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Editor’s Preface to the Spring Edition

The *Pi Sigma Alpha Journal of Undergraduate Politics* would like to acknowledge a host of colleagues who continue to encourage and support the efforts of Pi Sigma Alpha and the creative processes of the journal. As the only national political science journal for undergraduate research, the reputation of the Journal has solicited an increase in submissions, accounting for a diverse and extensive body of work. We extend a warm thanks to all colleges and universities that encouraged or emphasized submission to their students. The pieces that have been chosen for this issue are a microcosm of the exciting scholarship taking place across the country.

Like the authors showcased in this issue, the Editorial Board is entirely student-run. However, our efforts could not have been completed without help from numerous advisors. First, we would like to thank the Pi Sigma Alpha Executive Council and Executive Committee who continue to guide and maintain the mission of this organization. Secondly, we would like to thank the faculty advisory board: members who guided that status of articles set for publication in order to ensure both quality and consistency. Finally, we would like to thank Editorial Board Faculty Advisors Chris Nemacheck and Ron Rapoport, whose tireless efforts created enjoyable and engaging weekly review sessions. Their efforts beyond meetings warrant true commendation as the Journal would not be where it is today without their support.

The opportunity to both read and review undergraduate submissions has been a continuously rewarding experience. The publication of the *Pi Sigma Alpha Journal of Undergraduate Politics* boasts a variety of integral parts, consisting of both student and faculty members, who continue to enhance the success and sustainability of this publication. As the Journal moves to a different chapter, the members of the Eto Rho Chapter at the College of William and Mary look forward to the future endeavors of the Journal.

Best,

The Editors
Submission of Manuscripts

The Journal welcomes submissions from undergraduates of any class or major; submissions from Pi Sigma Alpha members are especially encouraged. We strive to publish manuscripts of the highest quality in all areas of political science. In general, papers selected for publication have been well-written with a well-developed thesis, compelling argument, and original analysis. Authors may be asked to revise their manuscripts before they are accepted for publication.

Submissions deadlines are October 31 for the Fall issue and March 31 for the Spring issue. Manuscripts are accepted on a rolling basis, so earlier submission is encouraged.

To submit your work, please see the Journal’s website (www.psajournal.org) for the new submission email address at Oakland University, and submit your paper as a Word document. Please include your name, university, and contact details (mailing address, e-mail address, and phone number). If possible, please also include a short comment about how you heard about the Journal.

Submitted manuscripts must include a short abstract (roughly 150 words), and citations and references should follow the APSA Style Manual for Political Science. The maximum page length for submitted manuscripts is 35 double-spaced pages.

The Journal is a student-run enterprise with editors and an Editorial Board who are undergraduate Pi Sigma Alpha members at The College of William and Mary. There is also an Advisory Board consisting of political science faculty from across the nation, including members of the Pi Sigma Alpha Executive Council.

As the Journal will be moving from the College of William and Mary, please direct any questions about submissions to the Journal’s upcoming faculty advisor Dr. Terri Towner (towner@oakland.edu).
Balancing Inflation and Unemployment: Text Analysis of Annual Monetary Policy Report

Cameron DeHart, Ohio State University

The Congressional statute governing monetary policy instructs the Fed to pursue “maximum employment, price stability, and moderate long-term interest rates.” Several people, however, believe that the Fed’s primary responsibility is to control inflation. There is disagreement among scholars and public officials about the proper role of the Federal Reserve, and an apparent discontinuity between the public’s perceptions of what the Fed does and what it is supposed to do. In this paper, I test two hypotheses about Fed policy outcomes. I test whether the Fed balances its objectives or is primarily focused on inflation. First, I find that there is little evidence that Fed policymaking tracks economic conditions between 1978 and 2007. Second, I find that the Fed showed more concern for inflation than unemployment in that same period, economic conditions notwithstanding. I conclude with suggestions for future research.

Many people believe that the Federal Reserve’s primary objective is to fight inflation. But the statute that governs the Fed, the Federal Reserve Act, says otherwise. According to Section 2a, the Fed is supposed to implement monetary policy “so as to promote effectively the goals of maximum employment, stable prices, and moderate long-term interest rates.” This section of the statute, often referred to as the dual mandate, does not instruct policymakers to pursue one objective with more vigor than the other. The law places maximum employment and price stability on equal footing.

Despite this plain language, many scholars and public officials believe that the Federal Reserve’s main job is to control inflation. This misperception about the Fed’s responsibilities is pervasive in academia and the federal government. Richard Rahn, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, asserted in the Washington Times that the Fed was created to ensure price stability, and that any other objectives (statutory or otherwise) complicate that mission (Rahn 2012). Economist John Taylor (1998) discusses “right” and “wrong” monetary policy in terms of the responsiveness to inflation risks, not unemployment. Mickey D. Levy (2012) criticizes recent Fed actions to reduce unemployment, and pines for Chairmen Volcker and Greenspan who recognized “stable low inflation is the best foundation for sustained economic growth and maximum employment.” In his comprehensive history of the Federal Reserve System, economist Allan Meltzer said that scholars widely accept that “employment and unemployment rates are independent of monetary actions, so that monetary policy is fully reflected in the inflation rate and the nominal exchange
DeHart

rate” (Meltzer 2010). Marvin Goodfriend (2012) judges the Federal Reserve’s success by its willingness to preemptively raise interest rates to stave off inflation. Cukierman (1992) claims that “[t]here is a widespread feeling among economists...that the degree of independence of a nation’s central bank (CB) is an important determinant of policy actions and therefore of inflation.” The misperception about the Fed’s objectives even permeates into the ranks of Federal Reserve officials. Jeffrey Lacker, the president of the Richmond Fed district, said in a January 2012 interview with CNBC that “The Fed does not control growth...Our job is to keep inflation low and stable” (Lacker 2012). As a Fed Governor, economist Frederic Mishkin stressed the importance of “low and predictable” inflation for the economy’s long-term health, and warned against “stimulative monetary policy” aimed at boosting unemployment (Mishkin 2007). In his 2005 confirmation hearing as Chairman of the Federal Reserve, Ben Bernanke said that central bankers, including the Fed, understood that controlling inflation was vital to achieving monetary policy’s other objectives. (Bernanke 2005). Senator John Sununu agreed: “Price stability is absolutely critical.”

The pervasiveness of this misperception about the Federal Reserve’s objectives is problematic. The public’s belief about what the Federal Reserve is supposed to do is disconnected from what the statute actually dictates to policymakers. Beyond this, it is unclear what the Federal Reserve actually does. Do policymakers balance their objectives, as mandated by Congress, or are they primarily focused on inflation, as the public perception seems to suggest? If the Fed balances price stability and employment, then we must explain why scholars and public officials think the Fed is supposed to focus on inflation. In that case, there is a disconnect between the public’s expectations and the Fed’s policy output. If the Fed is instead primarily focused on inflation, then we need to explain why policy outcomes differ from the Congressional mandate. In either case, ambiguity about the Federal Reserve’s mission and performance confuses our understanding of the institution and monetary policy.

In order to resolve this confusion about the Federal Reserve’s mission and its policy outputs, it is appropriate to test the Fed’s responsiveness to changes in economic conditions. Given an equal consideration to both unemployment and inflation, Fed policy outcomes should appear responsive to fluctuations in the economic conditions. If the Fed is more concerned with inflation than unemployment, then we would expect to see policies that are more responsive to changes in inflation. Determining the Fed’s responsiveness to economic conditions will help clarify whether the Fed balances its objectives or is primarily focused on inflation.

In the remainder of this paper, I review the history of the Federal Reserve’s dual mandate and economists’ recent preoccupation with price stabil-
Balancing Inflation and Unemployment

ity. I then present two hypotheses about Fed policy outcomes. The first, called the Balancing Hypothesis, supposes that the Fed follows its Congressional mandate literally and is responsive to unemployment and inflation equally. The second, called the Inflation Focus Hypothesis, states the Fed is focused more heavily on its price stability mandate. I go on to test these hypotheses with regression analysis of economic conditions on word frequencies from annual Federal Reserve reports. Following a discussion of my results, I conclude with directions for future research.

The Focus on Inflation

Congress created the Federal Reserve System in 1913 to “furnish an elastic currency” and to provide stability to the financial system. At that time, controlling inflation was a peripheral concern to policymakers because they believed the gold standard was sufficient to stabilize the value of money (Greider 1987). Changes in the domestic and international economy, including the demise of the gold standard in the last century, forced Congress to reform the Fed.

