonly referred to as one unit of territory, “Playón”) was strategic. Relative to poorer sectors of the settlement, marked by less accessibility, less commerce, and more precarious structures, these sectors seem more developed. In María’s words:

“In Playón you have the main access to the neighborhood, that’s why they [the government] chose Playón... it’s wide, you have the highway there, it’s most visible, and it’s also visible from outside. That’s why they chose to start in Playón, they’re strategies that they use to choose this over that, nothing is genuine. In the area behind it [on the streets where the PMV was first deployed], people don’t have sewer lines, they have septic tanks. Why not start there first?”

By beginning in Playón, the PMV became immediately visible to actors both within and outside of Villa 31. Within the settlement, anyone walking along the main route is more likely to move through these sectors than other less visible and less central areas. Residents are thus immediately confronted with government activity in their community, not only activity related to infrastructural projects, but also to the renovation of existing homes. In Playón, the government also enjoys the demonstrable effects of these policies, and it’s not uncommon to see high-ranking officials traversing Villa 31, pointing at and discussing recent upgrades. From outside of Villa 31, Autopista Illia—a main artery of access into the City of Buenos Aires—showcases these recent policies. The roofs and upper floors of homes that residents have constructed beneath and around the highway have, over the years, grown so close to it that they almost encroach upon the cars that pass them by. While stopped in traffic one day on the highway just above Playón, I watched as residents climbed spiral staircases to access the upper floors of their homes, noticing that a short hop over the guardrail would bring me into immediate contact with those who, as part of the current upgrading policies, stand to be displaced. Those who are situated beneath and right next to the highway stand to lose their homes so that the highway can be converted into a park. Just beyond these homes, façades of homes improved as part of the PMV provide evidence of recent attempts at integration.

From a social-ecological perspective, beginning in Playón also seems strategic insomuch as it diminished the immediate transaction costs of policy implementation. Not only does the visibility and level of social development in Playón diminish security risks for government employees working in the settlement, this area of the settlement may be easier to penetrate.

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69 These processes were confirmed across interviews with state and nonstate actors and participant observation.
70 See context section of this essay for more on punteros.
71 The plans for the park were inspired by the High Line in Manhattan.
because it was populated more recently. Compared to other sectors of the settlement where memories of violent expulsions pervade, many of these residents who arrived more recently may be more receptive to government activity. Additionally, some older sectors of the settlement tend to be marked by solidarity among more established residents, whereas social cleavages along ethnic and socioeconomic divides, even within a single manzana, provide points of entry for government employees. Once improvements are underway, the visibility of the upgrades works to attract other actors, such as cooperatives and residents living in precarious homes, toward the PMV. As Rodolfo explains:

“The people have more confidence now, they’re more enthusiastic to have their own home redone because they’ve seen how it turned out for others, that nothing bad happened, that the improvements were made and that it turned out spectacularly beautiful, and now they want the same for themselves.”

Thus, by beginning in the most visible and least contentious sectors of Villa 31, the government converted entry—initially an obstacle—to something that residents sought.

HOW LOCAL POLITICS SHAPED THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PMV

Used as a bargaining tool, a mechanism for local control, and a strategic location, interactions between state and nonstate actors surrounding entry to Villa 31 shaped the PMV. To gain entry, the government needed to assuage local political actors who were threatened by changes to the status quo. On the one hand, their economic interests were undermined by the loss of construction contracts related to infrastructural improvements, while on the other, they stood to benefit from an overall increase in construction projects in their community. These local actors moved to capture opportunities to disseminate information and carry out upgrades to homes. In this sense, entry has relied on the deepening of government presence and public policy in this community. Such deepening has occurred within the context of local politics of upgrades to the built environment involving government actors, cooperatives, residents, and architects engaged in competing for and ensuring access to resources necessary for carrying out improvements in Villa 31. To carry out these policies, the government also sought to reduce the transaction costs between residents and government actors. As we shall see in greater detail in the next section on participation, although operating within existing power structures has generated economic activity that benefited local cooperatives as well as, arguably “homeowners,” it has also undermined the interests of residents living in homes improved by these cooperatives and contributed to a fraught political culture. Because these politics determine who gets what with respect to resources and opportunities channeled toward building projects in Villa 31, this has opened new channels for political competition and social tension.

THE CHALLENGES OF PARTICIPATION

“Why didn’t the cooperatives show up to the meeting [the meeting between the government and residents regarding the PMV]? Before, when they wanted to snatch up the work they [the cooperatives] wouldn’t leave us in peace, there wasn’t a single day of the week, Saturdays, Sundays, every day there were meetings because they wanted to snatch up the work and now, after they’ve snatched it up and haven’t completed it properly, why won’t they show us their faces in the meeting?”

-Magdalena, resident living in a recently upgraded home

“You [the president of the cooperative] have to administer the money, it’s not like the government is going to give you the materials [for construction]. The
government gives you the gross funds and you have to analyze the timeframe for the work, how much you’re going to pay each person, how much you’re going to pay yourself, where you’re going to buy the cheapest materials – not the worst quality, rather, the cheapest but of the same quality – by shopping around for the best price.”

-Rodolfo, president of cooperative

“This program [the PMV] has a huge problem, that is, there’s a directorate that’s taken the name of the program – Dirección General de Mejoramiento de Vivienda – and they believe [those under the directorate] that they are the entire program [the entire PMV]… They don’t understand that they’re just one pillar of the program, just one instrument out of many, not the only one… Naming the directorate after the program effectively established that they are the program, making the rest of us nothing more than support [for the program]... and it’s a huge problem because they don’t give us the resources that they give them, so it’s impossible. In my view, that’s the huge problem with the program, there’s a directorate with this name and it unconsciously generates this idea that they alone are the program, when in fact, the program should have everyone from different areas [of government] working together. If not, there is no program.”

-Trinidad, government social worker/coordinaor for GOPP

The meeting that the government organized was starting in ten minutes. "If I go, I’ll just get into a fight with the architects," María explained. The government had invited cooperatives, government architects, social workers, and homeowners living and working in Galpón 1 so that those participating in the PMV could share their experiences. Galpón 1 was the first block where the PMV had been rolled out, fifteen months ago. María spent time here each day following up on the progress of improvements. Although unwilling to attend the meeting, she offered to escort me to the government offices down the street, where it would be held. It would be led by social workers and architects, the latter of whom oversee the cooperatives’ daily technical operations which, over the last few months, had become a source of tension between María and the government as her cooperative carried out improvements. Moreover, homeowners would be given the opportunity to speak freely in a forum intended to troubleshoot challenges that underpin the PMV, such as doubts about cooperatives carrying out improvements, uncertainty about the quality of materials used, remaining in one’s home through an arduous construction process, delays, and disputes between neighbors over changes to the built environment that create negative externalities.

María’s decision to avoid a meeting intended to create a forum of participation between cooperatives, homeowners, and the government is an emblematic example of how tensions that arise out of the project can overwhelm the actors involved. A central figure, residents in Galpón 1 had grown accustomed to seeing María and her workers carrying out improvements. Residents in these parcels where upgrades had been carried out were the guinea pigs of the PMV; cooperatives learned on the job, in their homes. At the same time, with the sacrifices of these homeowners, the stresses over the last fifteen months had produced a better equipped, better trained, and overall more capable cooperative. Cooperatives were involved in the installation of staircases, drywall, appliances, and carried out structural improvements that had, arguably, improved living conditions for residents that had participated in the PMV.

Thus, the PMV involves a fundamental shift in how residents of Villa 31 participate in homebuilding. Long accustomed to providing their own resources and making decisions about how, when, where, and what to build, the PMV not only brings cooperatives and state actors into the homebuilding process, it seeks to conform to the norms of conventional building practices. As actors provide technical and material resources, they exercise control over the improvement process. As such, one of the most complicated aspects of the PMV, participation, entails decision-making by diverse actors at every level of the project using the resources available to them to pursue their interests. In this context, this section focuses on challenges of participation within the PMV, locating how decision-making is aggregated across this community. To do so, I build on Turner’s framework for participation, which views participation as a function of who decides versus who provides, that is, who decides what shall be done and

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75 See overview of government power structure in the Appendix section of this essay. Those under the directorate primarily provide technical resources, versus the social resources that the Gerencia Operativo de Planeamiento Participativo provides.
who provides the resources, both material and technical, necessary for realization.59

WHO DECIDES VERSUS WHO PROVIDES?
Renters living in homes slated for upgrades are the least empowered under the PMV. They neither decide what upgrades are to be made nor provide the material or technical resources necessary for carrying out such upgrades.76

For homeowners in the PMV, participation is limited. The government designs the policy trajectory and cooperatives and government employees provide the technical and material resources necessary for home upgrades.77 Thus, while homeowners have veto power and the final say as to whether the project will move forward, the innovation and autonomous decision-making they have relied on in the past to construct their homes are undermined by the technical and material resources that the government and the cooperative provide. Moreover, the participation of homeowners is largely predetermined, that is, the policy trajectory of the PMV, as designed by the government, limits the participation of homeowners by not including them in the broader decision-making process leading to policy design. For example, homeowners participate in the initial survey process with social workers and architects to inform the government about the upgrades that are important to them. They also participate in meetings with social workers and architects designed to inform residents about the policy trajectory, foment a sense of community among residents living on manzanas (blocks) where upgrades are carried out, and provide a forum where the government can gather information to calibrate policies.

Certain decisions, such as the color of paint used on the exterior and interior of homes, are also relegated to homeowners. While these modes of participation might influence policy outcomes, they are part of a predesigned trajectory that the government uses to progress through the PMV.

While cooperatives also operate within the general framework designed by the government, their participation grows out of the political power they have amassed, the technical resources they had leading up to the PMV, and the control they exert over their own operations. First, building on the nexus that cooperatives provide for entry into the settlement by the government, local cooperatives may participate in a game of favors with the government to gain access to the PMV.78 Second, cooperatives with more technical resources also seemed to participate more, not only in decisions about homebuilding, but also with respect to the number of contracts they receive under the PMV.79 Technical resources may come from outsiders, such as politicians, attorneys, architects, and accountants that solve administrative and technical challenges for cooperatives, whose presidents generally lack the skills to do so without relying on outside help. For example, the cooperative’s architect, acting as a technical representative on behalf of the cooperative, works with government architects, engineers, and social workers to make decisions about design and construction. While my data suggest that these architects were heavily involved in the initial design of improvements to homes under the PMV and public spaces that cooperatives carry out, I did not uncover how the review process on

76 This was an ongoing theme across interviews and participant observation with state and nonstate actors. For example, in a meeting with residents of Manzana 22 held on July 31, 2017, Adriana (government social worker) told residents that the government was hoping to mitigate negative consequences, such as displacement, that had occurred as a result of implementing the PMV in other sectors the villa.

77 This was an ongoing theme across interviews and participant observation. For example, in an interview with the author on August 7, 2017, Trinidad (government social worker) presented internal policy documents, including memos and flow charts, detailing the designs and trajectory of the PMV. Other government actors and residents corroborated these details.

78 The degree to which cooperatives participate in favors varies. For example, María explained one day that employees and appointed officials working with SECISYU asked her if she would support the PRO in the upcoming elections, to which she replied, “I don’t want to burn myself [with her constituents?]”; and told the official that she respected their work in the villa but that she did not want to bring them voters for the elections.

79 Rodolfo’s cooperative would be an example of one that is technically well-equipped, in part because he owns other companies in Villa 31, one of which handles maintenance for a large bus company whose operations are at the bus terminal in front of Villa 31. Rodolfo’s cooperative has been awarded the most contracts out of all cooperatives carrying out upgrades under the PMV.
the side of the government unfolds. Overall, it seems that the more prepared that cooperatives are to operate within an institutionalized framework under the PMV, the less costly contracting them may be for the government.

At the same time, despite government oversight over materials used and the work carried out, cooperatives maintain a degree of power over their own operations. They choose what construction workers to hire, which affects the level of skill that each one brings to the project. They also choose the pay structure for these employees, affecting how workers seek to maximize their wages. Finally, cooperatives enjoy leeway with respect to the materials that they purchase, despite stipulations in their contracts over the quality of the materials that should be used. Diego, María’s electrician, discusses the quality of work carried out by cooperatives:

“There are three factors, in first place, the quality and requisites of the workers, in second place, how they are paid, for example, per job or per day, and in third place, the quality of materials.”

With respect to pay structures and timeframe for construction, Diego adds:

“The people here, they see all this money and they say, ‘oh, money, money, lots of money!’ And so, you see, they get startled, and what do they do, they work only for the money, rapidly, so that the money is most important and so that the owner of the cooperative makes money.”

As such, workers who are paid by the job, versus by the day, may choose to maximize the number of jobs they complete, thereby maximizing profits for themselves and for the cooperative. On the other hand, those who are paid by the day may take more time to complete the job correctly. With respect to materials used by the cooperative, Diego explains:

“One notices the difference, and not only with the electrical work, but also with the plumbing and some other things – not everything, for example, the floors are the same [in all homes], with this the cooperatives are all the same, they buy the materials in the same place – but you have things that yeah, you notice the difference, mostly in my budget for materials, is where I see it. The other day this other cooperative called me, and this electrician says to me “I have a problem, will you come and look at it?” So, I go and I look first at his electric panel, and it’s like this [demonstrates with hands], tiny, the electric panel. And my electric panel is like this [demonstrates with hands], its big, and I have one for each floor. Easy to have twelve breakers, well divided, all of them well made, well made so that they last you many years, while the others, no. I don’t know if it’s because they don’t know or because they don’t want to provide the necessary materials to do this kind of work. But there’s a big difference in the advantage that I have, that I work with a cooperative that provides good materials, necessary materials, so that the work turns out good. If not, I also would have done a poor job too. I can’t tell the cooperative “no, buy me good materials” or “instead of six I need twelve breakers.” Also, I believe that Juan [María’s husband, who buys materials for the cooperative] brings a lot of influence, because he understands my work, he’s also an electrician, and so he brings in good materials. That’s the difference.”

According to María, some cooperatives choose to purchase materials of lesser quality so they can pocket more money. She went on to explain that she chooses to purchase better quality materials because she wants to avoid having her neighbors “bang on her door at night” complaining about the kind of work that she has done. Left to make decisions about the workers they hire, pay structure, and materials, participation of cooperatives under the PMV stand to affect the quality of work they carry out.

While the local political, social, and spatial context in Villa 31 determine feasibility of site interventions, and indeed affect their trajectory, the state exercises considerable power over decisions about where the PMV advances and how to provide technical
and material resources. First, sectors where the PMV will be rolled out are largely predetermined. Presentation documents assembled by the government dating back to 2016 show the sectors and blocks slated to receive upgrades under the PMV through 2019. Second, the government, in working within the local political context of Villa 31, selects which cooperatives will carry out improvements to homes. Thus, as the PMV is shaped by a game of local politics, homeowners do not get to choose who carries out upgrades to their homes, despite disparity with respect to how cooperatives operate and the quality of work cooperatives are positioned to carry out.

Finally, the government provides a host of technical skills and materials that function outside existing systems of homebuilding in Villa 31. For example, while residents have grown accustomed to using brick and concrete in the building process, materials used under the PMV, such as Durlock (a type of drywall), were largely foreign to residents before the PMV. In addition to providing these materials, installation requires technical skills that are either acquired on the job through trial and error to the detriment of the homeowner or, for some cooperatives, led them to contract construction workers that had experience working with these materials.

SOURCES OF TENSION AND FRUSTRATION

The model for participation under the PMV gives rise to tensions and frustration between cooperatives and government actors participating in the homebuilding process. Participation in homebuilding under the PMV includes interactions among government actors, among the government and cooperatives, among the government and homeowners, among cooperatives, among cooperatives and homeowners, and among the government, cooperatives, and homeowners. The government plays the largest role with respect to decisions and providing of resources, followed by cooperatives and then homeowners. Finally, the government also acts as arbiter, seeking to diffuse tensions that arise between other actors and channel their behavior through institutions. In this section, I analyze participation in homebuilding under

RENTERS

Unfortunately, I was not able to interview renters displaced by the PMV, as their precarious living conditions made them less accessible. Second-hand accounts suggest that renters living in homes improved under the PMV are largely excluded from the benefits of the program. Second-hand accounts suggest that renters living in homes improved under the PMV are largely excluded from the benefits of the program. To be viable, the PMV needed to operate within local norms of property ownership in Villa 31. This meant gathering information from diverse actors in the settlement to determine who the proper owners of homes were, and then rolling out the program in a way that respected their rights to ownership. As Paco explained, the government feels certain that they have correctly located the owner of each home through multiple interviews among residents and social workers. Such interviews involve five actors: employees from SECISYU, delegados, alleged homeowners, renters, and witnesses. Across these interviews, the government determines who the interested parties are and establishes a history of the home. The overall result of respecting these norms has been that many renters living in homes improved under the PMV were displaced when construction began. According to

82 Through interviews and participant observation with residents and government employees I learned that structural factors, such as the condition of homes on a given block and the viability of site interventions given social factors on a given block influence government decisions.

83 I did interview other renters not displaced by the PMV. In one example, in an interview on May 24, 2017, Hector (artist/resident of Villa 31), shared his experiences about moving around Villa 31, sometimes sleeping on the street while looking for employment opportunities and a place to live.

84 Across interviews with state and nonstate actors, I asked respondents to share their experiences and observations regarding the plight of renters.

85 I discuss how operating within these norms made the PMV more viable in the section on compliance in this essay.

86 This was largely confirmed across my interviews. Some residents expressed initial concerns in letting the government carry out surveys because they said that their renters would try to steal their homes.

87 For example, an internal report prepared by SECISYU in February 2017 states that 53 percent (31) of the homes improved in Galpón 1 are occupied by the homeowner while 47 percent (27) are occupied by renters. Of all the inquilinos, just “one family could
homeowners, the displacement process was handled by the government. As Eduardo, a homeowner living in Galpón 1, explains:

“Frankly, social workers came here and handled it, we really don’t know anything about how they dealt with it. This group of people from the government came here and took care of everything; they dealt directly with the renters, we didn’t have anything to do with it.”

This shows how the government handled interactions that would normally occur between homeowners and their renters. Moreover, if renters were initially excluded from the PMV, they have been further excluded from benefits of the program by market mechanisms because in recently improved homes, rents stand to increase. For example, in Eduardo’s four-story home in Galpón 1, he and wife previously rented out floors they did not live on for 2,000 pesos per month. Post-improvements, each of these stands to go for 3,500 pesos. Thus, given the commercialization of the informal housing market in Villa 31, a lack of inclusion on the part of renters, and lack of a mechanism that prevents market-driven increases in rents, the PMV stands to further marginalize the lower echelon of the community.

HOMEOWNERS

Many homeowners have experience working in construction. Thus, from the perspective of homeowners, watching cooperatives carry out improvements to their home is a frustrating experience. As Eduardo notes:

“This door here, they [the cooperative] had to install it three times... because it didn’t close, because it wasn’t aligned... it’s a problem with the laborer... if I’m going to install a door, I have to know that the door has to be level, that the door has to be even, and that the door has to close well.”

The PMV also introduces building materials that many homeowners are skeptical about. To stave off security and environmental risks, such as break-ins and humidity, residents have spent many years, often painstakingly, constructing their homes out of durable materials. While brick and cement have proven their durability over time, materials such as drywall present new risks. These challenges are exacerbated by the irregularity of the built environment and socio-ethnic tensions. For example, a homeowner did not want to let the government proceed with plans to install ventilation in his home because he did not want to share the air with his neighbor, who was from a different country. In the words of Adriana, a social worker who tried to ensure equal access to health and safety benefits of the PMV:

“There were many ventilation and lighting upgrades to homes that we couldn’t do because “I don’t want my neighbor to have a window in the same spot that I do because he is Paraguayan, and I am Peruvian. So, it’s like, but come now, beyond that, we need to ventilate your home and we need to ventilate your neighbor’s home, and we need to illuminate your house and illuminate your neighbor’s house, “ah, I don’t care, he is Paraguayan, and I am Peruvian, I don’t want it.”

In another example, a homeowner, Magdalena, was promised that her unsafe staircase would be relocated. Yet, a bargaining failure between the government and her neighbor, who chose not to participate in the PMV, meant that the staircase could not be installed because doing so would have encroached on the neighbor’s space. In the end, Magdalena spent months in discussions with the government and her neighbor, and was left without a staircase. At the time of my research, the situation was still unresolved. In her words:

90 These claims are substantiated by interviews with state and nonstate actors, participant observation, and internal reports prepared by SECISUY that I gained access to in August 2017. For example, one report details conversations from a PMV follow up meeting with residents of Galpon 1 held on May 12, 2017. Residents complained that, due to inadequate materials used (such as security bars), the level of insecurity (related to theft) had risen on the block.
91 I have since learned – in an interview with María in December 2017 – that she is suing the government with the help of a nonprofit organization, Defensoria del Pueblo.
“Why do you [the government] start the work with the cooperatives, knowing that you didn’t get the approval [from the neighbor] to go ahead with the staircase? And they [the cooperative] put that electric panel there, and now they say that that’s where they’re going to put the staircase. They’d have to remove the electric panel and redo all the wiring for the lighting. So, then I go to my neighbor, who’s my friend, who lives next to me, and I ask if they’ll agree to share the stairs with me, but he didn’t want to accept because they [he and his family] already did all their piping years ago, everything, including the kitchen, and he didn’t want to redo his stairs.”

Irregular housing structures also complicate how disputes over public versus private space are handled by the government as part of the PMV. For example, residents in Villa 31 complain that the streets are too narrow for ambulances or firetrucks to pass. Not only are the streets narrow, given the upward growth of Villa 31, unplanned staircases protrude into the street, making it difficult for pedestrian traffic, let alone vehicle traffic, to pass through. Indeed, improvements to staircases and homes under the PMV are meant to mitigate risks of personal injury due to poor construction habits and make way for these crucial public services. Yet, faced with the decision to widen a street that entails giving up personal living space, residents are largely unwilling to budge. As Doña, a resident in another sector of the settlement where the PMV will soon be rolled out explained, the government wants to widen the street, which would mean giving up some of her personal living space, an idea that, for her, seems absurd. In this sense, participation in homebuilding may empower residents to undermine the better interest of the community as a whole.

Overall, homeowners shared mixed feelings with respect to the cooperatives. They tend to prefer that more experienced construction workers carry out improvements to their homes. For example, some expressed the need for cooperatives to be trained prior to beginning improvements on homes, rather than learning on the job, as the current model entails. On the other hand, some homeowners were generous, defending the right that residents must work on the integration project. In the words of Eduardo, “I get it, they have to learn [the cooperatives] and that’s fine. I tell you because I’m a contractor.”

COOPERATIVES

Depending on the number of construction contracts they receive under the PMV, cooperatives and their members may grow accustomed to waiting to find out about whether the program will provide them employment. For example, as the first phase of PMV in Galpón 1 neared completion in Güemes, it became clear to those working for María’s cooperative that they would not be working in the next sector where the program was being rolled out. This could have been due to a sequencing issue, but it seems likely that the government favored three cooperatives to work in Güemes for political reasons since all three selected cooperatives are avid supporters of the PRO, versus María, whose cooperative belongs to an independent political party. Other cooperatives involved in the first phase of improvements in Galpón 1 were also left out of upgrades in Güemes and thus faced similar challenges. In the words of Atena:

“They [the construction workers for the cooperative] don’t have work outside, they don’t give us work because we are villeros [slum dwellers], because we live in the villa, ‘and the DNI? [national identification document], ah, no!’ Thus, the people [of the villa] put their hope in our cooperatives and we pay them well, I pay my workers well, I pay them as they deserve to be paid... I’m paying them seven to eight hundred pesos as officials [a kind of position?], per day. So, what we going to do with these people that don’t have a job?”

Given this kind of uncertainty, María’s laborers did not know where they would find work. Many explained to me that they would find work on projects outside of Villa 31 to hold them over until María could contract them again to work on the PMV. Do such comments uphold the notion that residents of Villa 31 are denied employment outside of Villa 31 on the basis that they live in the settlement?

On the one hand, across interviews with residents, it became clear that they are concerned about discrimination. For example, a woman who had worked outside the settlement as a housekeeper explained that she was relieved that her employer did not fire her when they found out she lived in the settlement. On the other hand, in my follow up visit to Villa 31 in December of 2017, María explained that she was waiting for projects on manzana 22 of the settlement to begin, and that many of her workers were currently carrying out work outside of the set-
tlement. My analysis suggests that this is because her workers were better trained and more integrated into the formal labor market than Atena’s, whose comments above suggest that her workers have a more difficult time finding work outside of the settlement. Not only did Atena’s cooperative have a reputation for carrying out subpar work, she also had trouble with the government over the legal status of some of her workers.92 Finally, it’s essential to underscore again that the role of presidents of cooperatives is inherently political because gaining access to resources and distributing jobs is often linked to *collective* action.93 Indeed, vocalizing the need to find work on the basis of discrimination is a form of political agitation that cooperatives may use as they seek to increase their participation in the PMV, and their subsequent access to resources which may then be distributed among the cooperatives’ followers.

The PMV also positions cooperatives to respond directly to the demand of homeowners who, in the view of cooperatives, engage in opportunistic behavior to squeeze concessions out of the building process. As one of Rodolfo’s administrative employees explains:

“**Opportunism is taking advantage of any situation so that it works to your benefit, taking advantage even when you do something that’s good for them, taking advantage of absolutely everything. Look, I’m going to build you a bathroom, “but no, I want it this way;” look, you didn’t have a kitchen before, now you have kitchen, “no, over there I want five burners instead of four.” That’s taking advantage step by step.**”

Rodolfo adds:

“So, I bring you an armchair, “oh, no, but you brought me just one why didn’t you bring me three? I want three armchairs because I had three armchairs over there before.” Lies. But to keep you happy I bring the three chairs, and then they follow with something else and then something else and everything is a complaint.”

Cooperatives also complained that, by squeezing concessions out of the building process, homeowners create problems between the cooperative and the government due to delays that these concessions cause. The government, in turn, pressures the cooperative to move forward with the work in a timely manner. In some cases, it seemed that such delays could even give the government grounds to substantiate awarding fewer contracts to the cooperative that experiences delays.94 These challenges are exacerbated by those residents who choose to remain in their homes during the construction process. In these cases, the cooperative must work around their belongings, sometimes losing time as they move and clean them. Thus, if homeowners increase their chances for participating by staying in their homes, they do so to the detriment of the cooperative.

**GOVERNMENT**

Government employees charged with encouraging participation under the PMV feel slighted by government structures that undermine the nature of their work. Social workers demonstrated compassion and understanding for residents in precarious living conditions, wanting to share as much information with them as they had about the program to ease the homeowners’ concerns.95 Yet, it seemed that these social workers

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92 This claim is based on accounts from residents living in homes upgraded by her cooperative in interviews and at meetings and ratings she received from the government on the quality of improvements and compliance with administrative paperwork for the cooperative (as explained to me by government employees and other cooperatives; the government also showed me the reports). I discuss the ratings system in more detail in the compliance section of this essay.

93 I use the word “often” here because not all cooperatives seemed to engage in collective action to gain access to work. For example, Rodolfo (president of cooperative) explained in an interview with me on August 2, 2017, “I don’t drive people to cut off access [such as streets] to anything or gather people to demonstrate at the obelisk [an important monument in Buenos Aires]. I don’t think the solution for people is to give them fifty pesos, a hundred pesos, and take them to cut off a street for a sandwich or bag of merchandise, I think the solution for people is genuine work.” Notwithstanding, even if Rodolfo does not engage in the forms of clientelism he mentioned, he does distribute jobs and resources in the villa, which has helped him amass political power.

94 I discuss the rating system the government uses to rate the administration of cooperatives and the quality of work they carry out in the compliance section of this essay.

95 This was a common theme across several inter-
were often left powerless to affect larger changes to the program based on participation workshops and interactions they shared with residents. As Adriana lamented, the government lacks a cohesive plan with respect to the integration project and fails to listen to those involved in the project who have more experience working in informal settings when making decisions.75 Wanting to create a nexus of participation for residents, social workers are often left feeling frustrated that the government has not given them enough resources to do so.

Architects feel that their work under the PMV requires them to engage in social work. They spend more time responding directly to homeowners’ concerns and putting out fires between residents and cooperatives. As one architect, Sebastian, explained, he feels a sense of duty to defend the cooperatives before homeowners, noting that the smoother the relations are between these actors, the easier his job is.76 To do so, he regularly reminds homeowners that the PMV provides an opportunity for residents of Villa 31 to gain work and experience, a right he says residents have. Both architects and social workers likewise may feel overwhelmed by the challenges of the PMV. The program tends to move slowly, is complicated by the number of actors involved, and has limited bandwidth for responding to the demands of residents, some whose situations are too dire for the PMV to improve.96

Tension among the government and other actors involved in the PMV thus tends to unfold on multiple fronts. A government actor moving through Villa 31 is likely to be stopped by residents seeking answers to pending challenges, answers that these actors may not have. Moreover, social workers, architects, and other government employees behave as arbiters, diffusing tensions between different actors that the PMV involves. This work happens in the street, in homes, and at meetings designed to promote participation and gather information necessary for calibrating and improving the PMV. At the meeting in Galpón 1 that María chose not to attend, residents from Galpón 1 where the PMV pilot project had been rolled out lodged complaints about the drawn-out timeframe of improvements and the quality of work carried out by the cooperatives. In the words of a homeowner who attended the meeting:

“There’s humidity on the wall and because they’re working [the cooperative] on the other side of it, it completely fell apart, everything fell apart, my wall came crumbling down.”77

Another homeowner who attended the meeting continues:

“If in the end we are neighbors and if there are improvements [to homes], it has to be the same for everyone.”78

Open to giving residents a space where they could vent their frustrations and eager to learn about how the program could be improved, social workers and architects listened attentively. At the meeting’s close, Adriana explained:

“Without a doubt, this has been a learning experience. You guys have been the first block, and all of these challenges have helped us learn how to make better decisions for the next blocks where we intervene. The daily challenges we’ve experienced help us a lot as an institution to make better decisions during what is to come. It’s a shame that you’ve had to suffer.”79

GOVERNMENT

Taken together, the above accounts of participation in homebuilding suggest that sources of tension and frustration also produce positive effects. An overarching observation in my field research was that the audience and setting matters when people tell their stories. María’s comment about the meeting she avoided being “more political than technical” seems a case-in-point; in a forum designed to troubleshoot challenges with residents, wherein government actors are cast in a listening role, homeowners will search for the opportunity to effect outcomes of the PMV to their benefit. Thus, however valid their claims, they may not share the benefits of the PMV that they’ve experienced in this setting. Moreover, in my one-on-one interviews with homeowners and other actors, it became clear that some people shared their stories with the hope that I would help them improve their situation, despite my having explained to them ahead of time that I would not be able to provide them with any material benefit for participating in my study. This became evident as some participants continued to mistake me for a government employee, to which I reminded them...
repeatedly that I was not. Finally, sharing their troubles with me seemed to provide participants with a sense of validation for the hardship that they had endured. The above accounts suggest that, despite the challenges of participation with the PMV, behavior related to homebuilding is being channeled through state institutions. Even if homeowners seek to squeeze benefits directly out of cooperatives, their participation at meetings led by the government, their receiving of material resources provided by the state, and the direct interactions that they have with state actors channel their demands through institutions. For homeowners, this means interacting directly with a state whose presence was previously more fettered by local political actors in Villa 31. In the words of Adriana:

“I think the program related to housing upgrades is most profound because it affects the home, or rather, it extends into familial life... thus a positive change has been that, at a minimum... residents recognize that the State exists, that a State that perhaps never arrived before or didn’t arrive as you had hoped it would, finally exists... because when the State changes your home, inside, you say “ah, yes, it does exist.”

Rodolfo adds:

“If the residents don’t permit the improvements, there won’t be integration. If they don’t let the government build streets because they think they’re too narrow, there won’t be integration... to do anything, you need to have participation... otherwise, integration doesn’t exist.”

The PMV also leads to reflection and learning for the actors that it involves. In workshops with the GOPP, for example, residents draw maps of their block and write out a collective and individual history. This history includes a reflection on when they arrived, their impressions, challenges, positive thoughts, and aspirations. Social workers and government employees prompt questions and discussions, providing questionnaires that residents fill out. In the written words of a resident:

“I arrived in 2006. I lived with my spouse and my daughter. When I first arrived at the block, it seemed very ugly to me because the streets seemed so narrow and people were telling me that they rob you. The truth is, I didn’t like this block of the neighborhood. With time, I became accustomed to the neighborhood and to my block. When I arrived, I rented. Afterward, we built our own home with the help of some family members. We felt relieved because I had my own house. I stay in my home at night.”

In the written words of another resident:

“I arrived in 1985. I came with my family. There were some houses in the neighborhood but less on my block [than there are now]. We built our house, little by little and with a lot of effort. We came from Jujuy [a province in the north of Argentina]. My favorite place in my home is my kitchen and the living room that I fixed up and really take care of. I don’t have plants because I don’t have a place to put them, and I don’t have animals because neither do I have a place [for them]. I spend all day [in the neighborhood? at home?]. Sometimes I travel to Jujuy to see my family. What I like about the neighborhood is my block because when something happens to us we all unite to defend our neighborhood.”

Cooperatives and government employees expressed how much they have learned by working on the PMV. Not only is this evident in the changes these actors have produced to the built environment, it came through in their attitudes while on the job. One day a construction worker in Galpón 1 explained that prior to the PMV he had always dedicated himself to odd jobs related to maintenance around the city. He went on to add that the PMV has given him a chance to be in “his space,” wherein he works on improvements to homes that require he hone a more specific set of skills. With respect to government employees, most of them have no prior experience working on integration in the city’s informal settlements. Indeed, the PMV is ambitious in that it pools actors from across the government to roll out a program that most of them have never implemented elsewhere. Of all my interactions with government employees, Adriana was the only one who had worked on a program similar to the PMV, in Medellin. Given this lack of experience, an overarching theme with government employees was how much they had learned while working on the PMV in Villa 31, which suggests that the PMV has led to an improvement in skills.
“I’ve always wanted to provide something better, something different, for my family… so that tomorrow I can say ‘look, this here, this is my house,’… and my family, my daughter, can have something dignified, something of their own.”

- Eduardo, homeowner participating in the PMV

“I have to see how it’s going to turn out… whether I’ll have to pay for the land, that’s what I still don’t understand. Or the lights, for example, I’ll have to pay for what I use, and the water, I’ll have to pay for what I use, and my son recently started working and we have to pay for his lights and his water.”

- Magdalena, homeowner participating in the PMV

“For me, specifically, no [I wouldn’t do the PMV]. As I’m capable, I’d just prefer to do it myself. That’s not the case for many because they don’t know how to do it [the construction work], but for me, for example, I can fix it, I can paint it, because I know how. But for many people, no, they don’t have this advantage, and those are the people that ask for the PMV.”

- Diego, construction worker

“These people here [those that live beneath the highway that have businesses and tenants in their homes] don’t want to move because they’re very comfortable, very comfortable because they’re not even paying for water; they’re not paying for anything. They’re grabbing money without paying taxes on it from their tenants, and it doesn’t benefit them to move. But for us, it doesn’t negatively affect us [being relocated to newly constructed homes inside the villa as part of the integration project], because we don’t have anything [we do not have a business/renters that we derive an income from in our home, thus being relocated would improve our quality of life].”

- Teresa, homeowner

It wasn’t the first time that a fire had originated in a pile of trash in her neighbor’s home. “They thought that we had fire hydrants here,” Teresa explained. For years, she and the other neighbors complained to the government about the unsafe habits of the family next door that had proven once already to be a danger to them all. Social workers and psychologists made no headway in mitigating the situation. As Teresa recalled, “that’s their way of life, you aren’t going to change it.” The second fire began one morning while Teresa was “getting ready to head to the civil registry office” to register her baby. Her husband “opened the curtain, looked through the window, slid it open a bit, and saw the black smoke.” “Fire Teresa! Fire! Get out! Take the baby and get out now!” Although “more than one of the firetrucks showed up without water,” her family had been lucky that the fire department could arrive at all. As Teresa explains, in most areas of the settlement “firetrucks cannot enter because the streets are too narrow.” Not only could a firetruck enter on her block, her home is close to Autopista Illia, making access from above—where firetrucks parked and sprayed water—possible. Twelve hours after her husband noticed smoke emerging from the heap next door, a fireman handed Teresa a piece of paper that condemned her home. “I couldn’t enter my home to live.” The fire had destroyed the side of Teresa’s house facing the lot where her neighbor’s home once stood. What was saved from flames had been left uninhabitable by fumes. She looked at the piece of paper and thought of her three children while the fireman spoke. “But where am I supposed to go?!”

Structures of poverty present risks for all residents of Villa 31. Tapping into electricity lines, overloaded electrical transformers, poor refuse management, and open fires used as a source of heat for food or warmth carry risks. Other habits also have negative externalities for those living in this community. As Teresa points out, building habits in Villa 31 have left streets too narrow for the passage of firetrucks. Moreover, residents complain about narrow streets that make access for ambulances and public transportation services difficult, if not impossible. Homeowners and residents also notice the sometimes-poor quality of work carried out by cooperatives on public spaces, infrastructure projects, or home renovations. These examples uncover the importance of compliance in Villa 31 because mitigating these situations by making improvements to the built environment and providing access to essential services—integration—involves acquiescence on the part of residents. Mitigating the risk of fire requires that electricity, gas, waste management, and water services be improved and normalized, meaning that residents must allow the government to evaluate existing conditions, make improvements,
and charge residents for service delivery. For streets to be widened, existing housing structures, including staircases that protrude into the streets, need to be augmented or moved. For many of these changes to be undertaken, those living in Villa 31 must exercise consent. Homeowners engage with government actors and/or sign a contract that permits construction, whether carried out by construction companies or cooperatives, to begin. Cooperatives and construction companies carrying out site improvements need to comply with standard building and business practices so that adequate resources and technical skills ensure quality construction practices. In short, carrying out the social and urban integration of Villa 31 requires that those living in this community comply with norms that stand to change their ways of life.

But as Teresa’s story also makes clear, people do not necessarily have the means to change their behavior, even when not doing so continues to put themselves and others at risk. Her neighbor’s compulsive hoarding and the fires it ultimately caused were exacerbated by conditions of poverty. Despite multiple attempts by government actors, the family did not change their way of life. This observation prompts further analysis of resident participation, namely, why do those living under conditions of poverty in Villa 31 choose to comply with the program?

The first observation to be made is that social stratification within Villa 31 puts some residents at greater risk than others, and that this can have a positive or negative effect on compliance. For example, extremely poor living conditions could motivate compliance or contribute to feelings of fear that hinder compliance. Structural poverty notwithstanding, there are multiple reasons that residents choose to comply or not comply with the integration project. First, residents may be motivated by economic factors, such as perceiving the regularization of Villa 31 as an investment, or whether one collects rents they do not want normalized. Second, fear of the government may cow residents into complying or lead them to avoid dealing with the government altogether. Third, conflicting interests, such as putting one’s own needs before those of the community, may lead to noncompliance. Fourth, security concerns may motivate residents to comply if they feel that doing so will reduce crime. Fifth, access to materials that enable the continuation of independent building may undermine compliance. Finally, direct contact with the government during the compliance-seeking process may lead residents to comply because such contact may build trust. From the perspective of cooperatives, compliance may be linked to government monitoring and oversight intended to ensure specific business and construction practices. With each of these factors, residents choose to comply based on the perceived costs and perceived benefits of choosing compliance over noncompliance, and vice versa.

**REASONS TO COMPLY**

**Economic:** The PMV offers economic benefits to those that participate. Homeowners are not charged for upgrades made to their homes, and cooperatives, including construction workers, stand to benefit from wages earned on projects. Moreover, homeowners express a desire to continue making investments in their homes, including the ability to pass these investments on to their children. In this sense, for homeowners, compliance with the PMV seemed a natural next step in the progression toward regularizing their tenancy on the land. For those who rent out rooms in their homes on the informal housing market, they may have also been motivated to comply because improvements stand to increase home prices and the rents they can charge tenants.

**Quality of Life:** Homeowners in the PMV, as well as others like Teresa who participate in housing improvement programs, are motivated to comply to improve the quality of their lives. This includes improvements to security as well as renovations to areas of their homes about which they worry they will lack the resources to complete. As Eduardo’s wife Natalia expressed, she was concerned that her daughter would fall off the staircase and was motivated to comply to increase safety conditions for her family:

> “Now it’s more secure for my daughter, for example, the staircases. Before, we didn’t have good staircases,

98 Under the PMV, homeowners must sign a contract in order for construction to begin. Residents participating in other building projects carried out by the state, such as improvements made to Teresa’s home after the fire, have complained to me that the government did not have them sign anything. In this sense, a lack of formal oversight by the government contributes to a culture of informality.

99 I define the compliance-seeking process as the process of government actors soliciting compliance on the part of residents.
we had to enter and exit from outside, and it was super
dangerous, I slipped two times. It’s much more secure
now, for me and for my daughter. I consented [to the
PMV] for this.”

Some homeowners also felt they would never come up
with the funds necessary to complete the construction
of their homes independently.

Security: Related to quality of life, residents also
expressed a desire to improve security in their homes
and in the neighborhood. In the words of Jacinto from
Galpón 1:

“I consented because it’s time that we integrate [the
villa]. We want to pay our taxes, there is a lot of crime
outside [my home]; I want to live peacefully; I want
to have a place [neighborhood] like the people [the
people in the other part of the city?]; I don’t want to
live like this—I don’t like living in fear; with so much
insecurity, robberies, death, there’s so much of it all.
I want to pay taxes as it should be, pay for the house,everything as it should be. And as they offered it to me
[the PMV] it’s good, what they’re doing, yes, to have
lighting, everything—to have a new house [redone
under the PMV], or rather, to live.”

As Eduardo explains:

“It’s the reason that I consented, because if not, I was
going to keep living like this, with all these houses
remaining like they were. I was going to live in an un-
secure house—if there’s a fire, there’s no place for the
firetruck to enter, there’s no access for the firetruck.”

Social Integration: Residents expressed weariness of
being perceived by those outside of Villa 31 as free-rid-
ers who take advantage of their situation. Thus, they
were motivated to comply with the PMV because they
perceived the program to be a part of a broader inte-
gration process, whereby they would pay for services,
such as electricity, gas, and water, earning their right to
live in Villa 31. Eduardo goes on:

“I am in favor [of the integration] because those that
come from outside discriminate against those from
the villa, because we are villeros [“villeros” roughly
translates to “slum dwellers”]. We are the worst for
the people [from outside]. Thus, from the beginning,
the goal for the government was to make the villa an
adequate part of the city, a neighborhood that needs to
become an adequate part of the city.”

Direct Contact with the State: The recent change in
government and formation of SECISYU has brought
government actors, whether employees or high-rank-
ing officials, into direct contact with residents. Home-
owners who participated in the PMV explained that
their decision to do so was influenced by conversations
they had with these government actors. This direct
contact led some residents to believe that the new
government would deliver on the promises it made,
compared to past governments who had made promis-
es with little or no follow-through.

Fear: While respondents did not overtly admit that
fear of the government played a role in their decision
to comply, they did mention that they did not want to
stand against the government.