Today, the Federal Reserve System is compromised of two main bodies: the Board of Governors and the twelve Reserve banks. The seven governors on the Board are appointed by the President and approved by the Senate. Serving fourteen-year terms, they are tasked with oversight of the national banking system. The twelve Reserve banks are led by “Presidents” selected by the member banks in the Reserve districts scattered around the country. These two bodies come together to decide monetary policy on the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC), comprised of all seven Governors, the New York President, and four other District Presidents on an annual rotating basis.¹

The Fed’s current modern policy mandate originated with the Employment Act of 1946, which made full employment a stated goal of the United State government. Congress extended the mandate to the Fed in 1977 in the Federal Reserve Reform Act: “The formulation and implementation of monetary policy...shall be governed by the national policy to promote maximum employment, production, and price stability.” A year later, lawmakers reaffirmed but reworded the mandate to its current language: “to promote effectively the goals of maximum employment, stable prices, and moderate long-term interest rates.” The employment and price stability objectives are often called the dual mandate, and the balance between the two goals remains central to Fed policy discussion today.²

¹Although there are differences between the Federal Reserve System, Board of Governors, Reserve Banks, and Federal Open Market Committee, I find it appropriate to use Federal Reserve and Fed to discuss the institution in this paper.

²The third mandate (moderate long-term interest rates) is not usually given the same attention in analysis of Federal Reserve policy and politics (Blinder 1996).
Other scholars have studied whether central bankers like the Fed balance maximum employment and price stability. But much of this literature, done by academic economists in the 1970s, was concerned chiefly with a lack of focus on inflation. Specifically, economists in the mid-to-late 1970s were concerned that economic policymakers were not sufficiently responsive to inflation. The contemporary controversy about balancing employment and inflation was centered on the validity of the so-called Phillips Curve. Introduced in 1958 by economist William Phillips and subsequently refined by Keynesian scholars Paul Samuelson and Robert Solow in the 1960s, the Phillips Curve suggests an inverse relationship between inflation and unemployment. Economists and policymakers at the time were encouraged by the model’s implications that government policy could reduce unemployment by tolerating slightly higher inflation. In the 1970s, however, some economists began to question the validity of the Phillips Curve as the U.S. economy faced simultaneously high unemployment and inflation. In particular, the monetarist school of economists, led by Chicago’s Milton Friedman, argued that there was no long-term tradeoff between unemployment and inflation. Some scholars suggested that the goal for optimal monetary policy was price stability and not maximum employment (e.g. Kydland & Prescott 1977). Economists became acutely interested in how the central bank could build up its credibility to convince the market of its inflation-fighting abilities.

As the preoccupation with inflation took root among economists, tools emerged to fight the problem. In 1979, President Jimmy Carter appointed monetarist Paul Volcker to chair the Federal Reserve, and Volcker quickly set about reforming the Fed’s operating procedures. Volcker believed that inflation was tied to concerns about long-term interest rates and that the Fed lacked the credibility to lower inflation expectations without a hard line policy. Volcker believed that the Fed must restore its credibility in order protect the store of value of money, a vital role for any central bank. He re-focused the Fed’s attention on the growth of money, raised the discount rate and reserve requirements for banks in order to slow lending, and allowed interest rates to rise according to market demands.

Outside of the Fed, scholars studied the importance of political independence to the success of monetary policy. Specifically, scholars noted that if a

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3 See Goodfriend and King (2005) for a detailed analysis of the Volcker Disinflation.
4 Money is said to be a reliable “store of value” if it can be kept and used at a later date. Inflation erodes the store of value by reducing its purchasing power overtime.
5 The Federal Reserve’s main policy tool since the 1980s has been the Federal Funds Rate, the interest rate at which reserve banks lend to one another overnight. In addition to targeting interest rates, the Fed experimented with manipulating reserve requirements, money supply growth targets, and the discount rate (the rate at which banks can borrow from the central bank).
central bank was independent from executive and legislative authority, it was more likely to reduce the rate of inflation (Rogoff 1985). The central bank independence literature presupposed that inflation-fighting was the desired goal of monetary policy, providing intellectual support to central bankers seeking greater independence from partisan politics. In the 1990s, scholars and policymakers turned to monetary policy rules, with which central bankers could navigate the business cycle by moving interest rates according to economic condition. One such policy regime known as inflation-targeting called for policymakers to rely heavily, if not solely, on the inflation rate when setting policy. Inflation-targeting was considered an ideal policy regime because it could “overcome the inflationary bias that is likely to follow from discretionary policy guided solely by a concern for social welfare” (Giannoni & Woodford 2003).

The most prominent of the monetary policy rules, proposed by economist John B. Taylor, instructed policymakers to set the nominal interest rate according to the observed and desired levels of inflation, as well as other variables (Taylor 1993). These tools were developed over two decades after Congress created the Fed’s dual mandate, yet each of them (money growth targets, credible commitments, central bank independence, inflation-targeting, and the Taylor Rule) operates from the presupposition that controlling inflation is the Federal Reserve’s primary obligation.

The path dependence literature is helpful to understanding the evolution and persistence of the Fed’s inflation fighting policies. Pierson (2000) argues that policymakers pursue a particular policy path when they perceive increasing returns from continuing the policy, as opposed to some other alternative policy. This appears to be the case at the Federal Reserve under Chairman Paul Volcker, appointed in 1979 by President Jimmy Carter. According to an analysis of Fed transcripts in Goodfriend and King (2005), Fed officials were chiefly concerned with re-establishing the institution’s credibility to protect the value of the nation’s money. The Fed quickly implemented sharp interest rate increases and introduced money aggregate targets to bring inflation under control by 1980. With inflation slowly inching downward, and political concerns about rising unemployment pressuring the Fed to ease policy, Chairman Volcker refused to change course. The Federal Reserve saw an opportunity to restore its credibility as an independent and effective institution, and the Fed stuck to its anti-inflation policies (FOMC 1979). In the language of Pierson, the Fed perceived “increasing returns” for its public image by remaining tough on inflation. This focus on inflation never fully left the Fed, and staying the course ensured inflation-fighting would be the main goal of the Fed for the next three decades.

In the late 1970s, economists developed normative benchmarks for policy
that emphasized controlling inflation along with policy tools to address the problem of the day. The Federal Reserve adopted some of these tools (i.e., targeting money aggregates), but rejected others (i.e., explicit inflation-targeting). After the so-called “Volcker Disinflation”, the period in the late 1970s and early 1980s in which the Fed pushed down the inflation rate, did the Fed give equal attention to maximum employment and price stability? Or did the Fed continue to treat inflation-fighting as its primary objective? In the next section, I will discuss the behavior of Fed policymakers.

Although scholars have clear normative ideas about inflation, it is unclear whether the Federal Reserve’s policy outcomes reflect these ideas. I have two hypotheses about Fed policy output under the dual mandate.

**Balancing Hypothesis:** The Federal Reserve is a neutrally competent institution that is responsive to fundamental economic conditions in line with the dual mandate.

This hypothesis is consistent with the literature on neutral competence. As Kaufman (1956) summarizes, neutrally competent bureaucrats carry out their work “according to explicit, objective standards rather than to personal or party or other obligations and loyalties.” This hypothesis suggests that Fed policymakers follow their Congressional mandate to respond equally to unemployment and inflation, without showing greater preference for either condition. As economists and financial experts, Fed officials are tasked with following their mandate and they interpret it literally. Neutrally competent agencies, according to Heclo (1975), have a “vested interest in continuity” and thus pursue consistent policies, as well as work to address the expectations of government. According to the hypothesis, the Fed has an incentive to follow a consistent policy regime that is responsive to reasonable expectations to address the key economic problems in a given period. Specifically, the Fed wants to protect, or enhance, its credibility as a neutrally competent institution by reacting to the economy evenhandedly, as instructed by the statute.

The Federal Reserve is an ideal candidate for a neutrally competent bureaucracy: an institution staffed by professional economists, ostensibly removed from partisan politics, and governed by a clear mandate from Congress to promote maximum employment and price stability. The Fed’s insulation from politics, according to the Balancing Hypothesis, allows policymakers to pursue their mandated objectives without outside influence or prejudice. The Fed exhibits elements of Lewis’s (2003) four characteristics of bureaucratic insulation: independence, board or commission structure, fixed terms, and qualifications for administrators. The Federal Reserve is a creature of Con-
gress but has an independent budgeting process, and although policymakers are required to report semiannually to Congress, their specific monetary policy actions are free from external approval. Additionally, although the President appoints Governors to the Fed, with Senate confirmation, Fed officials cannot be removed without cause. These various measures of independence create distance between the executive and legislative branches and the Fed, so that the neutrally competent monetary policymakers can take action without formal political pressure. Lewis (2003) specifically recalls the creation of the Fed as an example of policy-by-committee in order to insulate the agency from political influence. Decision-making by a board or commission reduces the possibility that a single individual can be politically pressured to affect policy outcomes. Fed Governors are also insulated from politics because they serve fixed terms of 14 years. Since Fed officials serve such long terms, and cannot be removed without cause, the President’s opportunities to influence the Fed through appointment are rare. Lastly, the Federal Reserve Act specifies qualifications for Fed appointees that limit presidential discretion. Section 10 of the Federal Reserve Act requires the President to ensure “fair representation of the financial, agricultural, industrial, and commercial interests, and geographical divisions of the country” when appointing Fed Governors.

The Balancing Hypothesis suggests that Fed uses its independence to expertly balance maximum employment and price stability, as Congress clearly mandates in the statute. The alternative to this hypothesis grants the Federal Reserve the very same independence, but suggests policymakers use this independence to pursue their own understanding of what the best monetary policy is, the actual statute notwithstanding.

**Inflation Focus Hypothesis:** The Federal Reserve uses its political independence to implement policy according to its belief that price stability is a precondition for maximum employment.

This hypothesis is consistent with the central bank independence literature. Several scholars have found that lower inflation is associated with independent central banks (i.e., Bade & Perkins 1982, Rogoff 1985). Alesina & Summers (1993) summarize, “Insulating monetary policy from the political process...helps enforce the low inflation equilibrium. Without some degree of political independence, it would be impossible to appoint [an inflation averse] central banker...which is a socially desirable goal.” The Fed’s independence allows it to pursue anti-inflationary monetary policy despite the neutrality of

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6 The Federal Reserve System finances its operations with interest earned on its portfolio of assets, and routinely returns the excess profits to the Treasury Department.

7 Adherence to this requirement is dubious. A quick look at the past Governors reveals fewer farmers and labor leaders than bankers and academics.
the ruling statute. This hypothesis relies on a flexible version of *goal independence* discussed by Debelle & Fischer (1994), in which the central bank is free to set its own policy objectives. The *dual mandate* rules out complete goal independence for the Fed, but the *Inflation Focus Hypothesis* suggests that the Fed shows greater concern for price stability than maximum employment, according to the institution’s understanding of both conditions. The Fed uses its independence to re-interpret the *dual mandate* such that price stability is a precondition for maximum employment. In this sense, the Fed’s focus on inflation causes it to follow a *hierarchical mandate*, resulting in policy outcomes that are more responsive to one economic condition than the other.

In the next section, I describe a research design to test these hypotheses using word frequencies to determine responsiveness to economic conditions.

**Research Design**

To test the *Balancing* and *Inflation Focus* hypotheses, I analyze the frequency of the words “inflation” and “unemployment” in Board of Governors Annual Reports. The Fed is required to submit these reports, to Congress each year according to Section 10:7 of the Federal Reserve Act. The reports, found on the Federal Reserve website, summarize monetary policy actions taken in the previous year, including minutes from FOMC meetings, as well as a summary of financial regulation and banking operations at the 12 reserve banks. These reports are useful to this analysis because they capture a year’s worth of monetary policymaking documents in one body, and cover roughly the same material from year to year. My data set begins with the 1978 report, the first year after Congress passed the Federal Reserve Reform Act. The Fed was under legislative mandate to promote maximum employment and price stability during the entire period.

The dependent variables in my analysis are the frequency of “inflation” and “unemployment” per 10,000 words. These two words are common analogues for the price stability and maximum employment objectives of the Fed’s *dual mandate*, and are used regularly in the financial press and economic literature. I use these two words here in order to identify discussions about the corresponding economic condition, and acknowledge that policymakers may have framed the discussion in different terms (see Appendix A). Frequencies were determined by counting occurrences of the words in each annual report, an application of content analysis that is not unfamiliar to political scientists. Other scholars have used similar methods to discern policy preferences from political documents (e.g., Gabel and Huber 2000), and this paper shows a simple application of the technology.

The key independent variables in my analysis are normalized annual mea-

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8http://fraser.stlouisfed.org/publication/?pid=117
sures of the Personal Consumption Expenditure (PCE) price index for inflation and the National Unemployment Rate for unemployment.\textsuperscript{9} I also control for year, centered on 1978.

Results

Two main findings emerge from this analysis. Excepting the Great Recession (beginning in late 2007), there is no evidence that Fed policymaking tracks economic conditions. Second, inflation verbiage dominates unemployment in Annual Reports. I show these findings two ways: first graphically, and then analytically.

![Figure 1](image-url)

First, Figure 1 is not consistent with the Balancing Hypothesis. Graphs C and D show the contrast between the frequencies of “inflation” and “unemployment”. Inflation is discussed more frequently than unemployment, and

\textsuperscript{9}Inflation data is available on the St. Louis Federal Reserve Economic Data (FRED) website, and unemployment data is available from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Core PCE is the main inflation index used by the Federal Open Market Committee, the policymaking body of the Federal Reserve. Although the more familiar Consumer Price Index (CPI), sometimes called headline inflation, is often used to discuss the Fed’s policies in the media, I found it more appropriate to use the Fed’s preferred index. Substantively similar results emerge if I use CPI instead of PCE in my analysis.
increasingly so over the course of the data set. The frequency of “unemployment” appears to decline over time before rising suddenly in the late 2000s.

Figure 1 suggests support for the Inflation Focus Hypothesis. The Fed does not appear equally responsive to the two economic conditions. Graph C shows the increase in “inflation” frequency over time, despite the steep decline and stabilization of the inflation rate over time, seen in Graph A. Graphs B and D together suggest that the Fed was not responsive to unemployment before 2007, and did not use the word more frequently when the annual unemployment rate peaked three previous times. Figure 1 shows that concern for inflation was increasing even as the annual inflation rate was declining, but that concern for unemployment was largely unchanged until 2008.

Before 2007, there is almost no evidence that Fed policymaking was responsive to underlying economic fundamentals of the dual mandate. This graphical evidence suggests that the Fed was more concerned with inflation than unemployment each year, consistent with the Inflation Focus Hypothesis.

Broadening the scope of this analysis, I search for the specific language of the dual mandate mentioned in the Annual Reports (see Figure 2). “Price stability” is mentioned in every annual reported from 1978 to 2011, but “maximum employment” is very sparsely, if ever, used in the first two decades of the dataset. Similar to the count of “unemployment” in figure 1, mentions of the “maximum employment” half of the dual mandate rapidly increases around the onset of the 2007 recession.

Figure 2

Word frequencies from Annual BG Reports, 1978-2011

Figure 2 is vulnerable to the same objections as Figure 1: the absence of presumably relevant keywords is not proof that discussions of those concepts
Balancing Inflation and Unemployment did not take place. The disparity in references to price stability and maximum employment does, however, suggest that policymakers showed deference to the former when they did use statutory language to discuss policy. References to the dual mandate itself were similarly sparse (see figure 3).

**Figure 3**

Next, I perform two sets of regression analyses, regressing the word frequencies on the relevant economic variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inflation</td>
<td>2.16*</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.97)</td>
<td>(1.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>0.61*</td>
<td>0.57*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
<td>(0.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>9.06*</td>
<td>9.71*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.74)</td>
<td>(1.94)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Dependent variable is number of occurrences of the word “inflation” per 10,000 words in Federal Reserve Annual Reports for the regression analysis. *p < .05, two-tailed t-test
There is a small, positive, statistically significant association of annual inflation rate and the word “inflation” for 1978 to 2011. When the recent economic downturn after 2007 is removed, the association remains positive, although slightly weaker and statistically insignificant. The association between “inflation” frequency and year is positive and significant for both time periods. These results support the Inflation Focus Hypothesis, suggesting that the Fed discussed inflation more often over time.

I perform a similar regression of the frequency of the word “unemployment” and the measure of unemployment. Recall that the dependent variable is the number of times the word “unemployment” occurs per 10,000 words in the Annual reports. The key independent variables are the normalized annual measures of the National Unemployment Rate and year, centered on 1978. The regression results are shown in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>1.38*</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.24)</td>
<td>(0.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>0.07*</td>
<td>-0.05*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.16*</td>
<td>4.54*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.46)</td>
<td>(0.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Dependent variable is number of occurrences of the word “unemployment” per 10,000 words in Federal Reserve Annual Reports for the regression analysis. * \(p < .05\), two-tailed \(t\)-test

There is a small, positive, and statistically significant association between frequency of “unemployment” and the National Unemployment Rate. Once the recent economic downturn is removed, however, that association disappears; for 1978-2007, the association is nearly seven times smaller and no longer significant. In the full data set, there is a small increase in mentions of “unemployment” each year, but once we exclude the recent downturn, that association turns negative. These results provide no support for the Balancing Hypothesis between 1978 and 2011. The constant terms suggest that the Fed
discusses inflation 2.14 to 2.87 times more than unemployment, independent of the economy’s health and year, and these results are statistically significant for all four analyses.