Visible Changes to the Built Environment: Changes
to the built environment have motivated residents to
comply. For example, many residents who chose not to
participate in the PMV in the first round, or those who
were not offered the opportunity to participate in the
PMV during the first round, approached government
actors upon seeing changes to their neighbors’ homes
and asked if they could participate in the program.

Rating System: Employees working with cooperatives
and presidents of cooperatives are motivated to comply
based on government monitoring. Through a system
of inspections and ratings, government employees,
including architects, social workers, and an official
contracted by the government, perform routine visits
to construction sites—homes and public spaces—
where cooperatives work. These visits include checks
that range from ensuring that workers wear proper
safety equipment to reporting drinking or smoking
marijuana on the job. Cooperatives are then awarded
points based on their overall performance in five cate-
gories: hygiene and security, planning and supervision
of construction, order and cleanliness, quality of work,
and security of workers. The government tracks the
history of points awarded in each week of every month
and provides the cooperative with an average score.
For example, on April 7, 2017, María’s cooperative had
earned a score of 7. There are three ranges of scores:

100 The government official who carries out routine
tests shared a story with me about catching coopera-
tive employees smoking marijuana and drinking on
the job.
Bad (0-3), Regular (4-6), and Good (7-10).  

**REASONS NOT TO COMPLY**

**Economic:** Homeowners who collect rents from those who live in their homes may stand to be adversely affected by the PMV or another home improvement program in Villa 31, incentivizing their noncompliance. This is especially true for those who stand to be displaced by the conversion of the highway into a park. At the time of my field research, those living beneath the highway were being offered newly constructed homes. At the meeting I attended on June 15, 2017 between residents and government employees, the financial and contractual terms of compensation were still uncertain. What was clear, however, is that the government was looking to negotiate the terms of relocation for both homeowners and renters. They were offering new homes to both parties and were open to compensating homeowners who lost second homes or rooms in their homes that they had for rent. Homeowners were adamant that they were not concerned with the plight of renters because renters had not made investments in the home. Moreover, those that live off the rents they collect were unwilling to move. The government mentioned compensating those that currently collect income from renters by reducing the purchase prices of new homes or of the land to which they would be relocated. Regardless, these talks devolved into shouting and yelling on the part of residents who refused to listen completely to proposals being delivered. This is part of the transcript from the meeting:

**Homeowner 1:** “And so what’s the secretariat’s SE-CISYU’s] proposal? Is it to provide a new home for the one that we live in and then compensate us for the one in which the renter lives in, but not provide [us with] another new home?”

**Homeowner 2:** “Ah! And where is my sacrifice!? What I’ve done? Where is my sacrifice?”

**Government Employee:** “You will be compensated.”

**Homeowner 3:** “Where is my sacrifice? Where is my—I’m not going to get back the effort that I put in, what I worked for so that I have what I have now.”

**Government Employee:** “I’ll say it again—”

**Homeowners:** “No. No. No. No.”

**Government Employee:** “I’ll repeat the same thing—”

**Homeowner 5:** “No. As we’ve already told Larreta [Horacio Larreta the Chief of Government of CABA], there will be death here. There will be death here.”

**Government Employee:** “We hope not, but...”

**Homeowner 5:** “We hope? Yes, there will be because the people are going to stay.”

**Government Employee:** “Now, for the home in which one lives, the government will provide a new home, for the home that is rented, there will be compensation for the owner and the renter that lives in that home will be given a new home.”

**Homeowner 5:** “People” here was probably used in a collective sense to include the author of the statement, meaning, “we the people will stand our ground.”
Homeowner 6: “No”

Meanwhile, according to homeowners present at the meeting, renters were more open to relocation. To my knowledge, no renters were present at the meeting I attended.

Political: According to residents and government employees that participated in this study, some residents shied away from the PMV and other home improvement programs for political reasons. Supposedly, their loyalties to other political parties, instead of the PRO, caused them to avoid entering negotiations with the government over the integration project.

Conflicting Personal Interests: Residents were less willing to comply if the terms of integration stood to alter a part of their situation for the worse. For example, homeowners were unwilling to give up personal living space so that streets could be widened. Another example relates to the challenge of displacement for renters: in a sector of the settlement where the PMV has more recently been rolled out, the government proposed to homeowners that they allow renters to remain in their homes during construction and agree to not raise the cost of rents once the project has been completed. In one case, the government approached a woman who has a four-story home with many rooms for rent in one of the older sectors of the settlement and asked if she'd be willing to let displaced residents rent from her under these rent-controlled conditions, a request she told me she denied.

Means to Keep Building Without State Help: It seems that those who have the skills to build and/or continue to maintain access to building materials have a disincentive to comply. These may be construction workers with experience in building and/or those with the resources necessary for contracting their own labor and purchasing materials. In one case, a woman who was against the government’s integration project when I spoke with her at the beginning of my field research added an additional floor to her home (a third floor) within the span of six months. This was a product of her ability to continue purchasing materials on the black market and to continue constructing her home according to existing norms. Under newer home improvement programs that the government will be carrying out, the government will provide resources directly to residents, so they can build on their own.

Costly Construction and Business Practices: From the perspective of cooperatives, compliance has been costly. It requires training, oversight, and conformance to new business norms. For example, the government has recently begun to require that cooperatives pay their employees by check versus by cash.

Uncertainty/Unwillingness to Pay: As residents and government employees explained, the costs of purchasing land and paying utilities are separate costs that are not associated with the PMV. Notwithstanding, residents often considered such costs when deciding whether to comply with the PMV. On the one hand, residents I interviewed who participated in the PMV chose to comply with the program—which they viewed as complying with the integration project in general—despite not knowing what the costs of purchasing land and paying utilities would amount to. On the other hand, my respondents claimed that some residents chose not to comply with the PMV and other policies because they do not want to pay for access to public utilities, such as water, gas, and electricity, nor the land on which they live.

FROM AUTONOMY TOWARD HETERONOMY THROUGH COMPLIANCE

As residents comply with policies designed to integrate Villa 31, they begin to forfeit a way of life underpinned by autonomous individual and community decision-making. Improvements to homes through the PMV come with terms and conditions outlined in a contract that homeowners participating in the program sign and promise to adhere to, including the promise that they will not continue construction on their own. Not all participants in the PMV adhere to the terms of the contract. There are inconsistencies on both sides, by state and nonstate actors. Moreover, homeowners sometimes intentionally break with the terms of the contract when the PMV does not go as they had hope/as it was planned.
lations that guide resident behavior with respect to the use of such spaces. For example, in a meeting in the sector YPF over a newly-renovated park, residents met with government employees to discuss maintenance of, and hours of accessibility to, the public space. While they were involved, through participation, in decisions about how the space would be used, outcomes of decisions made were not only determined by actors within the community, but also by state actors that guided the direction of the conversation; indeed, these actors brought the issue up to begin with. By complying with these policies, residents of Villa 31 allow their behavior to be influenced, and indeed governed, by institutions. This represents a shift toward heteronomy because institutional structures influence outcomes by reducing the types and quantity of decisions that individuals can make.

One of the consequences of this shift has been the weakening of local power. As residents comply with integration policies, their reasons and willingness to engage in collective action change. For example, on a block with forty homes, if half of the homeowners consent to the PMV, the individual interests of those living on the block no longer align as they had before; rather, actors may coalesce with others who participated in the PMV, others who did not, or find less reason to engage in collective demand-making altogether. In this way, compliance may be used by the state to fractionalize and divide local spheres of power. Thus, a second consequence of compliance has been the exclusion of those who either chose not to comply or were not given the opportunity to participate in a given policy. As such, the integration of Villa 31 creates winners and losers through compliance, and state actors may select residents who absorb fewer resources, diminishing the transaction costs of “integration” as much as possible. In such a case, those who are better situated and choose to comply stand to benefit more from policies slated to include them, while those who are not and do not may lose a way of life that they preferred as others comply and norms change. Indeed, compliance may be a first step toward exposing this community to market forces and institutions that overrun it.

CONCLUSION

“To integrate would be to bring the neighborhood up to the same level as the rest of the city, with the same rights and the same obligation...obligation and commitment as a citizen, not just painting houses, or rather, integration includes commitment and obligation; the government is that which provides for me, and as a citizen there is that which corresponds to me.”

-Eduardo, homeowner participating in the PMV

“To integrate, if we are going to talk seriously, would be to demolish everything and build homes for everyone and streets for everyone.”

-Rodolfo, president of a cooperative

“To integrate is to impose a new way of life...”

-Adriana, government social worker

The forced expulsions began at 9am on February 24, 2018. Police and government employees from SECI SYU “entered the homes” of residents living in “Cristo Obrero,” where they used the “repressive force of the state to violently remove” them. The order to remove these residents and to demolish their homes to make way for the new highway was given by the Jefe de Gobierno de la Ciudad, Horacio Rodríguez Larreta, by Decreto No 61/2018, after residents refused to move into new homes constructed in the sector Containera. Back in October, residents had carried out demonstrations at the Portal, the government’s offices located at the entrance to the settlement. Standing in front of the large communal desk where employees of SECI SYU convene to work, residents held a sign that read, “dignified homes, no tin [roof], no plaster, not for payment.” Despite concerns over building materials and being charged for a home they felt was built without their input toward design or materials, the government would act to ensure that the construction of the new highway could begin. According to an article published by Observatorio del Derecho a La Ciudad (Observatory of the Right to the City), police “sprayed some residents that protested with pepper spray.” In a video that captured the encounter, residents looked on as their homes were demolished.

108 My interlocutors sent me a video shot on the day of the removals. In the video, it appears that construction workers contracted by the government were the actors who demolished residents’ homes.
our home, they were going to take away my children.”

The result of a bargaining failure, the government’s recent decree authorizing the forced removal of these residents is a sharp contrast to Ley 3.343, which states that "the implementation of the re-integration project will not involve the forced removal of anyone." As the woman at the scene explains, “the government never wanted to arrive at an agreement with me.”

As “integration” policies continue to advance through Villa 31, state actors continue to confront, and indeed challenge, a way of life. The violent and coercive removal of residents whose homes stood in the path of the proposed highway is the ultimate affront to local norms. As evidence in this essay has shown, such norms have grown out of local conditions. First, collective action and policies that have resulted in residents establishing de facto tenancy on the land has led to autonomous individual and collective decision-making. Second, economic opportunity tied to Villa 31’s prime location, as well as policies that have channeled resources toward building projects, have privileged particular local political actors—who shape the distribution of capital across this community—over others. Amassing spatial capital, residents seeking to improve their quality of life, and indeed, to plan for their futures, have become invested in the built environment. The commercialization of the housing market in Villa 31 is a prime example of how some residents have experienced relative upward mobility as a result of these conditions. Thus, if spatial capital and the commercialization of the housing market in Villa 31 are evidence of piecemeal gains toward a better quality of life, they also raise the costs of compliance, particularly when policies do not align with local interests. Indeed, given these conditions, “participation”—guided by policy outcomes that the state, backed by MDBs, sought to predetermine—has failed to convince residents, particularly those who perceive that they stand to lose from such policies, to comply. The devastating example of the relocation of Autopista Illia not only shows how affecting or resisting change in contested space requires power, but also that residents’ power to shape integration policies in Villa 31 is limited.

Earlier, I posed the question, How do state and nonstate actors negotiate the integration of Villa 31? The evidence presented in this essay has shown that the answer to this question depends on the extent to which integration policies do the following: effect the way that residents live, undermine interests of those targeted by policies, rely on incremental change, and involve local political actors. The trajectory of the PMV compared to resettlement for the proposed highway brings these four crucial factors into sharp relief. First, whereas the PMV brought changes to how residents live, resettlement policies stand to change how as well as where residents live. It’s essential to recall that many of the challenges with the PMV stem from residents’ concerns over the quality of materials and work carried out (how they live). Moreover, many residents were unwilling to move out of their homes while improvements were carried out (where they live). Both of these concerns were echoed in the noncompliance of residents who stood to be displaced due the proposed highway. Second, because of the rents that some residents collect, the success of the PMV depended on protecting the local interests of homeowners who have made such investments. Other homeowners expressed that they do not want to move because they fear an increase in housing costs or living costs associated with resettlement. These too, were concerns that residents living beneath the highway adamantly expressed. Third, whether home improvements have led residents to recognize a social contract with the state, or construction workers to carry out improvements according to new rules and regulations, participation and compliance under the PMV have led to incremental, versus sweeping, changes to the local way of life. Finally, the PMV relied on local political actors to gain entry to Villa 31 as well as facilitate contact with residents, which linked those who stood to benefit from its economic incentives to the PMV. Conversely, resettlement policies do not award local construction cooperatives contracts to carry out work related to demolition or the construction of new homes. If the PMV presented opportunities for local actors to negotiate with state actors, resettlement policies circumvent the will of local actors. In the absence of compliance, negotiation over integration policies gave way to tyranny.

It’s also essential to reflect on the role that the PMV has had within the broader scope of integration projects being carried out in Villa 31. As the policy documents briefly analyzed in this essay show, integration policies have been couched in rhetoric that touts the importance of local community participation. By drawing cooperatives and homeowners into the implementation process, the PMV is perhaps the best—albeit far from perfect—example of resident participation in the implementation of integration policies. Even the other projects, such as improvements to public spaces, that cooperatives are involved with do not bring other
residents into the implementation process to the same extent, not only because participation is costly, but also because other residents do not exercise the same control over space with respect to plazas and parks as they do over their own homes. Thus, the PMV, with its visibility from both inside and outside of Villa 31, is a flagship standard of participation that other integration projects fail to uphold. Within the broader context of integration policies, compliance with the PMV has also been key. Compliance creates a division in Villa 31 between those whose interests are linked to state-led policies and those whose interests are not. In this way, compliance stands to erode a legacy of autonomous individual and collective decision-making in Villa 31 as local actors are drawn to the material and nonmaterial benefits of the PMV.

What are the broader lessons about urban informality and integration to be drawn from this essay? On the one hand, local control in informal settings may provide much-needed structures of governance. A prime example would be the arrival of government employees under the newly formed SECISYU, many of whom lacked experience working in informal settings. By responding to local pressure and designing policies “in harmony with the norms of the neighborhood,” the government accommodated local actors such as María, Atena, and Rodolfo, who have continued to shape the distribution of capital across their community. By doing so, these actors not only underwrite their own livelihoods and those of their followers, they perpetuate a system of local politics that others in this community depend on to insulate themselves from the risks of poverty, such as hunger, unemployment, and a lack of access to basic city services. In the context of recent expulsions that show how executive decrees are used to override laws, local power in marginalized communities may be essential for protecting its residents, not only from a state that fails to arrive, but also from one whose arrival, which comes in the form of a wrecking ball, is unjust. On the other hand, local interests may conflict with policy outcomes desired by state actors, or even those in this community. As such, if equity—bringing Villa 31 up to the same conditions and standards as elsewhere in the city—is the policy goal, respecting the local way of life may result in a failure to ensure the greater good of the community. For example, as residents become locked into disputes over rights to space, such as with the widening of streets or the relocation of stairways, the transaction costs of ensuring access of ambulances and firetrucks increase and decisions about how to improve the overall quality of life for this community devolve into stalemate.

Urbanization in the Global South, along with automation, climate change, and population growth, is one of the most pressing challenges facing the twenty-first century. Although lacking institutional norms that align with those in other parts of the city (such as land use, property, and planning), informal communities produce norms of their own. Such norms, far from being divorced from those in other parts of the city, are conditioned by them. If housing elsewhere in the city is unaffordable to large swaths of the population, demand compounded by proximity to economic opportunity and laws that protect the rights of squatter communities create the conditions for norms of collective action, undergirded by access to land, to emerge. Within these informal communities, the outgrowth of this activity has been social and economic development. One of the great ironies of integration policies is that, by “formalizing” economic and social activity, they tend to erode existing norms that have kindled such development. To the extent that sustainable societies are upheld by norms endogenous to them, true integration, versus imposition, should drive development, lest such policies snuff them out.
Endnotes

1 In interview with author on June 15, 2017.
5 Secretaría de Integración Social y Urbana, “Plan Integral Retiro-Puerto: Evaluación de Impacto Ambiental, Terminos de Referencia.”
6 Ibid.
13 Ibid, pp. 64-65.
14 Martha Inés Sierra Moncada, El programa de mejoramiento de vivienda, una aproximacion desde la investigacion cualitativa (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2006).
34 Agustin (non-government architect, working with cooperative) in interview with the author, July 14, 2017.
35 Agustin (non-government architect, working with cooperative) in interview with the author, July 14, 2017.
37 Atena (president of cooperative) in interview with the author, June 15, 2017.
38 In interview with the author on January 12, 2018.
39 Agustin (non-government architect, working with cooperative) in interview with the author, July 14, 2017.
40 Agustin (María’s architect), in interview with the author on July 14, 2017.
41 These interactions occurred while engaging in participant observation on June 15, 2017.
42 These details were confirmed across interviews, with both state and nonstate actors.
43 I observed her touting the program while engaging in participant observation. She also described these actions to me when I interviewed her on June 15, 2017.
44 This claim was corroborated by the president of the cooperative as well as by numerous government employees.
45 Rodolfo (president of construction cooperative) in interview with author on August 2, 2017.
46 In interview with author on June 5, 2017.
47 María (president of construction cooperative/local representative) in interview with author on June 5, 2017.
48 Conclusions derived from participant observation, interviews, and meeting minutes prepared by government employees.
49 This was confirmed across interviews with state and nonstate actors.
50 Agustin.
51 Atena (president of cooperative/local representative) in interview/participant observation with the author in June 2017.
52 María (president of cooperative/local representative) in interview with the author on June 5, 2017.
53 This was revealed to me across multiple interviews and participant observation. One example would be manzana 22, one of the oldest blocks in the villa.
54 Rodolfo in interview with the author on August 2, 2017.
55 In interview with the author on June 26, 2017.
56 In interview with the author on August 2, 2017.
57 In interview with the author on August 7, 2017.
58 Meeting attended by the author on June 17, 2017.
60 Diego, in interview with the author on June 22, 2017.
61 Diego, in interview with the author on June 22, 2017.
62 Diego, in interview with the author on June 22, 2017.
63 María while involved in a discussion with the author in June of 2017.
64 Paco (government employee), in an interview with the author on August 3, 2017.
65 Eduardo, in interview with the author on June 19, 2017.
66 Adriana, in interview with the author on July 20, 2017.
67 Magdalena, in interview with the author on June 26, 2017.
68 Doña (resident) in interview with the author on August 4, 2017.
69 This was expressed across interviews with homeowners as well as at a meeting I attended between the government and residents of Galpón 1 on June 17, 2017.
70 Eduardo, in interview with the author on June 19, 2017.
71 Atena (president of cooperative/locally elected representative) in interview with the author on June 15, 2017.
72 Beatriz (member of cooperative working in maintenance and waste recollection) in interview with the author on June 15, 2017.
73 Unnamed participant of group interview on August 2, 2017.
74 Rodolfo, in interview with the author on August 2, 2017.
75 In discussion with Adriana while engaged in participant observation in July of 2017.
76 Sebastian (government architect) in interview with the author on June 19, 2017.
77 Comment from unnamed resident number 1 in meeting authored attended in Galpon 1 in Villa 31 on June 17, 2017.
78 Comment from unnamed resident number 2 in
meeting authored attended in Galpon 1 in Villa 31 on June 17, 2017.

79 Comment from Adriana (government social worker) in meeting authored attended in Galpon 1 in Villa 31 on June 17, 2017.
80 Adriana (government social worker) in interview with the author on July 20, 2017.
81 Rodolfo, in interview with the author on August 2, 2017.
82 Unnamed resident number 3.
83 Unnamed resident number 4.
84 In interview with the author on June 19, 2017.
85 In interview with the author on June 26, 2017.
86 In interview with the author on June 22, 2017.
87 In interview with the author on July 27, 2017.
88 Natalia, in interview with the author on June 19, 2017.
89 Jacinto, in interview with the author on June 17, 2017.
90 Eduardo, in interview with the author on June 19, 2017.
91 Eduardo, in interview with the author on June 19, 2017.
92 Meeting attended in Galpon 1 of Villa 31 by the author on June 15, 2017.
93 Jonatan Baldiviezo and Maria Eva Koutsovitis, “Larreta Desaloja Ilegalmente a Familias del Barrio Carlos Mugica (Villa 31-31Bis).”
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ILLIBERALISM IN THE EUROPEAN UNION: ESTABLISHMENT APPROACHES TO A DEMOCRATIC CRISIS

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ABSTRACT
In recent years, Europe has been the stage for the rising star of illiberalism. Elections in France, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Italy, and the United Kingdom have exposed the risk of nationalist illiberalism within the European Union. Since its inception, the European Union has been a bastion of Western liberal democracy, with its “Integration Method” of democratization lauded by global leaders and scholars. As the European Union faces a threat to democracy within its own Member States, how will it attempt to correct behavior and prevent backsliding into illiberalism?

This paper will describe and evaluate the methods by which the European Union seeks to influence policies and behaviors in its Member States, termed post-accession leverage. Constructing two case studies, this paper traces the illiberal activity within Hungary and Poland, and the corresponding attempts of post-accession leverage by EU entities. This paper argues that EU post-accession leverage mechanisms can be differentiated by formal and informal pressures spanning economic, political, and judicial mechanisms. Among the tools in the EU’s toolbox, this paper found that the efficacy of EU leverage is dependent on Member States’ domestic political and economic factors, with economic pressures being most effective during periods of economic vulnerability.

In recent years, there has been a crisis in global democracy. The rise of nationalist, far-right parties and governments have swept Europe into a new tide of illiberalism. In Western Europe, the drift towards the nationalist right has taken shape in the success and notoriety of politicians like Marine Le Pen in France and Geert Wilders in the Netherlands. Even the United Kingdom’s exit from the European Union indicates the far-reaching trend of conservative nationalism. In Eastern Europe, a number of the formerly communist Member States have become hotbeds of illiberalism within the European Union, where fringe nationalist parties and policies have integrated themselves into the center of state structures.

The illiberal grip on Eastern European Member States creates political friction in the dynamics between the EU and its Members. The European Union has been lauded for its effective spread of liberal democracy and its inclusion of civil protections and liberal principles in its laws. However, the illiberalism sweeping through Europe presents an existential question about the European Union's authority and ability to maintain liberal democracy within its borders.

This paper will explore the European Union's attempts to influence and penalize its Member States' illiberal policies. What post-accession leverage mechanisms does the European Union employ with Member States to attempt to correct illiberal behavior? The post-accession period refers to the time after a candidate country becomes a Member State; this period is significant not only for its full membership rights, but also because it marks the official completion of the European Union's legal and economic conditions for candidates. The term “post-accession leverage mechanism” refers to both formal and informal pressures exacted by the European Union on Member States, including the punitive infringement procedure and implicit economic pressures. Once the European Union engages in corrective measures with a Member State, what domestic and European factors limit the European Union's ability to contain illiberalism? The issues of Member States’ quality of democracy within the European Union and the European Union’s ability to maintain liberal democracy are critical to understanding current and future European Union internal relations.

LITERATURE REVIEW
The question of the European Union’s democr-
ic merits is not a new area of study. There are both strong critics and strong proponents of the European Union’s impact on regional democracy. With the recent groundswells of illiberal movements, parties, and Member State governments, the conceptual debate has taken on real consequences for the European people.

Beneath the tensions stirring in the European Union lies a greater global tension that warrants a brief summary: the dissonance between liberalism and illiberalism in democracies. For this paper, in accordance with the common academic definition, liberalism is the political system characterized by “the rule of law, a separation of powers, and the protection of basic liberties.”

In contrast, an illiberal democracy is an elected regime that lacks or actively undermines institutional and individual liberties. In The Rise of Illiberal Democracy, Fareed Zakaria argues that the global spread of democracy does not necessarily spread liberalism. Zakaria’s distinct separation of democracy and liberalism ultimately blames democratization before development of liberalism as the central cause for rising illiberal democratic regimes. In Zakaria’s framework, the establishment of electoral democracy does not necessarily lead to a stable liberal democracy. Although in Liberalism and Democracy: Can’t Have One without the Other Plattner builds on Zakaria’s separation of liberalism and democracy and argues that electoral democracy is a precondition for liberalism. The crux of the two arguments lies in the temporal placement of electoral democratization and the separate treatment liberalization. Both arguments emphasize the need for liberalism and electoral democracies as two distinct structures of a stable liberal democracy; however, they diverge on the issue of early electoral democratization as the determining factor for the later appearance of illiberal democratic regimes.

The distinction between democracy and liberalism is important for understanding the European Union’s current problem. Both Zakaria and Plattner identify a temporal and ideological issue within the spread of democracy that potentially lays the groundwork for future illiberalism in the regime. The European Union has a unique method of democratization, commonly referred to as the Integration Model. The Integration Model is democratization through European Union membership. In order for candidate states to become Members, they must undergo intensive processes of legal adherence to EU norms and market liberalization, the opening of capital market, to become liberal democracies compatible with the European Union. In Europe Undivided, Vachudova describes the membership accession process in three key terms: meritocracy, active leverage, and passive leverage.

In this approach to the European Union’s Integration Model, countries have the means, supervision, and incentive to become liberal democracies.

The meritocratic nature of the membership process manifests itself as oversight and yearly reports that show advancement towards membership with progress towards full compliance with EU laws and standards. As a part of this process, candidate countries must integrate the EU legal system, called the Acquis Communautaire, as well as the additional requirement of the Copenhagen Criteria, in which many of the protections for ethnic groups are implemented through legal safeguards for human rights. The three principles of the Copenhagen Criteria include institutional democratic stability, open market economies, and adherence to EU standards. The Copenhagen Criteria summarizes the liberalizing process driven by inherent benefit to EU Membership; adherence to the legal demands of the Acquis Communautaire and the Copenhagen Criteria brings candidates closer to becoming full Members, and therefore closer to the economic benefit of the European market. In line with Vachudova’s conceptualization of the EU’s leverage over candidate states, the European Union’s vast market provides implicit encouragement for candidates to fully comply with EU rules. The implicit value of the EU’s economic ecosystem was a particularly significant encouragement for democratization in the post-Soviet states working to become Members in the mid-2000s, who lacked the open and healthy economic structures and activity after decades under USSR rule.

The existing understandings of the Integration Model, and arguments for its success, are important for this research because the illiberal governments within the European Union undermine two core beliefs about the relationship between the EU and its Member States: membership guarantees liberal democracy; the European Union’s economic appeal is enough to secure high commitment levels in current and potential Member States. Dimitrova and Pridham also analyze the European Union’s Integration Model in International Actors and Democracy Promotion in Central and Eastern Europe, where they identify the economic and political appeal of the EU as a significant factor in the effectiveness of the dual membership-democratization process. Essentially, the economic pull of the
European Union overrides the conditionality of adherence to the Acquis Communautaire and Copenhagen Criteria. So, while the conditionality of EU Membership is high and requires sweeping, years-long reform, the economic promise of the European Market provides enough encouragement for candidates to carry out those changes fully until the reward of Membership.

In this framework, the Integration Model situates liberalism as contingent on the political and economic allure of the European Union. Dimitrova and Pridham also highlight the temporality of the accession process as a driving factor of commitment. The long duration of the membership process puts pressure on candidates to fulfill the conditions and wards against stalemates and total fallouts. The various elements of contingency and commitment discussed in the literature surrounding the Integration Model emphasize the significance of pre-accession processes, while assuming consistency in the post-accession relationships. The Integration Model’s high conditionality vanishes upon the candidate’s entry into the European Union. As a Member State, a country is not subject to the same leverages and conditions that function to secure liberal democracy in candidate states.

Democratic backsliding within the European Union despite the meritocratic and highly conditional membership process is at the crux of the problem in Eastern Europe today. The EU addresses democratic backsliding, or the rise of illiberal democracies, through post-accession leverage mechanisms, or the various legal and social tools the EU uses to correct illiberal behavior in Member States. The issue of democratic backsliding is discussed in Sedelmeier’s Anchoring Democracy from Above? The European Union and Democratic Backsliding in Hungary and Romania after Accession. Sedelmeier argues that partisan politics and weak normative consensus limits the European Union’s ability to penalize infringing members and use the Article 7 sanctioning mechanism that revokes a Member State’s vote or takes away other Membership rights. Article 7 of the Treaty of the European Union, while it has not been officially invoked and carried out to fruition, is commonly known as the most severe punishment the EU can exert against a Member State, as there is no established mechanism to expel a state from the EU. Sedelmeier also identifies three alternative means of attempted behavior-shaping by the European Union: social pressure, infringement procedures, and issue linkages. Infringement procedures, like Article 7, are an official legal mechanism exerted by the EU; the mechanism consists of a legal process designed to identify Member State violations with EU law and resolve them. In the cases of Hungary and Romania, Sedelmeier found that changes to Romania’s illiberal practices were potentially a result of increased vulnerability to economic pressure from the European Union, although attempts to correct illiberal behavior were curbed mainly by partisanship within the European Parliament. The inclusion of European Parliament politics contextualizes the decision-making and European-Member State relationships in a political environment, rather than a vacuum.

Distinguishing types of post-accession leverage in conjunction with analyzing domestic factors are integral to the inquisition into democratic backsliding in the European Union. Like Sedelmeier, Iusmen in EU Leverage and Democratic Backsliding in Central and Eastern Europe seeks to contextualize the EU’s efforts to correct behavior in Member States. In Iusmen’s approach to intervention, it is necessary that a set of domestic political factors align for a country to be amenable to European Union influence. In the case of Romania, Iusmen identifies three main domestic factors that influenced the European Union’s attempts at corrective pressures: political miscalculations, coalition tensions, and opportunistic actions. Altogether, the critical focus is on domestic political disorganization and self-interest as conditions that made Romaniapliant to EU corrective pressures. According to Iusman, illiberal actors in Member States can be influenced if they are concerned about loss of power, either within a coalition or with the electorate.

The relationship between EU post-accession leverage and domestic factors extends beyond self-interest and political vulnerability. There are multifaceted political and economic relationships involved in EU-Member State corrective interactions. In A Test of European Union Post-Accession Influence, Gherghina and Soare formulate post-accession strategies based on the assumption of Member State commitment. For example, in contrast with the other analyses of post-accession leverage, Gherghina and Soare suggest an additive approach to influence. In this additive approach to EU intervention, increased funding and socialization are meant to bring straying members closer to the political and economic community of the EU. This argument differs from the other descriptions of post-accession leverage that highlight the threat of benefit loss and social alienation as means of influence.
However, Gherghina and Soare acknowledge the role of decreased funding in shaping Member State behavior. They note that in Romania’s case, their status as one of the poorest Member States has made the concern of reduced EU funding a tool for post-accession conditionality. Connecting to Iusmen’s understanding of domestic factors as conditions for effective influence, Romania’s political and economic status as a low-earner made it particularly more pliant to EU intervention.

In addition to partisanship connections between Member States and the European Parliament that can prevent full implementation of post-accession leverage, political complications within the EU also strain the corrective relationship with illiberal Member States. Gherghina and Soare focus on the impact of political disagreements within the European Parliament rather than partisan dynamics discussed by Sedelmeier. Their research found that conflicting political interpretations of illiberal violation hindered EU pressure. There was also an issue of institutional voice; the EU’s various entities and political actors had difficulty sharing a common position. This kind of political inconsistency within the EU expresses the reality of deliberation, but also illustrates the negative impact of fragmentation on EU intervention. Overall, politicization of penalty procedures hinder the European Union’s authority and ability to correct illiberal behavior.

Ideological domestic factors are an important dimension of evaluating the efficacy of EU influence on Member States. Gherghina and Soare argue that post-accession compliance to EU norms and values is couched in a desire to be a high-performing, respectable Member State. In this perspective, commitment to the community begets commitment to EU norms and values. While Gherghina and Soare’s concept of a respectable Member State reinforces the earlier ideas of political and economic appeal outweighing the conditionality of membership, it also seems to be based on the assumption that there is a post-accession meritocracy or rewards system for well-behaving Member States. A defining characteristic of European Union membership is the lack of a formalized internal rewards system for compliant behavior. Rewards for compliance is a main attribute of the pre-accession political landscape, in which candidates are rewarded with EU membership after demonstrated progress and adherence. Additionally, the theory that Member States are driven to commitment and good behavior by respectability and community approval excludes the role of Euroscepticism in the Member States undergoing nationalist trends.

Within the issue of the European Union’s post-accession influence, there is also the matter of the various supervisory and punitive entities and mechanisms within the European Union. For the purpose of this paper, two entities will be discussed as they appear in the extant literature: the infringement procedure and Article 7. As mentioned earlier, the infringement procedure is the standard structural instrument for behavior correction. The infringement procedure is a multi-step judicial process that leads to the European Court of Justice and involves multiple opportunities for Member States to settle their cases through early correction. Scholars’ evaluations of the infringement procedure vary slightly in terms of its overall effectiveness. In Can courts rescue national democracy? Judicial safeguards against democratic backsliding in the EU, Blauberger and Keleman argue that judicial processes alone are not adequate tools for halting or preventing democratic backsliding. They suggest that political intervention, such as social pressure and sanctions, in conjunction with the infringement procedure is necessary for any actual influence over a Member State. In Fines against member states: An effective new tool in EU infringement proceedings?, Falkner acknowledges the difficulty of penalization within the existing infringement procedure framework and outlines the “hard” and “soft” enforcement tools employed by the EU during infringement. Falkner finds that while judicial processes alone are ineffective, the concurrent use of “soft pressure” in the form of social shaming is also ultimately ineffective. Both Falkner and Blauberger et al. argue for a diversification of the EU’s pressure mechanisms used during infringement proceedings, but also recognize the importance of judicial penalties in Member State behavior correction.

Article 7 is a pivotal instrument in the landscape of EU influence, penalty, and behavior correction in its Member States. Different from the other judicial processes or economic sanctions, Article 7 penalizes offending Member States by suspending EU voting rights. On the issue of Article 7’s role in post-accession leverage, Gherghina and Soare argue that difficulties with implementation and operability, as well as fragmented inter-institutional consensus and political dynamics hinders the credibility of Article 7 and the EU’s ability to safeguard liberal democratic standards.
7 penalty and the political dimension of “going nuclear” plays a large role in the EU’s reluctance to trigger the Article 7 proceedings. In Political safeguards against democratic backsliding in the EU: the limits of material sanctions and the scope of social pressure, Sedelmeier frames Article 7 as the ultimate form of material leverage, or membership-based leverage. Besides the vast political obstacles to triggering Article 7, Sedelmeier argues that material leverage loses its efficacy in the face of determined illiberal Member States because the threat of losing EU rights, membership, and funding do not necessarily register to the illiberal leaders, whose main concern is maintaining power. Despite the literature’s variance in opinion on the effectiveness of social pressure, Sedelmeier suggests that social pressure, especially through formalized instruments that monitor Member States, is most effective when applied consistently and thoroughly. Sedelmeier’s discussion of illiberal governments’ impenetrability in the face of material leverage will be important in this paper’s contribution to the understanding of illiberal Member States’ resistance to the EU’s ideological authority.

The arguments put forth by scholars studying the European Union’s strategies of influence outline both the mechanisms and limitations of post-accession leverage. There are economic, judicial and social pressures that the European Union can deploy in attempt to correct illiberal behavior. Limitations of the EU’s ability to influence Member States are rooted in European partisanship and concerns over post-accession Member State commitment. When analyzing relations between the European Union and individual Member States, certain domestic factors are also significant indicators of limitation or amenability. Political fragmentation and economic vulnerability are two main domestic circumstances identified in the literature that increase the likelihood of compliance. However, the literature does not clearly explore the domestic factors that may make compliance less likely.

In contribution to the literature, this paper will focus on the limitations of EU post-accession corrective behavior due to domestic factors in conjunction with institutional shortcomings. This paper will also analyze the impact of political discreditation of the European Union by illiberal governments on the EU’s attempts of post-accession leverage. As the political landscape in Eastern and Central Europe continues to develop, it is important that academia reacts and adapts to changes in the state of democracy.

METHODS AND DATA
In order to research the European Union’s post-accession leverage against illiberal Member States, this paper will take a qualitative case-study approach. The hypotheses of this study hinge on the terminology of soft and hard, or informal and formal, pressures that were outlined in the literature review. The cases for this study will include Hungary and Poland. The two Member States were selected as case studies because both current governments have earned the attention of the worldwide press for their policies, experienced massive protests, and have been subject to a great degree of EU scrutiny.

There are three main hypotheses for this study, all of which pertain to the role of domestic factors on the given set of known mechanisms of EU influence.

H1: If the EU is exerting both judicial and economic pressures, illiberal behavior can only be corrected if the Member State is economically vulnerable or if the incumbent government is politically vulnerable.

H2: If the incumbent government’s delegates to the European Parliament have strategic value to their party caucus, the EU will not be able to fully exert economic and/or social pressures.

H3.A: When the EU exerts post-accession pressure, if it includes ideology-based social pressure, determined illiberal governments will not modify their behavior.

H3.B: The more the EU utilizes ideology-based social pressure, the more likely the Member States’ incumbent illiberal government will be to resist the EU.

The hypotheses above are not mutually exclusive, but rather potentially compounded to illustrate the full political and economic landscape of post-accession maintenance of liberal democracy.

The independent variables throughout this study will be the type of EU pressure, domestic Member State economic factors, and Member State political factors. The types of EU pressure include social, economic, and judicial, which refers to the infringement process. Domestic economic factors will measure economic vulnerability with common indicators, such as unemployment, annual percent GDP growth, and deficit to GDP. Political factors for Member States pertain to the Member State’s relationship with the European Union.
Parliament (i.e. any party loyalty or advantageousness), the domestic status of the main illiberal actors (i.e. internal power shifts, election loss, coalition conflict), and any significant leaders’ statements on illiberality and European politics.

The dependent variable will be compliance to EU influence and quality of democracy. This will be measured by observable changes in behavior, such as reversing an illiberal policy after exertion of EU pressure, and the V-DEM liberal democracy score. The V-DEM database offers a nuanced index that tracks liberal democracy, which includes several electoral, social, and political indicators. The purpose of utilizing V-DEM is to measure specifically liberal democracies because this paper focuses on the manifestation of illiberal democracies. While compliance does not necessarily directly equate to enhanced quality of democracy, compliance to EU norms and values relates to the correction of illiberal behavior. Consistently low scores on the liberal democracy index may also indicate worsening of illiberalism despite surface-level, observable changes in behavior.

Data for the Hungary and Poland cases will focus on episodes of illiberal activity since 2004, after both case countries were granted EU membership. Hungary and Poland are the chosen cases for study because they are Member States with notable illiberal behavior. Moreover, both cases have had illiberal governments, not just fringe parties or other sub-national actors. It is important to note that while the case countries are in Eastern and Central Europe, this study is not aimed at making a specific argument about democracy in all Eastern European Member States.

Data for the case studies will come from news articles and various databases. The tracing of illiberal events and behavior will be cited from news articles from major sources like the BBC, The Guardian, The EU Observer, The New York Times, and the Financial Times. Electoral data used to track the domestic political circumstances of the illiberal actors will come from the online database Election Resources, with supporting information coming from contemporary news coverage of the elections. Information on EU statements and activity will come from a range of online databases from the EU’s network of websites and resources, such as the database on press releases, infringement processes, Parliament members, and annual funding. The economic factors of GDP growth and unemployment will be sourced from the World Bank database on national economies. The national deficit to GDP indicator is from the EU’s statistical resource Eurostat. The liberal democracy score is based on the annual V-DEM liberal democracy indicator.

HUNGARY
This section will analyze illiberal activity within Hungary since its entry into the EU in 2004 and the European Union’s mechanisms of post-accession intervention against democratic backsliding. First, I will briefly describe the historical underpinnings of Hungary’s nationalist illiberalism. Then, I will trace the illiberal activity in Hungary, based on the ways in which FIDESZ has violated the laws, norms, and values of EU liberal democracy. This section will define episodes of illiberal activity including constitutional reform, the refugee crisis response, and the marginalization of civil society and the press. The following subsections will discuss the interactions between Hungary and the European Union’s various post-accession leverage mechanisms. I will divide those sections into analysis of “Hard Pressure,” the judicial penalty system, and “Soft Pressure,” economic and social pressures. The bifurcation of “hard” and “soft” pressures follows the research of Falkner and Vachudova, both of whom categorize EU post-accession leverage mechanisms.

The next section will identify and discuss the domestic factors that predispose Hungary to be resilient to EU influence. The purpose of this case study is to outline the ways in which the Orban-led FIDESZ regime has created a political environment that simultaneously erodes the fundamentals of liberal democracy and resists EU attempts at behavior correction.

The main illiberal actor is the far-right FIDESZ party, led by Prime Minister Viktor Orban. After the fall of the Soviet Union, FIDESZ started out as liberal and pro-West, but the 1990s witnessed a platform shift towards nationalist economic protectionism against foreign capital and influence. Between 1998 and 2002, the exposure to power and Hungarian elites connected Orban with far-reaching resources for his national populist message. Orban and FIDESZ gradually came to dominance in parliament. Between 1998 and 2010, FIDESZ has gained a powerful supermajority in the parliament. Their main political rival is the Jobbik party, also a far-right nationalist party.

ILLIBERAL ACTIVITY
In this subsection, the tracing of illiberal activity will demonstrate the deep, structural nature of FIDESZ’s impact on the Hungarian government. Many of FI-
DESZ’s violations of liberal democratic norms and values have made international news. Headlines describe Orban as a “troubemaker” and an “authoritarian” with FIDESZ as an iron trap around the whole of Hungary. Illiberal activity includes legislation pushed through by FIDESZ, public rhetoric, and non-legislative activity, such as state mistreatment of refugees.

A pronounced and early example of the Orban-FIDESZ government undermining liberal democracy in Hungary is the 2011 ratification of a new constitution. In the 2010 elections, FIDESZ obtained 52.7 percent of the vote and a resulting parliamentary supermajority.33 With the supermajority, the 1949 constitution was nullified on the basis that it was the foundation of communist tyranny in Hungary, which rendered its history of case law invalid. The 2011 constitution entrenched FIDESZ and its ideology into the state structure while endangering necessary checks and balances.34 Within the FIDESZ Constitution are Cardinal Acts, which are specifying amendments regulating issues of varying weight, including “the election of Members of Parliament [and] the protection of families.”35 The Cardinal Acts are tagged onto constitutional edicts, and are passed with a two-thirds majority.36 Cardinal Acts are significant because of their inherent moderating power to fundamental laws. Under the FIDESZ regime, Cardinal Acts present a legal opportunity to exact deep changes in the fabric of the Hungarian government. In a report on the new constitution, the Venice Commission criticized the use of Cardinal Acts, which they argue include detailed regulations instead of just basic principles.37 Illiberal changes in the FIDESZ Constitution are largely entangled in the Cardinal Acts and amendments; however, the FIDESZ regime has used tools outside of the Cardinal Acts to change the Hungarian government.

The judiciary was arguably most impacted by the 2011 constitution ratification and period of swift structural reform following ratification. The retirement age of judges and agency of the Constitutional Court have both been under fire from FIDESZ law. A 2012 law abruptly lowered the retirement age of judges and prosecutors from 70 to 62, within a transition period of just one year.38 The law, without clear justification for the sudden eight-year adjustment, would trigger the loss of hundreds of judges in the Hungarian court systems. With the retirement age requirement, FIDESZ attempted to purge the judiciary and pack FIDESZ-aligned judges into the courts.

The judge retirement law is a significant example of FIDESZ’s undermining of liberal democracy because it indicates the vast, structural approach to legislative consolidation. While the retirement law aimed to displace a large portion of the judiciary, its deeper mission was to nullify the checking power of the courts and reinforce FIDESZ’s seated power in state structures. A similar approach was taken to the Constitutional Court itself. Between 2010 and 2012, the number of judges allowed on the court was increased from 11 to 15, allowing Orban to pack it with FIDESZ allies, and then the jurisdiction of the court was strictly limited.39 The judicial review of the Constitutional Court was restricted to only laws that impacted the budget, including tax and spending programs, unless those budgetary laws violate specific rights.40 Packing the courts and sharply undermining judicial review effectively rendered the judiciary’s check on the FIDESZ legislative agenda futile.

A restricted judiciary has a great electoral impact in addition to altering legislative power dynamics. One of the significant changes made to the Hungarian constitution was the amendment to electoral supervision. The new constitution stipulates that the Election Commission is composed of members of the governing party, rather than a politically diverse supervisory entity.41 Electoral districts have also been manipulated under new law: a two-thirds majority has been instituted as the new requirement for redrawing district boundaries. Undermining the election supervisory capacity of the judiciary with changes to both the partisan composition and decision-making processes neutralizes any potential opposition. The reform to the Election Commission allows FIDESZ to shift elections in their favor while ensuring that the Election Commission would not investigate any FIDESZ victory. Ultimately, the amendments to the electoral process reinforce and perpetuate FIDESZ’s majority through long-lasting structural changes.

In conjunction with the electoral amendments protected by the new judiciary, FIDESZ’s constitution redefined the Hungarian media landscape. Within the new constitution, FIDESZ banned “political advertising during the election campaign in any venue other than in the public broadcast media, which is controlled by the all-Fidesz media board.”42 Mass media law also permits the government to sanction journalists and press outlets, as well as prior restraints on the press through a strict registration process.43 Regulations on the media, and particularly political content and campaigning in the media, dangerously curb the freedom
Marginalization of the press blocks criticism of the FIDESZ regime, but Hungary’s constitutional entanglement of press freedoms and political advertising fatally entrap political opposition in FIDESZ’s suppressive media laws. In this way, restrictions on the independence of the press escalate to become sweeping measures against any form of opposition.

In a 2018 campaign speech, Orban characterized the press as adversaries: “We are up against media outlets maintained by foreign concerns and domestic oligarchs.” Orban’s explicit alienation of critical journalists as “foreign” and somehow against the state of Hungary reinforces the spread of public media outlets and those owned by Orban allies. In recent years of FIDESZ rule, the largest news websites and television groups have been bought up by close friends to Orban, such as Lorinc Meszaros, who is well-known to be a childhood friend of Viktor Orban. The clearing of the media landscape and creation of state versus “anti-state” news outlets have decimated media plurality. Richard Field, managing editor of the now-closed Budapest Beacon, stated, “The severe erosion of media plurality in Hungary makes it nearly impossible for us to continuing a fact-based newspaper of record about Hungary.” Moreover, the founder and editor of Direkt36, an investigative journalism outlet, argues that the dominance of FIDESZ-allied media and the alienation of remaining free voices create an environment in which journalistic investigations lose all impact and leverage. Ultimately, the FIDESZ regime’s legal, financial, and rhetorical attacks on the free press have deeply limited normative liberal democratic measures for accountability.

In addition to offenses on the free press as a means of suppressing opposition, the Orban regime has cracked down on civil society in Hungary, with targeted legislation against Non-Governmental Organizations and universities with foreign funding. In 2017, parliament passed a law stating that any foreign-funded university in Hungary must sign an intergovernmental agreement and prove that the university operates in the home country as well. The law effectively shut down the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest due to its association with international financier and Orban-foe George Soros. While thousands protested the university’s closing, it did not prevent Orban from launching a similar attack against liberal civil society organizations with foreign funding. The crackdown on the CEU and civil society NGOs is a continuation of FIDESZ’s marginalization of opposition and a flagrant breach of freedom of association protected in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

One of the more visible cases of Hungary’s escalating illiberalism and devaluation of European Union norms is its reaction to the refugee crisis. In 2015, the influx of Syrian refugees was responded to with a series of propaganda campaigns, proposals for border walls, and mass arrests of refugees. Hungary’s shutdown of the border, detention of refugees in “transit zones,” and widely reported abuse by the police indicates a foundational disregard for international norms fueled by FIDESZ’s ethnic nationalist politics.

The Hungarian government’s mistreatment of the refugees is in direct violation of the 1951 Refugee Convention, which demands signatories to provide certain human rights and protections to asylum-seekers. According to Article 26 of the Convention on Freedom of Movement, refugees are legally empowered to choose their place of residence and move freely within the territory of the state. Under Article 32 of the Convention on Expulsion, a state can only expel a refugee from its territory in accordance with due process, except in compelling cases of national security risk. Considering Articles 26 and 32, the isolation of refugees in a “transit zone” violates asylum-seekers’ rights to movement and due process. Hungary’s establishment of the transit zone effectively created a lawless, non-state area to keep asylum-seekers suspended in the stage before processing. The restriction on refugees’ physical and legal mobility during the influx of asylum-seekers indicates Hungary’s explicit rejection of liberal norms and shared concepts of personal freedoms established after World War II.

Moreover, Hungary’s blatant unwillingness to coordinate with the rest of the European Union on relocation efforts during the crisis reveals the empowered, mutinous, nationalist stance of the Orban government vis-a-vis EU decision-making. Since the relocation quota plan was introduced in 2015, Orban and other FIDESZ officials have rejected the quota system, accused it of violating Hungarian sovereignty, and refused to accept any migrants. Because the refugee crisis strikes at the core of FIDESZ’s ethnic nationalism and Euroscepticism, it provides a clear window through which to witness the Hungarian government’s distancing from European Union standards of policy and behavior. Refugees and the EU’s immigration policy have been a frequently used foothold in FIDESZ
rhetoric to legitimize ethnic nationalist behavior. In a 2018 campaign speech, Orban framed incoming refugees and migrants as an existential crisis for Europe: “[Those] who do not halt immigration at their borders are lost: slowly but surely they are consumed. External forces and international powers want to force this all upon us…”56 Immigration as the cultural end of Europe, hastened by “international powers” such as the EU, frames Hungary as the nationalist stronghold of Europe, thus justifying Hungary’s rejection of EU common policies on immigrants.

Hungary’s escalating pattern of behavior with the rise in power of the FIDESZ party illustrates the inability of the European Union’s post-accession leverage mechanisms to have any deep impact on the illiberal government. The eight years since FIDESZ’s electoral landslide have been defined by serious acts against the rule of law, the judiciary, the freedom of the press, political opposition, civil society, multinational agreements, and human rights. In addition to extreme legal changes and government activities, the FIDESZ regime has entered a pattern of normalizing illiberal behavior with Eurosceptic, ethnic nationalist rhetoric in speeches and government media. Orban and FIDESZ’s changes to the Hungarian government have two significant qualities: they impose long-term structural change and attempt to perpetuate FIDESZ political authority.

POST-ACCESSION HARD PRESSURE

This section will describe and analyze the interactions between European Union authorities and the Hungarian government regarding its illiberal activity. “Hard Pressure” post-accession mechanisms include the formal, supervisory processes within the EU such as the infringement procedure and Article 7. Hard pressure mechanisms are criticized for perceived ineffectiveness and political stigma, but are still deemed an essential instrument of the European Union’s authority over Member States. Hard pressure was exerted by the EU in all cases described in the previous section. The following table outlines the implementation of hard pressure and the respective outcomes to related illiberal activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>EU Penalty</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ratification of new constitution (2011)</td>
<td>Infringement launched on concerns within the new constitution: independence of judiciary and central bank laws</td>
<td>Orban backtracks on disputed central bank laws</td>
<td>European Commission states satisfaction with changes to central bank law; other aspects of constitution “will be monitored.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table illustrates two troubling patterns that arise when the European Union engages with Hungary in post-accession hard pressure: the superficial nature of behavior correction and the worsening neglect of the European Commission and Court of Justice’s directives within the infringement procedure over time.

One of the compelling cases of correction through hard pressure illustrated in Table 1 is the 2012 Judge Retirement Law. The infringement case itself lasted approximately a year, but the FIDESZ-ruled Parliament did not amend the law in question until the Court of Justice released its definitive decision that the law was in breach of European Union standards. However, it is important to note that the Court of Justice decision opposed the law because it was “unjustifiable” and therefore discriminatory. When the parliament passed the amendment to slightly raise the retirement age and increase the transition period, the law was only technically adjusted to satisfy the authorities. The act of systematically eliminating judges in favor of FIDESZ-aligned appointments did not change in the amendment, only its immediacy. The substance of what the Court of Justice deemed “unjustifiable discrimination” was only superficially reconfigured to meet the standards of the infringement procedure. The
Article 7 and revoke a Member State’s voting rights. In 2015, Orban threatened to reinstate the death penalty, which would begin an extensive process of evaluating Hungary’s violations for potential revocation of Membership rights, such as voting. The resolution cited Hungary’s transgressions against asylum-seekers and non-governmental organizations, particularly the shutdown of the Central European University. The resolution represents the first phase of Article 7 proceedings, which is an inquisitive stage designed to prevent an actual breach in European Union foundations. However, the European Parliament’s call for Article 7 did not prevent or cease illiberal activity in Hungary, particularly the FIDESZ regime’s offense against civil society and asylum seekers. In this case, the illiberal activity continued without any modification, and the issues at stake were entrenched in FIDESZ’s nationalist frame.

In response to the resolution, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó stated “European institutions are clearly unable to accept the fact that despite the application of international pressure, the government of Hungary is continuing to practice a migration policy that is exclusively aimed at ensuring the security of Hungary and the Hungarian people… We are now witness to a new attack on Hungary by George Soros’ network.” Not only did the European Union’s exertion of hard pressure in this case fail to slow illiberal activity, it incited the illiberal government into a harder stance. Szijjártó’s statement demonstrates the negative politicization of EU hard pressure. Szijjártó used the EU’s criticism to reinforce the FIDESZ policies on asylum and foreign-funding NGOs, both significant manifestations of the party’s nationalist ideology.

The interactions between the European Union formal penalty system and the FIDESZ government are characterized by superficial change, retaliatory statements, and continued illiberal activity. The narrow focus of the infringement procedure not only fails to undertake the full reality of systemic illiberal reform, but it also has no compelling compounding effect in the face of Hungary’s neglect. In the sequences of illiberal activity regarding the refugee crisis and civil society, the addition of infringement cases launched against Hungary still did not alter behavior. In the case of Hungary, the lack of efficacy in hard pressure tactics reflects poorly on the conventional paradigm of penalty and post-accession influence in the European Union.
This section will analyze the interactions between Hungary and the European Union when the EU is engaging in informal instruments of influence, or “Soft Pressure.” Soft pressure involves attempts at post-accession leverage that do not include the infringement procedure: economic pressure, whether that be the withholding of funds or economic relief; social pressure from political actors, such as Members of European Parliament; and public outcry from groups both inside and outside the state. Economic pressure is an important instrument within soft pressure because the European Union’s economic allure and reputation is an integral aspect of the EU’s pre-accession leverage. The table below illustrates both additive and subtractive methods of economic pressure employed by the EU in attempt to shape illiberal activity. The table above demonstrates the ways in which additive and subtractive economic pressures can manifest in bilateral relations between Hungary and the EU. The purpose of the table is to trace the process of economic pressure exacted by the EU upon Hungary’s illiberal activity (notated as the “Event” category in the chart). Across the three cases, one can observe instances in which one type of pressure was utilized versus both types, and any behavior changes that resulted. As mentioned in the literature review, additive pressure involves cases in which the European Union increases resources for the Member State in attempt to deter or halt illiberal activity. Subtractive pressure is the withdrawal of resources to punish the illiberal behavior. The table includes the manipulation of aid talks, special funds, and the Excessive Deficit Procedure (EDP). The EDP is a process through which Member States with debt exceeding 60 percent of GDP reconfigure fiscal policy under EU supervision. The EDP is a significant example of the EU’s economic governance over Member States because it is a mechanism with which the EU imposes austerity measures on Members and supervises state spending.

The manipulation of the 2011-2012 aid talks between the EU, IMF, and Hungary throughout the illiberal reforms reflects a series of back-and-forth exchanges between the EU and the FIDESZ government. During the initial period of constitutional reform in 2011 and the passing of a law that reduced the independence of the central bank, the European Union suspended financial aid talks. When parliament amended the central bank law to reinstate some independence, the EU resumed talks, only for them to end again when Orban publicly rejected the conditions of the IMF loan. Hungary’s lapse of behavior during the negotiations, oscillating between agreement and disagreement with continued lack of policy correction, demonstrates a similar pattern of superficial and impermanent responses as seen in the previous section on hard pressure. All the cases included in the table above were instances when both soft and hard pressures were employed by the EU.

The economic pressure implemented in the case of the Judge Retirement Law demonstrates an interesting use of combined additive and subtractive attempts of influence. Unlike the implementation of hard pressure, economic pressure may have a compounding impact with continued deprivation or supply of resources. However, in the case of the Judge Retirement Law, no attempt at post-accession leverage was successful until the Court of Justice decision yielded the 2013 amendments. During the suspension of the Cohesion Fund, a vast financial tool meant to reduce economic and social disparities in low-performing Member States, Commissioner Hahn stated that the decision was meant to reinforce the EU’s economic governance and was not meant to be “some kind of punishment.” Despite the Commissioner’s statement that the suspension of the fund was strictly budgetary, the assertion of EU authority during the time of parliament’s illiberal policy making and Orban’s lack of cooperation in negotiating was a significant reclamation of the EU’s mechanisms of governance.

Like the Cohesion Fund, the EU’s grant funding to Hungary may have been potentially manipulated to exert pressure, although less publicly. During the period of illiberal activity, there were sharp changes
in the European Union’s grant funding to projects in Hungary. EU development grants dispense funds to small business, NGOs, and researchers for various projects in alignment with EU objectives.

The graph above illustrates a rise in the amount of grant funding to Hungary while a general decline in the number of grants recipients. From 2014 to 2015, the overall grant fund rose from approximately 25 million Euros to 120 million Euros, with a sharp increase in 2016 to nearly 450 million Euros dispersed among only 760 recipients. While the justification for the shift in funding is not described in a public statement or rationale, the increase in grant funds starting in 2014 coincides with the period of time in which the FIDESZ government began violating basic rights and freedoms with their policies. Moreover, the slight increase in 2011-2012 coincides with the initial major illiberal act ratifying the FIDESZ Constitution and its sweeping amendments. The funding information represents an overall trend towards additive pressure, or even potentially the intentional funding of EU-aligned entities and civil society groups in a country under a Eurosceptic and hostile government.

In addition to economic pressure, social mechanisms are an integral aspect of soft pressure. Social pressure involves statements from individual politicians, like Members of the European Parliament, or groups, like political coalitions. In the case of the death penalty, which was discussed in the previous section on the threatening of Article 7, social pressure played a significant aspect in the controversy surrounding Orbán’s statements. The day after Orbán made the remarks on the death penalty, then-European Parliament President Martin Schulz issued a statement:

“They [Fidesz] have to understand that this circus — where every other month or twice a year at least, the whole EPP does nothing but defend Fidesz — is over. We will not do it anymore.”

“Is your place among the autocratic leaders [like Russian president] Putin or [Turkey’s president] Erdogan, or do you belong to a Europe based on the core values that you yourself fought for in ‘89?”

The statements from the other EPP delegates attempt to create a critical political environment for FIDESZ, and to increase the pressure on both Hungary and EPP’s leadership. Both Engel and De Lange’s comments are steeped in an ideological and political critique of FIDESZ’s role in Hungary and in Europe. Engel’s statement is more of a structural social pressure within the EPP to hold FIDESZ accountable, while De Lange’s comment brings into question the entire ideological paradigm of European politics. In conjunction, the statements situate FIDESZ in an ideological crisis of European politics, with EPP as FIDESZ’s moderator in the EU. Engel and De Lange’s statements encapsulate the ideological nature of social pressure, as well as the depth and breadth of critique that can be implicated with social pressure.

While the frustration from the EPP delegates indicates a massive political and ideological rift be-
between Hungary and the EU, the EPP has also attempted to exert social pressure on Hungary on specific issues. During FIDESZ’s 2017 attack on civil society and the Central European University, party chairman Joseph Daul stated, “EPP asked FIDESZ and the Hungarian authorities to take all necessary steps to comply with the Commission’s request. Prime Minister Orban has reassured the EPP that Hungary will act accordingly.”

Daul accompanied his statement with the assertion that the EPP will not condone the violation of the rule of law or the closing of the CEU. Daul’s statement represents an attempt to establish accountability with social pressure. However, Daul’s announcement was met with retaliatory statements from Orban, who undermined the seriousness of the EPP’s pressure with facetious comments, such as “They told me to behave,” in regard to the critique. Furthermore, attempts at social pressure were weakened by EPP leader Manfred Weber, who tweeted congratulations to Orban after his re-election as chairman of FIDESZ. It is important to note that while EPP leadership and members mentioned consequences in vague terms, none threatened expulsion from the party or sanctions.

Although social pressure from Members of European Parliament did not yield any behavior correction, and instead incited retaliatory statements, there was one instance that social pressure resulted in change. In 2014, the FIDESZ government proposed an internet tax on data traffic in the name of national security, which prompted large-scale protests. Domestic public outcry and condemnation from the Commission, with a particularly harsh statement from Commission Vice President for Digital Agenda Neelie Kroes, both occurred within a short window of a few days of the proposal. Together, the social pressure from above and below resulted in Orban’s cancellation of the tax plan. This case may imply the necessity of domestic pressure for EU social pressure to succeed.

The low effectiveness of economic and social pressure indicates a similar impact to hard pressure on illiberal activity in Hungary. However, the various types of soft pressure allow for increased flexibility and choice when European authorities attempt to correct behavior. From the series of interactions between the EU and the FIDESZ government, correction occurred mostly when the policy in question was of low ideological value. More technical laws distant from FIDESZ’s nationalist core—such as the Judge Retirement Law, Media Reform, Central Bank Law, and the internet tax proposal—are open to amendment. The next section will further analyze what factors make hard and soft pressure less likely to yield positive change.

DOMESTIC FACTORS
This subsection will outline the domestic factors that contribute to Hungary’s escalating resistance to EU post-accession leverage. By discussing domestic conditions as significant determinants of behavior modification during post-accession leverage, I am arguing that EU pressures on Member States can only be effective to a certain extend according to the political and economic environment in the Member State. The three main domestic factors are FIDESZ political strength in both the domestic and European contexts, economic recovery, and the proliferation of nationalist, Eurosceptic rhetoric.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Domestic Election</th>
<th>European Election</th>
<th>V-DEM score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>FIDESZ wins 12 out of 24 Hungarian seats</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>FIDESZ wins 42% of votes, 164 seats</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>FIDESZ wins 33% of votes, 262 seats</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>FIDESZ wins 44% of votes, 131 seats</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>FIDESZ wins 12 out of 21 Hungarian seats</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussed some in the previous subsection, Hungary’s relationship with the European Union via the European People’s Party (EPP) has complicated implications for accountability and implementation of leverage. The EPP leadership failed to sanction or expel FIDESZ from its ranks. As seen in the 2017 EPP meeting in which members debated the inclusion and behavior of FIDESZ, internal party pressure and criticism still did not yield a political or judicial consequence for Orban or FIDESZ. The conflict within the EPP demonstrated in the 2017 assembly also aligns with the argument that internal party disagreements and politicization of penalty processes hinders post-accession leverage.

Considering FIDESZ’s electoral results on multiple levels is significant for evaluating the party’s weight in the EPP as well as its domestic political strength. Below is a table demonstrating FIDESZ’s electoral results in both domestic and European parliamentary elections, with the liberal democracy V-DEM score to track the patterns of illiberalism.

While FIDESZ has been a high-vote earning
party since 2004, its political power came into force in 2010 when it won a two-thirds supermajority. It is important to note that one of FIDESZ’s changes to the election process included an amendment to the total number of seats in the parliament, with a sharp decrease from 386 to just 199 in 2014. Therefore, the 133 seats won in 2014 still results in a constitutional supermajority.

While FIDESZ maintains the majority of Hungarian delegates to the European Parliament, FIDESZ membership takes on additional meaning in the context of the EPP’s own political strength. In 2004, the EPP had 68 more parliamentary seats than its closest rival, the Social Democrats. In 2009, the EPP had 81 more seats than the Social Democrats. However, the EPP’s gap narrowed in 2014 to only 23 seats more than the Social Democrats. As FIDESZ gained political control in Hungary, the EPP was losing its hold on the European Parliament, which could have potentially increased FIDESZ’s relative importance to the EPP’s political strategy. FIDESZ’s embeddedness in Hungarian politics in conjunction with the EPP’s increased need for parliamentary seats contributed to Hungary’s lack of change under pressure.

While Hungary’s economy experienced an overall pattern of recovery, there was one year in which the Hungarian economy took a downward turn: in 2012, Hungary’s annual percent GDP growth was -1.6, while the unemployment rate was at 11 percent. In that same year, FIDESZ bent to EU pressure and amended its criticized Central Bank Law. While Orban later backpedaled in the aid talks, the economic nature of the exchange during a particularly economically vulnerable year demonstrates the connection between domestic factors and the efficacy of EU pressure.

FIDESZ’s far-right nationalist, Eurosceptic rhetoric plays a significant role in Hungary’s resistance to EU hard and soft pressures. The previous section discussed how FIDESZ is more likely to make an amendment to a policy without strong ideological substance or importance to the party’s nationalist outlook. Additionally, the responses to highly ideological social pressure, as in the cases of the 2017 Article 7 threat and EPP critiques of Orban, illustrate how social pressure with a basis in explicit liberal democratic values can incite retaliatory speech and continued resistance.

Retaliatory discourse is not the only source of nationalist, Eurosceptic rhetoric; illiberal rhetoric is produced by the FIDESZ regime to undermine European Union authority. In a 2014 speech, Orban famously declared his agenda to build an illiberal democracy. Orban argued that Western liberal democracies cannot remain globally relevant or competitive, citing the 2008 financial crisis and the rise of countries like Russia, China, and Turkey. Notably, Orban made two points that struck at the core of the EU’s ideological and judicial authority: “This means that we must break away with the liberal principles of society, the methods and the liberal understanding of society at all,” and later, “I don’t think that our European Union membership precludes us from building an illiberal new state based on national foundations.” By claiming the ability to create an illiberal Hungarian nation-state inside the EU, Orban is undermining the political value of EU membership, as well as the enforceability of EU laws and directives. To put it in context, the speech took place just as the refugee crisis of 2014 was beginning, which also marked the escalation of the FIDESZ government’s neglect of EU corrective pressures. Orban’s speech, as well as the instances of retaliatory statements from other FIDESZ officials, illustrates the impact of illiberal nationalist rhetoric on the post-accession leverage process.

In the seven years since FIDESZ’s first supermajority, the party has essentially altered the fabric of the Hungarian state and critically undermined the quality of democracy. The escalation in FIDESZ’s disregard of European Union values, laws, and post-accession pressures reflects the consolidation of FIDESZ’s power in Hungary, as well as the proliferation of anti-EU rhetoric. The domestic factors of political strength, economic recovery, and illiberal rhetoric create political and economic conditions that make FIDESZ less likely to yield to EU pressures.

POLAND
This section on Poland will analyze the illiberal activity and the respective mechanisms of post-accession leverage enacted by the European Union since its entry into the EU in 2004. First, I will provide a brief overview of Poland’s history with illiberalism. Then, I will track the illiberal activity in Poland, focusing on the Freedom and Justice Party (PiS) as the main actor. In the following subsections, I will discuss the interactions between Poland and the EU’s various post-accession leverage mechanisms, with a particular focus on the triggering of Article 7 that took place in late 2017. Lastly, I will analyze the domestic political and economic factors in Poland that impacted the EU’s post-accession influence. The purpose of this section is to outline Poland’s
illiberal activity defined by PiS and compare the cases of Hungary and Poland through the enactment of Article 7.

Historical context is integral to understanding the rise of illiberalism in Poland. The construction of a Catholic Polish nation is at the foundation of the PiS government’s conservative nationalist perspective. Even though the vast majority of Poles are Catholic due to the massive cleansing of Jewish Poles during the Holocaust, the Catholic identity has been entwined into Poland’s political narrative. Catholicism under Soviet rule and Pope John Paul II’s 1979 homecoming were important factors to driving the Solidarity movement, which ultimately negotiated the first free elections in 1989. During his historic visit, Pope John Paul II proclaimed that “without Christ it is impossible to understand the history of Poland.” While the Pope’s statement clearly speaks to a theological perspective of history, it also encapsulates the importance of Catholicism to the Polish national identity. Within the context of the current illiberalism, understanding the policies based in religious conservatism, the construction of the family as a national unit, and the religious-nationalism arguments against the acceptance of refugees is essential to the conceptualization of Poland as a distinctive Catholic nation.

The Freedom and Justice Party (PiS) is a far-right nationalist party lead by Jaroslaw Kaczyński. PiS has been in power twice: once between 2005 and 2007, and again in 2015. The party’s nationalist conservative underpinnings are characterized by religious and ethnic rhetoric. PiS, similar to FIDESZ, stands by socially conservative policies such as abolishment of abortion, opposition to gay rights, and rejection of non-Christian refugees. When asked why he joined PiS, Polish mayor Wojciech Judelski replied, “My family has lived [here] since the 15th century… Law and Justice comes from values and rules. The rules are based in the Catholic Church.” In the framework of Polish ethnic nationalism, the concept of the “true Poland” is founded in ancestral heritage and Catholic identity. When PiS first governed in 2005, it upheld the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty and guided Poland into the initial years of EU membership; meanwhile, the PiS government engaged with the EU to obtain more voting power.

With an electoral upset in 2015, PiS has now a governing majority in Parliament and the presidency. Because the Freedom and Justice Party has come into power recently and the new PiS government has just taken on illiberal characteristics within the last couple years, this case study will be shorter in length than the one on Hungary.

ILLIBERAL ACTIVITY
This section will identify the significant violations of liberal democracy in Poland by PiS, with a focus on the attacks against the Constitutional Court, freedom of the press, and entrenchment of PiS policy in Polish law. The following behavior took place after 2015.

A major aspect of illiberal activity in Poland is PiS’s legislation against the judiciary. Unlike FIDESZ, PiS did not ratify an entirely new constitution upon coming into the majority. However, the PiS legislation similarly undermines the independence of the judiciary and the normative configuration of the state. Between 2015 and 2017, PiS launched a series of reforms, including new requirements for Constitutional Court rulings. A 2015 law required the Constitutional Court to make decisions on the basis of a two-thirds majority, instead of the former simple majority, as well as the presence of thirteen judges, instead of the previous nine. The PiS government also installed five of its own judges on the fifteen-member Constitutional Court, while refusing the validity of appointments made by the Civic Platform government. The court-packing and restrictions on the Constitutional Court sharply restrict the judiciary’s check on PiS power in both houses of the legislature and the presidency. Legislation against the judiciary resurfaced in early 2017 with a series of bills. One of the laws allowed the justice minister to immediately fire and replace any Supreme Court justice, and another allowed the justice minister to name all the heads of the lower courts. In this case, President Duda, also a member of PiS, vetoed all but one of the laws: the widening of the justice minister’s ability to appoint lower court heads. Later in 2017, another set of bills were introduced to purge all judges not appointed by PiS from the courts, effectively giving PiS full control over the judiciary. The undermining of the judiciary by PiS demonstrates the government’s structural, systemic approach to consolidation of power and disregard for institutional independence.

In addition to illiberal judicial reform, PiS also passed restrictive media legislation. In 2015, PiS passed a law reconfiguring management of public television and radio, handing supervisory and appointment power to PiS authorities. In 2016, PiS released a ban on journalists’ access to legislators. The restriction of media freedom actively violates liberal democratic
values and creates a political environment with weakened mechanisms of domestic accountability. In the case of the 2016 media ban, parliament lifted the ban in response to public outcry, but still made no move to reinstate any greater degree of press freedom. The crackdown on media access, as well as the consolidation of public press management, demonstrates both a disregard for protected liberties and a direct attempt to reduce oppositional spaces within the media.

Additionally, PiS has also asserted its ethnic nationalist ideology into official political discourse. Like FIDESZ, PiS has refused to accept asylum seekers. In 2015, just before the PiS electoral victory, party leader Jarosław Kaczyński made comments claiming refugees were a public health risk, contributing to the spread of disease. Later, after PiS assumed power, the PiS European affairs minister stated that Poland would only accept refugees on the condition of certain security measures, associating asylum-seekers with terrorist threats. The anti-refugee rhetoric transformed into definite state policy as PiS took power. The PiS stance against refugees reflects the ethnic nationalist underpinnings of their party ideology, as well as the party’s disregard for EU agreements.

The pattern of illiberal activity in Poland under PiS governmental control indicates a lack of escalation, meaning an immediate use of state power to consolidate rule and undermine institutional freedoms. Unlike FIDESZ, which enacted legislative and rhetorical attacks on a wide variety of freedoms, illiberal activity under PiS was swift and concentrated on the judiciary and the media. Moreover, FIDESZ enacted much deeper structural reform essential to the configuration of the government, with changes to the electoral system and even the decision-making processes within parliament. The timeframe of PiS illiberal activity was also much more compact than in Hungary; FIDESZ began implementing illiberal policies in 2010, whereas PiS only came into power in 2015. PiS’s illiberal behavior in Poland demonstrates the immediacy of authoritarian policies and rhetoric upon electoral victory.

EU PRESSURES IN POLAND

This section will discuss both the hard and soft pressures enacted by the EU in an attempt to alter the illiberal behavior. The most significant case of EU post-accession pressure in Poland is the 2017 triggering of Article 7 because of the government’s violations of the rule of law. The purpose of this section is to illustrate how EU post-accession influence in Poland mainly took the form of multiple infringement procedures, with the social pressure being facilitated by the massive domestic protests.

Protests within Poland, joined by solidarity movements elsewhere in Europe, yielded the only three instances of the PiS government modifying their behavior. While protests are not instances of EU soft pressure, they may provide a platform for statements of solidarity by introducing social opposition to the discourse surrounding the legislation. The table below outlines the instances of domestic protests and their efficacy.

As seen in the Table 4, domestic protests had some effectiveness in pressuring the PiS government into behavior correction. In the cases of the Abortion Ban, the Media Ban, and the 2017 judiciary laws, either the parliament or the president responded with total correction (i.e. completely removing the law) or partial correction, as seen in the president’s vetoes. It is important to note that during this time period, Poland was simultaneously under investigation or engaged in infringement proceedings regarding the rule of law and freedom of the press.

During instances of domestic protest, European authorities spoke out against PiS policies. For example, Guy Verhofstadt, Belgian politician and President of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, released statements via Twitter in solidarity with the Abortion Ban protests. Terry Reintke, a German
Member of European Parliament, also stated her support of the protesters against the Abortion Ban. During the 2017 protests against the series of judiciary laws, European Union officials, including Vice President of European Commission Frans Timmermans, made statements regarding the laws's threat to liberal democracy. The statements exemplify how the protests created a platform in public discourse for European officials and politicians to exert additional social pressure on the PiS government. The protests and solidarity statements from EU authorities represented a compounded social pressure on the PiS government from both above and below.

Soft pressure also includes economic leverage. Unlike in Hungary, there was no leveraging of financial aid. However, in 2017, the Cohesion Fund for Poland was indirectly threatened by a proposal to freeze funds to rule-breaking Member States. Additionally, in the same year, European Commissioner for Justice Vera Jourova proposed that distribution of EU funds should be contingent on the Member States’ adherence to EU principles. In response to the potential for a punitive cut in funding, the PiS government dismissed the threat; Prime Minister Szydlo claimed that the threat was empty because the proposal violated EU legality. The proposals of EU funding reform based on Member State behavior is not just an instance of soft pressure, but an example of how the EU is systematically responding to illiberalism in Member States.

When the Commission experimented with proposals to reconfigure the funding process, Poland’s funding sharply increased as the illiberal activity increased. In 2014, before the PiS victory, Poland received around €29 million. In 2015, when PiS took power and began its illiberal behavior, grant funding increased to nearly €280 million. The 2017 grant funding peaked at just over €700 million Euros. The increase in funding with the increase in illiberal activity is a pattern also seen in Hungary, reinforcing the concept of additive economic pressure to influence Member State behavior.

The rest of the section will discuss hard pressure, with a particular focus on the triggering of Article 7. Since PiS came into power in 2015, the European Commission has launched multiple infringement procedures against Poland on the issues of rule of law, violations against the judiciary, refusal to accept refugees, and the undermining of press freedom. However, there is not a single instance in which the PiS government reacted to an infringement procedure with any behavior modification. In response, the European Commission has used unprecedented measures in an attempt to cease illiberal activity and democratic backsliding: the rule of law framework, and Article 7.

The rule of law framework is a recently established mechanism designed to address systemic threats in Member States during a time of crisis. This framework is meant to deescalate a Member State’s transgressions before the need to trigger Article 7. The mechanism’s process is similar to the infringement procedure; it involves an assessment of the Member State’s activity and a Commission recommendation. However, if the Member State does not adhere to the recommendation, the Commission will directly trigger Article 7. The rule of law framework was enacted against Poland in July 2017. In November of 2017, the European Parliament passed a resolution calling for Article 7 against Poland. By December 2017, the Commission brought forth Article 7(1), the first step in suspending membership rights, including voting rights. The quick succession of hard pressure punitive measures indicates both the Polish government’s continuance of illiberal activity and the government’s refusal to engage in dialogue. In the Commission’s announcement of the Article 7 proceedings, the preference for deescalated dialogue is clear: “Whilst taking these unprecedented measures, the Commission maintains its offer for a constructive dialogue to remedy the current situation.” The PiS government’s continued neglect of EU standards, recommendations, and directives despite the use of unprecedented mechanisms undermine the institutional gravitas of such procedures.

Unlike Hungary, the Polish government did not demonstrate any trace of engagement with the EU’s attempts at correction. The EU’s swift implementation of hard pressure on the PiS government did not result in any acknowledgement or behavior modification from the PiS. Illiberal behavior was impacted mostly by domestic social pressure in the form of protests, without EU authorities acting as the central source of soft pressure. As in the Hungary case, the few instances of the PiS government correcting behavior pertained to laws that did not have great ideological significance to the party or complete party support. The PiS government’s meager responses to social pressure and total lack of response to hard pressure represent a stark political reality in which the mechanisms of multilevel governance within the European Union fail to enact change.
DOMESTIC FACTORS

In this section, I will outline domestic factors that contribute to the PiS government's disregard of EU pressures despite the escalating severity of EU hard pressure mechanisms. Domestic factors include PiS electoral strength in Polish and EU races, the shifting economic needs of the electorate, and the rhetoric of Polish nationalism and sovereignty. As for the contextual relationship between Poland and the EU during the development of the PiS government's illiberalism, it is important to note that the European Council resident since 2014 has been Donald Tusk, Polish Prime Minister for the Civic Platform government and rival to PiS leadership. The PiS party's electoral history has been extremely unstable on a national level: they briefly held power within a coalition government in 2005, just after Poland’s accession into the EU, but lost to the Civic Platform in 2007. The PiS presidential and parliament electoral victories in 2015 were upsets, with PiS suddenly gaining seventy-eight seats in one election.102

The table illustrates two concurrent patterns of electoral activity for PiS: over time, the PiS won an increasing share of votes in both domestic and European elections. However, the party's positionality within its political institutions shifted in and out of prominence. Unlike FIDESZ, PiS does not have an advantageous relationship in the European Parliament, particularly because of its change in affiliation from one minority party to another minority party. The lack of advantageous partisan ties may also be an important factor in making Poland vulnerable to the hard pressure mechanisms EU authorities have not exerted against Hungary.

The sudden electoral success in 2015 plays a significant role in the pattern of PiS behavior described previously in the section. The success of the 2015 election domestically emboldened the PiS to enact illiberal policies while ignoring EU attempts at constructive engagement. However, unlike FIDESZ, the PiS government did not attack the electoral system. While PiS did weaken the judiciary, and therefore the supervisory check on the PiS government, parliament did not pass laws altering the geographic and political structures defining the basis of elections. Additionally, while PiS did reconfigure the management of public media, it did not specifically legislate on the issue of opposition campaigning. Because the PiS did not entrench its majority in law like FIDESZ, PiS remained domestically vulnerable despite its electoral success, which is a significant context for the instances of behavior correction during protests.

The economic environment in Poland is a significant domestic factor for the PiS government's disregard of European Union post-accession pressure. During the 2008 global financial crisis, Poland was the only economy in the European Union to not go into recession.103 In recent years, economic indicators have shown macro-level trends of overall enhancement. In the graph above, there is a pattern of decreasing unemployment and gradual relief of government debt. Especially since 2014 and 2015, there has been a more discernable change in the economic indicators. In the context of positive macro-economic change, the PiS has taken a stance of strong national involvement in the economy. The PiS government, unlike previous governments, put forth a comprehensive welfare program that involves unconditional monthly cash payments to all families with more than one child.104 The PiS welfare policy was hinged on a nationalist rhetoric, as seen in statements from then-candidate Beata Szydlo: “The state has abandoned too many people. There are too many divisions. We need to eliminate those divisions to ensure everyone feels the state is on their side.”105 The welfare program is an example of the PiS using its economic policy to articulate nationalist, family-oriented rhetoric.

Other PiS economic policies include the statements on government regulation of property rights and banks, as well as the lowering of the retirement age.106 In the party's 2014 plan, there was a strong

### Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Domestic Election</th>
<th>European Election</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>PiS wins 7 out of 34 seats for Alliance for Europe of Nations (AEN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>PiS wins 27 percent of votes, takes majority</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>PiS wins 15 out of 50 seats for AEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>PiS wins 29.9 percent of votes, majority to Civic Platform</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>PiS wins 19 out of 51 seats for European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>PiS wins 37.6 percent of votes, takes majority</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The PiS electoral history is included in the Table 5:

*The AEN dissolved in 2009 and PiS affiliation shifted to the ECR.
connection between the economy, sovereignty, and the family unit: “A sovereign state... where Polish families can continue and develop... is possible if we develop as a nation... as a community of Polish families.” While the macro-level economic indicators suggest a larger narrative of success, the PiS’s populist economics center the Polish family as a symbol of nationalist values to protect. The shift from the pro-EU, pro-free market Civic Platform government to the nationalist populist PiS government indicates a marked prioritization of nationalist economics. Poland’s economic strength in conjunction with the PiS government’s populist policies and nationalist framing ultimately devalues the EU’s market-sourced authority, situating the EU as an implicit threat to the Polish family.

PiS’s nationalist rhetoric in all sectors acts as a significant domestic contributor to the lack of behavior correction throughout the EU’s implementation of hard and soft pressure. Polish sovereignty and exceptionalism within the European Union stands at the center of PiS rhetoric, purposefully designed to diminish the EU’s political and ideological significance in Poland. After Brexit, Prime Minister Szydlo and PiS leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski made statements about the “non-consensual” nature of EU decision-making and Poland’s focus on the protection of “sovereignty” within the EU. In reference to the refugee resettlement quota system, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, who replaced Szydlo in 2017, stated, “We will not accept refugees, migrants from the Middle East and Africa. This is our sovereign decision.” PiS party materials also invoke sovereignty, as seen in the discussion of PiS nationalist economic rhetoric. In the party materials, a sovereign state is framed as an aspirational vision of Poland, with the realization of that dream being contingent on a centering of the Polish nation and Polish families in politics. While approximately eighty percent of Poles support EU membership, PiS rhetoric is integrating a version of Polish separatism within the framework of EU membership rooted in the invocation of sovereignty.

PiS domestic electoral victory, economic success, nationalist populist economic policies, and the significance of Polish sovereignty in PiS rhetoric create a political and economic environment in which the EU’s authority and liberal social policies are sharply devalued. The PiS government’s complete failure to constructively engage in dialogue with the EU regarding policy correction does not simply reflect escalating illiberalism, but also indicates diminishing multilevel governance.

ANALYSIS
governance This section will analyze the two case countries in the framework of the hypotheses. The purpose of this section is to emphasize the role of the Member State’s domestic, political, and economic environments as moderators of the EU’s post-accession influence.

The first hypothesis pertains to the role of domestic, political, and economic health in the EU’s ability to exert change in misbehaving Member States. H1: If the EU is exerting both judicial and economic pressures, illiberal behavior can only be corrected if the Member State is economically vulnerable or if the incumbent government is politically vulnerable. The foundation of this hypothesis is domestic factors’ moderation of the EU’s efficacy. Because the domestic factors considered in this hypothesis focus on vulnerability, or observable weakness that could undermine the government’s position with the EU, observable economic and political strength could have the opposite effect; while vulnerability makes governments more pliant to EU pressures, economic and electoral strength embolden illiberal governments. In the case of both Hungary and Poland, the illiberal governments resisted behavior modification. In both countries, economic strength and recovery made their respective illiberal governments less likely to alter behavior. Even in the example of the EU exerting economic pressure during a time of economic weakness, Hungary’s change in policy was superficial and technical.

Political vulnerability in the cases of Hungary and Poland is a dynamic variable because it considers electoral success, as demonstrated in the previous sections; however, legislative overtures to embed a party in power is a significant aspect of democratic backsliding into illiberalism. In the case of Hungary, FIDESZ reformed the electoral system and the judiciary to tighten its hold on governing power and mute oversight. In the case of Poland, the Freedom and Justice Party did embed its power with sweeping judicial laws, but did not manipulate electoral laws like FIDESZ to secure governing control. While FIDESZ reduced their political vulnerability through electoral and judicial laws, the PiS government’s political vulnerability made them liable to behavior correction, particularly during popular protests. Both cases reinforced the assertion of H1: that domestic economic strength and political security make illiberal governments less likely to
alter their behavior. For Hungary, a lack of economic vulnerability and FIDESZ’s rooted political power emboldened the illiberal government to resist the EU’s economic and political pressures. In the case of Poland, the H1 assertion of economic and political factors influencing behavior change in the government is supported in some instances; however, the PiS government altered illiberal behavior on the contingency of political favorability in the cases of massive protests rather than explicit EU pressures or directives, as discussed in the previous section. In this way, the consideration of political vulnerability or security as a moderating variable gains more nuance to include interactions between EU actors and non-governmental domestic actors.