These results are consistent with the Inflation Focus Hypothesis for that same period. The frequency of the key words was more responsive to deviations in the inflation rate, even when the two conditions deviated comparably. An increase in inflation by one standard deviation is associated with an increase in mentions of “inflation” by 2.16 words per 10,000, compared to just 1.38 additional mentions of “unemployment”.

This analysis also suggests that controlling for deviations in economic conditions, the Fed discussed inflation more frequently each year, while mentions of “unemployment” grew to a small degree on average annually. When I removed the recent downturn, annual mentions of “inflation” were similar in sign, strength, and significance, while annual mentions of “unemployment” actually declined. This suggests that the Fed talked more about inflation and less about unemployment over time, at least until 2008.

Conclusion

This paper showed that there is no evidence in the aggregate that the Federal Reserve balances its inflation and unemployment mandates from 1978 to 2011. Excepting the Great Recession, there is little evidence that the Fed was responsive to fundamental economic conditions in line with its dual mandate. In fact, the graphical and analytical evidence suggests that the Fed was decidedly more focused on inflation during the observed time period. Since 2007, however, the Fed appears to have become more interested in unemployment that it has been in the past. It is unclear whether this observation is indicative of a structural shift in the Federal Reserve’s objectives away from a focus on inflation or just a temporary response to the Great Recession.

In future projects, I hope to expand my data set to include a greater range of documents across the Fed’s century of operation in order to test the robustness of the Inflation Focus Hypothesis. DeHart (2013) performs a similar analysis of word frequencies using transcripts from Federal Reserve policy meetings, and provides additional support to this paper’s conclusions.

Like most research on important topics, these results raise more questions than they answer. Future research should look into the Fed’s responsiveness to economic fundamentals before 1978 in order to determine if the Congressional dual mandate demonstrably impacted the Fed’s policy outcomes. Other scholars have investigated the Fed’s responsiveness to economic conditions under a variety of scenarios including: different Chairmen, Presidents, or majority control in Congress; before presidential or mid-term elections; under different
monetary regimes. Much of this work relied on interest rates, the Fed’s main policy tool, to measure that institution’s policy stance. The federal funds rate has been close to zero for a half-decade and students of the Fed need to find alternative and complementary tools to interpret monetary policy. This paper presents text analysis of policy materials as one such tool.

Appendix

**Figure 4**

*Frequencies of alternative keywords from Annual BG Reports, 1978-2011*

**Figure 5**

*Frequency of root word ‘price’ from Annual BG Reports, 1978-2011*
References


the Country. Touchstone.


Corruption Sanded the Wheels of Economics, but Greased Political Reforms: An Examination of the 1970-80s Chinese Economic Reforms

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Corruption is damaging in almost every economic and social aspect, but it can play a crucial role in the dynamics of reforms. This examination of corruption’s effect in China’s economic reforms during the 1980s reveals that corruption helped counterbalance the local governments’ resistance to reforms. Specifically, corruption gains rather than political rewards were the driver behind the local leaders’ decision to support the reforms despite their loss in status and privilege. Corruption could act as a vehicle of exit; it could also provide financial compensation to status loss; most importantly, it could help tie the gains of local leaders with those of the entrepreneurial class, resulting in a public-private partnership network and a vested interest in the continuation of reforms. This study offers some preliminary evidence to these channels of corruption motives, and suggests future research directions to expand its findings’ generalizability.

Is corruption simply an inexcusable evil? Even though the overall harm of corruption is not to be contested, this paper offers a challenge to the absoluteness of such a view. It raises the argument that even after taking all its harms into consideration, corruption may still be a necessary ingredient for certain political developments of societies.

The case study of this research is the paradox of China’s marketization reforms from 1978 to the late 1980s. Even though the reforms took away many traditional privileges that the local elites in China used to enjoy, these elites nevertheless supported the reforms, and in fact played an active role in its eventual success. This, the study argues, is because the reforms expanded the opportunity for officials in local governments to engage in corruption. Corruption acted as a vehicle of exit for disillusioned officials; it also replaced losses in status and privileges with pecuniary opportunities, while creating vested financial interests of local governments in the continuation of reforms. Indeed, it was gains from corruption, rather than the political rewards accessible to the reforms’ supporters or the power from the central government that secured the commitment of China’s local governments to the reform and provided its much-needed momentum.
The Effects of Corruption in a Theoretical Context

It is almost a truism that corruption is harmful. Time and time again, economists and political scientists examine corruption’s influence on economics, politics and societies, only to discover yet another negative effect of corruption. Politically, corruption introduces instability and undermines government capacity (Nye, Heidenheimer, and Johnston 2002; Seligson 2002). Economically, corruption is considered as rent-seeking, which adds no economic value to societies while not diverting resources away from productive activity (Krueger 1974; Murphy, Shleifer, and Vishny 1993); moreover, “corruption adds costs to transactions, rewards inefficiency while penalizing efficiency”(Heidenheimer and Johnston 2002, 305). Finally, in terms of social effects, the literature also condemns corruption for furthering income inequality and discrediting the notions of justice, fairness and due process (World Bank 2011).

Given the overwhelming consensus on its harms, it comes to no wonder that corruption has become the most talked-about problem today according to a 2010 global survey (BBC World Service 2010). No less expectable are the efforts of the international community to encourage, if not enforce the adoption of anti-corruption measures by states, such as the OECD’s Anti-Bribery Convention in 1997 or the UN Convention against Corruption in 2005. Nevertheless, in condemning and fighting corruption at every possible opportunity, the dominant perspective on corruption overlooks two important issues. First, the criticisms mainly treat corruption as a day-to-day occurrence within a static and well-established political-economic system. This perspective does not consider its role in times of dynamic change, such as during economic reforms, revolutions, or institutional restructuring. As a result, it can impede our understanding of corruption in many parts of the world, where economic growth and political stability are not the only immediate demands. States and societies do not simply grow – they also need to evolve and transform through reforms and revolutions. Second, most analyses all too often compare corrupt systems, at least implicitly, to ideal, corruption-free ones, which have never truly existed. Such an approach overlooks the possibility that despite its ill effects, corruption may be the least harmful, if not the only alternative, for certain societies to function (Johnston 1997a). In summary, even though the harms of corruption are ubiquitous, and even though the most significant dissenting view – a “grease the wheel” argument that corruption may compensate for bureaucratic red-tape, inefficiency and bad governance (Leys 1989; Leff 1964; Huntington 1968) – has also been empirically refuted (Méon and Sekkat 2005; Campos and Dimova 2010), it is still early to dismiss corruption as an absolute bane whose existence must be eradicated.
Corruption and Market Reform in China

For an illustration of corruption’s complicated role in a society, one can look at the second-biggest economy in the world, China. The country is known for pervasive corruption: Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index gives it a very humble ranking at the 75th position (Transparency International 2011). Yet, despite corruption, China boasts an impressive economic performance: Between 1979 and 2010, its economy grew by an average rate 8.75% (Wedeman 2012). The coexistence of high corruption on one hand and high growth on the other present a conflictual image that Wedeman (2012) terms a “double paradox,” and that many others have been trying to decipher.

Corruption in China existed long before our present days. Both before and during the Cultural Revolution, corruption has been identified as a problem, which necessitated frequent anti-corruption campaigns such as the Three-Antis and Five-Antis Campaign (Lu 2000; Woodward 1981). It was, however, not until the market reforms in 1978 that corruption exploded in numbers and intensity. Between 1980 and 1989, the number of corruption cases jumped from 9,000 to more than 77,000 – an eight-and-a-half fold increase (Wedeman 2012, 93). To explain the phenomenon, some authors point to China’s decentralizing decision-making apparatus, which placed a lot of discretionary power beyond the state’s supervision (Gong 2006). Lu Xiaobo (2000) offers an alternative interpretation: he attributes the rise in corruption to the Chinese state’s failure in maintaining a rational-administrative bureaucracy to keep up with its expanding responsibilities.