The second hypothesis relates to the role of the relationship between the illiberal government and their affiliated European party on the EU’s ability to hold Member States accountable. H2: If the incumbent government’s delegates to the European Parliament have strategic value to their party caucus, the EU will not be able to fully exert economic and/or social pressures. In the European Parliament, the EU level legislature, representatives are associated by ideology rather than country. Party association on the European level and the maintenance of those parliamentary seats is crucial for obtaining decision-making power in the European Parliament; this relationship of power forms the bedrock of the concept of strategic value in H2. As seen in the case studies, FIDESZ has a strategic relationship with the powerful EPP, while PiS has had shifting affiliations with minority European parties. While EPP members demonstrated tension with FIDEZ and Orban’s illiberalism, EPP leadership continued to protect FIDESZ and avoid internal party penalties. In contrast, the PiS became the subject of the unprecedented judicial measures to influence illiberal behavior. While partisan relationships may not have a direct causal impact on implementation of EU pressure, the different positionality and experiences of pressure-implementation between FIDESZ and PiS endorses the hypothetical idea that parliamentary relations influence the extent of EU corrective mechanisms.

The third hypothesis pertains to the ideological nature of social pressure and is broken down into two parts. H3.A: When the EU exerts post-accession pressure, if it includes ideology-based social pressure, determined illiberal governments will not modify their behavior. The foundational assertion of the H3 hypotheses is that ideological speech plays a significant role in the relationship between the EU and errant illiberal Member States. This assertion is pivotal to understanding post-accession leverage and its efficacy against democratic backsliding because Hungary and Poland’s drift towards illiberalism is a legal and ideological conflict; the Member States’ illiberal activities signify a betrayal of the EU’s liberal standards and the legal safeguards to uphold those standards. Because of the ideological tension between liberalism and illiberalism at stake between the EU and delinquent Member States, ideological speech (such as Euroscepticism and ethno-nationalist rhetoric, or pro-European liberalism) strikes at the deep schism between the actors. In both cases, ideologically-based social pressure did not yield behavioral changes. It is also important to note that any modification of behavior by illiberal governments was made under multiple forms of pressure, not social pressure alone. This point is particularly significant because the cases demonstrate the dynamism of the multiple forms of post-accession leverage; although the coincidence of judicial, economic, and social pressures exerted on illiberal governments makes it more difficult to determine correlation specifically, the occurrence of behavior correction under all three pressures shows the importance of the additive, compounding effect of post-accession leverage.

The second part of the third hypothesis continues to consider the impact of ideological speech and social pressure on illiberal governments. H3.B: The more the EU utilizes ideology-based social pressure, the more likely the Member States’ incumbent illiberal government will be to resist the EU. According to the third hypothesis, ideology-based social pressure is not only ineffective; it incites further resistance and retaliative rhetoric. Retaliative rhetoric is particularly clear in the Hungary case, where criticisms couched in liberal terms were met with defiant statements from FIDESZ officials. As seen in the previous sections, retaliation by FIDESZ officials or Viktor Orban himself were characterized by broad strokes of Eurosceptic and nationalist rhetoric. However, PiS governments did not engage with retaliative rhetoric. While the Hungary case supports the hypothesis, the Poland case illustrates an exception to the issue of social pressure and retaliative rhetoric; the PiS failed to engage with the EU in any substantive dialogue. This lack of substantial dialogue surrounding the legal and ideological conflicts between Poland and the EU may be related to the shorter amount of time PiS has been in power compared to FIDESZ, which has had more time in government to
wrestle with the EU over violations. Together, the cases of Hungary and Poland demonstrate the importance of domestic, political, and economic factors in moderating the EU’s influence. Analysis of FIDESZ and PiS also exhibits the increasingly relevant role of Eurosceptic rhetoric in the discreditation of EU authority. Not only is hard pressure limited, the proliferation of nationalist Eurosceptic rhetoric limits soft pressure as well. Rhetoric deployed by FIDESZ and PiS uses sovereignty and nationalism to question the EU’s right to define and enforce liberal values. By framing relations with the EU as a struggle of sovereignty, the illiberal governments invalidate the ideological underpinnings of the EU’s infringements and criticisms.

CONCLUSION
This paper has argued that domestic factors, such as the political security of the illiberal actor, advantageous relationships within the European Parliament, economic strength, and proliferation of nationalist Eurosceptic rhetoric, modulate the efficacy of the European Union’s mechanisms of post-accession leverage. This paper placed emphasis on illiberal rhetoric’s role in discrediting post-accession leverage and the EU’s authority.

At the crux of this research is the crisis of the European Union’s ideological leadership. As more Member States fall to illiberalism, the European Union must adapt their post-accession leverage mechanisms to the new demands of preventing democratic backsliding. Today, anti-EU sentiment and illiberalism is threatening democracies in Macedonia, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, and Romania. To cope with the rise in illiberalism among Member States, the European Union should question the carrot-stick paradigm underlying its post-accession leverage mechanisms and the politicization of enforcement measures by decision-makers.

One of the limitations of this study is the close temporal proximity to unprecedented events, such as the triggering of Article 7 against Poland. Future studies will be able to analyze the impacts of Article 7 on the EU’s relationships with all illiberal governments. It is necessary to study illiberal democracy in the European Union in order to understand the ways in which misbehaving Member States threaten the ideological and judicial structures of the EU.
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Piatowski, Marcin. “Four ways Poland’s state bank


UNDERSTANDING THE DRIVERS OF CHINESE GRAND STRATEGY

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ABSTRACT
China's grand strategic aims are the subject of much debate due to the country's growing influence in modern affairs. However, the past few years have demonstrated that China's strategy has undeniably changed from playing a secondary role in international politics to one of leadership and growing confidence. This paper assesses two of the most prominent hypotheses explaining why this change has come about. The first hypothesis is that China's strategic pivot reflects its global interests and growing power relative to its greatest strategic competitors. However, when the timeline of shifts in China's foreign policy is compared against shifts in the regional balance of power, a notable temporal gap appears. The second hypothesis is that China's changing foreign policy instead reflects a growing ideological shift within the country's leadership. A growing historical revisionism within academia asserts that at the apex of ancient China's power, its empire ruled over a structured tributary system that brought peace to East Asia, known collectively as tianxia (天下). This assessment may be ahistorical but is increasingly viewed by Chinese academics as a blueprint for a morally-based, Sinocentric regional hegemony. The rise of Xi Jinping and his espousal of these ideas more accurately align with China's growing international confidence than any shifts in the balance of power, and therefore provide a better explanation for why the country shifted course so dramatically.

China's rise from the depths of colonization and the Sino-Japanese War to today's modernized society has rightfully captivated the attention of international relations scholars and laypeople alike. Until very recently, China had been reticent to assert itself on the international stage in a manner commensurate with its newfound wealth and power. Deng Xiaoping, the architect of China's modernization, codified this policy of restraint in his term "韬光养晦" (hide your light and bide your time). This aphorism has since served as a cornerstone for China's foreign relations, with each of China's leaders after Deng openly acknowledging the policy's importance. However, since Xi Jinping's rise to power, China has definitively abandoned this strategy of biding time and has instead chosen to "奋发有为" (strive for achievement). As a result, many international relations scholars interpret China's recent actions as it finally attempting to modify the existing international order in its favor.

In order to understand why China has so rapidly shed its traditional policy of biding time and has instead pursued international leadership, I analyze two prominent hypotheses explaining this transition. The first, a realist hypothesis, assumes that changes in Chinese foreign policy reflect changing confidence in China's national power. According to this interpretation, Chinese foreign policy is determined by its relative strength. If that is the case, Xi Jinping's new policy of "striving for achievement" simply reflects a growing consensus within China that there has been a shift in the balance of power away from the United States or other powers in the region and towards China.

The second hypothesis is a constructivist interpretation of China's newfound assertiveness and comes from the revival of classical political philosophy under Xi Jinping. The traditionalist political ideal of tianxia asserts that ancient China's imperial tributary system, grounded in the morality of the emperor and backed by immense and military strength, served as a resilient regional power structure that brought peace and prosperity to East Asia. This idea of tianxia and other neoclassical interpretations of ancient Chinese political philosophy have seen a remarkable revitalization over the past decade. The proponents of such a revival describe this movement as a more peaceful alternative to the Westphalian system in which state sovereignty is replaced by a hierarchical regional order governed by a dominant but benevolent central power. Although historically this system was never implemented as neatly as it is laid out in theory, the waning influence of Marxism in an increasingly capitalist China has made harkening back to such imperial traditions and polit-
ical philosophies seem only natural. Chinese leaders, according to this hypothesis, have since seized upon this traditionalist school of international relations theory and are seeking to manifest it across East and Central Asia.

Ultimately, drawing definitive conclusions about the motivations of Chinese conduct is difficult. Nevertheless, it is apparent that, while some facets of the realist hypothesis may still hold, the impact of new ideologies on the nature and objectives of Chinese foreign policy is significant and thus very underappreciated in international relations literature. Going forward, realist considerations of the balance of power should not be ignored in assessing China's actions on the global stage. However, understanding the intentions of China's leaders requires greater analysis of the recent revival of traditionalist political philosophy, particularly with regard to its impact on the current liberal international order.

LITERATURE REVIEW
As a result of China's meteoric rise, international relations scholars have made innumerable attempts to understand Chinese foreign policy and its implications for the future. The rapid shift in Chinese foreign policy since Xi Jinping came to power has only further contributed to the clamor for an accurate understanding of Chinese politics. However, attempts to identify the core drivers or motivators of Chinese foreign policy are notably sparse. To make matters worse, few scholars actually compare these drivers against one another to examine their relative effect, and none have done so in light of Xi Jinping's complete centralization of authority in 2017. With this gap in mind, I hope to provide the beginnings of a comparative analysis between these two hypotheses.

A realist interpretation of China's political decision-making writ large undoubtedly constitutes the most common school of analysis. According to Harvard Professor Alastair Iain Johnston's extensive examination of ancient Chinese foreign policy, realpolitik and a militaristic culture have dominated the Chinese elite's worldview throughout history. He asserts that, while Confucian-Mencian political ideology includes extensive examples of values-based, moralistic leadership, such examples are meant to serve as ethical guidance, not rubrics for reasoned state behavior.1 In his book Harmony and War, Dr. Yuan-kang Wang agrees with Johnston, claiming that during China's imperial period, "Chinese security policy largely confirms the expectations of structural realism" and "The popular belief that Confucian pacifism has guided China's security policy is therefore a myth."2 Their conclusion that Confucian-Mencian political ideology was not a substitute for, but a supplement to, realist thought is particularly insightful, as Confucian ideology clearly served a legitimizing role for Chinese policymakers for thousands of years.

Many scholars also identify realist motivations as the driving force behind more recent trends in Chinese foreign policy. Dr. Georg Struver, for example, applies historical analyses to modern China in his examination of China's international economic ties from 1990 to 2015, concluding that neither ideological guidance nor ideological similarity determine China's bilateral economic ties. Instead, according to Struver, political and economic payoffs are the most important considerations for Chinese leaders.3 Finally, Andrew Scobell and Scott Harold attribute changes in Chinese foreign policy over the 2009-2010 time frame to changes in the structural balance of power, as well as security dilemmas in the South China Sea.4 While this array of realist interpretations is extensive, these ideas may no longer apply in Xi's new era, where Confucian thought has been re-elevated to immense public importance.

Standing in direct contrast with the realists, constructivist China scholars view traditionalist ideology as the true driver of current Chinese policy, positing that ideology determines both China's ultimate international objectives and how it chooses to pursue them. Dr. Jeffrey Legro, for instance, contends that over the course of China's history, "both power and economic interdependence may push [China's] strategy in particular directions but such moves have also been reversed even when power and interdependence conditions remain fairly constant."5 In reality, he claims, collective ideas are more responsible for determining Chinese foreign policy because foreign policy is "enacted through domestic politics and decision-making," both of which are functions of ideology. As a result, traditional ideology provides the true foundation for Chinese policy, and should be better examined by foreign scholars.6 Building on Legro's analysis, China scholars William Callahan, Elizabeth Economy, and Camilla Sorensen all individually contend that China's historical memory and the concept of tianxia, the ancient, revanchist worldview, have dramatically altered how China acts on the global stage.7 Taken together, these qualitative assessments of China's history
provide a significant counterpoint to realist interpretations. More importantly, however, these assessments have gained more traction given President Xi's revitalization of Confucian education and his rhetorical appeals to a lost imperial past.

Though both the realist and traditionalist hypotheses have been examined previously, no studies thus far have compared them against one another since Xi Jinping’s complete consolidation of political power. The implications of these developments are immense for understanding current Chinese politics, as well as understanding the transition from Hu Jintao, a man committed to intra-Party consensus rule, to Xi Jinping, who has repeatedly broken unspoken political norms. As a result, I aim to fill that gap by comparing these hypotheses to identify the most important causal factors in China’s foreign policy shifts.

RESEARCH METHOD
In order to assess these two proposed explanations, I incorporate both quantitative and qualitative analyses. First, I evaluate how, when, and to what extent Chinese foreign policy has actually changed. While China’s foreign policy has undoubtedly transformed since the turn of the century, the precise timing and extent of these changes is not immediately apparent. Thankfully, a wide body of literature has already been dedicated to accounting for when and how these policies changed, so I simply collated that information to provide the most up to date understanding of how changes in Chinese foreign policy have played out. This assessment focuses on changes in Chinese elite discourse, modifications of China’s foreign policy bureaucracy, and notable shifts in Chinese international actions, such as in territorial disputes, international trade, and multilateral engagement. Though some debate continues over the nature of changes in China’s foreign policy objectives, the dramatic differences between the Hu and Xi administrations provide a fairly clear inflection point in China’s international affairs.

Second, regarding the realist hypothesis, I compare the above-mentioned rhetorical, institutional, and strategic shifts in China’s foreign policy to measures of the country’s national power. This comparison is largely based on the 2002 work of Hu Angang and Men Honghua, in which the two scholars lay out a new formula for calculating national power. While their methodology is not the most complex measure of national power, its popularity amongst Chinese scholars, as well as the authors’ close ties to the upper echelons of the Chinese government, makes it relevant in trying to understand the driving motivations of Chinese policymakers. By comparing the temporal changes in rhetoric, institutions, and strategy to fluctuations in national power, I hope to understand to what extent Chinese interpretations of the balance of power actually drive policy.

Finally, in examining the relationship between classical ideology and policy, I again combine quantitative methods with qualitative analysis. First, I chart when and to what extent traditionalist ideology has surfaced over the past decade. This involves measuring the rise in terms associated with the tianxia worldview and other traditionalist foreign policy ideas in articles on the Chinese National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database, the largest Chinese-language academic database in use. By charting its rise, I again construct a timeline of when and where this worldview perforated through Chinese academia and compare that to changes in CCP rhetoric, institutions, and strategy. Lastly, I assess to what extent the aforementioned changes in foreign policy reflect an adoption of a traditionalist, neoclassical worldview.

CHANGES IN CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY
Faced with a dynamic and growing China, academics and policymakers alike debated throughout the beginning of the 21st century whether or not China would adopt an international role commensurate with its economic power. After many years, a growing scholarly consensus has concluded that Chinese leaders made the decision to pursue such a leadership role sometime between the onset of the global financial crisis in 2008 and the end of the first term of Xi Jinping’s presidency in 2017. A nine-year window, however, is far too wide to determine the causal mechanism for this fundamental change in Chinese foreign policy. In order to create a more precise accounting of the changes in Chinese foreign policy, shifts in Chinese foreign policy initiatives, institutions, and rhetoric since 2008 must first be examined.

Chinese foreign policy rhetoric in the immediate post-Deng era largely revolved around Deng’s unofficial strategy of “keeping a low profile.”9 Jiang Zemin, Deng’s successor, reiterated China’s commitment to this strategy in 1991, 1995, and 1998, defining China’s foreign policy principles as “observe calmly, act coolly, never seek leadership, keep a low profile, and get some things done.”10 (冷静观察, 稳住阵脚, 沉着应付, 韬光养晦, 有所作为) While the precise implications of
this saying sparked heated debates within China, all parties generally agreed that China, in the words of Deng himself, “should never seek hegemony; China should never seek leadership.” With little desire to assert China internationally and his efforts focused on internal reform, Jiang was unconcerned with centralizing his foreign policymaking power. Instead, Jiang promoted, in the words of China scholar David Lampton, the “professionalization, corporate pluralization, decentralization, and globalization” of China’s foreign policymaking establishment.

The result of Jiang’s leadership was a more moderate, consensus-driven, and bureaucratic foreign policy that aimed to bolster China’s economic growth while simultaneously avoiding greater international obligations. The centerpiece of Jiang’s foreign policymaking, China’s decision to join the World Trade Organization (WTO), fits this mold, but is not the only example of his approach to foreign affairs. For example, while China took a more proactive role on Korean issues by joining the Four-Party Talks, it did so largely out of economic concerns and avoided undertaking any significant international obligations. In an attempt to ease relations with South Korea and therefore benefit from the country’s rapid modernization, Jiang took advantage of greater inter-Korean rapprochement to recognize South Korean statehood and open up trade. In the Four-Party Talks, meanwhile, China relegated itself exclusively to a role as an interlocutor, “responsible only for passing messages, nudging relevant parties to the negotiating table, and formulating general negotiating principles.” Though Jiang certainly took a more aggressive stance towards Taiwan over this same period, his policy stemmed largely from the rise of pro-independence parties in Taiwan. So in total, while China still acted to protect its “核心利益” (core interests) in certain areas, foreign policy under Jiang focused primarily on stimulating economic growth while avoiding international commitments.

President Hu Jintao, however, presided over a China fundamentally different from that of his two predecessors. Over the course of Hu’s presidency, China’s economy, aided by its 2001 accession to the WTO, underwent historic growth, surpassing Japan to become second only to the United States in total economic output. China’s foreign exchange reserves also shot up during Hu’s tenure, rising from $212 billion to over $3 trillion. In addition to economic success, the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, 2009 National Military Parade, and 2010 Shanghai Expo put China’s remark-
China’s strategic intention of taking the path of peaceful development,” and argued that China would not pursue regional leadership of any sort.26 Wang Jisi, a prominent international relations scholar with close ties to the government, disavowed earlier Chinese assertiveness in a 2011 Foreign Affairs article, stating “last year, some Chinese commentators reportedly referred to the South China Sea and North Korea as such [China’s core interests], but these reckless statements, made with no official authorization, created a great deal of confusion.”27 Finally, Hu never again mentioned his Harmonious World ideology at the SCO, arguably the only international organization where China held a leadership role and could effectively spread this new development model.28 Chinese foreign policy for the rest of the Hu administration focused less on protecting Chinese interests and more on boosting China’s soft power through increased international investment and minor international contributions.29 By the end of Hu’s tenure, the public clamored for greater international engagement but political elites, chastened by the international reaction to their first bout of assertive policy in 2009-2010, largely relegated foreign policy to an extended public relations campaign.

Upon taking office, President Xi immediately set out to fundamentally redefine Chinese foreign policy, publicly breaking with Hu’s tentative approach to international affairs. Two weeks into his term, Xi unveiled the driving objective of his administration, “to realize the greatest dream for the Chinese nation is the greatest dream for the Chinese nation in modern history.”30 Achieving this “China Dream” (中国梦), as it has become known, has entirely replaced the Deng-era maxim to “keep a low profile” in international affairs. In its place, Xi has exhorted the country to “strive for achievement” with the goal of “reform[ing] the international system and global governance” and “inject[ing] more Chinese elements into the international rule.”31 For the first time since Deng took power, Chinese leaders openly promoted revisionist goals. Xi further distanced his foreign policy from that of his predecessors by elevating the achievement of his international objectives to the same level of importance as the country’s pursuit of economic growth. According to several China scholars, China’s leaders had previously “insisted upon diplomatic strategy that would best ensure the country’s prosperity,” but under Xi, pursuit of “development and security are two major priorities equally high on the Party agenda.”32 This equality of security and economic concerns represents a fundamental redefinition of the aims and role of foreign policy in China.

While this rhetorical shift under Xi may not seem significant given the emphasis placed on the domestic portion of China’s national rejuvenation, Chinese international relations scholars make clear that Xi’s China Dream policies are an explicit call to supplant the United States as the preeminent regional power. In the words of one Chinese professor, “Xi Jinping launched the China Dream when China is number two in the world. Do you think when he wakes up from his dream that he wants to be number three? Of course not, he wants to be number one.”33 Shi Yinhong, one of China’s most prominent international relations scholars and a counselor to the State Council of China, meanwhile, has written that Xi’s goal is “to give [China] a dominant role in Asia and the Western Pacific — at the cost of the United States’ ascendancy.”34

Xi has backed his new rhetoric with an expansive, comprehensive effort to boost all forms of Chinese influence across Eurasia. Beginning with his flagship program, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Xi aims to tie Chinese transportation and trade networks to Europe via overland connections through Central Asia and expanded maritime routes across the Pacific and Indian Oceans.35 The geographic purview of the initiative is hard to overstate; not only does it connect East, Central, and South Asia to Europe, Xi’s recent commitment to include reconstruction of war-torn Syria as part of the BRI program has expanded his vision all the way to the shores of the Mediterranean.36 While not officially part of BRI, China also has several other investment initiatives to complement and connect the overland and maritime trade routes. For example, Chinese firms have begun construction in Pakistan on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to connect western China to the Indian Ocean. It has also led the way in creating and constructing the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor to promote regional trade and tie western China to Chinese-built, deep-water ports in Bangladesh.37 To finance these various initiatives, China founded the multinational Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), unveiled in the same speeches announcing the BRI initiative.38 Though its current financing projects overlap significantly with the Western-dominated Asian Development Bank, World Bank, and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, it constitutes the first Chinese-led international organization that has truly global reach.39
Beyond his infrastructural efforts, Xi has also put great emphasis on modernizing China’s military and enhancing its power-projection capabilities. For example, the PLA has reduced the overall number of troops it employs but has expanded its special operations, marine, and aviation units, all of which provide China with greater mobility and greater strategic flexibility.40 At the same time, the PLA under Xi has, according to US Department of Defense researchers, “embarked on its most wide-ranging and ambitious restructuring since 1949, including changes to most of its key organizations.”41 The most obvious of these changes is the PLA’s shift from a rigid division-based system designed to counteract the outdated threat of Soviet invasion to a more operationally flexible brigade-based system, providing China greater power-projection capabilities. In addition, Xi has reorganized the military command structure so as to enhance his personal power over the PLA, and has overseen an extensive purge of disloyal, incompetent, or corrupt senior military leaders.42 Finally, the PLA under Xi has expanded its regional and global reach with new military bases. In the South China Sea, Xi has overseen extensive land-reclamation activities on disputed reefs, turning several reefs into fortified bastions complete with advanced surface-to-air missile batteries, modern port facilities, and sizable marine garrisons.43 In Djibouti, meanwhile, Xi has opened China’s first overseas military base. Though the Chinese government insists it is only a “logistics support facility,” according to the treaty between China and Djibouti it can host up to 10,000 soldiers and its garrison of marines has already conducted live-fire exercises.44

Moreover, Xi has illustrated a greater willingness than his predecessors to use China’s enhanced non-traditional coercive powers. For example, China has established an expansive air defense identification zone in the East and South China Sea, and aircraft, both civilian and military, are regularly harassed by Chinese fighters whilst transiting the area. China’s unsafe interceptions of foreign aircraft are not new, as the 2001 collision between a Chinese J-8II fighter jet and a US Navy EP-3 signals intelligence aircraft illustrates. However, the frequency with which these unsafe interceptions now occur and the use of such harassment to enforce China’s territorial expansion is a change from the past.45 On the seas, meanwhile, China has made extensive use of its maritime militias to block, ram, and otherwise impede foreign ships in disputed waters.46 Again, like its use of aerial interceptions, China’s methods are not entirely new but the regular nature of these incidents indicates less concern over the potential ramifications for China’s economic development should a crisis break out. While these non-traditional coercive measures seem unsubstantial when compared to traditional military threats, the recent China-South Korea spat over a US anti-ballistic missile battery illustrates the lengths to which China now seems willing to go to punish countries that defy it. In the wake of the anti-ballistic missile battery’s deployment in South Korea, the country was quickly hit with a wide range of unofficial economic sanctions, government-organized boycotts of South Korean goods, and extensive cyber-attacks on military and defense contractor computer networks.47 Even low-level government workers such as health inspectors conducted an extensive campaign of harassment against South Korean businesses in China.48

All of Xi’s efforts to expand the scope of China’s diplomatic, economic, and military efforts have been in pursuit of creating what Xi has dubbed 命运共同体 (a “community of common destiny”), while punishing those who oppose China’s rise.49 According to Xi, by ensuring that the countries of Asian countries “are linked with and dependent on one another,” a “community of common destiny” can be created, thereby ensuring regional peace and development.50 China’s Belt and Road Initiative, supported by AIIB financing, aims to create precisely that kind of interconnectivity by aligning the political, economic, and cultural incentives of China’s neighbors with its own objectives. To complement China’s infrastructure investment efforts, Xi has also begun promoting greater security cooperation through both an expanded and more security-focused Shanghai Cooperation Organization, as well as by promoting the “New Asian Security Concept,” which envisions a series of intra-Asian security accords centered around bilateral Chinese security assurances.51 In the words of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, by tying together the wealth, security, and political legitimacy of China’s neighborhood, Xi has introduced “a new tangible dimension to China’s leadership aspirations” that constitutes a new vision of “global governance with prominent Chinese characteristics.”52 Though the concept is similar to Hu’s “Harmonious World”, it differs dramatically in scope; whereas Hu had simply sought to use China’s economic success to justify its one-party rule, Xi is developing a new international community bound together by Chinese investment. Instead of seeking to legitimize China’s
domestic system, this new community of common
destiny provides a sweeping vision for a new, intercon-
nected Asia, and subverts “the ideational foundations
of the existing order, and offer[s] an appealing blue-
print” for an alternative, Sinocentric regional order.53

In assessing when the real shift in China’s
foreign policymaking occurred, the gradual adaptation
by Hu, Jiang, and Deng to China’s growing economic
strength cannot compare to the fundamental shift in
China’s approach to international relations that has
occurred under Xi. Prior to Xi’s ascension to power,
the core objective of Chinese foreign policy was to
sustain economic development.54 The financial crisis of
2007-2008 undoubtedly gave Hu and the rest of Chi-
na greater confidence in the country’s new strength,
and greater distaste for an American-led order that
it saw as responsible for the international financial
catastrophe. However, once Hu and his advisor were
faced with muscular and cohesive reactions to China’s
military developments in the South China Sea from
both its neighbors and the United States, China quickly
recanted and reverted to its “good neighbor” policies.55
Though China under Xi has not abandoned its pursuit
of economic development, it now ranks political and
military considerations on par with economic ones
when taking action internationally, a dramatic shift
from previous administrations. In addition, Xi has
promoted his vision of a new Eurasian political order
based on the unifying properties of massive Chinese
investments. Instead of merely seeking economic
growth, China instead aims to actively and openly
reshape the international order. Chinese foreign policy
undoubtedly changed gradually prior to the Xi presi-
dency, but it was only after Xi took office in November
of 2012 that China truly became a revisionist power.

THE BALANCE OF POWER INTERPRETATION
According to the realist hypothesis of Chinese deci-
sion-making, China’s interpretation of the balance
of power determines its actions on the international
stage. If this is true, changes in Chinese foreign poli-
cy should closely parallel the development of China’s
national power. In practice, however, this has not
necessarily been the case. When contrasted against
the model for national power laid out by Hu Angang
and Men Honghua, President Xi Jinping’s fundamental
redefinition of Chinese foreign policy between 2012
and 2014 has no clear connection to similar shifts in
the regional or global balance of power. Instead, this
model demonstrates what most people already know:
that Chinese power has increased steadily since 2000,
while American power has slowly but surely slipped
away. Contrary to the balance of power hypothesis, the
most significant alteration of Chinese foreign policy
occurred not at the peak of China’s relative power
gains, but during a period of gradual change.

However, the data analyzed cannot rule out
the possibility that Xi’s actions are compensation for
the tenure of Hu Jintao, whom many Chinese citizens
viewed as weak-willed and ill-suited to leadership.
Hu’s relatively reserved policies were viewed by many
as incompatible with China’s growing international
strength, and Xi’s policies may therefore have been an
attempt to make up for Hu’s restraint. Thus while the
balance of power hypothesis does not hold in all cases,
it cannot be totally ruled out as a causal factor in Xi’s
decision to transform China’s foreign policy.

METHODOLOGY
In assessing the balance of power between one or
several countries, innumerable methods can be used.
Quantifying national power, meanwhile, is not the only
way to assess the relative strengths of a country which
in fact dramatically complicates what can, in very
broad terms, typically be intuited by a well-informed
observer. However, quantifications of national power
play a particularly important role in the Chinese gov-
ernment. Ever since Deng Xiaoping’s national security
advisor Huan Xiang stated that “for the next several
years…strengthening ‘综合国力’ [Comprehensive
National Power] will be the main task,” there has been
an explosive rise in interest in measures of national
power.56 For example, in 1999, 800 out of every million
articles published on the Chinese National Knowledge
Infrastructure (CNKI) database were about measures
of national power.57 Zhou Yongming, an academic
who studies Chinese politics went so far as to say that
measuring national power is part “of a new paradigm
by which the Chinese have come to perceive their
position in the world since the late 1980s.”58 Mean-
while, scholar Michael Pillsbury has said that “China’s
analysts believe in geopolitics. They try to calculate
mathematically the hierarchy of the world’s future
major powers.”59 As a result of this greater emphasis on
quantitative methods, I will therefore rely primarily on
quantifications of national power to represent Chinese
perceptions of the balance of power.

In choosing my methodology, I sought out
models of measuring national power that are both
widely accepted by other scholars as accurate and
are most likely to reflect the internal discussions of Chinese leadership. Three models of national power meet these requirements: the first was created by the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), a civilian think-tank that operates as a bureau of China’s foreign intelligence services; the second was developed by Colonel Huang Shuofeng, an officer in the PLA and the self-proclaimed father of Chinese national power estimates; the third and most recent was crafted by Hu Angang and Men Honghua, two Chinese scholars. While it would be very interesting to recreate and update the results of the Huang Shuofeng and CICIR models, their complete formulas have yet to be published in open-source material. Furthermore, both Hu and Men have very close ties to the Chinese government, which makes their model a good candidate: Hu is the director of Tsinghua University’s China Studies Program, and is believed to be heavily involved in the Chinese government’s formulation of public policy, while Men is a leading scholar at the Party School of the CPC Central Committee, where his writing on Chinese ideology is “taken seriously by Chinese leadership.” The Hu-Men model is also both the most recent and the only model that is not reliant on extensive surveys of Chinese international relations scholars, dramatically reducing its complexity. As a result, despite its idiosyncrasies, the Hu-Men model seems to be the closest a foreign researcher can come to easily replicating a government-sponsored measure of national power and is therefore the best model for this analysis.

The Hu-Men model defines comprehensive national power as the relative abundance of “real and potential key resources available” to any given country. These “strategic resources” fall into eight categories: economic power, human capital, natural resources, financial resources, technological development, governing power, military power, and a country’s ability to utilize international resources. The twenty-three indicators that make up these eight resources are measured in their raw values, but then calculated as a portion of the total amount of that resource. That portion is multiplied by a pre-assigned weight for that indicator, then multiplied again by a pre-assigned weight for the overarching strategic resource. The result is an equation that looks like this:

\[ \text{National Power} = \sum ((ri \times bi) \times ai) \]

where \( ri \) is the portion of the total amount of a certain indicator that a country possesses, \( bi \) is the assigned weight of a particular indicator, and \( ai \) is the assigned weight of a given resource. The aim of this model is to represent the varying importance of both the strategic resources and the different indicators that constitute those strategic resources. At the same time, it provides easy comparison between any number of countries by calculating all values as portions of the total available resources.

For an illustration of how this works, take measuring military strength in the year 2000 as an example. Hu and Men use active duty personnel as one of two indicators (\( ri \)) to quantify military strength, one of the eight strategic resources. In this case, the number of active duty personnel from several countries are summed up to establish the total number of active duty personnel that are relevant to the comparison, then China’s portion of that total is calculated. In this case, that portion is 27.6 percent, meaning that, in 2000, China had 27.6 percent of the total number of active duty troops of all countries included in our comparison. That percentage is then multiplied by the weight of the indicator (\( bi \)) for active duty personnel, which is 0.5. Finally, that value is multiplied by the weight assigned to the strategic resource (\( ai \)) military strength, which is 0.1, to produce the contribution to China’s national power that active duty personnel provides. This process is then repeated for each of the twenty-two other indicators and totaled up for each year. The final number for each year is therefore not a raw value of national power, but instead China’s annual portion of the total power of all countries included in the comparison.

As a result of this methodology, a given country’s national power is dependent entirely upon which other countries it is compared against. In the Hu-Men model, only the five largest international actors of Asia are included: the United States, China, Japan, India, and Russia. This grouping is useful in assessing China’s strength relative to its neighbors, but does not necessarily indicate how its strength stacks up on a global scale. To supplement this relatively small comparison, I have therefore included a parallel comparison of nineteen different countries. These countries were chosen in another survey of national power by Professor Song Yiming from Renmin University, who has written extensively on quantitative measures of national power in both China and in the West. In his study, these nineteen countries were chosen to provide a regionally-diverse survey of global strength while still focusing...
on the most relevant international actors, and as such seemed fitting to supplement to Hu-Men model.63

A country’s measured national power is also highly dependent on the weights given to each indicator. In the Hu-Men model, these weights (shown in Figure 1) are assigned through no clear methodology other than the two scholars’ intuition on the relative importance of the various measures. While that intuition is a useful insight given the close relationship both authors have with the Chinese government, other authors have applied more advanced methods to determine appropriate weights. Thankfully, Professor Song of Renmin University also proposed a model of national power that shared seven of the eight “strategic resources” with the Hu-Men model. He then chose weights for each of these resources through a survey of twenty other Chinese political science scholars.64 While Professor Song lacks the ties to the Chinese government that Hu and Men have, his methodology for surveying other Chinese academics is taken directly from the CICIR model, which was developed in close coordination with Chinese intelligence services. The result is that the Song model provides new ai values to supplement the Hu-Men model, which were obtained by utilizing methods developed for government-sponsored measures of national power.

As mentioned previously, this is not to say that the model is perfect or even a particularly accurate snapshot of the world at any point in time. Thus far, nobody has constructed a universally accepted model to measure national strength. In fact, few scholars even agree on basic methodology, with some relying heavily on just a handful of data points while others construct multi-layered matrices to measure every minute aspect of a country’s strength. Choosing a single measure of national power upon which to base any conclusions is therefore bound to be imperfect, and will reflect the priorities and biases of the authors. Indeed, this model leaves out key variables such as the feelings of the population, ideas of national identity, and the quality of governance. However, given the government’s use of similar methods for assessing the world, it seems prudent to recreate as best as possible the analytic tools available to policymakers in the Chinese government. By doing so, the model may therefore provide some insight into areas of confidence or concern that could be behind the Chinese government’s changing approach to foreign affairs.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

While any attempt to quantify national power is inherently problematic, the results of this model are remarkably consistent, regardless of which set of countries are included in the calculations or which weights are used. The most striking aspect of the results is China's steady, rapid growth in national strength. Even the global financial crisis, which many international relations scholars claim was a watershed moment in China's rise to superpower status, only marginally increased the rate of growth in China's national power. This same trend applies generally for each strategic resource, with the notable exception of China's development of human capital. In that instance, the benefits of a massive and increasingly educated population are somewhat dampened by the number of citizens aging out of the workforce. Other strategic resources, however, do have interesting trends worthy of closer examination.

Beginning around 2006 and accelerating in the wake of the global financial crisis, China's share of financial resources grew rapidly as other global financial centers in Europe, Japan, and the US struggled to recover. This upward trend, however, began to slow sometime around 2011 for reasons that are not immediately apparent. However, by breaking down the data into their constituent indicators, it becomes clear that, while China's capital formation grew unabated over this timeframe, its share of market capitalization and net foreign direct investment (FDI) flat-lined. This pattern of rapid acceleration post-2008 followed by a later stagnation in growth coincides almost perfectly with Hu Jintao's brief experiment with a more assertive foreign policy in the wake of the financial crisis. This relationship is particularly clear in the case of net FDI, which grows rapidly after 2008 but slows down abruptly in 2011, precisely when Hu began to walk back China's more assertive policies in the South China Sea and elsewhere.

Given this correlation between strong financial performance and assertive policies, the case could therefore be made that this model understates Chinese leaders' sensitivity to the financial well-being of China's economy. However, following the accession of Xi Jinping, the correlation between changes in FDI and foreign policy no longer holds. In fact, as FDI stagnated and eventually decreased from 2013 to 2016, Xi unveiled an increasingly ambitious foreign policy agenda. In addition, though China's market capitalization did grow from 2013 to 2015, it sharply decreased in 2016 while capital formation slowed significantly from 2014 to 2016. In short, though two indicators of financial well-being closely aligned with the foreign policy of Hu Jintao's second term, no measure of financial strength included here can adequately explain Xi Jinping's new policies.

China's share of military strength, meanwhile, does seem to moderately increase its rate of growth around 2011, just before Xi takes power. However, this uptick in military strength does not reflect China's increased military capabilities it was instead caused by changes in the United States' military posture. In fact, China's number of active duty personnel remained consistent from 2006 to 2015, when Xi began his military reforms. Defense spending, meanwhile, grew at a constant rate from roughly 2008 onwards. However, because the model calculates resource strength based on relative abundance, steady declines in the United States' military spending and manpower beginning in 2010 increased the growth of China's portion of military strength. Given that the United States' defense spending accounts for over 50 percent of defense spending included in the nineteen-country model and over 70 percent in the five-country model, a sharp de-
cline in the United States’ defense spending translates to a considerable increase in China’s share of military strength. While that does mean China increased its military power relative to one of its greatest competitors, the decrease in the United States’ military spending likely did little to boost Chinese leaders’ confidence in their military, despite being registered in the model as China’s relative gain. Instead, the drawdown of the United States’ combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan allowed the United States to pivot its military focus away from the Middle East and towards Asia. As a result, the brief uptick in China’s relative military strength around 2011 seems unlikely to have given Xi Jinping the assurance he needed to fundamentally redefine Chinese foreign policy.

While military power and financial resources seem at first to positively correlate with the aggressiveness of Chinese foreign policy, China’s use of international resources appears to have a negative correlation soon after Xi Jinping takes office in 2012. In this model, the measure of international resources is meant to capture the ability of a country to make use of international markets and international intellectual property exchange. As such, it consists of exports and imports of goods and services, as well as royalty receipts and payments. According to the data, China’s use of international resources grew steadily until 2013, when the growth in its foreign economic ties began to slow and then ultimately decrease in 2016. A closer look at the individual indicators illustrates that this dip is not actually a decrease in national power, but the beginning of an important transition period for China’s economy.

Starting first with the trade aspect, China’s share of exports grew at a stable rate from 2008-2015, before decreasing in 2016. However, this measure disguises the fact that growth in the raw value of China’s exports has slowed since 2013, and has actually decreased in 2015 and 2016. At the same time, the growth in China’s share of imports began to flatten out, again starting in 2013 and decreasing in 2016. The trend is even more pronounced when raw imports are examined; after averaging 11 percent year-on-year growth in imports from 2006-2013, it dropped to 3 percent growth from 2013-2014, then decreased in 2015 and 2016. By 2016, the value of imports was only marginally higher than it had been in 2012. Furthermore, the slowing of imports has occurred for both commodity and non-commodity goods, with a fall in commodity imports responsible for an outsized share of the decrease.65

China’s use of international intellectual property, meanwhile, tells a similar story. China’s share of royalty receipts has always been insignificantly small; in fact, in 2000 China received less than 0.01 percent of the total royalty receipts in the 19-country comparison. By 2016, China still captured less than 0.5 percent of the total, but its growth over that period had been consistent from year to year. Its royalty payments, on the other hand, grew at an increasingly fast rate until 2013, rising from 2 percent of the total to nearly 13 percent. This makes sense, given that China was playing technological catch-up and that, according to the Asian Development Bank, “buying technology and paying royalties may be the most effective approach to developing domestic technology bases.”66 However, China’s growth in royalty payments slowed greatly after 2013, much like China’s export and import volume.

Together, this data indicates that China’s economy is undergoing a transition from an export- and investment-driven economy to a consumption-driven economy. As wages and domestic consumption increase, China’s reliance on continuous investment and exports for growth decreases. In addition, domestic import substitution reduces the need for imported intermediate goods, while a growing indigenous technological capability gradually eliminates the need for foreign technology transfers. This conclusion is supported by other data in the model as well: in 2013, China’s share of both FDI and gross domestic investment slowed before decreasing in 2016. However, China’s growth in domestic consumption over the same period only slowed by about 1.5 percent, a modest deceleration compared to the growth in imports, exports, and investment, which each slowed by 5.5 to 6 percent before declining.67 The result is a growing economic reliance on domestic consumption and import substitution, while investments and trade play an increasingly secondary role.
Though this transition has been developing over the past decade and a half, the acceleration of this process under President Xi’s rule is notable in that Xi has made this kind of economic reform a central objective of the Communist Party. In fact, at the 19th Party Congress in November 2017, the Party redefined what it calls China’s “principal contradiction” under Xi’s leadership for the first time since 1981. Until 2017, China’s “principal contradiction” had been defined as a tradeoff between meeting the needs of the people and China’s “backward social production.” However, this was amended to become the tension between “unbalanced and inadequate development” and the “people’s ever-growing needs for a better life.”

Addressing imbalances in production and consumption is therefore central to resolving this contradiction and will involve, in the words of Morgan Stanley’s Chief Economist Stephen Roach, a growing “emphasis on productivity, innovation, pruning excess capacity, and moving up the value chain…” This is by no means an easy task, but Xi and his deputies have repeatedly made it clear that promoting this transition is fundamental to China’s long-term prosperity.

Given the centrality of this economic transition in Xi’s domestic policies, it is tempting to assume Chinese foreign policy under Xi, and in particular the Belt and Road Initiative, is also focused primarily on addressing domestic economic imbalances. If this is true, then it is not growing confidence in national strength that is responsible for China’s changing foreign policy, but instead concerns over China’s long-term economic stability. This hypothesis of Chinese decision-making was certainly correct during the Jiang or Hu administrations, when foreign policy was explicitly subordinate to economic growth. In addition, the BRI probably does play a role in helping China make this transition by providing a short-term outlet for domestic overproduction and overinvestment, particularly through the massive investment projects in western China that are part of the overall initiative. However, the ability of the BRI to address large-scale overproduction is limited, and the intent of China’s economic reform is not to simply shift its problems abroad. Instead, Xi and his economic advisors have made it clear that they intend to gradually cut production and wean the economy off government-led investment.

Furthermore, BRI and Xi’s other foreign policy changes go beyond simply investing in foreign infrastructure. Xi has modernized China’s military, shown greater willingness to coerce China’s neighbors, and promoted a vision of a new Sinocentric international order which Xi has dubbed the “community of common destiny.” If Xi sought only to address domestic economic concerns, none of this would have been necessary and growing tensions with the United States’ and China’s neighbors could have been avoided. So, while BRI may therefore be doing dual-duty as a sound economic policy, Xi’s other reforms and initiatives demonstrate that the ultimate objective of his foreign policy changes must be the larger goal of redefining China’s role in the international system.

Though the model therefore shows little evidence of anything that could cause great concern or confidence on the part of Chinese policymakers, this is not to say assessments of China’s domestic or international position are in no way responsible for its changing foreign policy. In fact, some of the greatest societal concerns facing China today are not measured in the model at all, such as ethnic tensions, rampant nationalism, or poor local governance. On the other hand, an increasingly confident population and secure sources of domestic innovation would add to any assessment of China’s national strength but are not included in the model. However, the Hu-Men model does provide an analysis of the more tangible sources of power over this time period and demonstrates that none of those factors correlate strongly with foreign policy changes since Xi took power. To assess the more nebulous aspects of national power that may have given Chinese leaders more confidence on the world stage, such as a growing national spirit, a whole other set of research is required.

While that important research must be set aside for another opportunity, polling data does provide a separate, imperfect way of capturing some of the intangible factors that go into an assessment of a country’s strength. Though factors included in the Hu-Men model, such as economic health and spending on defense, clearly play a role in public opinions about China’s strength, an individual’s understanding of ethnic relations and the quality of governance also undoubtedly influence their evaluations as well. Thankfully, Pew public opinion polling data from 2002 to 2016 includes questions regarding the future of the country, and therefore can provide another set of data upon which to base conclusions. This data must be
viewed with some uncertainty given the authoritarian nature of the PRC, but it does provide another touchstone to assess how China understands and has historically understood its national power. This data largely backs up the conclusions of the Hu-Men model, demonstrating that public confidence in China’s future has followed a stable, predictable trend upwards for the past decade and a half. For example, satisfaction in China’s development path increased slowly but steadily through 2015 before decreasing slightly in 2016. Confidence in China’s economic future also increased slowly over time, while belief in China’s position as an economic superpower has declined since 2009. Noticeably lacking across the datasets are any indications of rapid increases in Chinese confidence, particularly any that align with changes in Chinese foreign policy.

This data does not necessarily prove that China’s leaders do not react to perceived changes in the balance of power. In fact, though the 2008 financial crisis had little impact on public confidence or the Hu-Men model, it clearly did have an impact on policymakers. Hu Jintao, after all, embarked on a much more aggressive foreign policy campaign between 2008 and 2010, demonstrating that even the most mild-mannered of China’s leaders could not resist the opportunity to assert himself in what was dubbed a “period of strategic opportunity.” Hu eventually walked back his assertive policies, but evidently China’s leadership is willing to act swiftly to take advantage of important international events. However, no such international event can explain why China’s foreign policy changed so dramatically in 2012 with Xi Jinping’s rise to power. As the Hu-Men model and Pew polling together show, perceptions of China’s power amongst both the foreign policymaking establishment and the general public did not undergo any significant changes around 2012 that could explain Xi’s new policies. Despite issues associated with quantifications of power or with polling data, the two sets together can establish a general idea of how the country’s view of its position in the world has changed over time and reflect no great changes that may have led to China’s new foreign policies. Even by abandoning the larger model and looking instead at trends in individual indicators, no clear correlation exists between Xi’s foreign policy and economic, military, or societal data.

HISTORICAL MEMORY AND IMPERIAL AMBITIONS

Another candidate to explain China’s newly-assertive foreign policy under Xi comes not from realist assumptions but instead from a new political ideology based on modernized interpretations of China’s classical literature. The ideal of tianxia, which depicts a Sinocentric, stable ordering of the international system, has been one of many classical ideas that has seen a resurgence in recent years. Xi’s reforms, meanwhile, in many ways bear a striking resemblance to this ideal, with his new foreign policies positioning China to serve as a cultural, economic, and political hub for an emerging regional order in Asia. While quantifying the extent of this ideological connection is impossible, trends in academic and political discourse demonstrate that there are indeed clear parallels between the wider discussion of traditionalist policies in the years leading up to Xi’s accession and his foreign policy reforms. Given this correlation and the character of Xi’s reforms, it is evident that the ideological revival of classical political thought has been a major contributing factor in China’s foreign policy changes.

TIANXIA AND TRADITIONALISM

The concept of tianxia, which translates to “all under heaven”, stretches back to the Zhou Dynasty, which reigned from 1046 BCE to 256 BCE. In creating a political philosophy to legitimize their rule, the Zhou and later dynasties united conceptions about the divine right of emperors with a model of moral leadership and authority to create, in the words of journalist and author Howard French, “this set of ideals, around which a harmonious sense of geopolitics can be maintained.” In this new, idealized political order, five concentric, hierarchical circles represented the political communities of Asia: the center, which consisted solely of a divinely-ordained emperor who, through self-cultivation and moral authority, developed the vision and knowledge to rule effectively; the lords and pacified zones, which were both defined by acceptance of Chinese culture; and two barbarian zones—the controlled zone and the wild zone, with the former pledging fealty to the center through rituals and tributes. Effectively uniting and leading “all under heaven”, or all five zones, under a sage king’s rule became the ultimate political ideal, and required a combination of subjugation and moral attraction.

Of particular note here is the idealized relationship envisioned between the center and the controlled barbarian zone, a relationship that formed the basis of this supposedly peaceful international system. In exchange for tributary payments, trade access, and rit-
uum acceptance of Han superiority, the emperor would confer legitimacy on the leaders of the controlled barbarians. This relationship could then gradually imbue the barbarians with Chinese ideals until they became culturally indistinct from the empire itself. In combination with military expansion, this form of assimilation would allow a sage emperor to naturally spread classical Chinese values and therefore his zone of control. Noticeably lacking from this theory is any discussion of the sovereignty or independence of the “controlled barbarian zone”, which, while operating largely as separate states, had their foreign policies dictated to varying degrees by the emperor. Furthermore, the idea of cultural assimilation belies the profound chauvinism of this structure, in which a clearly superior, “civilized” center seeks to control its periphery. In this ideal, the process of assimilation only radiates away from the center, not towards it.

Due to recent scholarship, this idealized vision of tianxia and other traditionalist foreign policy concepts have seen a modern resurgence as the cornerstone of a new, Chinese school of international relations theory. As China’s economic might has grown, more and more academics have sought to supplant the West’s monopoly on intellectual theories in international relations. According to famed Chinese scholar Yan Xuetong, “foreign policy should be guided by Chinese traditional political wisdom rather than any ideology rooted in Western culture, including Marxism.” In its place, Yan and others have proposed a traditionalist international relations theory, relying on classical Chinese texts from multiple philosophical schools for inspiration. The development of this new school of thought has been underway for many years, with much debate between scholars over the best sources of such a political philosophy. In earlier years, this meant refining ideas of socialism and Marxist historical materialism to suit conditions in China. However, since 2005 there has been a growing movement to turn to classical Chinese literature for inspiration in creating this new theory of international relations. That year, Chinese philosopher Zhao Tingyang published his book The Tianxia System: An Introduction to the Philosophy of a World Institution, in which he argues for the replacement of the Westphalian system with the traditional Chinese vision of uniting tianxia under a single, morally upright leader.

In Zhao’s interpretation of Chinese history, the concept of tianxia served to unite the realms of civilized peoples and their “barbarian” neighbors “under the aegis of a benign hegemonic state personified by the emperor as Son of Heaven, and administered for the benefit of all under heaven.” Non-Confucian cultures submitted to the Son of Heaven because it was in their interest to do so, while the ritualistic tributary system, “whether regarded as symbolic or disguised as trade,” served to confer legitimacy and bestow benefits to either side. This authoritarian structure, Zhao claims, brought peace and stability to ancient China’s vast empire, and served as the foundation for the development of an integrated international civilization in East Asia.

In Zhao’s view, democracy and the Westphalian system, on the other hand, have both proven themselves incapable of promoting the wellbeing of humanity. This is primarily because they are fundamentally the products of individualistic perspectives. On a macro level, the Westphalian system fails because states selfishly pursue narrow foreign policy objectives that inevitably undermine the security and prosperity of others. Instead of acknowledging the de facto inequality of states, the conception of universal, immutable sovereignty undermines the development of a stable international order. Meanwhile, democracy fails on an individual level because it becomes a tyranny of the majority, where people vote to enhance their own wealth and prestige at the cost of others.

According to Zhao and other traditionalists, the world must therefore pursue an alternative that is capable of ruling for the greater good of all humanity, not simply their own community or nation-state. In this case, that means accepting a modern form of tianxia, where a global government led by a benign, aristocratic elite would rule over an international community. Much like the Son of Heaven, these impartial elites could assess and enact the will of the people through “careful observation of social trends” and therefore be utilitarian in their decision-making. States or sub-states that resist this global system or contravene the universal law of tianxia would then be subject to punitive expeditions, ensuring stability for all citizens.

Zhao’s work on tianxia and the development of a Chinese international relations theory has faced significant backlash for its narrow and ahistorical analyses. The reality of the tianxia system was a much more complicated one, whose concepts were preserved from dynasty to dynasty but whose actual execution differed profoundly over time. For example, Zhao’s vision of the tianxia utopia is a fundamentally cosmo-
politician one, whereas ancient tianxia drew sharp lines between the "superior" Han Chinese society and the "inferior" or "barbarian" nomadic societies to China's north and west. One must look no further than the Ming Dynasty-era Great Wall of China for evidence of the isolationist and ethno-nationalist strains that were fundamental to historical applications of tianxia. Furthermore, the foreign societies that the Son of Heaven nominally controlled frequently exercised their own coercive control over the core Chinese state, and in many cases actually supplanted the ruling dynasty. So, while the language of a Sinocentric regional order may have been preserved for large portions of China's history, any given dynasty's actual control over foreign actors fluctuated dramatically. In the words of the Harvard University Sinologist Yang Lien-sheng, the "Sino-centric world order was a myth backed up at different times by realities of varying degrees." Finally, Zhao's claims that tianxia preserved peace in East Asia is patently false, as several historians have demonstrated that rates of state violence in ancient China were roughly equivalent to their Western counterparts. In short, Zhao's vision of tianxia is an idealized one that ignores the isolationist and ethnocentric aspects of the system, but it has grown dramatically in popularity anyway.

Despite the general rejection of many of Zhao's historical claims, his approach to criticizing the Westphalian system and promoting a modernized tianxia as a Chinese alternative has had lasting consequences. According to China scholar William Callahan, Zhao's work was influential not because people agreed, but because "he has been able to set the agenda, and thus productively generate a powerful discourse that sets the boundaries of how people think about China's past, present, and future." Whether or not they agree with Zhao's historical analyses, many proponents of developing a new, Chinese school of thought have therefore been forced to address the perceived failure of the Westphalian order and the need to replace it. As a result, his work contributed to a significant growth in interest around what Yan Xuetong calls "traditionalism", a neoclassical interpretation of international relations theory, and has helped broadly define the views of this new school of thought.

Bridging the Gap: Ideas Moving from Literature to Policy
To understand the extent to which Zhao's writing and the writing of this traditionalist school of thought have grown in popularity, I have collected data on trends in China's academic international relations literature. As the data demonstrates, not only has interest in an indigenous Chinese political philosophy increased, more specifically it has been the rise of a traditionalist school of thought that has been responsible for that increase. This uptick in articles about tianxia and other ideas associated with traditionalist Chinese foreign policy began around 2010 and peaked around 2013, just about when Xi Jinping took office. Many of these traditionalist ideas have also since been replaced in scholarly work by officially sanctioned terms, almost all of which refer to the same traditionalist concepts. Though this correlation does not necessarily mean Xi Jinping took his foreign policy ideas directly from academia, the extensive crossover between Chinese policymaking and academic circles indicates that acceptance of a new, tradition-based foreign policy was almost certainly present and growing before Xi had taken office. As a result, the ideas coming out of academia at the very least influenced the execution of Xi's policies, and likely played a significant role in shaping his worldview.

Searches of the CNKI Chinese language database provide a useful metric for understanding when, and by extension maybe answer why, certain things became popular. In particular, CNKI provides an academic trend search function that allows a user to refine their search, then displays graphically the changes in popularity of the search term over time. In this instance, a series of terms was compiled, then the search for each of these terms was restricted to political science papers with matching article tags. As a result, the search only came up with articles that were both in the appropriate field and were in some way focused on the search term itself, as opposed to merely having the search term in the abstract or body of the paper. The terms, their translations, and results are all displayed below in Figure 7. On the left side of the graph are the number of articles that match the given parameters per million articles published, while the line plots the data points, one for each year between 2000 and 2017. The blue line below the graph, meanwhile, plots the percentage change in popularity from year to year.
Beginning first with the most obvious term, *tianxia* itself, we see a steady increase in interest over time punctuated by a series of sharp increases from 2010 to 2013. There was also an earlier, much smaller increase in interest around 2005, when Zhao Tingyang’s book was first published. In large part, this is due to the fact that Zhao’s book was originally a work of philosophy, and much of the academic interest in his writing was therefore not popular amongst political science authors until later on. Academic focus on Zhao’s work in political science circles seemed to begin primarily around 2011, when it saw a much larger resurgence, as demonstrated in Figure 7. Terms associated with the tianxia ideal such as “朝贡体系” (tributary system), “王道” (moral authority), “美德” (virtue), “皇帝” (emperor), and “夷” (barbarian) all follow this
same pattern of experiencing an increase around 2005, before spiking upwards dramatically beginning in 2010 or 2011. Even the term “传统” (tradition), one of the broadest terms examined, saw a marked increase in interest from political science scholars from 2010 on. Given the tianxia emphasis on dealing with barbarians, tributary payments, and the cultivation of individualistic, moral authority, these terms should indeed follow the same pattern as tianxia itself if interest in traditionalist foreign policy is increasing. Meanwhile, phrases that aren’t tied to the concept of tianxia or part of the traditionalist school of thought do not follow the same pattern. For example, Deng’s maxim to “韬光养晦” (keep a low profile) follows no immediately discernible pattern, nor does Xi’s later maxim to “奋发有为” (strive for achievement). The terms “世界秩序” (world order) and “国际秩序” (international order) similarly do not experience the expected uptick in interest around 2011, and only grow in popularity after Xi’s accession to the presidency.

The decoupling of terms associated with the tianxia concept from other foreign policy phrases seems unsurprising, but it is indicative of what drove these trends. Instead of displaying general interest in alternative worldviews or international orders, the results show that it was specifically interest in traditionalist foreign policy concepts and primarily those associated with the tianxia system that increased between 2010 and 2013. This data is certainly not proof of anything in and of itself, but it does confirm that there was a marked increase specifically in writing about traditionalist foreign policy in the years immediately leading up to Xi’s accession to the presidency.

Though there may have been this greater interest, there still remains the issue of understanding if and how that interest turned into policy. However, extensive work on the connections between Chinese academia and foreign policy institutions has already demonstrated that the two spheres frequently share ideas. For example, in 2007 Bonnie Glaser and Evan Medeiros, both accomplished American academics, charted the rise and fall amongst China’s leadership of the “peaceful rise” development concept. The idea began when Chinese academic Zheng Bijian visited the US in late 2002 and recognized that there was uncertainty amongst American academics and government officials regarding China’s future intentions. Upon returning to China, he began to promote a new concept that he called “the development path of China’s peaceful rise” (中国和平崛起的发展道路), which quickly grew in popularity amongst Chinese academics as a way of assuring the world that China’s economic power would not translate into revisionist intentions. By late 2003, China’s top Party and military leaders were using the term “peaceful rise” in internal discussions, and in December 2003, Premier Wen Jiabao used the term publicly in a speech at Harvard University. Shortly thereafter, however, opposition to the concept from within the Politburo Standing Committee led to the concept being officially rejected and use of the term in public speeches and academic work was quickly curtailed.

Though the concept fell from grace, the story of its rise and fall illustrates how academic work can very rapidly become part of the policymaking lexicon and actually frame how China approaches its foreign affairs. In this case, Zheng Bijian’s “professional experience, Party credentials, credibility in the Chinese system, and 关系 [personal relationship] networks are all central to understanding the evolution of peaceful rise.” This rise and fall in academic circles is also documented at the bottom of Figure 7, further demonstrating that trends in the CNKI database do accurately reflect trends in the international relations community. In this instance, Zheng benefited from particularly good connections to the foreign policymaking establishment, which undoubtedly helped his concept transition from academia to policy. However, he is not the only one to have these close ties to leadership figures.

While Zhao Tingyang, the author who re-popularized the idea of tianxia, lacks the same kind of connections to China’s politicians, early proponents of a traditionalist school of international relations theory undoubtedly do have relationships with upper leadership. In some cases, they are even part of the policymaking establishment themselves. The most notable example of this is Yan Xuetong, who has championed the development of the traditionalist school of thought. In his 2011 book Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power, Yan examines pre-Qin Dynasty international relations theory. He concludes that China should “promote the open principle of the traditional idea that all under heaven is one…” and must “create a new international relations theory on the basis of both pre-Qin thought and contemporary international relations theory.” His connections to policymakers, meanwhile, are extensive: he is Director of the Institute of International Relations at Tsinghua University, one of China’s preeminent universities; he was Director of the Center for Foreign Policy Studies at
the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), the think tank mentioned previously that has close ties to Chinese intelligence services; and he was a research fellow for China's National Security Commission, one of the government's highest policymaking bodies.99 Other scholars with similar ties to the government have also championed the development of a traditionalist school of thought. For example, Cheng Xiangyang, a deputy director at CICIR's Center for Foreign Policy Studies has said “the pragmatic moral authority of China's traditional strategic culture still has vitality and brilliant prospects for development.”100 Sun Ru, the other deputy director at CICIR, has written similar op-eds supporting a traditionalist school of thought.101 Furthermore, because many more scholars temporarily or unofficially “serve as advisors to the Chinese government on issues of international politics, there are direct linkages between the academic debate(s) and the official political strategy discourse.”102 In short, not only have the ideas of the traditionalist school entered the academic mainstream, they are championed by a very well-connected community of scholars and advisors to senior leaders.

TRADITIONALISM IN ACTION: CHINA’S FOREIGN POLICY TODAY

Though these traditionalist views have been popularized in international relations circles and may be held by policymakers, questions remain about whether or not they have actually had any impact on Chinese foreign policy. However, since the late Hu Jintao and early Xi Jinping era, the government’s promotion of traditional Chinese culture has rapidly increased, adding credence to the idea that policymakers are indeed enthusiastic about a traditionalist revival. Furthermore, clear parallels exist between Xi’s new foreign policy and the regional structure envisioned by proponents of this emerging, traditionalist Chinese school of international relations. Given these similarities between the idealized tianxia concept and Xi’s policies, one must therefore conclude that this new, classical Chinese international relations theory has indeed impacted how Xi has led China.

Although it may seem unrealistic to conclude that a non-Communist ideology could significantly influence Communist Party policymakers, ancient Chinese philosophy has made a remarkable resurgence in popularity since the reform era. By the mid-2000s, both Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao were quoting Confucius in public speeches, a far cry from the days of Mao’s campaign to destroy the “Four Olds.”103 Hu even took his promotion of classical ideals into the policy world with his Harmonious Society and Harmonious World initiatives. These programs had classical roots in both their names and their ultimate objectives: in the case of the Harmonious Society, this meant creating a小康社会 (“moderately prosperous society”) a phrase frequently used by Confucius; for the Harmonious World initiative, the goal was to “怀柔远人” (win the admiration of foreigners through kindness), another very traditional Confucian concept.104 Yu Keping, one of Hu’s close advisors, even explicitly connected the Harmonious World program to the tianxia ideal, calling it a “new take on the development of the ancient Chinese dream of天下大同 (Unifying All Under Heaven).”105 While the objectives of Hu’s Harmonious World were nowhere near as ambitious as the Belt and Road Initiative of Xi, it was an early step towards expanding China’s influence abroad. This brief episode therefore demonstrates that, by as early as the late 2000s, the traditionalist revival was having some impact on policymaking, and the ideas of neoclassical writers were already prominent in the minds of government officials.

Xi Jinping, meanwhile, has used the full force of his government to promote traditional Chinese culture domestically. Instead of merely occasionally referencing ancient history, Xi “made the use of ancient Chinese classics, including Confucian texts, one of the hallmarks of his political discourse.”106 Xi has gone much further than his predecessors in promoting the revival of traditional Chinese culture, saying that “A country and nation’s power and prosperity must always be supported by a flourishing culture. The prosperous development of Chinese culture is the prerequisite to the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.”107 He has backed this up by ordering the State Council to execute a formal plan for the preservation and promotion of classical Chinese culture through mandatory education and media campaigns. Even Xi’s analog to Mao’s "Little Red Book", which had laid out the guiding ideology of the Party under Mao, makes no references to Maoism or Marxism, and instead is a collection of quotes from various Chinese classical texts.108

Xi’s most notable connection to classics comes from his use of the term 中国梦 (“China Dream”). As discussed previously, “China Dream” has been Xi’s term for his overarching vision of China’s growth into a modern power. It encompasses everything from domestic to foreign policy and is used in almost every

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one of Xi’s speeches. However, the term “China Dream” has a clear lineage stretching back to the Zhou Dynasty of the seventh and eighth century BCE, the same era trumpeted by traditionalist scholars as the apex of China’s tianxia ideal. The earliest recorded use of the term “China Dream” comes from a poem actually written in the Southern Song dynasty, when Mongols threatened to overrun Chinese society. However, in this poem, the author Zheng Sixiao references another poem written several hundred years previously, saying “my heart full of the China Dream, the ancient poem ‘Flowing Spring.’” This older poem, “Flowing Spring,” comes from one of the oldest surviving examples of Chinese literature and is about a man who is disconsolate after dreaming of the lost splendor of the Western Zhou Dynasty. The term has since been used repeatedly in modern times prior to Xi’s adoption of it, but always as a clear reference to China’s lost imperial greatness. By turning the phrase “China Dream” into his guiding vision, Xi is explicitly calling upon China’s past for inspiration in leading China forward.

In his foreign policy speeches, Xi’s enthusiasm for promoting Chinese culture has also continued unabated. Xi has adamantly promoted the development of a new, Chinese school of international relations theory, demanding China “develop a distinctive diplomatic approach befitting its role as a major country,” and “conduct diplomacy with a salient Chinese feature and a Chinese vision.” His “community of common destiny” concept of “global governance with prominent Chinese characteristics,” meanwhile, is exactly the kind of governance structure that traditionalist international relations theory advocates for. In fact, the defining features of a traditionalist order are its Sinocentrism, its hierarchy, and its super-state governance structure, all of which match precisely with Xi’s vision and rhetoric. Although Xi has not explicitly referenced traditionalist writers such as Zhao Tingyang in his speeches, the pillars of his new foreign policies are undoubtedly inspired by these traditionalist ideas.

Observers of Chinese politics have understandably questioned whether Xi’s language reflects his genuine belief in traditionalist ideology. After all, Xi has explicitly called for the strengthening of China’s soft power abroad through promotion of classical Chinese culture. In addition, traditionalist political philosophy advocates for centralized power in the hands of a capable elite, which conveniently legitimizes both the Party’s continued rule and Xi’s own centralization of power. However, far from merely using Chinese culture as a rhetorical device, Xi has backed up his affinity for Chinese classics with actions that clearly pursue an international order similar to that of the tianxia unification.

Beginning first with his Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Xi is working, in the words of China scholar Elizabeth Economy, to “[recreate] when he believes China was greatest.” BRI serves as the keystone of Xi’s “community of common destiny” by aligning the political, economic, and social incentives of China’s neighbors with itself, ensuring a regional order of mutual success and “win-win cooperation.” However, the concept bears a striking resemblance to that of the idealized tianxia, where the mutually beneficial relationships of the cultivated center and barbarian periphery ensured relative stability. Not only does the BRI help create this shared community, it does so in the exact same way dictated by the tianxia ideal: through a hub-and-spoke model of trade that gives the center ultimate economic and political leverage over its periphery. Revitalizing Silk Road trade routes has obvious historic potency and the BRI initiative is not the first attempt at leveraging that history for the sake of common gain. However, by recreating the Silk Road routes through massive economic patronage and bilateral agreements, China is setting itself up as the ultimate arbiter of this community. The result is, in the words of one academic, “a demarcation between the ‘periphery’ and the ‘core,’ where the core is clearly China, playing a critical role as a rule-maker in aiding and financing, and the periphery refers to those countries that depend on the core to thrive.” Under the idealized vision of tianxia, this is the perfect method of controlling the empire’s strategic periphery as it provides the center powerful incentives and coercive capabilities to wield at will. Author Howard French summarized this strategy perfectly:

“China’s aim is to maximally leverage access to its immense market. In doing so, the none too subtle message it radiates to its neighbors is a familiar one that can be summed up in the following way: In order to ensure your prosperity, hitch your wagons to us. Yes, we expect deference, but isn’t that a small price to pay for stability and co-prosperity? It is a message that in substance could have been penned by an emperor of old.”

Foreign observers are not the only ones to observe this connection between BRI and tianxia, with one
Chinese scholar going so far as to say, “until the Qing unification period, ‘One Belt, One Road’ [another term for BRI] remained the structural characteristic of the tianxia concept.” Clearly Xi does not want to bring back the days of nomads kowtowing to the emperor for trade rights, but large trade and investment projects provide exactly the kind of economic carrots and sticks that were fundamental to maintaining the tianxia order.

Xi’s use of national power in other areas, meanwhile, has similarly demonstrated that he wants China to become the ultimate arbiter of foreign policy decisions in Asia. When states around China’s periphery have acted in defiance of China’s will, Xi has shown a greater willingness than his predecessors to apply pressure to coerce them into changing their behavior. China’s relations with South Korea and the Philippines are prime examples of this; in both cases, these smaller countries faced political, economic, and even military pressure from China after making decisions that undermined China’s objectives. After caving into that pressure, both countries were rewarded with an influx of Chinese investment and greater cooperation in foreign affairs. Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi inadvertently laid out China’s justification for this overbearing behavior when Singapore agreed to sign a maritime code of conduct, which China had vehemently opposed. Yang looked at his Singaporean counterpart and stated bluntly, “China is a big country and other countries are small countries. And that is just a fact.” While this interaction could be written off as the normal belligerence of a rising power, Yang’s hierarchical, Sinocentric outlook is not just a part of the traditionalist school of thought, but the fundamental regional structure promoted by neoclassical scholars. In fact, Yang is also a noted proponent of traditionalist foreign policies and has stated that “Chinese wisdom” offers a “new model” of regional cooperation and global governance. His opinions, meanwhile seem to be so common amongst China’s leaders that they, in the words of scholar Wang Gungwu, clearly “wish to go back to their long-hallowed tradition of treating foreign countries as all alike but unequal and inferior to China.”

Although Xi’s leadership has followed this neoclassical approach to foreign affairs, there still remains the important question of whether his actions are the result of the recent traditionalist revival or simply reflect Xi’s long-held personal views. After all, in a centralized political system like China’s, ideology may have less influence over policy than the perspectives of individual leaders. Yet differentiating between the influence of ideas and individuals is near impossible. In this case, the only satisfactory way of doing so would be to demonstrate that Xi’s personal adoption of traditionalist ideas came either before or after the recent classical revival. However, since Xi took power in 2012, the Chinese government has whitewashed most of Xi’s personal writings and opinions from earlier in his career, effectively eliminating any chance of analyzing Xi’s earlier views on classical writings. The one indication that ideas, not individuals, are the deciding factor here comes from the Hu administration’s Harmonious World initiative which, as discussed previously, was an early example of foreign policy influenced by classical literature. His initiative demonstrates that, despite the drastic differences in leadership styles between Xi and Hu, the ideas of traditionalism were already impacting policymakers before Xi had come into office. So, while Xi may have long believed in looking to China’s classical past for foreign policy guidance, the ideas he has championed were already influencing a portion of China’s leadership.

From the outside, it is difficult to draw a direct causal relationship from the writings of academia to the foreign policy decisions of China’s preeminent leaders. However, the parallels between Xi’s policies and the ideas proposed by an increasing number of classical and international relations scholars are overwhelming. Xi has clearly espoused and promoted a traditionalist school of thought through mandatory education in Chinese classics and through his domestic policy initiatives. In the foreign policy realm, meanwhile, he has made referencing traditionalist ideas fundamental to his political discourse, and his policies have closely mimicked both the intent and methods of the classical Chinese ideal of uniting tianxia. Finally, as the data demonstrates, in the years leading up to Xi’s presidency, there was large and growing academic interest in China’s traditionalist foreign policy, as well as great crossover between academics who supported these ideas and the foreign policymaking establishment. Together, these patterns demonstrate that there is almost certainly a connection between new ideas about China’s past and the policies that have come to define Xi Jinping’s presidency.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS
China’s rise to power and its future intentions have undoubtedly been the subject of much inconclusive
speculation on the part of academics around the world. This further analysis of Chinese policy, constrained as it is by space and time, similarly cannot provide many definitive conclusions about the primary drivers of Chinese decision-making. On one hand, though attempts to assess the perceived balance of power did not directly correlate with changes in Chinese foreign policy around 2012, balance of power assessments have clearly played a role in Chinese foreign policymaking at other points in time. Take, for example, Hu Jintao's experiment with revisionism in the aftermath of the financial crisis. However, the lack of correlation between similar changes in the balance of power around the rise of Xi Jinping indicate that it cannot fully explain the more recent and fundamental shifts in China's foreign policy. On the other hand, the rising popularity of traditionalist international relations theory coincided perfectly with Xi's rise to power and his ensuing policy changes, all of which bear a striking resemblance to the political ideal set forth by classical Chinese literature. This traditionalist hypothesis does have a broader array of supporting evidence, but the importance of realist assessments of the balance of power cannot be completely ruled out as a factor in Chinese decision-making.

What can be concluded from this analysis, however, is that China's use of historical memory plays a much greater role in shaping China's future than most international relations literature currently appreciates. Realism could have been the defining driver in Xi Jinping's decision to pursue a much more assertive foreign policy, but clearly the ideas of China's classical past have strongly influenced the nature and implementation of those policies. The methods by which China is reshaping its international role are taken directly from the recent neoclassical revival, demonstrating that ideas, not power structures, are determining how China seeks to alter the international order. This observation provides policymakers and academics across the globe a few key insights into what goals China's leaders intend to pursue and how they intend to pursue them.

First, by openly championing a new theory of international relations, Chinese leaders have given the public a clear outline for their future intentions in Asia. Thus far, Xi has tried to recreate a Sinocentric regional order in which China can ultimately replace the United States as the primary provider of trade and public goods in Asia. However, as this regional structure develops, it seems unlikely that China will develop the web of alliances as is common in American-dominated regional orders. Neoclassical political philosophy openly shuns the creation of a Chinese version of NATO or the Warsaw Pact, opting instead for a hub-and-spoke model of economic and security arrangements that gives China greater direct leverage over its neighbors. Xi has clearly pursued this path thus far, setting up China as the ultimate arbiter of trade and security agreements in Central Asia, and has attempted to enact this same structure in Southeast Asia as well. It therefore seems likely that this structure of bilateral ties will only deepen as China's strength increases and its ability to coopt or coerce others grows in turn. For those who cooperate and recognize China's superiority, such as in the China-Philippines maritime dispute, the result will be continued Chinese investment and technology transfers. Those who oppose China's rise, meanwhile, are likely to face growing economic, political, and military pressure. All of this depends on the continued prominence of neoclassical thought, but thus far Chinese leaders, and Xi Jinping in particular, have only seemed to double-down on their promotion of traditional Chinese political philosophy.

Second, the development of a traditionalist Chinese international relations theory means that assumptions about state action and state objectives should be reassessed when applied to China. Take, for example, the longstanding expectation that, by enmeshing China in a liberal international order, Chinese leaders would then be incentivized to preserve the current rules-based system. Though the current liberal international order seeks to preserve the concept of sovereignty, traditionalist political philosophy promotes the de jure recognition of the current de facto inequalities between states. Therefore, regardless of the benefits the current international order provides, Chinese leaders may still be inclined to pursue a revisionist foreign policy that reshapes the political structure of the world to more closely resemble their political ideal. This means China may ultimately seek to erode the sovereignty of its neighbors and shun the development of binding international laws. As a result, foreign leaders seeking to preserve the status quo should recognize that their attempts to realign China's incentive structure may backfire if they do not understand China's ultimate vision of a stable international order. This does not mean all Western international relations theory is now invalid when applied to China, but clearly fundamental assumptions about incentive structures and value judgements must be reassessed.
given this revitalized political philosophy.

Ultimately, understanding China’s future requires analyzing the driving forces behind the actions of its leaders. Establishing a strong causal connection between an idea and an action is difficult, but this analysis demonstrates that the impact of ideology on China’s foreign policy over the past six years has been both overlooked and understated. Realist considerations are still an important factor in China’s foreign policy, but, as demonstrated repeatedly, historical memory of China’s imperial past undoubtedly plays a central role in current attempts to chart China’s path forward. For policymakers and academics alike, this distinction is crucial for predicting China’s future actions and managing its peaceful rise to power.
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THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITIES IN AN INTERFAITH SUNDAY SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT
This paper examines the construction of individual and group identities in a dual-faith religious community. I draw on ethnographic, interview, and archival data collected from an interfaith Sunday school wherein intermarried Jewish-Catholic couples come together to educate their children in both faith traditions. On an individual level, I find that actors rely on two dominant repertoires of cultural materials to construct their religious identities: a ‘100 percent both’ dual identity repertoire and a choice-based, self-determination repertoire. These identities find support in the organization’s cultural production, which decentralizes doctrinal belief in its definition of religion. I also find that the organization imbues actors with a morally-charged ‘political’ identity as ‘interfaith ambassadors,’ in addition to their traditional religious identities. On the societal level, I examine how the organization might be fruitfully situated within discussions of secularization and pluralism. The dynamics revealed in my analyses point to new possibilities for conceptualizing religious identities and communities and raise pertinent questions about the integrative and creative potential of the pluralistic social situation.

As of 2015, one in four currently married American adults had a spouse of a different religious affiliation.1, 1 Similarly, the same report found that one in four American millennials claim to have been raised in religiously mixed families, a fact which forecasts a continued increase in the previous measure as millennials marry each other. With respect to the specific religious populations mentioned above, thirty-one percent of all married Jews are married to non-Jews, and thirty-nine percent of these non-Jews are Catholics.2

Much of the past work surrounding these trends—especially amongst scholars of Judaism—has addressed concerns about the fate of religious institutions in the face of ‘challenges’ like intermarriage. Although such studies have debunked the notion that churches and temples have grown weaker, the feeling still pervades amongst religious leaders that intermarriage is a danger and a detriment. In the same way, a whole other set of non-academic literature addresses not institutional challenges but the challenges of the couples themselves. Intermarried couples often internalize the strife and strain of their religious leaders, friends, family members, etc. as their own, sometimes culminating in feelings of crisis.

Only a select few of intermarried Jewish-Catholic couples have reached the conclusion that their offspring, having two distinct parents, should also have two distinct religions. Such is that case at the Chicago Interfaith Family School, a Sunday school for the children of intermarried Jewish-Catholic couples who come together to educate their children in both faith traditions. The following study attempts to provide an explanation for how it should be possible for one individual (a child of intermarried parents) to have two faiths, to explain how such an individual’s identity is constructed, and to relate the process of identity construction back to structure and culture, broadly and locally construed.3

BACKGROUND ON SETTING
The Chicago Interfaith Family School (the Family School, for short) is best introduced simply as “a religious education program that teaches children of Jewish and Catholic parents about both faiths.”4, 2 Currently, the organization utilizes the facilities of a private Catholic elementary school located in Chicago’s West Loop for its classes and events. The Family School was founded by a small, already-existing group of young Jewish-Catholic intermarried couples who would meet periodically to discuss common issues such as disagreements with parents, in-laws, and local clergy or questions about their faiths. As the story goes, the dialogue group ran strong for about five years until the member couples began having children, provoking the question, ‘how do we raise the kids?’3 Taking matters into their own hands, the group came together to
resolve such a question and, in 1993, the Family School was born.

The Family School derives its name from its pedagogy, which holds that, in the case of religious education, it is best for the whole family to be involved. Thus the children's classes, with the exception of eighth grade, are taught by the parents on a rotating basis. Those parents not teaching attend concurrent adult education sessions consisting of roundtable discussion for continued support as well as frequent lectures from guest speakers. Although the Family School identifies itself as part of a “grassroots social movement” that comprises similar interfaith programs in New York City and Washington, DC, the focus on teaching from within the families is unique to the Chicagoland area.5

To be clear, the programs on the east coast, while similar, are not branches of the Family School. They each have their own names and organizational infrastructures. There is only one Family School. (There is, however, an organization call the Union School, which takes after the Family School’s model to serve Chicago’s suburban communities.)

The children’s educational program guides students from kindergarten through eighth grade. The teachers draw on an extensive curriculum developed by founding member and current eighth grade instructor Patty Kovacs. According to the Family School’s website, the curriculum acts “as a toolkit for living fully in an interfaith family,” and is “designed to foster a religious-cultural literacy for understanding the similarities and differences between Judaism and Catholic Christianity.” Officially, then, the Family School is not intended to teach belief or faith, but rather culture. As Patty told me, she designed the curriculum to be developmentally appropriate for each grade level, drawing on her training in psychology and as a school counselor to inform her writing. In the early childhood years, this translates to learning about the holidays, rituals, and canonical stories of both traditions. In the later years, the lessons gravitate toward the interwoven histories of both traditions as they played out from ancient to modern times. By the time students reach eighth grade (the grade level I was able to observe), the focus shifts explicitly to ethics, personal identity and responsibility, and social justice. The implications of this final turn will be discussed below; at present it suffices to say that the Family School seeks to provide its students with both the granularity of a faith-based cultural education as well as the depth of a moral education.

While undertaking to teach two religions at once, Family School members incidentally deploy various conceptions of religion in their curriculum and in their speech in order to make sense of what they are doing. Below is my attempt to group together the three most common conceptions I observed.

(1) Religion as a Combination of Historical Forces and Systems

In the Family School’s curriculum book, religion is defined as “a combination of culture, traditions, dogmas, values and ethics”—all of which are “extrinsic” to the individual. This combination of forces and systems is important only insofar as it is a means to faith and spirituality, which are “intrinsic” to the individual and express one’s connection to “transcendence, a power beyond us.”

(2) Religion as a Way of Seeing and Speaking

In everyday conversation, Family School members often express their view of religion by calling it ‘a lens’ or ‘a language.’ “Interfaith religious education can offer our children two sets of ‘glasses’ (or bifocals, if you will),” write the Kovacs. Similarly, one rabbi was quoted in a promotional video saying, “Religion is not, ‘this is truth and your religion is false.’ I would like to think of it more as language.” As another affiliated rabbi put it, “Every faith sees a part of God. So, when different faiths are in dialogue together, they see a bigger picture of what God is.”

(3) Religion as Action

The third definition of religion departs significantly from the first two. Its maxim is as follows: “religion is not religion until it becomes action.” This definition abandons the religion-as-means concept and essentially poses an ontological ultimatum: act on your religion, or else it is not real. My data reveal two meanings to this powerful and imposing definition, (1) action as the natural manifestation of love, and (2) action as political activity in the name of social justice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This project sits at the intersection of three significant bodies of sociological thought revolving around identity, religious community, and religious intermarriage respectively. An account of the contributions from each of these respective fields will however make it
clear that limited attention has been paid to the peculiar subject at hand, wherein religiously intermarried families have formed a religious community to explore the subject of identity.

IDENTITY

‘Identity’ is a deceivingly simple term for a complex range of phenomena. The question of “who I am” can encompass “my sense of myself, others’ perceptions of me, my reactions to others’ perceptions, the social categories that attach themselves to me, and [those] to which I attach myself;” none of which is perfectly continuous across time and space. The concept of identity hinges on an inherent paradox of sameness and difference. On the one hand, identities express sameness: I am the same as myself from birth to death, and I am the same as others who share my gender, race, ethnicity, etc. On the other hand, identities express difference: I am different from who I was, and I am unique compared to others. This fluctuation between poles of sameness/difference and fixity/fluidity will be a guiding theme for this study.

Sociologists and social psychologists of the past century have devoted more energy to documenting difference than sameness because, when observed empirically, there is little about a person that remains the same and much that varies according to the environment. The view thus arose of a fragmented self, which has been conceptualized as a combination of social selves and as an effect produced by context-specific dramaturgical presentations. According to such a view, there is no stable core self which continues across time and space; instead, there are many selves that result from inhabiting many social roles.

It follows that while one cannot scientifically observe an unchanging self, one can still observe people as they talk about their unchanging selves. In this vein, narrative analysis, memory analysis, and other approaches have recently been used to understand the role of biography in self-construction. These approaches attempt to explain not only “what is now making up one’s identity,” [emphasis added] but also “how one became what one is,” all in an attempt to account for the “whole” individual—history and all—rather than just the individual as an assemblage of social roles. I maintain that biographical and narrative analyses can be consonant with the fragmented conception of self if we recognize that stories themselves are subject to change based on the environment where they are told, and have drawn extensively upon such accounts in my field work.

Within sociology, then, one finds perspectives capable of addressing identity’s poles of sameness and difference. We find sameness represented in the biographical self and difference in the fragmented self. While I maintain a methodological agnosticism with regards to the existence of any stable, core self, I take seriously the fact that people perceive themselves to be continuous and relatively stable. The tensions brought about by poles of sameness and difference underlie the formation of each one of the identities discussed in this paper.

Everett Hughes was perhaps one of the first to articulate the crucial idea that, within a single person, some roles, statuses, or selves could be more important than others. Hughes termed these “master statuses” that could “overpower” other status-determining aspects of self. This question of how disparate identities manifest across situations and variously affect the self-concept has been conceptualized by recent social-psychological scholarship in terms of identity salience. According to Callero, we might conceptualize identity salience as a hierarchy, with those identities most affecting the self-concept positioned at the top, and those least, at the bottom. While much of this study is devoted to describing the identities in question, identity salience enters the picture in order to ground these descriptions in their respective relevances for the actors in question.

A religious identity signals membership in social categories like race or ethnicity, and can also imply membership in a close-knit group such as a congregation. On the other hand, it can also imply that such close-knit groups provide the individual with the necessary symbolic materials for identity construction and—unlike pure social categories like race or ethnicity—for the construction of a system of meaning, moral order, and orientation on a cosmic scale.

Despite the traditionally close association between one’s religious identity and one’s church or temple, recent scholarship has begun to explore religious identities which take up other symbolic content and boundaries as their constitutive bases. Studies of interfaith activist groups and Christian meditators have yielded rich new findings about people constructing “pluralist religious identities” along lines of tolerance vs. intolerance rather than, say, Lutheran vs. Baptist. While we still want to call such identities ‘religious,’ they often lose their traditional religious character when subjected to “aggregative” or “integrative” strate-
gies that combine or mix together packages of religious materials into “something not immediately identifiable as belonging to any single religious faith.”

The interfaith identities of the actors I studied at the Family School will evince a similar disregard for traditional differentiation along the lines of strictly Jewish or strictly Catholic group membership. Instead, the Family School engages in a project of complex cultural innovation and production that allows for multiple religious identities to flourish at once.

**RELIGION**

Most famously formulated by Durkheim, the elementary principle of the “moral community” has always taken religion as its example par excellence. In Durkheim’s words, it is “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them.” Yet, when we introduce our case of the Family School to this lineage of thought, we run into a problem: if a moral community entails “a unified system of beliefs and practices,” what happens when a group’s beliefs and practices are ostensibly dis-unified or even contradictory, as would seem to be the case in a Jewish-Catholic Sunday school?