While the rise in corruption was well accounted for, the fact that the reforms continued and even accelerated despite pervasive corruption was not. Given the well-known ills of corruption, one would expect corruption to stall the pace of reforms. This expectation was especially well-justified in China’s case, considering that corruption also added fuel to the fire of public dissatisfaction, which had been at a high point since the dismantling of state-owned enterprises all over China and the massive laid-offs that followed (Hurst 2004). Indeed, the corruption issue was one of the main motivations behind the Tiananmen Square protest in 1989 (Sun 1991). What is more puzzling, though, is that even without corruption, the success of the reforms is still difficult to explain. Despite the reformers’ efforts to concentrate on the economy while leaving China’s political structure intact, the reforms nonetheless created a lot of political disruption. This disruption was felt particularly at the localities, where the reforms took away the traditional status and privileges previously monopolized by local Communist leaders. In terms of status, the leaders’ position as the sole local elites came under heavy pressure from a rising entrepreneurial class. Deng Xiaoping’s quote, “It doesn’t matter whether
a cat is white or black, as long as it catches mice,” is thus more than a nod to
the equality of status between two modes of production. It also means equality
between the traditional leaders and the emergent challengers. Not only was
there a decline in social status, but local leaders also had to give up some of
their political power. For example, contracting out production to the private
sector means that the control a leader had upon his province’s economic ac-
tivities (e.g. allocating production quota, organizing labors, and the power to
grant and withhold major benefits) was also diminished and transferred to pri-
ivate hands. Finally, one could count as well the ideological predicament that
Communist cadres, especially the conservative hardliners, had to face when
capitalist economics were suddenly introduced to China, and even endorsed by
the Party. All in all, the reforms in China, while trying to maintain the political
status quo, nonetheless created disturbances within the hierarchies of Com-
munist leadership.

Sizing up the Hypotheses

The key question of China’s economic reform is straightforward. If the reform
took away so much of the local government officials’ privileges, why did they
not oppose and stop it? In other words, how could the reform proceed even
though it went against the interests of a powerful group of political elites?
Here, this paper hypothesizes that corruption, rather than a nuisance to the re-
form, is actually an important piece, if not the central piece of the puzzle. Cor-
rup tion generated opportunities for local officials to benefit financially from
the reform; thus, in effect, it counterbalanced their disposition to resist the
reform, and turned them into its supporters instead. This hypothesis is set in
contrast with two other hypotheses, the null hypothesis and the “political re-
ward” alternate hypothesis. While the null hypothesis suggests that the reform
in China would proceed regardless of the resistance from local leaders, the
alternate hypothesis argues that political rewards expected by local leaders in
exchange for their support of the reform (e.g. career advancement, or support
from the constituents) were the main counterbalance against local resistance as
opposed to personal mercenary gains.

It should be noted that the research seeks not as much to affirm any of
the hypotheses as to falsify them. In terms of methodology, the study looks for
evidence, both primary and secondary, that would discredit each hypothesis,
so as to select out the last hypothesis standing among these three. Once this
hypothesis has been identified, its mechanisms would be explored in further
details, followed by another empirical test to confirm its validity.
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Table 1

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**Null Hypothesis: Local resistance did not have an effect on the reforms prospect**

The basic rationale behind the null hypothesis is that decision-making in reform-era China did not allow the interests of the local leaders to be heard. That happened because (1) the reforms were inevitable given the economic and political situation of China at that moment, or (2) local governments had little influence in the leadership competition process that led to the reformist Deng Xiaoping’s rise to power, or finally (3) the central government was so strong vis-à-vis the localities that it could simply do whatever it pleased (Blanchard and Shleifer 2001).

It is not difficult to reject the first explanation. Although the economic situation before the economic reforms was indeed grave, reform was by no means the only option toward recovery. Indeed, while the CCP’s elites recognized the need to recover economically from the damages done during the Cultural Revolution, “there was no agreement on the means to achieve it” (Shirk 1993, 23). Marketization was one possible choice, but as several members of the elite pointed out, so was the refinement of the Soviet-style central planning system that China had experimented with since its 1953-57 First Five-Year Plan (Shirk 1993, chap. 2). This system had historically delivered impressive results, most notable among which was the 10% average annual industrial growth rate from 1949 to 1980 (Shirk 1993, 27; *Statistical Yearbook* 1990). What’s more, while the Soviet’s own command economy had begun to slow down by that time, China’s had yet to reach the limits of both extensive...
and intensive growth, and could deliver even more simply by upgrading the technical planning and managerial capacity (Derngerger 1986).

The reform was thus anything but an economic inevitability. Nor was it a political one. Typically, the literature portrays the reforms as the consequence of a power struggle between the conservative Hua Guofeng and the reformist Deng Xiaoping, who eventually prevailed and introduced the reforms (Harding 1987; Fewsmith 1994). This struggle is commonly viewed as a one-sided battle. On one side, Hua Guofeng had neither experience nor legitimacy; he also hopelessly clung on his outdated pro-Mao platform. In contrast, Deng Xiaoping had in his hand the popular support of the elites who wanted a departure from the Cultural Revolution era (Teiwes and Sun 2011). Although this perspective has quite some truth, the realities of China’s power struggle did not support such a simplistic interpretation. Granted, Hua lacked legitimacy: He was a late joiner (Ting 1980) and did not belong to the first generation of revolutionaries like Mao, Deng and many others (Vogel 2011). Also true are that Hua’s power came more from his official titles rather than personal relationships (Vogel 2011), and that his “two whatevers” policy line (“whatever policy decisions Chairman Mao made,” and “whatever instructions Chairman Mao gave”) (Hua 1977) was not well-received in the party circle, especially after the Cultural Revolution. Nevertheless, Hua’s disadvantage was not as big as typically thought. To begin with, while his unprecedented Party positions (as holder of three highest offices in the CCP simultaneously) might not automatically bring legitimacy, they gave him discretionary power over all branches of the CCP and allowed him to intervene in almost every activity of the Party. Even more importantly, despite his humble origins, Hua had amassed for himself some significant achievements during his brief rule before the 1978 showdown, whereas Deng at the same time was still climbing his way from disgrace back to a place within the Party elites. These achievements included the reversal of several Mao-era verdicts, the highly-praised ousting of the Gang of Four, and even the opening of China to foreign trade and technology (Ting 1980). The last achievement in particular was notable, because while the current literature attributes Deng almost entirely to China’s door-opening policies, it was actually Hua who pioneered the effort through (among other things) his visits to Yugoslavia and Romania (Teiwes and Sun 2011; Vogel 2011). The hopeless uphill battle between a backward, unpopular Hua Guofeng and a rising Deng Xiaoping was thus more of an exaggeration perpetuated by the hindsight bias of “just [speak] of one person [Deng] for good things and one person [Hua] for bad things” (Teiwes and Sun 2011) than a true reflection of the balance of power.

Compared to the first rationale of this hypothesis, the second and third were laid on no better foundation. Both arguments rested on the assumption
that local politics did not factor in the decision-making of China’s central government. This assumption, however, echoes the outdated “Mao-in-command” model (e.g. Oksenberg 1971) and the tendency to reduce China’s contemporary politics to a continuation of its historical dynastic court. In light of the intra-party’s checks-and-balance of the CCP and China’s territorial politics, one can see how flawed this assumption is. To begin with, China’s leadership selection process ensured that local officials would have a say in the matter for two reasons: one, that decision making in the CCP worked through a selectorate, and two, that it rested on the reciprocal accountability between the top leaders and their subordinates (Shirk 1993). The selectorate here refers to the top party leaders (totaling around 500 individuals), with the elders and PLA leaders on the informal side and the Central Committee on the formal side, who had the power to debate and vote on policies, and most importantly reject/approve the top leader candidate that the Poliburo and the preeminent leader suggested. The Central Committee in particular acted as a final veto gate. Although actual power often lied in the hands of the leader and his elder allies, all decisions still had to pass through the ratification of the Central Committee. Thus, in Shirk’s words,

Because the Central Committee holds the formal authority for choosing the leader, even if it only ratifies the choice made in a smoke-filled room in Deng Xiaoping’s house, the people in that smoke-filled room recognize they must pick someone acceptable to the Central Committee...the body is not merely a rubber stamp; the leader chosen must reflect the preferences of the committee. (Shirk 1993, 81)

A look into the composition of this selectorate reveals the importance of the local elites. In 1987, for example, provincial and municipal officials occupy 43% of the Central Committee (Shirk 1993, 81) making themselves the largest bloc in the Central Committee.\(^1\) Thus, even though having the center’s support remained crucial, at the end of the day, a leader candidate still had to first win the acquiescence, if not approval, of the localities.

The second feature of China’s leadership selection, reciprocal accountability (Shirk 1993), is an extension of this unique relationship between the Party leader and the lower echelons. Unlike democracies, where the people elect leaders, and unlike absolute authoritarian regimes, where the leaders have ultimate sovereignty over the appointment of their subordinates, in China the power to appoint goes both ways: Leaders can appoint bureaucrats and

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\(^1\)This has yet to include municipal-level military officials, which Shirk places in another category. Arguably, local military leaders may display pro-region tendencies like government officials, but they might also have different interests and agenda.
local governors, while local officials can also influence the choice of party leaders. With this reciprocal authority came reciprocal accountability. Both the leaders and the officials had to be sensitive of the other’s opinions, and because competition for political leadership could take place at any time (Tullock 1987), the leaders in particular must maintain a healthy relationship with the local officials throughout their tenure. This, again, gave weight to the local government’s voice in the Party’s central politics.