To best handle these questions, I look to the work of Christian Smith and his extensive “subcultural identity theory” for religious groups. The theory encompasses both meso and macro-level propositions. As for the meso-level, Smith writes, “collective identities depend heavily for existence on contrast and negation. Social groups know who they are in large measure by knowing who they are not.”

The Family School is an especially tricky (and thus worthy) case to address in terms of boundary-work—the drawing and policing of negative symbolic boundaries—because it strives to be inclusive of all paths, all the while maintaining its authenticity as both a Jewish and a Catholic institution. I claim that boundary work is still important for group identity by demonstrating how boundaries are drawn not along traditional lines of doctrine, belief, or practice, but along more subtle lines of wide doctrinal tolerance vs. intolerance.

As for macro-level treatments of religious communities, scholars have asked, what is the relation of the individual to modern society, and what is the fate of religion? Through the late twentieth century, the answers to these questions were relatively uniform and clear: the individual was increasingly alienated from the collective and religion was bound for obsolescence at the hands of secularism. In the ideal-typical premodern society, religious meanings and definitions were reinforced by nearly all the central institutions and significant others in one’s life. In contrast, modern Western society has undermined the ability of any one social base to define reality and provide meaning for the individual, instead segmenting life into the specialized realms of politics, religion, health, education, recreation, family, work, etc. Modern persons are left to flit, often nervously, between “dehumanized” institutions whose “instrumental-rational” logics do not overlap and leave the individual without any way to tie them together into a coherent worldview.

Such a bleak picture, for better or for worse, fell out of fashion amongst sociologists in the late twentieth century given copious empirical evidence demonstrating that religion was, in fact, not on the decline but rather on the rise. In 1993, R. Stephen Warner hailed the arrival of a “new paradigm” in the field positing a net-neutral or even a net-positive, growth-based picture of the modern religious landscape. To paraphrase, ‘maybe modernity is good for religion after all!’ The new paradigm has come to include several instantiations: rational choice theories, which lean upon the age-old metaphor of the free market and claim that religious groups thrive on competition; subcultural theories of symbolic group formation; and the intermediary institutional theory. All such theories have come to view the pluralist situation as a productive force that creates new possibilities for religious actors to reclaim, reinvigorate, and strengthen their “traditional ways of life.”

According to Smith, people are perhaps more drawn to religion now than in previous eras; and religion, in turn, is perhaps better equipped to thrive than was previously thought. First, pluralistic modernity provides an abundance of options for religious commitments, all of which are legitimate given the modern prioritization of choice over ascription. Second, Smith argues that modernity’s crisis of overarching meaning is actually irrelevant because all people really need is a single “reference group”—such as a religious community—to render their beliefs meaningful. It turns out people do not need a “sacred canopy”—
cred umbrellas" will do. Third, Smith argues that modernity’s differentiating power and market-orientation allow for a rich ecosystem of religious subcultures, which are made all the stronger by virtue of having each other against which to define themselves. Such diversity and strength would not be possible outside of our pluralistic situation.

I aim to situate my claims about the collective identity of the Family School steadfastly within the “new paradigm”, all the while retaining insights from the original work of Bergerv and Luckmann. Their original concepts of “plausibility structure”, the “secularization of consciousness”, and “the privatization of personal identity” will prove useful in explaining how the Family School renders worldviews plausible, as well as what those worldviews contain and entail. As for the more creative view of pluralistic modernity, I draw significantly from the later work of Berger and Luckmann on intermediary institutions and again on the work of Christian Smith on subcultural identity. I bring these insights to bear on the Family School by suggesting that it coheres and maintains itself by symbolic distinction and by offering itself up as a unique intermediary institution tailored to a very specific population within the religious landscape.

RELIGIOUS INTERMARRIAGE

Research on American intermarriage has been concerned with all sides of the phenomenon, from the patterns of incidence and selection to causal factors and consequences among the families. With regards to causal factors, scholars have noted variance in intermarriage trends according to factors such as “age, gender, region of residence, type of locality, nativity status, and education.” Correlations have been found between premarital levels of religiosity or religious identification and levels of intermarriage, suggesting that the less one identifies with one’s religion, the more likely one will be to intermarry.

Most important to this study is past work on the consequences of intermarriage, which also focuses attention on questions of religiosity and religious identification. Here, however, the causal arrow changes direction to imply that intermarriage results in lower levels of religiosity and weaker identification with one’s religion. Since intermarriage often affects the entire household, the religious identifications and religiousities of children as well as parents are considered to be at stake.

Many studies have attempted to discern patterns and causes for how and why children of interfaith unions identify the ways that they do. These studies often pose a child’s identity as a problem to be resolved in one of the following ways. The family will: choose one parent’s religion over the other’s; ignore religion altogether and choose neither; compromise and adopt something like Universalism, which draws from many traditions and values no particular one over another; or, the least common strategy, expose the children to both religions, perhaps with the eventual plan of allowing them to make up their own minds. While there has been some documentation in the literature that this last option, dual faith, is accompanied by strong commitment among those who choose it, scholars have speculated that raising children in both religions is uncommon because of additional strain on the parents. As Bruce Phillips put it, “Raising a child in two religions is twice as much work as raising a child in only one religion.”

Several significant gaps persist in the intermarriage literature. For one, few scholars have looked at intermarriage using in-depth qualitative methods. While numerous surveys have no doubt been administered, the lived experiences of interfaith couples and children have received little attention outside the work of Egon Mayer. Mayer, a celebrated sociologist of American Judaism, published one of the only interview-based studies of intermarriage in 1985, Love and Tradition: Marriage Between Jews and Christians. In it, he presents interview evidence and applies concepts from the sociology of families to explain how couples work through the difficulties of intermarriage. He also includes a section on the commitments of children but leans heavily toward a focus on the Jewish side of the intermarried family, addressing the extent to which the children can be identified as being Jewish. While I follow in Mayer’s methodological footsteps, I aim to shed light on a subsegment of the intermarried population that he failed to address but which I believe to be worthy of our attention: those interfaith families who commit to raising their children in both traditions.

In the study that follows, I aim to contribute to the existing literature on intermarriage in three ways. First and most basically, my study adds to the dearth of qualitative treatments of the subject by exposing and examining the rich cultural system of a specific subpopulation of intermarried families. Second, the case of the Family School presents itself as an outlier to many of the trends discovered in the literature on
demography. It stands as a stark counterexample to the notion that intermarriage is caused by or causes lower levels of religiosity, as many Family School members take their faiths very seriously and attend church and temple regularly. Third and most importantly, my study contests the implicit assumption, present in all prior work, that religious identity exists as a fixed “thing” (factor or outcome) rather than an ongoing process of negotiation. In treating religious identity as a static variable, scholars have wholly ignored the processes by which it is formed and maintained via a negotiation of multiple cultural repertoires and social bases. These processes are precisely the objects of my study.

DATA AND METHODS

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AND NATURE OF THE DATA

In this paper, I draw on ethnographic, interview, and archival data, collected and analyzed largely in that order. Since my research question concerns how identities are constructed and understood in a specific space, I chose to use qualitative methods for the depth and nuance they can provide.

The first step in procuring the ethnographic and interview data was the classical quest for access. Since I had no prior affiliation to the Family School, not to mention that I claim neither the Jewish nor the Catholic tradition as my own, it was only by a stroke of luck and a series of helpful hands that I obtained access to the site. Through an acquaintance at another faith-based organization in Chicago, I was introduced to a former Family School parent. Through her, I was introduced to David Kovacs, who is a founding member, one of the eighth grade instructors, and husband to Patty Kovacs, mentioned above. Together, these two graciously became my primary contacts and informants throughout the ethnographic process, informing me of class meeting times and making suggestions for where to mine for useful data.

Per the Kovacs’ suggestion and once I obtained parental consent, I began sitting in on the eighth grade class, which meets roughly every other week. The ethnographic portion of my data consists of detailed field notes from five eighth-grade class sessions, each lasting around one and a half-hour; one interfaith service lasting one hour; one adult education dialogue session lasting one hour; and one potluck event which I observed intermittently for one hour, making for a total of roughly ten and a half-hours of participant observation over a span of three months. While my observation focused on the eighth grade class, I was also able to briefly observe the adults in a dialogue session and interfaith service I attended. The Family School community on the whole currently consists of eighty distinct families and around fifteen distinct couples who do not yet have children. This translates to 120 active students in the kindergarten through eighth grades, twelve of whom, along with the three instructors, make up the specific ecosystem of the eighth-grade class. Attendance in class by the students was variable but never dropped below seven during my time there. The ecosystem of the eighth-grade class would also periodically change on days where guest speakers were invited to come and share, as was the case during two of the sessions I observed.

The nature of my time in the field technically falls under the banner of participant observation. However, although I did participate in small talk and assist with minor tasks before and after class, my methods were on the whole imbalanced toward observation. When class was in session, I sat by myself at a table to the side of the room with a clear view of what was happening and only spoke when prompted, which rarely occurred. Such a set-up turned out to be ideal because it made for minimal obtrusion and simultaneously allowed me to take extremely detailed jottings on my laptop in real time. On the one occasion where I sat in on the interfaith service being held in the school’s gymnasium, my methods slanted back slightly toward participation given the nature of collective singing and recitation.

The second portion of my data consists of semi-structured interviews. In order to glean as complete a picture of the social setting as possible, I wanted to hear from at least one person occupying each of the roles within the Family School: student; parent or teacher; organizer; and clergy. Among students and parents, I solicited volunteers via an email listhost and in person during a community-wide potluck after class one Sunday morning. I limited the student pool to those in the current eighth-grade class and the parent pool to those with a child either currently attending the eighth grade or who had recently graduated. Among the eighth-grade instructors and the current partnering rabbi, I simply reached out to them directly to schedule meeting times. The interviews ranged from ten minutes to two hours in length depending on the respondent’s role. The final dataset consists of

6 6
interviews with thirteen respondents, which made for a culminating five and a half-hours of interview audio.

Interviews were conducted either in person in the privacy of an empty classroom at the elementary school or over the phone. I employed a semi-structured approach, asking open-ended questions and then allowing respondents to guide conversation so long as it was relevant, while also asking clarifying questions on important points. The interview guidance varied slightly depending on the respondent’s role. In all cases, the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim and in full.

It should here be noted that my biases and my position as a researcher may have influenced the nature of the ethnographic and interview data collected. While I do not think it possible to access a person’s unadulterated experience or non-performative “truth” in any social situation, I do think it important to delineate a few exceptional circumstances that may have interfered with the process of painting an honest picture. First, many Family School members are keenly aware of the sociological interest that an interfaith organization generates and expressed to me some suspicions about researchers misrepresenting interfaith life as confusing or detrimental to those involved, specifically the children. It is thus possible that the actors were inclined to describe the Family School in an especially positive light so as to guard against the risk of unfavorable interpretation on my part. Second, my own Protestant religious background as well as my sociological training predisposed me to carry certain assumptions about religion (namely, what it is and is not) into what I observed and heard. While I attempted to bracket these lenses, I, like any subject, am not immune to intensely perspectival seeing and thus imagine that many of my assumptions and interpretive tendencies influenced the field notes I took down and the questions I asked. Third, I made a point to treat the actors in the space as coproducers of knowledge with me and to keep them informed throughout the data collection process. This attitude on my part as well as the curiosity of some of the actors resulted in certain informants becoming surprisingly interested and invested in the project along with me, leading them to lend me ideas and recommendations along the way. Multiple times, Patty even offered to sit down with me over coffee to “develop a framework.” Such enthusiasm may have disposed certain actors to generalize about their experiences more abstractly than they would have if speaking to someone occupying a non-academic role.

The third portion of my data is a set of archival materials produced by the Family School’s core members and organizers for use in instructional or promotional capacities. Paper materials consisted largely of handouts I received while sitting in on class: one diagram constructed during class; four poems or songs by external authors which were read during class; two agglomerations of students’ in-class writings; one interfaith service program/bulletin; and one year-long class schedule. The digital materials consisted of the written content on the Family School’s website; excerpts from an extensive, 318-page book of curriculum that doubles as an introduction to the school’s mission, written by Patty and David; and a series of ten short YouTube videos about the Family School or interfaith life totaling roughly forty-four minutes. The videos were selectively transcribed based on relevant quotations. I obtained the class materials and the pdf of the curriculum book directly from Patty and David either in class or via email, while the online content is publicly available.

**ANALYTICAL APPROACH**

I employed relatively uniform coding strategies to each of my datasets. Each process began with open coding for patterns and concluded with a more pointed reading of the data for their relation to the original question. In the ethnographic and interview datasets, I read through each set of field notes and each transcript four times: twice without imposing substantive categories and twice with certain categories in mind. First, I would read for notable moments of any kind; second, to discern recurring patterns; third, having reflected the recurring patterns back onto the data, for any loose evidence that belonged with them; and fourth, for the original question of religious identity. I then compiled codes and outlined chronological structures of the events I witnessed. In the archival dataset, my methods were largely identical with regard to the written materials. The exceptions include the 318-page book of curriculum and the YouTube videos. As the former item consists mainly of lesson plans for parents and teachers, I did not deem it relevant to close read the whole book. However, nestled before the grit of the curriculum, the first seventy-nine pages of the book, which serve as an introduction to new parents by answering commonly asked questions, proved valuable and amenable to the four-step close-reading process. Finally, the content analysis of the YouTube videos required an intermediate step between data and code
wherein I would watch them three times each, paying attention to different aspects each time. First, I would focus on the dialogue and selectively transcribe notable quotations; second, I would mute the audio and pay attention solely to images, open coding for visual motifs; and third, I would watch for the narrative structures of the videos as told, frame by frame, by the writers and editors. After having taken down notes on these three aspects of the videos, I submitted these notes to the original four-step reading process outlined above in order to come away with a set of usable codes.

My primary codes functioned in two ways. First, I understood them to be elements that related one “specific event, incident, or feature . . . to other events, incidents, or features” via comparison.33 Second, they served as links between the raw data and what would become my analytic categories and themes. After compiling codes from the three datasets, all the while taking down in-process memos, I then began a process of meta coding, first via “local integration” of patterns and themes into the subsections of this report. This was followed by “inclusive integration” of patterns and themes into a unified, if somewhat complicated, narrative revolving around the analytical axis of “identity.”34

RESULTS

The results sections, attempting to analyze the identity construction of intermarried couples’ children, are organized so as to start at the level of the individual and move gradually outward to the level of the classroom, the community, and finally to the level of Western society. I have organized my findings under the following five subheadings: (1) repertoires of religious identity’ (2) the treatment of belief and the definitions of religion; (3) the construction of political identity; and (4) the Family School as a product of pluralism.

SECTION 1: REPERTOIRES OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

“In my eight years of Family School, I have learned what it means to be two different religions.”

– Regan, class of 2011

“We’re not raising kids up to be Jewish and Catholic, we’re raising kids up to know Judaism and Catholicism and then make their own decision and chart their own way. And omni-religion, multi-religion, one religion, no religion: they’re all valid.

– David, eighth grade instructor

The first and most obvious step toward understanding identity construction in the Family School is to examine, largely at face value, how the actors themselves talk about their identities. In the following section, I use a cultural lens to analyze speech about identity processes and find that actors alternate between two dominant repertoires to understand their religious identities as shaped by the Family School, firstly “being both,” and secondly, self-determination.7 The first repertoire draws on metaphors of familial heritage and bilingualism. The second repertoire draws on metaphors of self-discovery, conscious decision-making, continual questioning, and fluidity. The repertoires are created and maintained via ongoing narrative self-construction and serve to uphold the two poles of identity, sameness and difference, within a single self.

THE “BEING BOTH” REPETOIRE

The first repertoire essentially affirms a dual-faith identity, and is best characterized by the phrase, “being both.”8 While not all actors used the verb “to be” when describing themselves, those who did not would say something along the lines of, “I do both; I come from both; I am conversant in both. This repertoire relates the experience of being both to that of being bicultural, relying on the two powerful metaphors of heritage and bilingualism.

Remembering that the Family School is specifically designed for families with one Jewish and one Catholic parent, it is not surprising that actors, especially the parents, would tend toward explaining their thought processes in terms of passing down two heritages. As one mother told me, “the concept was that we thought [the kids] would be both with an emphasis on the commonality between the two religions and perhaps a knowledge of what each of us were brought up as” (emphasis added). Another example, which comes from a promotional video for an upcoming Family School documen-
tary, does well to convey the emotional significance of the heritage metaphor. The video consists of shots of parents and children sitting together in pews at Old St. Patrick’s Catholic Church while an old Jewish hymn is played on the cello. In the middle of the video, the camera focuses on a young girl looking up lovingly at her mother, and we hear the overlaid voice of Rabbi Abigail, the Family School’s supporting rabbi, chime in:

“And for the families raising their kids with both Judaism and Catholicism to be able to hear this melody that’s part of their hearts and souls, to just interweave these parts of their lives and these heritages, is such an honor and so beautiful.”

The moment conveys a pathos of family togetherness and stability reinforced by love (the mother smiles back at the daughter), religious ecstasy (the music in the background), and a sense that past and present are unified (“to just interweave these parts of their lives”).

This metaphor hinges on an awareness of the past and an appreciation for roots that one might expect in an ethnic identity. (Jews and Catholics have long been considered “ethnic” immigrant populations in the United States.) For immigrants, stories of memory, history, and place play crucial constitutive roles. Memory must be continually recalled and reimagined because such populations no longer have direct access to those histories and places. Not only that, but the histories are also in danger of being lost or subsumed by the new culture into which the populations have entered. One of the functions of the Family School, then, is to affirm the pasts and histories of both partners in an interfaith couple, and thus, both heritages.

The second metaphor I frequently came across within the larger “being both” repertoire analogizes the dual-faith experience to being bilingual. As the Kovacs write in the curriculum book, “We are teaching religio-cultural literacy, the ability to be conversant in two faiths.” In learning about the holidays, traditions, songs, rites, and stories of both Judaism and Catholicism, students of the Family School can proudly proclaim to be literate in both: they can read, they can speak, they can listen, and they can get by in settings where either is spoken—in church or in temple.

In a promotional video, an interfaith-serving rabbi is heard saying, “I’ve known a lot of kids who grow up in bilingual households, so I think the same thing is in play when you’re learning two faiths.” And in a testimonial, a veteran Family School mother writes,

“We groped toward Family School, where all was equal, all was fair, and all was fluent in two mothertongues. Life was good. L’chaim, [my son] tells me. In English or in Hebrew, life was good.”

Most basically, the bilingual metaphor resembles and complements the heritage metaphor in being an analog to ethnic or bicultural identities. Just as some bicultural individuals negotiate life in two languages, so too must an interfaith individual learn to negotiate life in two religious languages. What the bilingual metaphor adds to the heritage metaphor, though, is a sense of the present. Interfaith individuals not only descend from two social worlds: they learn to live in two social worlds, each with their own languages, norms, and demands on their subjecthood. The phenomenon of alternating between different symbolic tool-kits depending on the cultural or linguistic context has been well-documented in literature on bi-ethnic and bi-cultural identities. The concept fits rather well when overlaid onto our case. Interfaith individuals can be said to alternate between the Jewish and Catholic tool-kits depending on whether they find themselves in temple or in church, or, on Mom’s side of the family or Dad’s side. It would thus seem that Family School actors, in adopting metaphors that align with what is known about ethnic identities, have demonstrated sociological intuitions about the necessary interplay between their biographical and fragmented selves.

THE SELF-DETERMINATION REPertoire

In contrast (but not necessarily in contradiction) to the “being both” repertoire, the second repertoire casts religious identity as, above all else, a matter of self-determination. It says, “I am what I choose to be; I am unresolved; I am unlabeled.” It surfaced in my data just as often as the “being both” repertoire. When deploying this repertoire, actors would use phrases like, “conscious decision,” “options,” “unresolved questions,” “fluid,” or “changing and evolving.” The following examples are representative of the way actors would speak about choice:

“[Our parents] understood the human right of choice. They wanted us to explore. To find our own identity. Because a persona taken on by obligation is not a true identity.”

-Winston, Class of 2007, from the curriculum book
The self-determination repertoire emphasizes free-thinking, authenticity, and individual choice. Parents see themselves as doing something good for their children in providing them with the ability to choose between the two religions of their heritages. Later on, parents told me, they would also feel okay if their children expanded their horizons beyond Judaism and Catholicism—"as long as it was their choice." The feeling pervaded (and was reinforced in class) that only individual choices endow identities with authenticity and reality.

The element of choice in constituting modern religious identity is well-accepted in the sociological literature and perhaps best addressed in the early work of Thomas Luckmann.\textsuperscript{37, 38} In \textit{The Invisible Religion}, Luckmann claims that modernization brought about a massive shift from a public religiosity to a private one, from an obligatory sacred cosmos to a nonobligatory one, and from an ascribed identity to a chosen one. Luckmann saw these shifts as symptomatic of "a pervasive consumer orientation" among moderns that forces individuals to comparison shop for commodities and worldviews alike.

If we take Luckmann’s account to reliably characterize the modern situation, then once again, Family School actors have demonstrated their own sociological intuitions by taking a social paradox to its logical conclusion: "if we can’t give them a religious identity, then we’ll give them a religious identity where they give themselves a religious identity."\textsuperscript{10} In positing a self-determining frame for religious identity, Family School actors would seem to have perfectly fit Luckmann’s mold of the consumer orientation, whereby autonomous choice acts as the primary legitimating force.

COMPARING AND INTEGRATING THE TWO REPETOIRES

The ‘being both’ repertoire hinges on metaphors of heritage and bilingualism, while the self-determination repertoire hinges on metaphors of conscious decision making. The former posits two fixed identities while the latter posits one fluid one. This contradiction, perhaps even more than being both Jewish and Catholic, is a point of sociological confusion and interest. I propose that we can make sense of these identities by conceptualizing the formation of self holistically, in terms of past, present, and future. The ‘being both’ repertoire speaks primarily about the past and its relation to the present; the self-determination repertoire speaks primarily about the present and its relation to the future.

When actors spoke about ‘being both,’ they did so without hesitation, as if to express something permanent. The arising of religious identity as an ancestral fact, rather than social product, is held up by the metaphors of heritage and bilingualism. The heritage metaphor works because (after all) one cannot change one’s ancestry; the bilingual metaphor works because language is a tangible, albeit learned, skill that one either possesses or does not. Having a heritage and knowing a language are stable things. While the metaphors are certainly well suited to the task of reifying identities as Jewish and/or Catholic, sociologically speaking it is not only their fit but the process of fitting that matters. I thus argue that actors’ speech about their identities is an ongoing process of reinterpreting and retelling the stories of their selves, as narrative analysts would put it.\textsuperscript{39} Speaking in this way becomes the work of connecting present selves with past selves, or perhaps with the selves of parents and grandparents. Thus, on the one hand, ‘being both’ fragments the self into a Jewish identity and a Catholic identity, but, on the other hand, unites the self as a continuous biography.

The self-determination repertoire, on the other hand, would seem to lay claim to a fluid sense of religious identity wherein actors are ultimately free to define themselves. Yet this way of speaking about identity is especially interesting and confounding because it makes a meta-claim about individuals—namely, that they are fixed in their unfixed-ness. In effect, this is similar to the sociological view of self as contingent and continually constructed. Yet for Family School actors, the production of self is less a matter of social construction and more a matter of individual choice, such that individual choice has the ultimate authority.

Having said as much, what, then, becomes of the first identity repertoire? Could a self-determining subject all of a sudden choose not to “be both?” What is the real thing, fixity or fluidity? While such questions are fascinating, Family School actors do not answer them because they do not see them as a problem. For them, the self is at once fixed and fluid—always alter-
nating between the poles of sameness and difference. The two repertoires do not necessarily contradict but rather reside on opposing poles of identity within the overarching (sub)culture of the Family School, which arms its members with diverse tools for diverse scenarios of identity expression.

SECTION 2: THE TREATMENT OF BELIEF AND MAPPING TO VARIOUS CONCEPTIONS OF RELIGION

A study of religious identity, and especially here, would be remiss to gloss over the question of belief and its relation to actors’ senses of self. In the section that follows, I describe and analyze the Family School’s official and unofficial approaches to belief and their consequences for identity construction. I first describe how the founding rationale of the Family School takes a hands-off approach to belief in favor of a “religio-cultural education.” I then introduce the idea that this de jure hands-off approach to belief leads to a de facto situation in which questions of biblical and theological interpretation are left open to individual discretion. Among the discretionary tenets is the obvious question of whether Jesus was the Messiah, which serves as the best example of the successful decentralization of belief. I also find that, when asked about doctrine, actors had a tendency to emphasize the authenticity of their paths and identities in the face of more traditional conceptions that posit stronger links between belief and identity. Finally, I delineate the various ways religion is defined without reference to belief, both on paper and in live conversation, and how these create space for the formulation of various identities.

THE OFFICIAL STANCE ON BELIEF

As we have seen, Family School actors have no trouble whatsoever conceptualizing and expressing their own interfaith identities. For anyone standing outside this movement, though, I would imagine that an important question still lingers: ‘Even if they think of themselves as being both Jewish and Catholic, aren’t their beliefs contradictory?’

In simplest terms, the answer to the question of contradictory beliefs is no answer. The Kovacs made it abundantly clear to me that they designed the program according to what I will call a ‘hands-off’ approach to belief. As they wrote in the curriculum book, “[We were] sure an interfaith religious school could never answer the difficult questions of religious identity. These are intensely personal issues, and each family must resolve them on their own. Thus, we could not teach belief in Judaism or Catholicism. Nevertheless, a school that taught about Judaism and Catholicism — our practices, stories, heritages and values — might help children and their parents to learn about their religions together. (emphasis added)”

Officially, then, the Family School holds no stake in specific matters of identity or belief. Unofficially, though, as we have seen, the Family School in fact plays a great part in identity construction by providing repertoires for self-understanding. As we will now see, the Family School also in fact indirectly guides individuals’ beliefs about the Bible, God, Jesus, the afterlife, etc.—despite the intention, as stated above, to allow “each family” to resolve questions of belief in private.

The curriculum hones in on the granular details of Jewish and Catholic traditions, celebrations, stories, and histories, but does so largely without engaging what is termed “dogma”—a religion’s “prescribed set of truths.” Yet, this seemingly neutral stance on belief should not lead us to conclude that the Family School is a wholly secular enterprise. Instead, it belies a greater hope that the belief-less cultural knowledge base being built up will eventually grow into something more As the old maxims say, the personal is always political and the objective is always moral. The following excerpt from my interview with the Kovacs clarifies the implicit moral vision of an interfaith education:

“To say, then, that the belief systems are contradictory is, for Family School members, to miss the point entirely. Judaism and Catholicism are conceived not simply as sets of beliefs or propositions about the supernatural, as is our colloquial sense of the word ‘religion,’ but rather as holistic, historical, and cultural forces— as ways of seeing reality, or as ways of orienting moral action. From one view, then, the tension created by contradictory beliefs is resolved by shifting attention away from conflict and onto the other relevant elements of religious education, such as moral development. On another view, though, ...
In a Western culture beset by the idea that religion is belief (Smith 1998), even a purportedly belief-less religious education cannot avoid the question entirely. If the aim of the Family School is to give families tools for the private cultivation of belief and faith, the Kovacs say, such an enterprise cannot help but somehow bound the set of possibilities for belief simply by framing lessons a certain way. We then come to the curious situation in which a de jure hands-off approach to belief becomes a de facto openness to biblical and theological interpretation—the exception being ‘literal’ or exclusive interpretations. The position of neutrality or agnosticism thus acquires positive and negative expression in the form of urging certain conceptions of the Bible and the divine while discrediting others.

During the first class session I attended, Aaron, the young eighth grade writing instructor, had the following to say on the subject of Biblical interpretation:

“There are many ways to interpret the Bible—don’t just take what me or David or Patty say. If we do that, we’re no better than the people who just say the Bible is literal truth… like Will was saying, what it means to be pluralist.”

Aaron here uses the word “pluralist” to mean the acceptance of multiple interpretive truths. This particular class session entailed unpacking the concepts of metaphor and myth as ways to access truths which lie at the limits of common language. During this discussion, Patty brought up the work of the comparative mythologist Joseph Campbell, saying, “It doesn’t matter if it’s an Indian myth; it doesn’t matter if it’s a Sunni myth: at some point people must go on a journey in which everything changes.” The lesson was clear yet double edged: there is no singular way to interpret myths and yet, different myths often end up expressing the same underlying meaning. Therefore, one ought to make one’s own judgments about the meaning of Biblical myths.

Of course, the instruction to interpret Biblical myths on one’s own assumes that the texts in question are myths. As Patty told the class, “I hope I’m not offending anybody but… the Bible is not literal truth. Period.” While the Family School strives to be inclusive of as many interpretations and religious expressions as possible, there are still some things a metaphoric approach cannot abide, namely a non-metaphoric approach. Such exclusions as this, which bound the possible ways of relating to biblical text, might be thought about, for the sake of clarity, as belonging to a set of “meta-beliefs”—beliefs about how to approach religious doctrine. Though of a high order of abstraction, these meta-beliefs come to serve as points of symbolic differentiation for the Family School over against other religious groups.

The open-ended approach extends also to the divine figure of Jesus. Yet, as one might expect, the character of Jesus presents a peculiar problem for a group identifying as both Jewish and Catholic. The Kovacs informed me that the issue of Jesus—how to talk about him, how to teach about him, whether he is the Messiah—surfaced as a force of “dramatic tension” among the Family School’s early parents. Patty writes, “Our fears were tied up in ‘The J-Word’—Jesus.” While she attributes the gradual resolution of that tension to patience and group discussion, the issue remains a hurdle that all Family School families at some point face. Interestingly, the curriculum does not address theological questions about the person of Jesus until the sixth grade year, when Patty (who is trained in psychology as a school counselor) thought the children would be developmentally ready to reason through the claims “on their own.” Before sixth grade, teachers address the issue of Jesus by emphasizing elements of his life or teachings that do not have to do with his divine status.

While we cannot take a stance on any perceived theological tension, my sociological findings speak to the success of the Family School’s pedagogical approach in assuaging any psychological tension actors may experience by virtue of belonging to two historically separate religious groups. A common response to the issue of Jesus holds that, as one graduate put it, “in Catholicism, there’s a lot of teachings of Jesus and a lot of teachings about Jesus. And in Judaism you can believe the teachings of Jesus without necessarily believing all the teachings about him. (emphasis added)”
This response implies the ‘being both’ repertoire, since the two faiths are dealt with in compare-contrast format as separate systems that one can alternate between. Yet even the responses I heard that attempted to integrate Judaism and Catholicism at the same time, though ripe with cognitive difficulty, showed few signs of distress or tension. The best example comes from an interview with a current eighth grade student named Jamie. She was, notably, the only student I talked to who expressed cognitive difficulty about her beliefs. While she was speaking to me about the cognitive barrier of Jesus she was entirely at ease and expressed a faith that the difficulty was not a problem:

“I know that, like, the one thing that I definitely believe in is that God . . . exists and that God is here. And I know that, like, in Catholicism people believe that Jesus was the Son of God and the Jewish side is, like, still waiting for the Messiah so, like, I’m still discovering how to combine those things. I feel like when I get older I’ll know but right now I’m still learning—I feel like we’re all kind of still learning, even maybe my parents.”

DOCTRINE AND IDENTITY

Jamie’s above response serves as evidence of the Family School’s successful decentralization of doctrinal belief. If doctrinal beliefs were actually the most salient factors of religious self-construction, as we colloquially imagine them to be, we would expect to see many more responses like Jamie’s as well as much more psychological distress. Seeing as this is not the case, we can reasonably conclude that doctrine matters little for students when self-categorizing in the ‘being both’ repertoire as Jews/Catholics. For Jamie and the other eighth graders I encountered, things like family heritage, time spent at church or temple or in Sunday school, time spent celebrating holidays—the activities of religious life—were more salient than the beliefs, at least when defending their authentic Judaism and Catholicism.

I owe much to Susan Katz Miller, author of Being Both: Embracing Two Religions in One Interfaith Family, for pointing out to me that while it may indeed be common or colloquial to associate belief with religious identity, it is only so because we live in a culture saturated by Christianity. In her words, “[The concept of belief] makes the most sense in a Christian or Muslim context, and makes less sense in a Jewish or Hindu or Buddhist context in which practice is primary.”

The severing of doctrinal belief from fixed dual religious identity was most convincingly articulated to me by Rabbi Abigail.12 Whereas most actors conveyed the unimportance of doctrinal belief to me simply by remaining silent about it, Rabbi Abigail did so by expressly denying its importance for authentic Jewish identity. When I asked her, ‘how do you see the relationship of doctrine to identity?’, she responded,

“I could say Reform rabbis specifically, by and large, have many, many questions about dual-faith families because they believe you can’t be dual-faith, that that’s a theologic impossibility . . . and what I have found is that dual-faith families, by and large, umm… are able to pass on literacy in both faiths and children are able to learn about two things simultaneously and they are able to grapple with things and I think that they either believe in Jesus in a very Jewish way, so there are no theologic issues specifically, or they hold two truths or two parts of faith within their same heart, ya know? . . . I think that these kids are bridge builders and interfaith ambassadors and they understand greys and they understand nuance and they understand that their Judaism doesn’t have to look like my Judaism and that it’s complicated and that their families are complicated and that’s fine!”

We come to see, then, that the stakes here are not only authentic Jewish and Catholic identities, but authentic religious lives more broadly. When actors adopt Jewish and Catholic social-categorical labels, they do so with the help of the ‘being both’ repertoire and largely without regard for any supposed contradictions in doctrinal beliefs. When, at other times, actors attempt to shed all labels and conceive of their religious identities as open ended and fluid, doctrinal belief can enter back into the picture as an object of exploration. In the self-determination repertoire, both identity and belief are seen as delightfully unresolved and teeming with infinite possibilities. Yet whether one is “both” or “unresolved,” the relation to doctrinal belief is never one of clinging. The Family School actor is therefore always able to say, ‘I don’t have to be bound to doctrine and dogma to be who I am.’

SECTION 3: THE CONSTRUCTION OF POLITICAL IDENTITY

In the following section, I suggest that, in the void cre-
ated by a partially open approach to religious identity and belief, another dominant sense of self arises that I will call a political identity, held up by the rhetorical strategies of the Family School. I first demonstrate how political identities are more salient than religious ones for Family School actors. Next, I introduce the identity repertoire of the “interfaith ambassador,” who is seen to be accepting, well rounded, and peace wielding. I then discuss the eighth grade curriculum and the rhetoric surrounding it as the primary mechanisms by which political identities become real for the students. Finally, I speculate that, despite its political emphasis, we might understand this process of identity formation in terms of the enterprise of theodicy, drawing on Geertz, Berger, and Weber.

It is one question to ask how religious identity is constructed; it is another to ask whether religious identity is what we should be studying in the first place. It came to my attention in analyzing the data that actors do not seem to place much stock in their robust and complex interfaith identities in the context of their big-picture, multivalent selves. Complex interfaith identities would seem to be significant sociologically, but less so personally. Yet the Family School is clearly important to its members and therefore, I thought, must somehow still influence identity in a significant, more salient, way. Upon broadening my questions and reexamining the data, I found what I was looking for—namely, the lasting and salient imprint of the collective upon the individual—in what I will call a ‘political identity.’ It should be noted that this denotation is nothing more than an ideal type, deployed for ease and convenience. It will eventually become clear that the concept is inadequate and perhaps even misleading, seeing that Family School members would not subscribe to the characterization of a political identity themselves because, for them, there exists no divide between religion and politics.

IDENTITY SALIENCES
I gathered from many actors that their religious identities occupy but a small part of their holistic selves. They do not occupy master statuses that can “overpower” other identities and are thus not very salient.40

Compared to my other types of data, interviews were well-suited to uncover comparative saliences because they allowed me to look into aspects of respondents’ lives outside the Family School walls. For example, in my interview with eighth grader Jamie, I got a glimpse into a different classroom setting in her Catholic middle school:

“Like my friends . . . whenever we’re doing something in religion class about that kind of stuff my friends will ask me about Judaism—and I think this is the only time—and, like, okay I’m not really an expert but . . . that’s really the only time we really talk about it.”

If we operate on the assumption that identities of high salience would tend to “break through” in seemingly irrelevant settings (e.g. a mother talking about her kids at work), the fact that Jamie does not talk about her religious identity outside the context of religion class indicates low salience for her.

Whereas members’ interfaith identities might not get much airtime outside the Family School, the political identities that are incubated in the Family School do. These identities possess a natural capacity to “break through” into seemingly irrelevant settings by virtue of their abstractnessabstract nature and moral relevance. It is hard to be an interfaith Jew-Christian in the circumstances of everyday life; it is much easier to be a “well-rounded person” who is “committed to justice.” As will be shown, the high salience of political identity derives in part from the definition of religion as action and the pedagogy of the eighth grade classroom.

A POLITICAL IDENTITY REPERTOIRE: “INTERFAITH AMBASSADORS”

The following quotations were excerpted from a Family School promotional video entitled “Learning Two Faiths:”

Affiliated Rabbi 1: “I think when people have been raised with two faiths they have an openness to the world.”

Older girl 1: “It just opens you up to so many more things. It makes you a more well-rounded person.”

Younger girl 3: “We’ve really learned to accept all religions.”

Affiliated Priest 2: “This is the way the world should be.”

Affiliated Rabbi 2: “If everyone could be raised being this deeply respectful and embracing and...
...curious, I think the world would be a much more peaceful place.”

Affiliated Rabbi 1: “Bringing a little more peace into the world, a little more joy, a little happiness: that’s what makes it special.”

Such terms as “well-rounded”, “open”, “embracing and curious”, and “peaceful” make up the softer side of the political identity repertoire. Other metaphors more explicitly draw on political terminology, namely the regally connoted “interfaith ambassador”, originally popularized in the community thanks to Susan Katz Miller’s book Being Both: Embracing Two Religions in One Interfaith Family. The term—a favorite in the Family School—surfaced throughout the organization. I will thus refer to this set of metaphors as the “interfaith ambassador” identity repertoire.

The dominating metaphor is simple. Ambassadors engage in dialogue in order to keep peace between nations; interfaith ambassadors do the same between religions. The metaphor bespeaks an awareness of historical interreligious conflict and a moral concern to somehow alleviate such conflict via practices of everyday diplomacy and openness to others. This is the stuff of religion-as-action; the stuff of redeeming a lost world via political and moral engagement. As one eighth grader put it,

“If everyone on earth was half as tolerant and understanding as any of the members of Family School, holy war and genocide would all be things of the past.”

The process of assimilating the interfaith ambassador repertoire into actors’ sense of self occurs in great part through the content and form of the eighth grade year.

THE EIGHTH GRADE YEAR AS THE SITE OF POLITICAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

According to the Kovacs, the whole Family School program from years K-7 was designed to culminate in a process of coming of age in the eighth grade year. For this reason, during my initial logistical talks with the Kovacs before beginning collecting data, they recommended that I observe the eighth grade year alone, as this is where the process of identity-reckoning comes to the fore. Heeding the Kovacs’s advice, I chose not to collect data in any of the K-7 classroom settings. As such, my findings may be colored to lend more weight to the importance of eighth grade than might have otherwise been the case, given a more evenly-weighted data collection.

According to the Kovacs, years K-3 at the Family School see the curriculum honing in on the holidays, rituals, and canonical stories of both religious traditions. Later, in grades 3-7, the lessons gravitate more toward the histories of both traditions as they played out from ancient to modern times, the distinct belief systems of each tradition, and some common disagreements. Discussions at these grade levels center around the presented curriculum.

In contrast, the eighth grade year takes a decided leap out of religious history and into “the real world”, meaning at once the world of public discourse as well as the personal world of each student’s thoughts. Instead of being taught how to sing traditional songs, students are encouraged to talk about what they see around them and how they feel inside. Conversations about current events (occurring in autumn 2016) such as the Standing Rock water crisis and the election of Donald Trump were commonplace in class, alongside discussions about the students’ personal experiences with moral problems with friends and family, their own suffering, and the suffering of others. The framing of these discussions, however, never lost touch with the religious mission of the program. Discussions of social justice were often referenced back against the histories of Jewish and Catholic activism. For example, one class saw the welcoming of a guest speaker who gave the class an American history lecture and touched on the social gospel and the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s:

“In addition to this historical dimension, discussions of social justice also referred back to the main ontological takeaway; students are not fundamentally interfaith, but they are fundamentally, always and ever, “people of God.” This highly generalizable and essential phrase served as a powerful tool for socializing students into their morally charged political identities.41

The use of religious language in the construction of civic identity has been well documented in sociological literature.42 Such work focuses on the vocabularies activist or civic groups use to express motivations or to conduct boundary-work. Our case serves
as an example of a group doing both at the same time. Actors’ self-identifications as Jewish, Catholic, or both in name only serve as indicators of the deeper sense of being “People of God.” Again, as articulated in Section 2, traditional religion and religious labels are conceived as means to a greater end.

IDENTITY AND THEODICY

In the eighth grade classroom, the question of “who I am” is presented in the same breath as questions of social justice. But why should this be? Why should a sense of who one is be related to a sense of justice, or more specifically, to a coming to awareness of injustice and suffering? The Family School curriculum introduces students to a variety of injustices. In the words of recent alumna Larissa,

“The way I understand injustices in the Family School is through theodicy. It is said that learning about injustice and suffering “makes a difference.” My fascination concerns why such a difference should play significantly in coming of age and in the formation of identity. The sociological paradigms that locate identity simply as a congruence of social relationships and interactions cannot explain why this association should be so powerful. And yet, for Family School actors, it is.

I assert that a potential answer to this question can be mined from old understandings of the task of theodicy. The term theodicy, simply put, refers to religious legitimations of bad things. In the Judeo-Christian West, one potential theodicy might say, “God allows people to get sick in order to test their strength and commitment to Him.” According to Berger, old theodicies would address the bad things by explaining them and locating them in a meaningful cosmological configuration. This act of location would then make the bad things palatable and endurable. There exists, however, a key difference between the Family School’s “theodicy” and its traditional one-conception. Traditionally, theodicy legitimates suffering and injustice; meanwhile, the Family School’s theodicy legitimates not suffering and injustice per se but the response to them, thereby still providing guidance when they are encountered. Family School members may still not know why the bad things exist, but—as People of God—they know what to do about them: to reject them by standing up for what is right or by lending a hand.

I propose that the whole cycle of theodicy, from the realization of bad things through the realization that one can fix them, serves to render the political identity at hand all the more potent and salient. By locating responses to the bad things in a greater order of meaning, the theodicy by default also locates the identity of a world-fixer or peace-builder in such an order. On top of this, the “interfaith-ambassador” identity is reinforced by framing eighth grade as the time when students “come into their own” and “when things become real.” In a fascinating paradox characteristic of religious thought, then, we might say that things become real by virtue of their participation in something unreal or more-than-real, something transcendent.

As a sociologist, I cannot comment on whether God makes things valuable or whether things are made real through participation in transcendence unless that transcendence is, as Durkheim would say, some version of the collective. What I can say, however, is that theodicy makes a powerful imprint on the identities of our subjects by virtue of its cosmic stakes and its skillful presentation by the instructors.

THE RELATION OF RELIGION AND POLITICS

I have by now presented sufficient information to make some points of clarification. I have spoken of religious identities, a political identity, and of a religious motivation behind a political identity. These three terms refer to analytically and conceptually separate phenomena. What I have called religious identities bound the self-using repertoires (“being both” and self-determination) that refer in some way to specific, traditional religious cultural materials: churches, temples, beliefs, celebrations, matzah balls, etc. What I have called political identities, on the other hand, bound self-using repertoires that refer to current events, world injustices, self-discovery, and one’s obligation as a “Person of God.” Finally, what I have called religious motivations refer to whatever lies beneath such phrases as...
“Person of God,” namely, a fundamental or ontological grounding for action.

While distinguished for the sake of presenting information, these three are not wholly separate phenomena. No cultural repertoire is perfectly bounded and indeed there is spillover between the various repertoires I have spoken of. The more explicit interweaving of the various identities, though, might be conceptualized in a sort of depth hierarchy. At the base (I dare not say “core”), we have the fundamental ontological assurance that one is a “Person of God.” Directly atop this sit the ethical obligations which cohere into a political identity. Atop this, at a sort of surface level, we have the particular instantiation as Jewish-Catholic or self-determined “People of God.” While these levels of self are in dialogue with each other such that no one level creates another, it might be said for rhetorical reasons that Family School actors are political first and religious second. This is perhaps the most significant finding concerning the formation of individual identity within the Family School.

SECTION 4: THE FAMILY SCHOOL AS A PRODUCT OF PLURALISM

CRISIS NEGOTIATION AND THE FAMILY SCHOOL AS AN INTERDISCIPLINARY INSTITUTION

According to Berger, the pluralistic situation is one “in which people with different ethnicities, worldviews, and moralities live together peacefully and interact with each other amicably.” While the following argument will ultimately affirm the positive, productive potential of pluralism, it begins with the real difficulties the situation can produce in the minds and social lives of individuals. Pluralism has allowed individuals from previously separate and sometimes antagonistic social groups to fall in love and marry each other, as in the case of our Jewish-Catholic couples. However, as a corollary, the pluralistic situation can also create strife for individuals like our couples when their prior social groups pull on them in conflicting ways. Hence the problem arises of the disapproving friend, in-law, or rabbi, a problem which the Family School sets out to solve.

As one interfaith rabbi fittingly observed, “Growth comes out of tension.” For Berger and Luckmann, pluralism’s tension is a large-scale, anxiety-producing, existential “crisis of meaning.” For the sake of clarity, the salient crises experienced by our interfaith couples, while still resultant from the pluralist situation, are better categorized as (1) interpersonal, (2) cognitive, or (3) authenticity-based.

1. Interpersonal crises took the form of disagreements between couples and their parents, in-laws, or friends over basic issues of intermarriage, such as childhood education. 2. Cognitive crises more often took the form of disagreements or tensions between the two partners, or even between warring conceptions in a single mind. These crises usually arose out of confusion with regards to belief. 3. Crises of authenticity most often took the form of rejection at the hands of traditional religious authority. The three types are exemplified in the following three quotations:

Interpersonal:

“We were told thirty years ago... I was told by a friend, a guy I had worked with in television for four years, ‘you know what, I think you should break up with her.’ And he said that to us when we were in Cincinnati in her parents’ backyard!”

-David, eighth grade instructor and Jewish spouse

Cognitive:

“He was raised to believe that if you aren’t Catholic or Christian, you won’t go to heaven. Where does that leave me? Where will that leave us at the end?”

-Jewish spouse, from the promotional video “If a Democrat Can Marry a Republican…”

Authenticity-based:

“People have had such pain... I have heard over these years, as we’ve talked to these couples, so many heartbreaking stories: ‘I grew up in temple youth group, I was a teenage this and that and I thought that I could go to my rabbi and my rabbi shut me down and I felt abandoned.’ And that’s what made us say, ‘we need to be the safe space where people can bring this.’ And so many people over the years have brought these stories and shared these stories and they’re heartbreaking, you know? It was like, no religion should make people feel that low and that abandoned.”

-David, eighth grade instructor
That these crises exist and come to bear on these couples ought to be clear by now given what has come before in this study. It was ubiquitously expressed by the parents with whom I spoke that the clergy are an indispensable comfort and resource for them. Indeed, the Family School was initially founded as a couples' support group that provided a much-needed “safe space” for interfaith couples to discuss their crises. What now merits attention is the particular process by which the Family School attempts to guide families (especially the parents) through such crises.

Following Berger and Luckmann, I argue that the Family School functions as an intermediary institution that mediates between individuals and society, a society that is sometimes hostile to the notion of an interfaith lifestyle. The Family School accomplishes this by guiding families through a process of tension resolution and meaning negotiation.

One of the biggest evidential clues supporting this therapeutic model lies in the structure of the Family School’s promotional and documentary video clips. Put succinctly, the videos follow a problem-resolution-moral structure. Consider the following quotations excerpted from a documentary video clip entitled, “If a Democrat Can Marry a Republican…,” which I sorted according to the narrative structure above:

1. Problem:

   “I was living at home and when he came to the door my parents looked at him and said ‘he’s not Jewish.’ And I said, ‘yes, you’re right.’”

   -Jewish spouse

2. Contextualization/Resolution:

   “But if we keep saying that it’s the best to marry someone Jewish and then intermarriage is the second best option, then we’ll never have an equal community. We’ll never have a community that feels open and accepting and loving and affirming of an interfaith couple.”

   -Family School affiliated rabbi

(3) Moral:

   “It really is about loving each other, not only in spite of our differences but because of our differences . . . being understanding of each other and of the world around us and of people of all different beliefs.”

   -Young spouse

The order in which the filmmakers present the content is emblematic of the problem-resolution-moral structure. By casting clergy in roles of attending experts to the couples’ questions, the makers of the video attempt to impart a straightforward message to viewers: the Family School and its clerical consultants affirm interfaith marriage and will help guide you through a process of reconciling your tensions.

My interviews with Rabbi Abigail confirmed the role of clergy as crisis-negotiators. Along with the Catholic priests at the affiliated Old St. Patrick’s Church, Rabbi Abigail strives to make interfaith couples feel comfortable and welcomed where other clergy have done the opposite:

   “I feel the work I do still puts me on the far, far, far fringe of my colleagues and it’s seen as controversial or seen as hurting the Jewish landscape . . . So there’s a lot of negativity around it but . . . I think that if someone has an opening for Judaism and wants a rabbi in their lives, then what’s the way for me to be able to do that? It’s countercultural at this point for people to want a rabbi! [laughs] Like, it boggles my mind that people still do, especially people who’ve heard ‘no’ so many times, who’ve been told that they’re wrong over and over. ‘You’re still trying!? Oh my god, like, wow, great.’”

The rabbis and priests affiliated with the Family School resolve crises by offering counsel and by officiating at life events. They counsel couples who are facing tension with in-laws, and they attend discussion groups in which couples grapple with doctrinal issues. They officiate at baptisms, baby-namings, bris (circumcisions), first communions, bar and bat mitzvahs, and weddings. These ceremonies often take on an interfaith character, with both Catholic and Jewish symbols at play, so as to validate and acknowledge both heritages as relevant and authentic.
I propose that the clerical services function as the primary mechanism within the Family School that mediates between the families and society. By providing institutional affirmation, the clergy legitimate actors’ identities as authentic Jews and Catholics; through legitimation, the clergy help resolve crises and relate actors back to society “at large”—a pluralistic society made up of friends, in-laws, the Catholic church, and the various branches of Judaism. The Family School provides individuals with a sense of belonging in a unique subculture while also tying them to traditional, historical faith traditions. As such, it constitutes a unique adaptation to the pluralist situation in facing both forward and backward, and, once again, preserving both sameness and difference.

CREATIVE PLURALISM AND THE FAMILY SCHOOL AS AN URBAN SUBCULTURE

The Family School supports intermarried families in a way few other religious institutions can. Its highly specific orientation as a therapeutic institution and reference group for Jewish-Catholic couples endows it with a uniqueness well-suited to thrive as a subculture. Having seen this, we would do well to imagine the Family School metaphorically as a unique “good” on the religious marketplace, or as a unique species in a “large coral reef ecosystem, teeming with an abundance of complex and varied life forms.”

To briefly lean on the market metaphor, the Family School advertises itself as an institution which caters to the demands of a certain sub-section of religious consumers, categorized as follows: they are, first and foremost, intermarried Jews and Catholics in the Chicagoland area. They seek to resolve any crises they may face, to find like-minded families and affirmation, and to understand their situation and themselves. They are—or are taught to be—theologically liberal and tolerant of all religious paths. Most of them do not seek an intense religious commitment but rather a safe space for them and their children to explore difficult questions and feelings. Although I did not explicitly ask, all seemed to be heterosexual and, almost all of them, white.

While families need not be alike in all the above ways, it is not by simple coincidence that such a specific group has come together. Rather, we can make sense of the Family School as occupying one niche in an urban ecosystem of religious niches. According to subcultural theory, cities produce deviant subcultures by “providing ‘critical mass’ and ‘institutional completeness.” In other words, the sheer size of a city like Chicago (whose metro area boasts a population of 9.4 million allows miniscule sub-sections of the population to come together into sustainable groups that might not otherwise draw enough individuals to survive. Seeing as Chicagoland was 34 percent Catholic and 3 percent Jewish in 2014, we need not strain to imagine how a community of around hundred intermarried couples was able to come together (400 over the school’s twenty-four years). Additionally, the diversity of a city like Chicago, with its majority-minority status and infamous ethnic enclaves, endows groups with a plethora of potential out-groups against which to define themselves.

Having found each other, Family School members, like any other subcultural group, engage in the creation of symbolic distinctions through what has been called boundary-work. Cultural theories of group identity formation have regarded boundary-work as an inseparable part of the cohering process and implicit in the project of cultural production. Many strategies of negative distinction found actors constructing hypothetical naysayers against which they could affirm their identities. One of the Family School’s promotional videos yields a straightforward example of such a dialogue:

**Affiliated Rabbi: “How do you answer somebody who says, ‘You can’t be both?’”**

**Middle-school girl: “Well I say, ‘yeah I can.’”**

Other instances of negation entailed the construction of more specific Others such as biblical literalists, traditional clergy, and even sociologists—who were imagined as having statistically informed biases against successful interfaith marriages. These Others share one important commonality, namely their intolerance. Since the Family School regards acceptance as a virtue and defining characteristic, intolerance (non-acceptance) then becomes just about the only thing that is excluded from group identity. The Family School’s boundary-work would then seem to be a contradiction: a commitment to inclusivity seems to require excluding the non-inclusive. The contradiction begins to dissolve, however, when we distinguish acceptance and doctrinal inclusivity from group-inclusivity. Family School members do not see themselves as unaccepting or non-inclusive of biblical literalists or single-faith individuals; they simply see themselves as different and
thus partially define their group with respect to this difference.

To support the process of boundary-work, Smith’s subcultural identity theory outlines reference groups, which might be thought of as miniature plausibility structures. Reference groups “serve for people as sources of norms, values, and standards of judgment, functioning as informal authorities in the process of self-evaluation.”52 Individuals falling outside one’s reference group have significantly less sway in determining one’s self-evaluation than those inside. I thus propose that actors are able to express their identities so confidently in the face of doubters by virtue of the Family School’s status as a reference group. When a Family School member confronts someone in society at large who denies the plausibility of a dual-faith identity, he/she can easily brush off such comments given the security of the reference group. The fact that the Family School devotes itself to teaching people how to talk about their identities and negotiate crises, and even advertises itself as a safe space, only further cements its status as a reference group par excellence.

Few religious groups—not even the Universalists—can offer what the Family School offers. Even amongst interfaith groups, the Family School distinguishes itself as a unique specimen. Most often, when one hears of an interfaith group, one thinks of the many existent efforts to bring together various single-faith individuals for dialogue. A number of prominent organizations of this type, such as the Interfaith Youth Core, are present in Chicago. The Family School distinguishes itself even from these by offering something much more specific and complex. That said, a small number of dual-faith organizations very similar to the Family School do exist in places like New York City, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C., having cropped up independently around the same time. These organizations still differ, though, because they cater to the slightly wider umbrella of Jewish-Christian (rather than Jewish-Catholic) families and also receive varying levels of support from local churches and temples.53

We thus come to the conclusion that the relative success of the Family School makes sense given the pluralistic, urban conditions under which it arose and in which it currently thrives.

DISCUSSION

Individual identities do not come into being in isolation; they are always products of social structure and culture. In this paper, I began analysis at the level of the individual and gradually zoomed out to the classroom, community, and societal levels in order to paint a picture of how the various tiers interact.

Pluralistic social structure enables the peaceful coexistence of multiple religions, ethnicities, races, genders, sexualities, nationalities, etc. in one place—in this case, the United States. In cities, pluralistic social structure manifests in dense and diverse populations, which allow for deviant or unique subcultures to emerge. Such subcultures thrive on the abundance of potential members, symbols, and out-groups available to them for shaping group boundaries and identities. When the subcultural group is a Jewish-Catholic Sunday school, internal cultural production can take on a rich and complex character, thanks in part to the wealth of symbols embedded in each of the historical faith traditions. Given some baseline level of individual identification with the group, the group’s cultural production comes back to shape individual actors’ senses of self, e.g. via classroom pedagogy. To complete the circle, these individuals are always present at each of the preceding levels and never cease to act back upon them in ways that affirm their statuses as social realities.54

This relational schema of self, culture, and society does not, in itself, pose anything new or innovative to the discipline of sociology. Its elaboration in the case of the Family School, however, points us to new theoretical understandings for sociological literatures on intermarriage, identity, and religion.

In the case of intermarriage, the findings of this study have the potential to reform literature in three ways. First, the very existence of an institution like the Family School challenges the notion that intermarriage and religious strength are negatively related, for here we find a religious institution committed solely to intermarried couples. Instead of weakening their respective religiosities, most of our couples would say that their intermarriages have brought them closer to their faiths. Such an insight obviously does not overturn any macro-level trends indicating the opposite, but it does invite a deeper look into the phenomena than previously ventured, perhaps now with an eye to other variables.55 Second, my study challenges the notion that raising a child dual-faith (as opposed to single-faith, neither, or Universalist) is too idealistic or confusing to work.56 While the option may still be uncommon in intermarried households, the creation of more intermediary institutions like the Family
School could precipitate a change in this trend. Third, my findings detailing actors’ comfortable mastery of multiple identity repertoires adhere to the literature that sees religious identity as an ongoing process of cultural negotiation. Future scholarship would do well to incorporate this view into outlets such as survey design, so as to glean more accurate representations of identities outside their social-categorical labels.

Literature on identity, religious and otherwise, may also be rethought of in light of this study. First, the case of the Family School points to new possibilities for conceptualizing dual-faith or otherwise complex religious identities. Just as bicultural individuals describe themselves as participating in two different cultures and histories at once, so do our dual-faith actors learn to view their two religions as “heritages” from which they descend and in which they actively take part.57 Second, our dual-faith actors appear somewhat like classical religious actors by participating in a moral collectivity.58 Yet, they also share commonalities with more recent religious actors who aggregate or integrate cultural packages into “pluralist religious identities.”59 Our dual-faith actors have various cultural materials and expressions available to them and see themselves as participating in two distinct traditions at once. However, they still rely on the religious collective (here, an intermediary institution) in rendering themselves coherent. Future research would do well to further examine dual-faith individuals through cultural analysis, as I have done, but also through social-behavioral analysis, something I was unable to fully do. The field could benefit from an in-depth and perhaps longitudinal look at the institutional behaviors of dual-faith individuals to discern how their various identity repertoires relate to things such as attendance or civic participation.

Lastly with regards to the identity literature, our case presents us with a special opportunity to grapple with the concept of identity more broadly, through the poles of sameness and difference and fixity and fluidity.60 Family School actors are same as Jews, Catholics, and other interfaith Jew-Catholics. Yet they are also different from any of these categorical groups by virtue of the self-determination repertoire, which enshrines the choosing subject as unique and ultimately able to decide with whom he/she is same. Such is the case with much identity construction in the modern world: individual choice is seen as bearing the final authority, with structure and culture coming into play only insofar as they delimit and shape the choices.61 The Family School, then, provides us a portrait of the modern self as coming to terms with its fluidity in the social sphere (“I choose to go to temple or church”), all the while holding onto its fixity as a choosing and biographically-constituted subject (“I was raised with the choices of Judaism and Catholicism”).

Finally, this study constitutes an addition to sociological literature on religion by describing a new, innovative religious institution that has arisen in part thanks to pluralistic conditions. On the surface, this study affirms the view of creative pluralism and rejects old logics of secularization. However, on a deeper level, the Family School continues to stir tensions by virtue of its unique combination of secular and sacred discourses. The new theories of creative pluralism reject the secularization thesis, citing as evidence the sacred discourses and fervors of groups such as evangelicals.62 The Family School, however, is a far cry from an evangelical church: it teaches culture rather than belief; it meets but twice a month; and its members, while perhaps just as fervent about their Catholicism or their Judaism in private, do not express much interfaith ecstasy when they come together. On the one hand, we have no choice but to describe our belief-less Sunday school as secular, given that it relegates matters of belief to the private realm and spends equal energy cultivating political identities as it does religious ones. On the other hand, one could read the melding of religion and politics as a re-animation rather than a secularization—an extension of the sacred into the secular rather than the other way around. Given that frequent references to traditional sacred things are still made in the Family School, albeit in abstract terms like “People of God,” “the holy,” or “the transcendence,” we cannot characterize it as a wholly secular enterprise.

My findings support the notion, then, that a “secularization of consciousness” has occurred, but that even such consciousnesses can still come together in search of the sacred.63 The old lines have been blurred: the sacred discourses (Judaism, Catholicism) are discussed in a secular context, and the secular discourses (politics, activism) are discussed with sacred terms. Once again, then, the Family School makes a name for itself by “being both.”

CONCLUSION

Looking ahead, the pluralistic social situation seems poised to endure in the United States. Non-Christian and unaffiliated populations are on the rise, and Chris-
tian populations are on the wane. More broadly, the country is on pace to cross over to a majority-minority racial population by 2044. Even so, group tensions fester and erupt with regularity, threatening the “peaceful” component of pluralism’s definition. While the construction of symbolic boundaries aids and abets the formation of identities, it is also a process prone to reifying and amplifying difference in poisonous ways. It may even be that the very process of Othering is but a way for subjects to cast out the nastier bits of themselves and deposit them safely away in people and things who appear to be different. While such a process may keep the peace via a sort of embittered stalemate, if true, it also bodes ill for the prospect of an open-minded and accepting sort of peace.

The fact the Family School too draws symbolic boundaries between itself and other groups would then seem to implicate it partially in some disastrous cycle of Othering. However, here I must interpolate an important caveat: for Family School actors, the twin acts of participating in dialogue and sharing in the search for holiness are seen to somehow break down the very symbolic boundaries they seem to erect. In dialogue or in the presence of the holy, social-categorical labels and even socially and culturally informed identities fall away, leaving only the raw selves and their encounters with each other and with “the transcendent.”

The current literature would benefit from further research into religious intermarriage, religious identity, and the re-imagining that occurs within such phenomena as the country continues to diversify.

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16 Smith, American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving.
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FROM JASMINE TO JIHAD: 
HOW DISAPPOINTMENT WITH DEMOCRACY CAN CREATE FOREIGN FIGHTERS

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ABSTRACT

Tunisia’s status as both the only lasting democracy to result from the Arab Spring and the largest source of foreign fighters to Salafi-jihadist groups in the Middle East raises significant questions. Does democracy encourage terrorism? If not, what is unique about Tunisia that could be driving this phenomenon? To explore the research question, “How do democratic and non-democratic variables contribute to the large number of Tunisian foreign fighters joining Salafi-jihadist groups?” this thesis conducts a cross-country regression that examines trends in the Middle East and North Africa as a whole. The analysis then narrows to examine Tunisia’s role in regional trends by viewing quantitative evidence in the context of Tunisia’s history, current political climate, and geographic connectivity to Salafi-jihadist conflicts. This thesis concludes that unfulfilled democratic and economic promises of the Jasmine Revolution motivate Tunisians to become foreign fighters, while democratic freedom of organization, instability after the democratic transition, and ease of travel facilitate fighter recruitment.

Why do individuals leave their countries to participate in transnational terrorist organizations? Following the Arab Spring in 2011, the outbreak of civil wars in Syria, Iraq and Libya led to an astonishing trend: foreign fighters are flowing towards these conflicts at a rate never seen in previous conflicts involving foreign combatants.¹ ²

For Tunisia, understanding the factors behind the flow of foreign fighters is especially crucial, as this small and homogenous nation is the largest source of foreign fighters for Salafi-jihadist groups like the Islamic State, Al Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM) and Jabhat al-Nusra.² What drives Tunisians to leave and fight becomes even more puzzling given that Tunisia is the only democracy to emerge from the Arab Spring. With U.S. policy under George W. Bush and Barack Obama consistently advocating for democracy as an antidote to the Middle East’s problems of terrorism and instability, Tunisia’s foreign fighter contribution raises key questions.² Does democracy facilitate or encourage foreign fighter participation? If so, under what conditions? If not, what is unique about Tunisia that causes so many Tunisians to become Salafi-jihadist foreign fighters?

This thesis explores the research question: how do democratic and non-democratic variables contribute to the large number of Tunisian foreign fighters joining Salafi-jihadist groups? After quantitative and qualitative analysis, this thesis concludes that unfulfilled democratic and economic promises of the Jasmine Revolution motivate Tunisians to become foreign fighters. This motivation then coincides with increased freedom of organization, instability, and ease of travel stemming from the 2011 revolution, facilitating fighter participation.

Through a cross-country regression, this thesis highlights independent variables that have a statistically significant relationship with foreign fighter participation in North Africa and the Middle East. Classifying independent variables used in the regression as either democratic or non-democratic highlights ways in which Tunisia’s democratic transition and democratic regime, as well as other variables like unemployment, influence the decision to become a foreign fighter. To ensure that the large number of Tunisian foreign fighters was not skewing regression results, I conducted a second regression excluding Tunisia. While the magnitude of coefficients tends to diminish all our influence to encourage reform in the region” (Obama 2011).
ish with Tunisia excluded, Tunisia does not appear to be driving results as the significance and signs of the correlations remain largely the same. The study then narrows to examine, using quantitative and qualitative evidence, how the motivations of Tunisian foreign fighters compare with those from the MENA region. Qualitative measures include GIS analysis of connectivity to Salafi-jihadist training camps in Libya as well as studies of Tunisia’s political history and current political climate.

**TUNISIAN FOREIGN FIGHTERS**

Before the 2011 Jasmine Revolution, the number of Tunisian foreign fighters was significantly lower. In the Iraqi insurgency of 2003-2011 for example, the Sinjar Records reveal that Tunisia contributed only around 3% of the foreign fighters joining Al Qaeda in Iraq. Today, Tunisian foreign fighters comprise roughly 17.5% of foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria. In Libya also, Tunisians contribute the highest number of foreign fighters, with numbers estimated around 1,500. According to a report by The Soufan Group, as of December 2015 the official number of Tunisians who have traveled to fight in Syria and Iraq is 6,000, while the unofficial estimate is as large as 7,000. This number remains the highest in the Middle East and North Africa, with the second largest number of foreign fighters coming from Saudi Arabia at 2,500. Additionally, as of early 2018, approximately 800 fighters have returned to Tunisia. These returning fighters endanger Tunisian national security and could radicalize other potential fighters. While this thesis will focus on conditions that prompt foreign fighters to leave Tunisia rather than the impact of those who return, the negative ramifications of returning fighters underscore the significance of the research question.

**LEARNING FROM TUNISIA’S FOREIGN FIGHTER PHENOMENON**

Tunisia’s large contribution to the jihadist foreign fighter population could provide insight into the theory that democracy plays a role in motivating foreign jihadist fighters from the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region. The cross-country regression highlights the factors that drive foreign fighter recruitment in the region as a whole. Data on Tunisia, from graphs, maps, and qualitative analysis, then help to investigate whether Tunisia’s high level of foreign fighter recruitment is due to its democratic transition in 2011, its democratic regime afterwards, or other variables. Understanding Tunisia’s high foreign fighter numbers can also contribute to our comprehension of radicalization. This research tests theories that economic grievances, political opportunity, religious ideology, or social identity prompt radicalization. Research on foreign fighter motivations is crucial for pro-democracy regimes in order to prove the legitimacy of democratic government in the MENA region. More importantly, deciphering the motivations of jihadist fighters is necessary to prevent the situation in the MENA region from worsening. Although the Islamic State has lost the majority of its territory in Syria, analysts warn that foreign fighter participation today mirrors the jihadist “finishing school” of the 1980s Afghanistan War. As then, foreign fighter participation today could lead to a resurgence of the Islamic State in the near future. Moreover, in January 2018, peaceful protests in Tunisia devolved into police violence and the arrest of almost 800 people, causing many to speculate that the current situation in Tunisia could prop up Salafi-jihadist groups in future years. Since the Jasmine Revolution, the U.S. has funneled roughly $300 million to Tunisia to encourage its democratization. Studying foreign fighter motivations can thus inform the role of pro-democracy regimes like the U.S. that pressure non-democratic countries to encourage democratic development. Although the Arab Spring resulted in renewed...
authoritarianism in many countries, the quick spread of democratic movements indicates that democracy was attractive to many revolutionaries in the MENA region. With this in mind, future democratic transitions are not unlikely and could parallel Tunisia’s by exporting large numbers of foreign fighters to jihadist conflicts unless pro-democracy regimes like the United States learn from the mistakes of the past. Because this thesis concludes democracy is not the core motivation for foreign fighters in Tunisia, pro-democracy regimes like the U.S. can avoid situations like Tunisia’s in the future by addressing economic, political, and religious grievances at the same time that they encourage democracy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature discussing theories as to why individuals participate in terrorist activity fall into two categories: those which postulate democracy is a variable inducing terrorism, and those which do not. Non-democracy explanations include 1) economic inequalities create push factors that prompt people to engage in terrorism; 2) selective incentives from terrorist groups create pull factors that draw people to engage in terrorism; and 3) social sanctions draw recruits by offering membership in a group. Democracy explanations include 1) the freedoms of democratic political systems facilitate terrorist recruitment and financing, and 2) democratic transitions destabilize state security and legitimacy. While these four explanations address terrorism in general, foreign fighter literature emphasizes group ideology and identity. Scholarship on Tunisia combines both non-democracy and democracy explanations. This section addresses each of these bodies of literature.

NON-DEMOCRACY EXPLANATIONS

The economic inequalities theory explains how awareness of economic disparities creates grievances that prompt individuals to engage in political violence. Gurr (1968) clarified the causal link between economic inequality and violence with the term “relative deprivation” to describe how individuals engage in collective violence when they believe that they have been deprived of something they deserve. This grievance-based explanation has been substantiated by empirical findings from Davies (1962), Paige (1975), Peterson (2001), Scott (1976), and Huntington (1968). Muller (1972), however, questioned Gurr’s relative deprivation theory, as his results suggested low trust in political authorities more accurately explained correlations between violence and economic inequalities. Muller and Seligson (1987) qualified this challenge in a study finding income inequality in agrarian societies was still predictive of political violence. Following this initial questioning of the relative deprivation theory, London and Robinson (1989), Timberlake and Williams (1987), and Bradshaw (1985) found empirical support for this theory in cross-country studies. In country-specific contexts, Nejad (1986), Kileff and Robinson (1986), Hamby (1986), and Kennedy et al. (1998) found empirical support that economic inequality contributed to political violence in the Iranian revolution, the Rhodesian Revolution (bush war) in South Africa, La Violencia in Colombia, and U.S. neighborhoods with high income inequality.10 Brush (1996) then summarized that although the relative deprivation theory is no longer considered a sufficient explanation for terrorism, it seems to be a contributing factor.

Other scholars find the pull factors of terrorist groups to have greater explanatory value than the push factors of economic deprivation. The selective incentives theory suggests individuals participate in terrorism because terrorist groups offer some benefit in joining. Olson (1965), Popkin (1979), and Lichbach (1995) cited many examples of recruitment increasing when groups offer selective incentives—such as when terrorist groups offer safety from legal consequences to soldiers who desert from the state army. Azam (2006) pointed out a reverse implication of selective incentives, as insurgent groups can also attract members by increasing the cost of not joining. Grossman (1991) noted that insurgencies raise the cost of not joining by threatening private property; if an insurgency appears to be succeeding, citizens rationally join to protect property rights. Humphreys and Weinstein (2008) and Gates (2002) also found support for the selective incentives theory, noting social appeals can combine with material incentives to increase insurgency participation.

Scholars studying the third framework, the social sanctions theory, have found that terrorist groups attract new recruits by appealing to outcasts and using social networks. Gabriel and Savage (1979), as well as Shils and Janowitz (1948) introduced the idea that social identity attracts recruits more strongly than material incentives. Schbley (2003), Sageman (2004), and Post et al. (2009) found this theory to be particularly strong in the Middle East as Salafi-jihadist groups
possess a strong religious identity and recruit through family and community networks.11

DEMOCRACY EXPLANATIONS
The two democracy explanations for terrorism are the political opportunity theory and the democratic transition theory. The political opportunity theory argues political violence increases in democracies because open societies afford increased opportunities for the organization of political violence. Eisinger (1973) applied this theory to U.S. cities, finding the openness of a city’s governance structure, measured by civil liberties and the ease of protest, predicted the number of protests in that city. Tilly (1978) applied Eisinger’s framework to nations as a whole, arguing that events like the French Revolution occurred because governments failed to suppress insurgents, providing opportunities for political violence. Turk (1982), Eubank and Weinberg (1994), Collier and Hoefller (2000), and Li and Schaub (2004) found democracies experience higher levels of political violence because loose regulation of financial transactions, speech, and group gatherings allow insurgents to recruit fighters and finance activities. Robison et al. (2006) found that greater civil liberties correlated with higher levels of political violence, and that civil liberties likely prompt Islamic terrorism because Salafi-jihadist groups seek to rid their countries of what they consider the Western influence of democracy.12 Crelinsten (1989), Hamilton and Hamilton (1983), and Schock (1996) added that democracies tend to facilitate terrorism because they are less free to repress civilians following a terrorist attack. This argument is supported by Smelser (2007)’s findings that autocracies like Nazi Germany experience low levels of political violence because they repress all protest. Eyerman (1997) found democracies that recently transitioned from autocracies experience more political violence than autocracies or established democracies. LaFree and Ackerman (2009) suggest democratic transitions correlate with terrorism because citizens accustomed to autocratic rule do not respect the ability of a democratic government to enforce laws. The link between weak legitimacy and terrorism is supported by LaFree (1998) who found higher perceived government legitimacy correlated with lower crime rates, and Sunshine & Tyler (2003) found perceived legitimacy to correlate with more cooperation with policing authorities. Crenshaw (1983) linked weak legitimacy directly with opportunity for terrorism, writing, “The power of terrorism is through political legitimacy, winning acceptance in the eyes of a significant population and discrediting the government’s legitimacy.”13

FOREIGN FIGHTER EXPLANATIONS
While these five terrorism theories overlap somewhat with foreign fighter theories, the distinction between terrorism and foreign fighter activity is important. Domestic terrorist motivations have been extensively studied, and often relate to conditions within a country. Political violence in a foreign country, however, has been researched far less, and relates more to ideology than in-country grievances. Hegghammer (2010, 2013) distinguishes between terrorists and foreign fighters, noting objective grievances, material incentives, and political opportunity are not sufficient explanations for foreign fighter participation. Foreign fighter literature instead cites social sanctions, group ideology, and group identity as motivations for foreign fighter participation.

Although some, like Post (1990), have argued against privileging the role of ideology in terrorist recruitment, ideology has empirical support as a motivation for foreign fighters, especially for Islamist foreign fighters. Hassan (2001), Atran (2004), Felter and Fishman (2008), and Hamid and Farral (2015) found adherence to ideology factors more strongly than grievances in decisions to become a foreign fighter. Malet (2010, 2013) and Hegghammer (2010, 2013) underlined how foreign fighters join conflicts when they perceive imminent threats to a unified pan-Islamist community, known as the Ummah.6 Fighting for the Ummah is as much an element of identity as is ideology for jihadist foreign fighters, because Salafi-jihadism prioritizes both membership in and protection of the Islamic community.14

It is important to note Benmelech and Klor (2016) published a study similar to this thesis that uses a cross-country regression to study Islamic State foreign fighter motivations. Their conclusion differs from that of this thesis, as they found economic and political grievances to be weak indicators of foreign fighter motivation. Focusing instead on why GDP per capita exhibits a positive correlation with Islam-
ic State foreign fighter participation, Benmelech and Klor (2016) concluded Salafi-jihadist ideology attracts recruits who are alienated from Western societies—often resulting in recruitment of Muslim immigrants in wealthy western countries. Their thesis therefore does explain foreign fighter recruitment from within the MENA region. The conclusion of this thesis can also be applied to western countries like those studied by Benmelech and Klor (2016), but it is also strengthened by the insights gained from a combination of macro and micro-level studies.

TUNISIA-SPECIFIC EXPLANATIONS

Literature providing explanations for the foreign fighter phenomenon specific to Tunisia tends to highlight non-democracy explanations. These include the absence of economic opportunities, political marginalization of youth and Salafi-jihadists, neighboring unstable regional actors, and the existence of jihadist recruitment networks in Tunisia pre-revolution. It also considers democracy explanations like increased religious freedom resulting from Tunisia's democratic regime, as well as the breakdown of security forces and release of jihadists from prison resulting from Tunisia's democratic transition.

NON-DEMOCRACY EXPLANATIONS FOR TUNISIA

The Tunisian economic situation is one of the more frequently cited reasons for why youth are joining Salafi-jihadist organizations. Scholars adhering to this explanation posit that the worsening economic situation in Tunisia has produced disillusionment, prompting many to look for alternative opportunities in Salafi-jihadist conflicts. While before the revolution many considered Tunisia to be one of the most economically stable countries in North Africa, youth unemployment in Tunisia increased from 29.4% in 2010 (before the revolution) to 42% in 2012 (one year after the revolution), leveling out to 35.4% in 2017.7

15 Fahmi and Medeb (2015) highlight how Tunisian youth in particular are suffering from the declining economy, especially after Tunisia ended its hadira and Amal welfare programs. Zelin (2015) also pointed out that widespread disappointment over the worsening post-revolution economy is likely driving Tunisians to seek out alternate ways to make a living through foreign fighter participation. This argument thus applies the economic inequalities theory to Tunisia's situation. Through this country-specific lens, Tunisia's continued decline post-revolution into a nation of unemployed youth and closed economic opportunity is driving many to become foreign fighters.

Scholars also cite political marginalization of Salafists and government corruption as reasons for Tunisia's increased foreign fighter flow. This explanation points out that the failure of the post-revolutionary government to incorporate Salafist views and enforce freedom of religious practice led many to renounce licit political activity and pursue illicit Salafi-jihadism. MacDonald and Waggoner (2017) and Fahmi and Medeb (2015) argue the Tunisian government's post-2011 exclusion of Salafist views has led to feelings of inadequate political engagement, especially among youth. Although these explanations cite political grievances, which Hegghammer (2010, 2013) argued were not sufficient to prompt foreign fighter participation without some external ideology, Yerkes and Muasher (2017) and Zelin (2015) explain how growing corruption in Tunisia's government is encouraging Tunisians to seek out legitimacy and inclusion in Salafi-jihadist groups. In Tunisia, Salafism seems to be a refuge from government corruption because it provides an extra-governmental source of authority that emulates the morality of the early Muslim community.16 Salafism also traditionally rejects western democracy in favor of promoting Sharia law and waqf-based welfare, so Tunisians dissatisfied with the current system's corruption and its resulting economic problems often look to Salafism as an attractive alternative.17 In addition to promises of material goods, Salafi-jihadist groups like the Islamic State and AQIM promise marriage—a costly endeavor young men are often not able to pursue due to the economic consequences of government corruption.18

A third explanation for Tunisian foreign fighter participation is spillover from instability in Libya. This explanation posits that after the 2011 revolutions in Tunisia and Libya, illicit trade and an increasingly porous border streamlined Tunisian travel through Libya to Salafi-jihadist conflicts. Scholars documented an explosion of contraband and migrants across the Tunisia-Libya border following the Jasmine Revolution.19 At the same time, roughly 15% of Islamic State recruits from Tunisia come from the border city of Ben
fighter participation and ease of travel through Libya. Tabesh (2016) also highlighted that flow of weapons, money, and recruitment ideology across the Libya-Tunisia border are increasing Tunisian extremism.

A fourth explanation cites the existence of jihadist recruitment networks in Tunisia prior to the Jasmine Revolution as a factor in Tunisia's high foreign fighter numbers. Scholars adhering to this theory argue that Tunisians are predisposed to participate in Salafi-jihadist conflicts because previous generations acquired reputations as leaders in recruitment and likely still maintain foreign fighter recruitment networks. Although the actual numbers of Tunisian fighters in the 1980s Afghanistan War or the 2003-2011 Iraq War were lower than other North African countries like Libya, Algeria, or Morocco, Tunisian jihadist fighters formed networks amongst each other as they worked to facilitate movement of fighters. In particular, Tunisian fighters served key administrative roles by recruiting new members and tracking finances, forming networks throughout the MENA region and Europe. Post-Arab Spring, veteran Tunisian foreign fighters could easily resurrect these recruitment networks to connect disillusioned young Tunisians to Salafi-jihadist conflicts across the MENA region.

DEMOCRACY EXPLANATIONS FOR TUNISIA
Democracy explanations for Tunisia's contribution to global jihadism are further divided into democratic transition and democratic regime theories. The democratic transition theory highlights how prison releases and loss of government control over mosques contributed to the supply of potential foreign fighters, while the democratic regime theory points out that increased civil liberties and underdeveloped local governance allowed the proliferation of Salafi-jihadism.

The democratic transition theory aligns with general explanations of post-revolutionary terrorism by arguing that instability following the revolution provided space for Salafi-jihadists to both communicate radical ideas and recruit foreign fighters. Like in Eyerman (1997)'s findings, Tunisia's transition from an autocracy to a democracy damaged its legitimacy in the fight against jihadism because it led to release of jihadists from prison and weakened control of mosques. As Malka and Balboni (2016) note, the Tunisian government released hundreds of Salafi-jihadists from prison in February 2011. This release of jihadists was strategic, distancing the newly democratic Tunisian government from the autocratic Ben-Ali regime. Following this release of prisoners, however, Salafi-jihadist attacks and violent protests in Tunisia saw a sharp uptick. Tellingly, one of the prisoners released was Abu Iyadh al-Tunisi—a terrorist who in 2000 founded the Tunisian Combatant Group, which in 2011 became Ansar al Sharia in Tunisia (AST). Further, in the months following the revolution the Tunisian government lost control of hundreds of mosques, leading to an influx of radical imams who began recruiting foreign fighters.

Tunisia's underdeveloped democratic regime then allowed Salafi-jihadist groups to recruit more freely and fulfill the role of absent official local government. While dictator Ben Ali tightly controlled freedom of assembly and the press, between 7,000 and 10,000 new organizations and more than 200 new media publications emerged in the year after the revolution. This freedom, however, also allowed Salafi-jihadist groups like AST to organize and communicate more freely, with membership growing to an estimated 20,000 by 2012. This supports the political opportunities theory, as Tunisia's increased civil liberties allowed the proliferation of Salafi-jihadism. Tunisia's democratic regime further enables Salafi-jihadism because its local government is underdeveloped, which is unique to Tunisia's democratic regime rather than a typical element of democratic regimes. As of April 2018, Tunisia has yet to hold elections for its municipal bodies, meaning current governing bodies are unelected, unstable, and inconsistent in providing basic services like trash collection or notarizing public documents. Salafist groups have been filling this power vacuum, allowing Salafi-jihadism to gain legitimacy where the official government lacks it. Although decentralization is not a core theory of the causes of terrorism, Ezcurra (2017) found in a cross-country study that to a certain extent, government decentralization (or development of local governance) seemed to reduce domestic terrorist activity, and Estelle (2018) found a similar link in Libya. So, Tunisia-specific explanations cite

8 AST grew to an estimated 70,000 members by 2014 and until then was considered one of the main Tunisian Salafi-jihadist groups, but by 2015 no longer maintained a strong domestic presence in Tunisia (Zelin 2015a).

9 While the domestic terrorism Ezcurra (2017) studied is not equivalent to foreign fighter participation, the principle that less-developed local governance can contribute to terrorist activity remains applicable
democracy and non-democracy explanations, while also highlighting factors unique to Tunisia.

HOW EXISTING LITERATURE GIVES RISE TO THIS RESEARCH QUESTION
Considering existing literature on terrorism and foreign fighters, this paper’s research aims to fill a gap in scholarship between broad statistical analyses of foreign fighter motivations and qualitative analysis of Tunisia. Scholars like Hegghammer and Malet have conducted cross-country statistical analyses of foreign fighter motivations without the kind of country-level study this paper offers. At the same time, analysts like Fahmi and Medeb as well as Malka and Balboni have tracked qualitative factors related to the situation in Tunisia without the statistical analysis this paper provides. Additionally, this paper combines a number of theories on terrorism that have previously been tested separately, and applies these theories to the modern period of 2013-17. By combining a regional statistical study with Tunisia-specific qualitative analysis, this thesis adds nuance to macro-level statistics, and thus fulfills the need for both an overall regional picture and a deeper study of the historical and political situation in Tunisia.

DATA METHODS AND HYPOTHESES
Based on review of current literature as well as current events in Tunisia, this thesis investigates the following hypotheses:

DEMOCRACY HYPOTHESES

H1: If civil liberties in a country increase, then foreign fighter participation will increase.

H2: If a country possesses weak local government structures, then foreign fighter participation will increase.

H3: If a government decreases repression of religious organizations, then foreign fighter participation during that period will increase.

H4: If a government exhibits growing corruption measures, then foreign fighter participation will increase.

NON-DEMOCRACY HYPOTHESES

H5: If a country experiences regional economic inequality, then foreign fighter participation will increase.

H6: If a country exhibits high general unemployment, then foreign fighter participation will increase.

H7: If a country exhibits high youth unemployment, then foreign fighter participation will increase.

H8: If passage to Salafi-jihadist camps in Libya or Syria is more feasible, then foreign fighter participation will increase.

To test these hypotheses, I first conducted a cross-country regression to understand the larger context of what motivates foreign fighters in the MENA region, and then compared these results to quantitative and qualitative data from Tunisia. The cross-country regression measures how independent variables for each of these hypotheses align with foreign fighter flow from Tunisia, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Turkey for the years 2013-2017. These countries were selected because they are located in the MENA region, and each contribute a minimum of 100 fighters to Salafi-jihadist groups. The United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia, Bahrain, Côte d’Ivoire, and Qatar were included as dummy variables, as there is reason to believe they contributed close to no foreign fighters to Salafi-jihadist groups.29 Nine independent variables were used in the regression to test these hypotheses.10 For H1, the independent variable selected was the Civil Liberties Index from V-Dem.11 This proxy was chosen to measure civil liberties in the MENA region because its definition of “lib-

10 These dependent variables are DV1 (total foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq), DV2 (total foreign fighters to Libya), DV3 (total foreign fighters to Syria, Iraq, and Libya), DV4 (foreign fighter flow obtained by measuring difference from year to year with additions of 1/7 of the previous year’s total fighter contribution to account for deaths), and DV5 (foreign fighter per million Sunnis, measured by dividing DV3 by the country’s Sunni population).