Finally, to suggest that local governments were mere pushovers when it came to top-down directives from the central government in Beijing is to oversimplify a dynamic central-local relationship that the historical evidence had suggested. In fact, a major element of this relationship is conflict. Local governments did not rubber-stamp top down policies; quite the opposite, directives from the top require local compliance. Often, they were also subject to liberal reinterpretation. Thus, in places like Guangdong, local strategy was often described as following a “red light theory:”

*Go quickly when the green light is on; Proceed immediately when the light turns yellow; Find a bypass route to proceed when the red light is on* (L. C. Li 1998, 167).

The Guangdong example showed that locals had the power and tendency to bend central policies to its liking. That had yet to be the limit of the provinces’ capacity. Chang (1978) noted that they could as well bargain actively and effectively with the central government over the terms of their interactions. When the need arose, they were also capable of coordinated resistance against the center. The series of provincial attacks in 1976 that criticized the Beijing government for adopting a “vertical dictatorship” was one such example. These attacks took the form of editorials and articles, and were remarkable for both their tough stance against the central ministries and the high profile of their authors, most of whom were from higher administrative bureaus of provinces and large industrial enterprises (Tong 1989). Furthermore, they were not isolated incidents. The tension between localities and center indeed was so prevalent that it caused a paradigm shift in the Chinese politics literature: Once the dominant perspective in the 1960s and 70s, the “Mao-in-command” model, which regarded power as being concentrated solely in the center, had to be abandoned in favor of alternate models like “Chinese federalism,” “structuralism” or “factionalism.”

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Alternate Hypothesis and Main Hypothesis: Political Rewards versus Corruption Gains

If the null hypothesis was invalid – in other words, if local resistance truly mattered - then what account for its negligible impact? What incentives were there to make local officials embrace the reform instead of opposing it? As stated earlier, there are two major answers to this puzzle. A big part of the literature alludes to political rewards; this paper, on the other hand, suggests the mercenary corruption incentives of local officials. Political rewards refer to, among other things, the endorsement from higher leaders, opportunities to promotion, or support from their constituents. These rewards allow its recipients – the local cadres – to solidify their careers, and even climb up the hierarchy ladder. By contrast, corruption motives are about getting rich through illicit gains. Admittedly, there are overlaps between the two types of incentives: By climbing up, officials can gain income more easily, whereas wealth can also be used when needed to pursue career aims (Huntington 1968). Nonetheless, in the grand scheme of things, a line of distinction can still be drawn. First of all, political rewards work within the legal boundary of the system; corruption gains, on the other hand, work outside it. Second, whereas political rewards are linked to an official’s career advancement, corruption gains have to do first and foremost with pecuniary profits.

Between these two, there is some support from the literature for the “political rewards” hypothesis. For example, it is often suggested that economic successes in officials’ own provinces are an important determinant of cadre promotion (Lou 1992; Wang 1989). According to this view, local officials have the incentive to reform their provinces because that would eventually help them further their political career. In addition, another view suggests also that local officials did not support the reform idea per se; rather, they were trying to ally themselves with the winner of the competition to avoid punishment (Cheung, Chung, and Lin 1998). Under the selectorate theory interpretation (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003), this motivation can also be an effort to get into the “winning coalition,” which comes with the benefits of preferential private goods both to the officials’ themselves (e.g. more administrative authority) and to their localities (e.g. favorable tax policies). Finally, there is the possibility that letting reform happen in a province would raise officials’ legitimacy in the eyes of local constituents, reinforcing their career stability.

In light of China’s system of cadre management and promotion, however, all these political rewards can be deemed implausible. To begin with, the last suggestion can be rejected, for the simple fact that local officials in China were not elected and consequently were under no direct accountability pressure from below. Instead, cadres in post-Mao China were appointed through
the “two-level downward management system,” under which officials were responsible for the appointment of subordinates at the next two lower levels (Huang 1996). The system reinforced the notion of reciprocal accountability, and made sure that provincial cadres had no need to be accountable to their people’s needs.

Secondly, the suggestion that provinces bandwagoned on Deng’s reformist camp in hope of securing the winner’s favor seems more plausible, yet it remains still on the questionable side. While the logic of bandwagoning makes sense, it does not necessarily explain several of the provinces’ behavior patterns. The first problem is that as the challenger, Deng had to somehow convince members of the current winning coalition to deflect to him. These current winning coalition was receiving rewards from Hua, and thus it would fall to Deng’s initiative – and not its members’ – to make bigger promises and ensure that such promises were credible (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003, 59–60). On top of that, there is also a second problem. The competition between Deng and Hua, as we already know, was not a one-sided battle; consequently, the provinces would be almost as likely to denounce the reform (i.e. join Hua’s camp) as to embrace it (i.e. join Deng’s faction). Moreover, even if they chose Deng, the provinces’ commitment would likely be rather ambivalent, given that the competition outcome was uncertain and the cost of choosing the wrong side was high. In two-party election campaigns like in the United States, for example, big donors often made contributions to both sides, so as to get into the winning coalition regardless of the election’s outcome. In China’s case, the ambivalence should have been even more pronounced, given the lessons from the sudden policy reversals and the brutal persecution during the Cultural Revolution and the preceding Hundred Flowers Campaign.

The reform, however, portrayed a totally opposite picture. The localities embraced the reform early and enthusiastically: While many provinces, like Guangdong, Anhui, Shandong or Shanghai pioneered the reform ahead of the government’s directives (Jae 1998; L. C. Li 1998), others were very quick to follow, to the extent that they actually demanded the center’s permission to reform (Zhang 2011). In contrast, ambivalence was rare. Rather, provinces actually went as far as to take matters into their own hands by adopting their own local developmentalist policies (Oi 1995). Of course, there were “resisters” such as Heilongjiang province (Jae 1998), as well as some slower adopters of reforms; however, they were all concentrated geographically at the northeastern “Stalinist rust belt” of China (Hurst 2004). Their resistance to reform

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3 From 1983 onwards, the system was changed to one-level downward system.
4 For a breakdown of the top donors’ contribution in the US’s election campaigns since 2000, see OpenSecrets (2012).
5 This region was concentrated with large-scale heavy industry, and according to Hurst (2004), “has never been the site of any appreciable commercial centers.” As a result, it stood
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therefore seemed to reflect the practical consideration of the provinces’ interests rather than a choice between the reformers’ and the conservatives’ side.

Finally, the idea that economic performance factored into cadre promotion and drove officials toward reform can be refuted. Although there is evidence to support a role of economic performance in provincial cadres’ evaluation, such evidence was not consistent through times. In fact, “the criteria for cadre promotions are highly sensitive to changes in general political and ideological environment” (Huang 1996). It should be noted, as an illustration, that just a few years prior to the reforms, ideological adherence to Maoist principles was still the only criterion for cadre evaluation. Even when economic performance mattered, it would not necessitate the localities’ reform mindset. The command economy, after all, was still a viable option, and more likely than not, what constituted “economic performance” by the time of the reform would still have a lingering central-planning bias (e.g. meeting production quotas, or ensuring workers’ livelihood, etc.) The reforms did not change everything in one day, including the Party’s conceptualization of economics and economic successes.

Even More compelling counterevidence can be found in the cadre management principles of China. In short, these principles perpetuated an assessment that heavily emphasized political orientation at the expense of other performance-related factors. The ganbu kaohe (cadre evaluation) procedures were institutionalized by the Chinese leadership in 1979 to be a comprehensive evaluation system that included both performance review and an opinion poll (Department of Organization 1986; 1980). In reality, however, it was largely employed as a security check to screen out cadres with undesirable political affiliation. These reviews had only perfunctory remarks on the officials’ economic activities, but often included great detail on their activities during events like the Cultural Revolution or the 1976 Tienanmen incident (Huang 1996, 95). Similarly, other monitoring and disciplinary institutions, such as the provinces’ General Offices or the Central Discipline Inspection Commission, were also preoccupied more with collecting administrative information and investigating moral and political transgressions rather than with economic evaluation (Central Discipline Inspection Commission 1987). In short, although other things may have changed, the post-Mao Chinese Communist Party’s idea of a “good” cadre was still as fixated on political correctness and loyalty as it has ever been during the Mao era. The room for economic consideration, as a result, remained minuscule.

to gain little from the economic reform.
How Corruption Helped Reforms: Channels of Corruption Motives

As the two alternate hypotheses were rejected, what remains is the paper’s proposed argument. Local officials’ acceptance of reform, as well as local developmental urges – the driver behind the Chinese economic reform – was made possible by the opportunities of local officials to engage in corruption. In other words, local cadres were committed to the reform because they saw that the resulting profitable, if illicit, opportunities from corruption could outweigh the initial losses in social status and privileges.