11 The civil liberties index ranked countries on a scale of 0-1 based on the question “To what extent is civil liberty respected?” where 0 indicates no respect for civil liberties and 1 indicates complete respect.
eral freedom…absence of physical violence committed by government agents and the absence of constraints of private liberties and political liberties by the government” should reasonably proxy for the civil liberties citizens would desire following a democratic revolution. For H2, the independent variable selected was the Local Government Index from V-Dem. The Local Government Index measures both the existence and the independence of local governments, which should align with citizens’ expectations for a newly instated democratic government. For H3, the independent variable selected was Religious Organization Repression from V-Dem. Religious Organization Repression should reliably proxy for post-revolutionary expectations of religious freedom because a large driver of the Jasmine Revolution was anger over systemic repression of Salafist groups and over-regulation of mosques. For H4, the independent variable selected was the Corruption Perception Index from Transparency International. This index was chosen to proxy for corruption because perceived corruption among politicians might reasonably gauge how readily citizens will abandon licit political activity for Salafi-jihadist groups. For H5, the independent variable selected was a percentage of agricultural employment out of total country employment from the World Bank. Agricultural employment was chosen to proxy for regional inequalities because the agriculturally-dominant regions of Tunisia experienced historic marginalization, so present-day declines in agricultural employment could proxy for decreased economic opportunities and increased anger among these areas. For H6, the independent variable selected was the unemployment rate from the World Bank. For H7, the independent variable selected was the youth unemployment rate from the World Bank. For H8, the independent variables selected were distance by road between the country’s capital and Raqqa, and then Sirte. Distance by road was chosen to proxy for feasibility of travel because, logically, humans are more likely to travel to a location if it is closer to them. Quantifying feasibility of travel requires the use of limited data, as a statistical measure of feasibility of travel does not currently exist. While this measure may fail to capture easy passage to conflicts in the form of cheap plane flights or lax border controls, travel from Tunisia to Salafi-jihadist conflicts seems to have been largely by road, as will be explained in more detail in the Tunisia-specific section.

The time span of 2013-2017 was chosen due to limitations on publicly-available foreign fighter data. Another limitation on the scope of this analysis is that of extrapolating individual foreign fighter motivations from non-individual data. With this cross-country regression forming a basis for comparing Tunisia to general trends within the MENA region, a Tunisia-specific analysis using quantitative and qualitative data follows discussion of regression results.

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12 The local government index ranked countries on a scale of 0-1 based on the question “Are there elected local governments, and if so to what extent can they operate without interference from unelected bodies at the local level?” Zero indicates no elected local government, while 1 indicates local government elected freely and operating independently.

13 The religious organization repression index ranked countries on a scale of 0-1 based on the question “Does the government attempt to repress religious organizations?” Zero indicates severe religious repression and 1 indicates complete religious freedom.

14 Transparency International’s corruption perception index ranks 180 countries on a scale of 0-100 based on “perceived levels of public sector corruption,” where zero indicates high corruption and 100 indicates nonexistent corruption.

15 The use of agricultural employment as a proxy for regional inequalities has some basis in political science literature, as Muller and Seligson (1987) use agricultural employment in tandem with a country’s Gini coefficient to measure regional inequality. Taylor and Bradley (1997) also use agricultural employment to measure regional inequalities in Europe.

16 This number is based on International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates, derived largely from national sources.

17 This variable is measured by the World Bank as the percentage of the labor force ages 15-24 that is unemployed.

18 The data for foreign fighters is aggregated from RAND, The Soufan Group, the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR), and Aaron Zelin’s 2018 report “The Others: Foreign Fighters in Libya,” and are estimated figures informed by national, NGO, UN, and independent academic studies.

19 On this Jessica Stern has noted, “It is difficult to make gross generalizations about what leads individuals to do what they do in any area of life; difficulty in answering this question is not unique to terrorism experts” (Stern 2014).
ANALYSIS: CROSS-COUNTRY REGRESSION RESULTS

DEMOCRACY HYPOTHESES

H1: If civil liberties in a country increase, then foreign fighter participation will increase. The cross-country regression suggests a surprising result: the civil liberties index exhibits both a statistically significant and largely positive relationship with four of the five dependent variables. These data suggest there is enough confidence to reject the null hypothesis that civil liberties have no effect on foreign fighter recruitment, and the relationship between civil liberties and foreign fighter recruitment is positive. With relation to DV3, this means if a country in the MENA region were to move from no respect for civil liberties (e.g., North Korea with a score of 0.03) to complete respect for civil liberties (e.g., the Netherlands with a score of 0.95), the total number of foreign fighters from 2013-2017 from that country would increase by an average of 6,837.22

To control for homoscedasticity, I used the Huber-White Sandwich estimator to calculate standard errors.

As stated before, summary statistics and regression results with Tunisia removed are included in appendices A, B, C, D, and E.

This was found by calculating $7431.8 \times 0.92$

H2: If a country possesses weak local government structures, then foreign fighter participation will increase. The cross-country regression results only indicate statistical significance for DV2, which measures total foreign fighters to Libya. Although this independent variable is only significant at the lax confidence level of 90%, the signs of correlation coefficients for each of the dependent variables are negative, suggesting a higher level of local governance has a negative correlation with foreign fighter participation.23 For DV2, this correlation means if a country transitioned from a score of 0 like Qatar to a score like the U.S.'s (0.96), the number of total foreign fighters to Libya would decrease by an average of 279 total foreign fighters between 2013-2017.24 For DV3, foreign fighters to Syria, Iraq, and Libya, this number becomes even larger, decreasing by an average of 1,495.25 This result is consistent with literature on the link between government centralization and terrorism.30 Although lacking strong statistical significance, this suggests in the MENA region, higher levels of local government generally correlate with decreased foreign fighter participation.

H3: If a government decreases the repression of religious organizations, then foreign fighter participation during that period will increase. In the cross-country regression, religious organization repression exhibited a result opposite that expected by the hypothesis; religious repression seemed to correlate with increased foreign fighter participation. This variable exhibited statistically significant negative correlations for DV1 and DV4, but because increased religious repression is measured as an increase on the scale, this suggests a positive relationship.26, 27 This result is contrary to [0.95-0.03].

23 This means we can only be 90% confident that this correlation is not due to random chance.
24 This number was found by calculating $290.6 \times 0.96$.
25 This number was found by calculating $1557.2 \times 0.96$. Although this correlation with DV3 was not statistically significant at the confidence level of 90%, its p-value was 0.172, and it exhibited a similar correlation as the statistically significant coefficient for DV2.
26 DV1 represents total foreign fighters to Syria and Iraq, and DV4 represents total foreign fighter flow.
27 While the sign of the coefficients for DV2 and DV5 was positive, these two coefficients were not
assumptions of political opportunity literature, but somewhat aligns with the emphasis on foreign fighter ideology advanced by Hegghammer (2010, 2013) and Malet (2010, 2013). For DV4, these results indicate for every one-point increase on the religious repression scale (where higher ratings indicate lower religious repression), foreign fighter flow for that year to Syria, Iraq, and Libya increases by an average of 295.5 individuals. In other words, if Maoist China with a rating of 0 and the United States with a rating of 0.98 were MENA countries from 2013-2017, there would be an average of 290 more Salafi-jihadist foreign fighters from China per year than from the U.S.28 The partial statistical significance indicates this conclusion should be taken with caution.29 Nevertheless, this negative correlation is suggestive that if a government increases repression of religious organizations, foreign fighter participation will also increase.

**H4: If a government exhibits growing corruption measures, then foreign fighter participation will increase.** The independent variable used to test H4, the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) from Transparency International, was only statistically significant for DV5, and indicates mixed signs for other dependent variables.30 These mixed results indicate this independent variable should be interpreted with caution. For DV5, the regression suggests every one-point increase on the CPI scale correlated with a decrease of about 5 foreign fighters for every million Sunnis in a specific country. Despite the fact that the regression indicated this result with 99% confidence, this relatively small correlation and mixed results across the five dependent variables do not offer enough confidence to soundly reject the null hypothesis that corruption measures do not correlate with foreign fighter participation.

**NON-DEMOCRACY HYPOTHESES**

**H5: If a country experiences regional economic inequality, then foreign fighter participation will increase.** In the regression analysis, the variable used to approximate regional inequality was agricultural employment. Because agriculture is typically a dominant occupation in impoverished regions, this could be a proxy on a national scale for regional inequalities.31 In the countries studied, however, agricultural employment was not statistically significant, even at the low 90% level of confidence. Thus, we are unable to reject the null hypothesis: regional economic inequality has no relationship with foreign fighter participation.

H6: If a country exhibits high general unemployment, then foreign fighter participation will increase. The independent variable used to test H6, general unemployment, was statistically significant for four out of the five dependent variables tested, displaying a strong positive correlation with foreign fighter participation. This indicates with medium to high confidence that we can reject the null hypothesis that general unemployment has no relationship with foreign fighter participation. For DV3, there is 99% confidence that, a one percentage point increase in unemployment for a MENA country correlates with an average increase of 310.4 foreign fighters to Iraq, Syria, and Libya from 2013-2017. These results are consistent with economic grievance literature and indicate higher unemployment in a country generally correlates with higher foreign fighter participation.

H7: If a country exhibits high youth unemployment, then foreign fighter participation will increase. The results for the independent variable used to test H7, youth unemployment, suggest a surprising conclusion.32 Unlike general unemployment, which exhibits a statistically significant and were relatively close to zero when compared to the large negative coefficients for DV1, DV3, and DV4.

28 This number was found by calculating \[295.5 \times (0.98 - 0)\].
29 This variable was statistically significant for DV1 and DV4, but not for DV2, DV3, or DV5.
30 This index scores countries on a scale of 0-100 with lower numbers indicating higher perceived corruption.
31 The use of agricultural employment as a proxy for regional inequalities has some basis in political science literature, as Muller and Seligson (1987) use agricultural employment in tandem with a country’s Gini coefficient to measure regional inequality. Taylor and Bradley (1997) also use agricultural employment to measure regional inequalities in Europe. The Gini coefficient was not used in the regression because this data was not available for countries studied after the year 2010, and so was not relevant to the post-Arab Spring analysis. In Tunisia, low measures of agricultural employment could proxy for regional economic inequalities because Tunisia’s most political and economically disenfranchised border regions are overwhelmingly agricultural (Boukhars 2017).
32 Numbers for youth unemployment were from
positive relationship with foreign fighter participation, youth unemployment seems to correlate negatively with foreign fighter participation.\(^3^3\) The negative sign for four out of five of the correlation coefficients, as well as statistical significance for DV1 and DV3, is suggestive of this conclusion. For DV3, this means we can say with 95% confidence for every 1% decrease in youth unemployment, the total number of foreign fighters sent to Syria, Iraq, and Libya between 2013-2017 increases by an average of 88.7. This result is counterintuitive not only because general unemployment exhibits a positive correlation with foreign fighter participation, but also because it runs contrary to economic grievance literature.

\(H8: \text{If passage to Salafi-jihadist camps in Libya or Syria is more feasible, then foreign fighter participation will increase.}\) The independent variables used to measure H8 were the distances to Raqqa and Sirte.\(^3^4\) Distance to Raqqa was statistically significant for all four variables studied and produced a negative correlation coefficient.\(^3^5\) This means for every ten kilometers between a country’s capital and Raqqa, the number of foreign fighters that country sent to Iraq or Syria from 2013-2017 decreased by an average of 2.34. In practical terms, a country in North Africa like Algeria (located 4,344 km from Raqqa) should see on average of 907.9 fewer total foreign fighters being sent to Iraq and Syria than a country in the Middle East such as Lebanon.\(^3^6\)

We see similar results when using Sirte to measure the effect on fighters traveling to Libya, although results for this variable exhibit a smaller correlation coefficient. On average, then, geographic proximity to the World Bank, using ILO estimates.

\(^3^3\) The scatterplot for this variable with relation to foreign fighter flow is located in appendix F.

\(^3^4\) This distance was measured in kilometers. Raqqa was chosen because until 2017, the city was widely considered to be the “capital” of the Islamic State in Syria. Sirte was also chosen because between 2013-2017 it was the location of major Libyan Salafi-jihadist training camps. Although DV2 measured foreign fighter travel from cities throughout home countries to cities throughout Syria and Libya, Raqqa and Sirte were chosen for simplicity.

\(^3^5\) DV2 was removed because it measured fighters traveling to Libya.

\(^3^6\) Beirut is located 464 km from Raqqa. The calculated number was found by calculating \((4344 - 464) \times 0.234 = 907.92.\) Salafi-jihadist headquarters in Syria and Libya does correlate with higher foreign fighter participation.

**ANALYSIS: TUNISIA-SPECIFIC RESULTS**

While the cross-country regression provides insights into foreign fighter motivations in the MENA region as a whole, quantitative and qualitative evidence from Tunisia illuminate how Tunisia diverges from regional trends. The central question of this Tunisia-specific analysis is whether or not democracy is the core reason so many Tunisians are becoming foreign fighters. This analysis concludes that democracy itself does not seem to be the core driver of foreign fighter participation in Tunisia. In fact, Tunisia’s failure to fully deliver on many of its democratic promises like free exercise of religion, democratically elected local governments, and reduced corruption seem to combine with failure to improve the economy as well as ease of travel to Libya, Iraq, and Syria to contribute to Tunisia’s high foreign fighter numbers.

**DEMOCRACY HYPOTHESES FOR TUNISIA**

\(H1: \text{If civil liberties in a country increase, then foreign fighter participation will increase.}\) In the cross-country regression, civil liberties exhibited a statistically significant, positive relationship with foreign fighter participation. Civil liberties in Tunisia also seem to correlate somewhat with foreign fighter participation, as depicted by the graph below, indicating a possible link between political opportunity and Salafi-jihadism.\(^3^7\) Because civil liberties in Tunisia spiked after the Jasmine Revolution in 2011, this result aligns with the political opportunity theory predicting that democracy.

\(^3^7\) One caveat for this visual comparison of foreign fighter totals and civil liberties per year is that these are estimations. As noted above, data for foreign fighters is aggregated from RAND, The Soufan Group, the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR), and Aaron Zelin’s 2018 report “The Others: Foreign Fighters in Libya.” The years displayed in this graph (2008-2012) are extrapolated from this 2013-2017 data and informed by reports that foreign fighters were already in the hundreds by early 2011 (Malka and Balboni 2016). The 2012 number was then filled by linear interpolation. While this graph only focuses on 2008-2012, the appendix includes the years 2008-2017, although 2008-2012 were chosen because fluctuations in civil liberties compared with initial foreign fighter numbers were clearer during these years.
cies experience higher levels of terrorism. In the early years after the revolution, civil liberties both allowed Salafists to organize more freely and led to tensions between Tunisia’s secular society and Salafists attempting to practice their religion in public.

As predicted by political opportunity literature, civil liberties seemed initially to facilitate Salafist organization and radicalization in Tunisia. For two years after the revolution, the ruling Islamist party Ennahda did not strictly regulate Salafist organizations, allowing Salafi-jihadist AST and AQIM auxiliary Katibat Uqba ibn Nafi (KUIN) to grow unchecked. After years of being forced to organize secretly under Ben Ali, Salafist groups could register as political parties and even hold gatherings that consisted of thousands of people. In addition to allowing local Salafi-jihadist organization, increased civil liberties permitted fundamentalist countries like Saudi Arabia and Qatar to send Salafi-jihadist propaganda and money to fund foreign fighter travel. Thus, increased freedom for Salafist groups to organize and spread their messages seems to have facilitated foreign fighter radicalization in Tunisia.

The motivation for Salafists to listen to and respond to these jihadist recruitment messages, however, comes from the unfulfilled promise of free religious practice.

Salafists attempting to practice their post-revolution religious liberties have met strong social opposition in Tunisia. After decades of Presidents Bourguiba and Ben Ali repressing religious liberty, the Jasmine Revolution promised change. One of the most visual examples of this repression was President Bourguiba’s ban of the niqab and hijab in schools in 1957, and Ben Ali’s use of security forces to harass women wearing veils. The post-revolution Tunisian Constitution, in contrast, guarantees “free exercise of religious practices,” but Tunisia’s secular society has hindered de facto free exercise of religion. In 2012, for example, Manouba University Dean Habib Kazdaghi banned the niqab, claiming that the covering created security and identification concerns. Salafist students on campus reacted by staging protests and other demonstrations, some of which turned violent. In addition to prompting protest, these kinds of limitations on individual religious practice likely motivate Salafists to become foreign fighters because groups like the Islamic State promise a caliphate run according to Sharia law. Thus, civil liberties in Tunisia highlight how the failed promise of free exercise of religion combined with greater opportunity to organize under Tunisia’s democratic regime to prompt foreign fighter participation.

**H2**: If a country possesses weak local government structures, then foreign fighter participation will increase. The cross-country regression suggests weak local government structures correlate with increased foreign fighter participation. In Tunisia as well, qualitative evidence suggests one of the factors driving foreign fighter participation is an underdeveloped local government. The results align with Ezcurra (2017)’s theory that countries lacking strong local government structures experience higher levels of terrorism. This was classified as a democracy hypothesis because democracies should, ideally, hold democratic elections for all levels of government—a feat Tunisia has yet to accomplish as of April 2018. Indeed, qualitative evidence suggests Tunisia’s underdeveloped local governments create power vacuums that Salafi-jihadist groups fill, allowing these groups to radicalize and recruit foreign fighters. Like H1, results for H2 point to how Tunisia’s failure to fulfill the promises of democracy stimulate increased foreign fighter participation.

Following the Jasmine Revolution, Tunisian municipal governments were in turmoil, thereby permitting Salafi-jihadist groups to establish extrajudicial authorities in many neighborhoods. Municipal governments were formed haphazardly with unelected representatives while some remained nonexistent for several years. A first round for municipal elections are scheduled for May 9, 2018, although repeated postponements in the past cast doubt on this possibility (Reuters staff 2017).
nance by infiltrating impoverished interior and border regions as well as working-class suburbs of wealthy coastal cities, providing security and waqf (Salafist charity).\(^{40}\) In addition to providing services like security and traffic control, these neighborhood Salafist groups offered economic mediation, schooling, and even marital counseling.\(^{41}\) These services strengthened the perceived legitimacy of Salafist organizations, prompting disillusioned Tunisians to listen sympathetically to Salafi-jihadist messages. One Tunisian even noted that he joined a Salafi-jihadist organization simply because it helped him recover property stolen after the revolution.\(^{42}\) Moreover, Salafists facilitate the informal smuggling economy in impoverished border neighborhoods, gaining the loyalty of local Tunisians and strengthening routes that transport foreign fighters.\(^{43}\) Although Tunisian authorities have attempted to combat this extrajudicial system by arresting many of its leaders, these theocratic neighborhood structures persisted into 2017.\(^{44}\)

Overall, Tunisia’s underdeveloped local governments seem to both motivate and facilitate foreign fighter participation, aligning with patterns in the MENA region. This result supports the findings in democratic transition literature because Tunisia’s destabilizing democratic transition is partly responsible for underdeveloped local governments.

**H3:** If a government decreases repression of religious organizations, then foreign fighter participation during that period will increase. In the cross-country regression, repression of religious organizations seemed to correlate with increased foreign fighter participation, turning the political opportunities theory on its head. While those subscribing to the political opportunities theory might expect that more religious repression would lead to decreased foreign fighter participation, the cross-country regression displays an opposite effect.

\[\text{Figure 2: Tunisia religious repression and foreign fighter flow}\]

Such a trend is also existent in Tunisia. As Figure 2 illustrates, there seems to be a modest correlation between religious repression and foreign fighter flow in Tunisia.\(^{40}\) Some may conclude that religious repression correlates with foreign fighter participation in Tunisia because failed promises of religious freedom have driven disappointed Salafists to escape to a foreign conflict where they can freely practice Salafism. However, it is also possible that the Tunisian government’s religious repression is a response to increased Salafi-jihadist activity. This discussion concludes that results are likely driven by both Tunisia’s repressive response to Salafi-jihadism as well as resulting Salafist alienation, indicating again that unfulfilled promises of democracy could motivate foreign fighter participation.

Since 2013, the Tunisian government began to rein in the civil liberties that, as discussed in H1, initially allowed Salafi-jihadist groups to organize and recruit foreign fighters. This crackdown followed an AST-organized riot outside the U.S. Embassy in Tunis and a political assassination coordinated by AST and KUIN in February 2013.\(^{45}\) The ruling party Ennahda reacted by banning AST’s annual meeting in May and policing similar Salafist gatherings.\(^{46}\) Two months later, in July 2013, AST assassinated a second liberal politician, leading Ennahda in August to ban the group, declaring it a terrorist organization.\(^{41, 47}\) As Figure 2 shows, increased religious repression only lasted through 2013 and 2014, likely because AST increasingly began operating from strongholds in Libya rather than in Tunisia.\(^{48}\) However, during 2013 and 2014, heightened religious repression often seemed to respond to increased Salafi-jihadist activity in Tunisia.

Increased religious repression in this two year interval may also have pushed Salafists to become foreign fighters by disillusioning them with the failed

\(^{40}\) Here, the religious repression index (0-1) was first subtracted from 1 to get a measure where when religious repression increases, the numerical score on this graph will also increase. The index was then multiplied by 1,000 to display visually how the relative changes in score magnitude compare with foreign fighter numbers per million Sunnis in Tunisia.

\(^{41}\) Although KUIN is also a significant Salafi-jihadist presence in Tunisia, it tends to focus on conducting a domestic Tunisian insurgency, while AST focuses more on recruiting foreign fighters, and was considered the central Salafi-jihadist group in Tunisia until 2015 (Zelin 2015b; ICG 2013).
promises of democratic religious freedom.\(^4^2\) Even prior to the revolution, religious repression often correlated with foreign fighter participation. Many of the Tunisian Salafists who became foreign fighters in the Afghanistan War and the Iraq War likely did so in part to escape Ben Ali’s repressive tactics of imprisoning Salafists and policing sermons.\(^4^9\) In the post-revolution environment, the Tunisian government’s increased religious repression beginning in 2013 also led AST to increasingly focus on “\(takfiri\)-minded jihad,” encouraging more recruits to become foreign fighters.\(^5^0\) In fact, in the months after AST was declared a terrorist organization, its members flocked in large numbers to Libyan Salafī-jihādist training camps.\(^5^1\)

Hence, a link between religious organization repression and foreign fighter participation in Tunisia is likely because the Tunisian government responded to Salafī-jihādist activity with increased repression, which in turn drove Salafists to become foreign fighters.

**H4:** *If a government exhibits growing corruption measures, then foreign fighter participation will increase.* Although this hypothesis had little statistically significant support in the regression analysis, qualitative analysis of post-revolution Tunisia suggests that corruption represents yet another unfulfilled promise of democracy. Rotberg (2009) argues that corruption can both motivate and facilitate terrorism. Indeed, qualitative evidence in Tunisia suggests that corruption may both motivate fighters to join Salafī-jihādist groups and facilitate travel through weakened border security.

Tunisians often voice disappointment with growing post-2011 corruption, pointing to the possibility that individual corruption is motivating foreign fighter participation. Yerkes and Muasher (2017) inform that corruption today is worse than it was under the autocratic Ben Ali regime. As Yerkes and Muasher (2017) explain, this corruption exists at both the systemic level of the national government, bureaucracy, security forces, as well as the individual level of the black market. In a survey of Tunisians, 76 percent of respondents agreed that “there is more corruption in Tunisia today than there was under Ben Ali.”\(^5^2\) Trust in the Tunisian government has also dropped dramatically, from 62 percent in 2011 to 16 percent in 2014.\(^5^3\) Moreover, awareness of corruption seems highest among those 18-29 in Tunisia, when compared with those 50 and older, meaning the young people most likely to be recruited by Salafī-jihādist groups are most motivated to join.\(^5^4\) Awareness of corruption may then motivate Tunisians to become foreign fighters because disillusionment could drive them toward the piety and perceived legitimacy of the Salafī-jihādist message.\(^4^3\), \(^5^5\)

In addition to motivating Tunisians to become foreign fighters, corruption facilitates foreign fighter travel across the porous Tunisia-Libya border by allowing informal trade to grow. One of the reasons illicit trade has flourished under the post-revolutionary government is that national corruption has led to continued postponement of local elections, causing border policing to be lax.\(^5^6\) Failing to find licit jobs due to high national and youth unemployment, those in poor border regions increasingly turn to illicit jobs like smuggling.\(^5^7\) This porous border not only allows practices like money laundering, drug trafficking, and arms trafficking but also facilitates foreign fighter travel and terrorist financing.\(^5^8\) The influence of this porous border is not only linked to corruption, but also to regional inequalities. The ramifications of the informal economy will therefore receive further elaboration in discussion for H5.

Despite the lack of statistical significance, corruption appears to both motivate and facilitate foreign fighter participation. This discrepancy between the insignificant statistical result and the qualitative evidence from Tunisia could be resulting from limitations of the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) in revealing Tunisian attitudes. The CPI measures the opinion of business leaders and political analysts on “the degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among public

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\(^4^2\) While discussion for H3 is similar to H1 in discussing Salafist religious freedom, H3 discusses religious repression from the state, while H1 discusses religious repression from secular society in Tunisia. Distinguishing between these two sources of repression of free individual exercise and later repression of religious organizations highlights the many sources of religious grievances for Salafists in Tunisia.

\(^4^3\) A recent New York Times report, “The ISIS Files,” uncovered primary documents the Islamic State left behind in Syria, outlining the detailed and relatively functioning governing structures the Islamic State constructed in territory it held from 2014-2017. While countries like Tunisia often forced citizens to bribe officials (called a “corruption tax”) to accomplish menial tasks, the Islamic State instated in its occupied territories fairly efficient services like trash collection, sharecropping, healthcare, and distribution of needed goods (Yerkes 2017; Callimachi 2018).
officials and politicians.” This could be a problematic measure of how corruption in Tunisia impacts foreign fighter participation because it does not capture the opinions of the ordinary Tunisian, only measuring corruption at the level of the elites. Given the limitations of the CPI and significant qualitative evidence of Tunisians’ discontentment with post-revolutionary corruption, it is likely that corruption does play a role in Tunisia’s foreign fighter participation.

Taking the democracy hypotheses together, it seems that the unfulfilled promises of the Jasmine Revolution likely motivated Tunisians to become foreign fighters, while initially, increased civil liberties for Salafist groups, underdeveloped local government, and smuggling along the Tunisia-Libya border facilitated foreign fighter participation.

**NON-DEMOCRACY HYPOTHESES FOR TUNISIA**

**H5: If a country experiences regional economic inequality, then foreign fighter participation will increase.** In the regression analysis, agricultural employment was not statistically significant. Despite lack of statistical significance, political and economic marginalization in border regions informs how Tunisia’s regional inequalities could motivate foreign fighter participation.44

Historically, Tunisia’s southeast border has been marginalized since the French protectorate when elites dismissed this region as backward and overly tribal. This political marginalization laid the foundation for future economic marginalization as these nomadic peoples were forced to give up pastoral livelihoods for agriculture in an infertile region.59 Continuing this historic marginalization, the government today sends roughly 70 percent of its budget to the wealthy interior, distributing only a fraction of the remaining funds to border regions (see appendix G for a visualization of unequal regional unemployment).60

The resulting economic underdevelopment in these border regions has led to negative externalities such as the swelling informal economy and growth in Salafi-jihadism. Continuing a decades-long tradition of smuggling across the border with Libya, Tunisians in border regions today operate a thriving informal trade due to the lack of licit alternatives.61 Although hard numbers are difficult to find because of the nature of this hidden trade, the World Bank ranked the informal sector in Tunisia as the second largest “business environment obstacle” in the country, indicating a significant presence.62 Moreover, Tunisia’s informal economy is estimated to employ 37% of the labor force, with workers heavily concentrated in border regions.63 Growth in the informal economy has implications for Salafi-jihadism, as an informal economy indicates both weak government control and necessity-driven illicit activity in these regions.

The result of this marginalization and increased illicit economy in Tunisia is an increase in Salafi-jihadist activity and foreign fighter participation. In months after the Jasmine Revolution, Salafi-jihadist protests exploded in border regions, expressing discontent after years of repression under Ben Ali.64 Salafi-jihadist protests still continue in 2018 largely because economic conditions in border regions are not improving.65 Tunisia’s Salafi-jihadist movement has been driven predominantly by the socioeconomically marginalized, so the proliferation of Salafi-jihadist activity in border regions is not surprising.66 As Marks (2013) notes, Tunisians in border regions often feel frustration and powerlessness. This makes Salafi-jihadism especially attractive, as individuals can attain positions of authority, fight for the Ummah, and find meaningful employment.67

Therefore, while regression results for agricultural employment are not statistically significant, the push factor of regional inequalities in Tunisia seems to combine with the pull factor of Salafi-jihadist ideology, noted in foreign fighter literature by Hegghammer (2010, 2013) and Malet (2010, 2013), to motivate foreign fighter participation.

**H6: If a country exhibits high general unemployment, then foreign fighter participation will increase.** The cross-country regression suggests a significant and positive correlation between general unemployment and foreign fighter participation. In Tunisia, this relationship also seems valid. As Figure 3 shows, unemployment in Tunisia spiked in 2011, likely contributing to the lagged effect of increased foreign fighter participation in the years studied, 2013-2017. Additionally, the relative magnitude of Tunisia’s unemployment in comparison with other MENA countries demonstrates how the economic problem of unemployment in Tunisia likely has encouraged foreign fighter participation (Figure 4). Qualitative evidence from Tunisians’ reactions to high unemployment further demonstrate how economic grievances and the need for employment...
could be linked to foreign fighter participation.

As will be elaborated in H7, Tunisians often cite economic problems as issues the post-revolutionary government is not addressing, indicating widespread disappointment with the Jasmine Revolution that could contribute to foreign fighter participation. In fact, interviews with Tunisian foreign fighters have highlighted the strong link between bad economic conditions and jihadism. One Tunisian who joined the Islamic State said to a reporter: “I can’t build anything in this country. But the Islamic State gives us the chance to create, to build bombs, to use technology.”68 Other interviews underline how unemployment not only creates grievances, but also economic need that influences foreign fighter participation. One Tunisian foreign fighter seemed to have traveled to Syria partly for economic reasons; while in Syria he received a salary and when he returned to Tunisia he immediately bought a set of nice clothes for his parents.69

Overall, evidence from Tunisia’s experience with high unemployment builds on the discussion of regional inequalities in H5 to underline the influence of bad economic conditions on foreign fighter participation. As will be emphasized in the discussion for H7, youth unemployment provides an even stronger marker of how Tunisia’s dire economic conditions encourage foreign fighter participation, namely by creating disillusionment as well as economic need.

**H7: If a country exhibits high youth unemployment, then foreign fighter participation will increase.** The cross-country regression results suggest that in general, flow of foreign fighters exhibits a statistically significant, negative relationship with youth unemployment. This result is the opposite of that predicted by the hypothesis and does not seem to be valid for Tunisia.45 Rather, in Tunisia, it is likely that the spike in youth unemployment in 2011, as well as persistently high youth unemployment relative to other MENA countries contributed to increased foreign fighter participation in 2013-2017. This further aligns with Tunisian dissatisfaction over persistently high youth unemployment rates after the Jasmine Revolution. Frustration as well as economic need for employment has likely contributed to Tunisia’s high foreign fighter participation.

While the high rate of youth unemployment in Tunisia was one of the critical factors that drove the Jasmine Revolution, persistently high youth unemployment rates following after 2011 represent yet another unfulfilled promise of democracy.70 Tunisia’s historically high youth unemployment rate results in part from the large number of young Tunisians holding advanced degrees, making which makes them overqualified for many jobs in Tunisia. From 2009-2010, roughly 40 percent of Tunisia’s 18 to 23-year-olds were enrolled in universities, but; once they graduated, many of these

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45 One explanation for the difference between regression results and evidence from Tunisia could be that idiosyncrasies unrepresentative of Tunisia’s foreign fighters in the cross-country data are driving results. For example, Jordan is near the bottom of general unemployment rankings, but near the top of youth unemployment rankings. The same is true for Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Large differences between the magnitude of youth and general unemployment could be skewing results without providing the full picture. Examining youth unemployment in Jordan compared with foreign fighter flow, the relationship suggests a weak positive correlation (0.11) from 2013-2017, while a stronger positive correlation (0.45) when the years are expanded to 2009-2017 (see Appendix K). Appendix F illustrates a scatterplot between foreign fighter flow and youth unemployment, displaying how outliers in foreign fighter flow (some of which are points for Tunisia) are not represented by the regional trend line.
students were forced to rely on parental support until they could find a job matching their skill sets. Moreover, the youth unemployment rate in Tunisia spiked immediately after the Jasmine Revolution – from 29.4 percent in 2010 to 42.4 percent in 2012 – producing a statistically lagged effect in prompting foreign fighter participation from 2013-2017. This explanation for Tunisia’s divergence from regression results is significant because youth unemployment only includes those aged 15-24, while the average age of an Islamic State foreign fighter is 26. A 24-year-old who experienced the 2011 spike in unemployment and remained unemployed even after the Jasmine Revolution would likely be left feeling powerless and discontent, making the idea of fighting in a heroic and lucrative foreign jihad particularly tempting.

Public opinion surrounding youth unemployment in Tunisia often highlights disappointment with the post-revolutionary government, which indicates economic grievances could be prompting foreign fighter participation. According to a 2017 survey, 70% of Tunisians agree that “Employment should be the government’s first priority regarding Tunisian youth,” while 73% of Tunisians believe Parliament is doing nothing to address their needs. Youth unemployment is producing both anger and a sense of powerlessness among Tunisians—sentiments that could potentially motivate individuals to become foreign fighters. Moreover, the causal link between unemployment and the decision to engage in illicit employment is supported by Gurr’s (1968) relative deprivation theory, as well as Dube and Vargas (2013) who found that in Colombia individuals who lack licit employment are more likely to engage in illicit activities. Thus, the trend of youth unemployment mirrors that of general unemployment, accentuating how economic conditions likely combine with political grievances to motivate Tunisian foreign fighter participation.

**H8:** If passage to Salafi-jihadist camps in Libya or Syria is more feasible, then foreign fighter participation will increase. This hypothesis provides yet another non-democracy explanation for foreign fighter recruitment, this time pointing to feasibility of travel rather than motivation. Regression results for this hypothesis indicated both negative and statistically significant correlations across almost all dependent variables. Naturally, humans are more likely to travel to a location if it is geographically closer to them. While the capital of Tunisia is 4,344 km from Syria, from 2011-2013 travel from Tunisia to Syria was relatively easy because Tunisians did not require visas to enter Turkey, and direct Tunis to Istanbul flights were relatively cheap. Even when the Tunisian government instituted international travel restrictions for those younger than thirty-five, the porous Tunisia-Libya border allowed continued ease of travel to Libya, Iraq, and Syria. Further, travel hubs in Libya are often training camps for foreign fighters, which increased the likelihood that Tunisians from 2013-2017 would travel to these camps before joining conflicts in Iraq, Syria, or elsewhere in Libya. The map on the following page explores this hypothesis on a domestic level in Tunisia by illustrating road connectivity between foreign fighters’ hometowns and Libyan Salafi-jihadist

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46 Results for Raqqa were more statistically significant than those for Sirte.
47 This number could be compared with Jordan or Lebanon at 651 km and 464 km, respectively.
48 In fact, ease of travel to Turkey from MENA countries has been cited as a central reason for the high number of foreign fighters in Syria. Istanbul is a known tourist location, making flights cheap and inconspicuous (Zelin 2013).
training camps. Connectivity here is measured as the density of possible paths Tunisians could take to reach Salafi-jihadist training camps once the most likely paths are plotted on the map. Scholars generally agree that the three cities of Ben Guerdane (15.2%), Bizerte (10.7%), and Tunis (10.7%) are the largest sources of foreign fighter recruits in Tunisia, so these cities were highlighted in red on the map. On this map, connectivity seems to correlate with foreign fighter contribution for Tunis and Ben Guerdane but appears weaker for Bizerte. While these results suggest that logistics facilitate foreign fighter travel, they also reveal that many of the confirmed hometowns of foreign fighters are not well-connected to Libyan training camps. These two observations suggest that in Tunisia, the majority of foreign fighter recruitment fits the pattern found in the cross-country regression; namely, that proximity and other logistical factors influence recruitment trends. Many sources of foreign fighters, though, are not particularly well-connected via road networks to Libyan jihadist training camps, but still travel there. So, while ease of travel seems to facilitate foreign fighter participation, political and economic grievances likely also motivate Tunisians to become foreign fighters even when travel is more difficult.

49 With GIS software, roads in Tunisia and Libya were digitized into a network, and then analyzed for density of least-cost paths between Tunisian cities and Libyan training camps. A tool called Kernel density was used to visualize how many times these paths overlapped with one another, showing connectivity. The cities used in the network analysis were from a 2018 report by Aaron Zelin that mapped hometowns of Salafi-jihadist recruits in Tunisia. Libyan Salafi-jihadist training camps are from Estelle (2018). Larger images of this map and of the cities Ben Guerdane, Bizerte, and Tunis are in appendices H, I, and J. This analysis comes with significant caveats. Data for Tunisian and Libyan roads was obtained from an open source database, and locations of both Libyan training camps and Tunisian foreign fighter cities are from secondary sources that do not claim certainty.

CONCLUSION

When a country overthrows its dictator, the promises of democracy and youthful hope for the future seem nearly incorruptible. Citizens dream of the new civil liberties they will enjoy, and youth envision a future of increased opportunity. When Tunisia overthrew dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in the 2011 Jasmine Revolution, Salafists dreamed of the religious liberties they would enjoy, and young Tunisians envisioned increased economic opportunities. Seven years after this overthrow, though, Tunisia’s failed democratic promises, struggling economy, and continuing regional inequalities seem to have disillusioned many Tunisians—particularly Tunisian Salafists. When these disappointments combined with increased opportunity for Salafists to recruit foreign fighters, the flow of Tunisians to foreign Salafi-jihadist conflicts swelled.

This thesis has highlighted how Tunisian foreign fighter participation aligns with and diverges from trends in the overall MENA region, finding that democracy itself does not appear to be the core driver in Tunisia’s high foreign fighter numbers. Tunisia’s destabilizing and imperfect experience with democracy, on the other hand, does seem to play a significant role. Without the Jasmine Revolution, Tunisians would not have experienced the disillusionment stemming from unfulfilled democratic promises, nor the destabilization, civil liberties, underdeveloped local governments, and growing informal trade that facilitate foreign fighter participation.

This link between the Jasmine Revolution and foreign fighter participation does not indicate...
that pro-democracy regimes should stop promoting democracy or that democratic transitions should be avoided in the MENA region. Instead, many of the results that pointed to broken promises of the revolution—results for religious repression, restrained Salafist exercise of religion, corruption, and underdeveloped local governments—highlight ways in which the promotion of democracy could have helped to avoid this situation in Tunisia. In addition to addressing these failures to deliver on promises of democracy, pro-democracy regimes like the U.S. could concentrate aid for new democracies on fostering economic growth. In Tunisia, the apparent link between economic grievances (unemployment and regional inequalities) and foreign fighter participation highlights how certain kinds of foreign aid or trade deals with Tunisia could lessen the attraction of participating in a seemingly glamorous and lucrative foreign jihad. To help reduce these grievances, the U.S. could leverage an offer of increased economic aid to Tunisia on the condition that Tunisia reduce business regulations. This would make Tunisia more attractive for foreign investment and enable Tunisian entrepreneurs to more easily start businesses, increasing employment opportunities.50 The U.S. could also establish trade deals with Tunisia, lowering tariffs on selected Tunisian exports to boost the economy. Regardless of the specific policy pro-democracy regimes follow, the central lesson of Tunisia is that newly democratic governments must be circumspect about fulfilling the promises and expectations of their revolutions.

As the headiness of revolution wears off, citizens of a new democracy will naturally expect to enjoy new rights and improved conditions. Failure to fulfill these expectations produces dangerous disappointment, while attentiveness to these desires can place a democracy on a peaceful foundation. In Tunisia the potential for peaceful democracy has not died, but it may be in jeopardy. Strengthening democratic institutions, enforcing civil liberties for all citizens, and building foundations for economic growth can thus help Tunisia as well as countries that undergo democratic revolutions in the future to reduce the risk of foreign fighters, creating a more peaceful global environment.

APPENDIX

A. Cross-country Regression with Tunisia

B. Summary Statistics with Tunisia

ranked “inefficient government bureaucracy” as the number one business environment obstacle in Tunisia (Schwab 2017). This indicates that reduced business regulations could make bureaucracy more efficient, thus encouraging both foreign and domestic entrepreneurship.
C. Cross-country Regression Without Tunisia

E. Differences in the With-Tunisia and Without-Tunisia Regressions

When Tunisia was removed from the regression analysis, the main shift that occurred was diminished magnitude of the correlation coefficients. For almost all of the significant coefficients, the signs remained the same, and there were few changes in statistical significance. Major differences when Tunisia was taken out of the regression analysis include:

- The negative correlations between youth unemployment and foreign fighter participation became smaller in magnitude.
- The positive correlations between general unemployment and foreign fighter participation became smaller in magnitude.
- The positive correlations between the civil liberties index and foreign fighter participation became smaller in magnitude.
- The negative correlations between religious repression and foreign fighter participation became smaller in magnitude.
- The negative correlations between local government index and foreign fighter participation (in general, though not for DV4) became smaller in magnitude.
- The negative correlations between distance to Raqqa and Sirte became slightly smaller in magnitude.51

Although adding Tunisia to the regression analysis tended to increase the correlation coefficient, this is expected for a country that is the largest contributor of Salafi-jihadist foreign fighters in the sample and does not qualify Tunisia as an outlier skewing the analysis.

51 Each of the differences described in this bulleted list were between variables that were statistically significant.
F. Scatterplot Youth Unemployment and Foreign Fighter Flow

G. Map of Unemployment by Governorate in Tunisia 2016

H. Map of Connectivity of Tunisian Cities to Salafi-jihadist Training Camps in Libya
I. Map of Connectivity of Ben Guerdane to Salafi-jihadist Training Camps in Libya

J. Map of Connectivity of Tunis and Bizerte to Salafi-jihadist Training Camps in Libya

K. Foreign Fighter Flow and Youth Unemployment in Jordan
Endnotes

20 The Soufan Group 2015.
25 Malka and Balboni 2016.
26 Malka and Balboni 2016.
32 Malka and Balboni 2016.
Malka and Balboni 2016.
ICG 2013.
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Malka and Balboni 2016.
Zelin 2013.
74 Callimachi 2018.
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