But what exactly are the mechanisms of these corruption motives? This paper argues that corruption facilitates local support for the marketization reform through several channels, among which include a channel of exit, a channel of compensation, and a channel of vested interests.

Corruption as Exit

Hirschman (1970) proposes that members of an organization can respond to perceived decline of their organizations through two main methods. They can either “voice” – to speak out about their concerns – or “exit” – to abandon the organization and its mission altogether. These two options were technically available to the conservative Communist cadres who felt disillusioned with their Party’s turn toward capitalism, although in practice exiting was not really a choice. Lacking a means to safely “exit” the Party, these cadres’ only choice left would be to express their dissatisfaction with the reform (most likely through joining Hua’s conservative camp). The existence of corruption opportunities re-enabled the “exit” option by giving cadres a chance to disassociate themselves from the work of the Party while not necessarily quitting it. Taken to a further extreme, corruption could also act as a vehicle for the disillusioned to “get back” at the government.

Corruption as Compensation

As the reforms took place, local officials had to surrender several of their Mao-era privileges. At the same time, however, their roles also changed dramatically. Previously limited to political and administrative tasks, now these officials could extend their functions to the economic arena, as the private sector had been legitimized and private investments were pouring in from both within and outside the country. More significantly, the reforms put huge amounts of money and economic prizes into their discretion. First, there was the dual-track system that came into being in 1981. Essentially a state of co-existence between the state-owned and privately-owned sectors, the dual track system
triggered price distortions where key commodities and materials could be bought at lower “planned” prices and resold at higher “private” prices (Johnston 1997b). Second, there was also the policy of fiscal deregulation, which delegated tax-collecting responsibilities from the center to the provinces and enabled local discretion in the use as well as the retention of tax revenues. Finally, dismantling the state-owned enterprises gave local officials another big economic pie to distribute under the name of privatization.

All these newfound leverages came in at a pace that regulations and central controls could not – or did not – keep up with. Property rights, for example, remained ill-defined, and so did business practices and bureaucratic standard-operating-procedures (Johnston 1997b). In fact, even anti-corruption policies – the centerpiece of the government’s anti-corruption machinery – had not evolved much at all from the Revolutionary-era reliance on slogans, moral exhortations, and the infrequent show-trials of major offenders (Johnston 1997b). Inevitably, this resulted in an increase in available opportunities for rent-seeking and other corrupt behaviors, and opened new avenues for cadres to compensate themselves for the losses that the economic reforms incurred. They could, for example, hand out accesses to cheap “planned-price” goods in exchange for bribes, or tamper with account books to embezzle directly from the provinces’ funds, which, thanks to the reform, were put right under their control. These behaviors were not limited to civilian bureaucrats: military officials in the People’s Liberation Army, both central and local, had their shares of spoils too (Mulvenon 1998).

Corruption as Creator of Vested Interests

As a means of compensation, corruption may help earn the local government officials’ acquiescence to the reforms. However, to make these officials actually embrace the reforms and pursue it with enthusiasm, corruption needed to influence them through another channel – a channel that could also create vested interests in the continuation and expansion of the reforms. The foundation of this channel of corruption motives lies in the market-centered interpretation of corruption which states that

*A corrupted civil servant regards his public office as a business, the income of which he will... seek to maximize. The office becomes... a maximizing unit.* (van Klaveren 2002)

Under this interpretation, a corrupted provincial leader would be seen as a service supplier: his duties thus became his for-sale services, and the amount of bribe his selling price. Prior to reforms, the demand side of this market con-
sisted mostly of individuals seeking political favors and privileges. As reforms took place, however, an entire new group of “clients” emerged: Private entrepreneurs, both domestic and foreign, who sought entrance into the province as well as favorable accesses to limited resources and credits. For these clients, the value of the services equaled the potential profit of doing business in that particular province, while their prices were weighed against two alternatives to bribery: To get these privileges legally, and to relocate to another province, or even to outside China.

If it is indeed the case that corrupted local leaders wanted to maximize their incomes, they could not ignore the demand side of the market. Leaders could raise legal barriers to make it more costly not to bribe, but given the other alternatives to bribery, this would not really work. Entrepreneurs who perceived the legal procedures as too complicated and the bribes too unreasonable could simply do business somewhere else. Thus, to attract clients, local leaders would have to raise the value of their services, which also means making business more profitable for potential entrepreneurs. This would eventually lead to the adoption of a pro-business stance and the easing of non-bureaucratic barriers – taxes, infrastructure, labor and environmental regulations, and so on. To maximize their income from bribery, local government leaders in China would therefore become very sensitive to the needs of the private sector. More than simply letting reform happen, these leaders would seek to encourage it by directing the flow of resources, credits and investment so as to promote the profitability of local businesses. The more profits firms made, the higher the value of the leaders’ services became, and the more profits they made for themselves. As a result, the interests of local leaders could become aligned with those of entrepreneurs through bribery; through repeated interaction, they may even be reinforced into a stable official-entrepreneur partnership. This entire process also turned these government officials into CEOs of their own province-sized mega industrial-commerce complexes.

Did corruption motives exist in reality? Some empirical evidence

The channels suggested in this paper only present some possible ways in which corruption motives can influence local officials’ attitude to reforms. They should not be interpreted as an exhaustive list, nor taken prematurely as what actually happened in post-Mao China. To come to that conclusion, further empirical evidence is definitely required.

There is no question that corruption existed during China’s economic reform and had been on the rise in both frequency and intensity. It is also a consensus that anti-corruption policies have been inconsistent and ineffective due to the entrenched interests of powerful elites in the corrupt status-quo
Corruption Sanded the Wheels of Economics, but Greased Political Reforms (Gong 1994; Sun 2004). Less clear, though, is whether these corruption incidents functioned according to the logic that this paper suggests. Given scarcely any documentation of provincial Communist cadres’ thought processes behind their corruption behaviors, and that exposed anti-corruption incidents are often deeply politicized (Johnston 1997b), it is difficult to determine whether corrupt cadres engaged in corruption truly as a means of “exit” or not. What we know, nevertheless, is that corruption is often linked with the emergence of “naked officials” – officials who moved their families and assets abroad (X. Li 2012). Since the reform, this practice has been gaining in popularity: China’s Ministry of Commerce reports that between 1978 and 2003, more than 4000 officials have fled China in this manner, carrying with them more than $50 billion worth of assets (Xie 2010). If we accept the connection between corruption and the practice, then what emerges is an image of a cadre corps who engaged in corrupt acts while simultaneously trying to sever their ties with the regime and society. This image is indeed consistent with our “exit” channel of corruption.

Compared to the first channel, the other two are even better supported by empirical evidence. To begin with, evidence consistent with the compensation channel of corruption includes observation of (1) a rise in corruption at local levels during the reform, and (2) a shift in the types of corruption. With regard to the corrupt officials’ background, Sun (2004) noted that reform-era corruption began at the regulatory offices of the traditional planned economy, and then moved toward chief executives at local levels as the reforms progressed. In addition, whereas in the pre-reform period, transgressions typical of a planned economy such as privilege seeking dominated, such forms of corruption had been largely overshadowed by new material-based methods, most notably bribery and embezzlement. From occupying a measly 1% of all corruption cases in 1979, these two quickly rose to 70.7% in 1986, 83.9% in 1989, and altogether accounted for more than half of all corruption cases since the reform through the 1990s (Sun 2004, 38–42). Admittedly, this evidence is only indirect: on their own they cannot point out whether these corrupt acts were enough compensation for the officials’ losses. Nevertheless, they show a pattern that is consistent with our expectation: Local governments did indeed engage more in corruption following the reforms, and they did so through methods that created direct illicit material, as opposed to nepotistic gains in status.6

While the shifts in the type and origin of corruption lent some support to the compensation channel, the vested-interest channel is consistent with

6This is important, considering that there are many other non-material seeking types of activities that were classified as corruption in China, such as moral decadence, misappropriation, privilege seeking, or negligence (Sun 2004)
observations of two phenomena of China’s political environment. First, it was the rise of the Princelings (taizi dang) – descendants of high ranking Party members – into entrepreneurial prominence. Previously, these Princelings have enjoyed extraordinary political power within the Party (Xiang 2012), but in the post-reform years, their influence has extended to the private sector as well. Major businesses and economic institutions currently controlled by these Princelings include, but are not limited to, the State Development Bank of China, China Satellite Communications Corporation, the automobile firm Shanghai Auto, and the telecommunication service provider China Unicom (New York Times 2012; Wall Street Journal 2011). Beside the Party elders’ direct descendants, the businesses of prominent CCP leaders’ family members (e.g. Wen Jiabao’s – see New York Times 2012) were another demonstration of the close tie between cadres and entrepreneurs in post-reform China.

Second, empirical studies of the provincial dynamics during the reform demonstrated that indeed there existed fierce competition between provinces for more economic growth and foreign investment. Among these studies, Gallagher (2004) observed that in an effort to compete for foreign direct investment, local governments and Party-sponsored trade unions frequently colluded with entrepreneurial managers to liberalize labor policy, while several others noticed the existence of a “development zone fever” phenomenon, in which provinces, following the success of the initial Special Economic Zones (SEZs), engaged in fierce competition to “apply” for SEZ status (Yang and Wang 2008; Zhang 2011). Altogether, these observations suggest that localities indeed engaged in a pro-business competition, while also reinforcing the notion that this competition involved a form of partnership between local officials and local private entrepreneurs. Again, this is only indirect support to the proposition that corruption creates vested interests; nonetheless, they demonstrate that the actual patterns of corruption and local politics were indeed consistent with the expectations of the main “corruption gains” hypothesis.

Conclusion

Findings

This paper examined three possible explanations for the success of Chinese economic reform in light of the local governments’ supposed resistance. It has refuted two of the three hypotheses, and, with the last hypothesis standing, explored the mechanisms through which it could have been realized. Finally, the paper provided a preliminary look into available empirical evidence to identify possible evidence that is consistent with this hypothesis. As it turns out, the preponderance of evidence lies in favor of the “corrup-
tion gains counterbalanced local resistance” hypothesis, as opposed to the null hypothesis and the alternate hypothesis. The null hypothesis was rejected on the ground that the competition between reformers and conservatives within the CCP was a real, undecided battle, in which local officials had both a significant role to play and powerful means to let its opinions be heard. The alternate hypothesis was also eventually rejected. In this case, it was because (1) local officials’ political advancement had no direct connection to economic successes, (2) picking-the-winner behaviors could explain neither the provinces’ preference for the reformist camp nor their overwhelming enthusiasm.

In contrast with these two hypotheses, the corruption gains explanation alone can account for the success of the reforms in overcoming local resistance, as well as the “double paradox” of rapid growth and rising corruption in China, by suggesting that corruption facilitated the initiation and created vested interests in the economic reform from within the localities. The hypothesis is also consistent with available empirical evidence. Even if the empirical consistency is not yet a definite proof of the hypothesis’s validity, it nevertheless demonstrates a compelling case for the interpretation.

Implications

The finding that corruption has an important role in the Chinese economic reform is first and foremost a direct hit against the dominant contempt for political corruption. While the literature has viewed corruption as universally harmful, this finding suggests that there is at least one way in which corruption can play a crucial role in an economy’s progress. This challenge is made even more remarkable by the fact that it leaves all the established findings on the relationship between corruption and economic inefficiency or societal injustice untouched. In other words, the paper advances the case that corruption can be necessary even when all its shortcomings and harms are still present.

Another impact of this research’s findings can be found in the literature on the Chinese economic reform. The research identifies local officials as the key determinant of reforms. These stakeholders started off with a negative disposition toward reforms, and had to be won over if the reform was to go forward. In a sense, this research extends the local developmentalism literature (Oi 1995; Shirk 1993), by continuing to attribute the dynamism of China’s reforms to a bottom-up process, even when the official push toward reforms came top-down from the center. In another sense, it actually provides a more nuanced view of the reform’s political logic. Whereas previous literature regards the provinces as autonomous agents and views them as a coherent unit vis-à-vis the center, this paper shifts the level of analysis to the individual official in the provincial governments, and repaints the picture in deeply personal colors.
Finally, the research findings change some of our perceptions of Chinese politics, while at the same time reinforcing several others. In fact, it can be seen as a mediation of some conflicting perceptions. While the research makes a case for local, informal politics as opposed to the structural or hierarchical models, it nonetheless relies on several analyses of Chinese institutions, such as the veto power of the Central Committee. As the study puts these two puzzle pieces together, it thus tacitly advances the implication that informal politics are ultimately based on a set of institutionalized rule-of-the-game rather than having an independent origin.

*Methodological Shortcomings*

For a well-rounded examination of the question, the paper taps into a diverse range of evidence. At some points, it uses official CCP documents; at others, it relies on inductive reasoning based on historical events; still, at some points, it also borrows and incorporates secondary analyses into its arguments. However, since the pool of evidence is so multi-faceted and often shrouded in uncertainty, there is an inherent risk of cherry-picking evidence. The fear is not as much of bias as it is of overlooking more complicated pieces of evidence in favor of the immediately available. In addition, selecting evidence from such a variety of sources also takes away some of the research’s methodological consistency.

Besides problems with empirical evidence, this research may also be criticized at some points for oversimplification. This criticism comes from its approach of analyzing big issues in terms of their smaller subcomponents, such as when the null hypothesis is divided into three rationales for separate examination. Such an approach, while convenient, carries the risk of committing a fallacy of exhaustive hypotheses; consequently, future studies should be on the lookout in case new evidence reveals other possibilities and hypotheses that have yet to be covered in this research.

*Generalizability*

On one side, the paper leaves future studies with a few shortcomings to address. On another, it also poses an important question: To what extent can these findings be generalized to beyond the China case? Given the uniqueness of the Chinese reforms, it is obvious that the same conclusion can hardly be replicated in any other country. Nonetheless, the reforms also featured several common political characteristics, such as a state of local-central incongruity and/or the entrenched elite interests in the status quo. These characteristics have plenty of foreign equivalents, which hold promising prospects for future comparative studies.
Corruption Sanded the Wheels of Economics, but Greased Political Reforms

To examine the generalizability of this current research, future studies should best not jump ahead into radically different contexts. Comparing China to the developed Scandinavian social democracies, for example, would be too much of a stretch. Rather, realistic efforts should focus more on countries that share political resemblance (e.g. Russia – see Sun (1999)), regional proximity (e.g. other East Asian emerging economies), or physical size (e.g. India).

Among these possibilities, the most prominent one is perhaps China’s next door neighbor Vietnam. In fact, very few countries – if any at all – can share commonalities with the China case to such an extent. Politically, both countries were (and still are) governed by their respective Communist Parties, whose resilience has kept them alive and well-off even after the fall of the Soviet bloc. Economically, the growth-and-corruption patterns of the two countries, both pre- and post-reform, can also be considered parallel. Most importantly, above all, is the fact that Vietnam also experienced its own marketization reforms in 1986. Termed Doi Moi (Renovation), the reforms entailed many aspects identical to the Chinese forerunner, most notably the “net contract system” (Khoan gon), fiscal decentralization policies, and the opening of Vietnam’s economy to foreign trade and investment (Vo 1990). Future researches can definitely take advantage of these qualitative similarities: they can use Vietnam as a starting point for any further generalization and make inferences on the determinants of corruption’s effect based on existing comparisons of the two regimes’ economics, politics, and even culture. Would corruption still be necessary when economic necessities had already created intense pressure to reform? How did the Vietnamese Communist Party’s greater internal stability (Kerkvliet, Chan, and Unger 1998) and higher accountability (Abrami, Malesky, and Zheng 2007) affect the channels for corruption motives? Questions like these, if properly explored, will provide great insights into the new research avenues opened up by this research paper. As soon as they do, the literature will be able to move toward a better understanding of not only China’s, but also our modern world’s corruption phenomenon.

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7Vietnam has a CPI ranking of 112th (Transparency International 2011) and its growth rate, in comparison to China’s 8.75%, was an average of 7% by the late 1990s (Federal Research Division 2005)


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Oy Gevalt! Jewish Violent Extremism in the West Bank: A Framework for Analysis

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Settler violence began in the 1980s as ideologically motivated phenomenon that targeted Palestinians who rejected halachic rule. However, it devolved from pointed attacks in the name of messianic redemption to normalized aggression. The transition from one type of violence to another reflects a shift in the relationship between four primary variables: ideology, Israeli government support, diaspora support, and impunity. This paper establishes a framework for understanding settler violence by analyzing the relationship between the four primary drivers from the 1980s to the present. In doing so, this paper explores the political and strategic interests that make prospects for addressing political violence in the occupied Palestinian territories unlikely in the near future.¹

Palestinian Terrorism Drives Jewish Violent Extremism

The conventional thinking for upwards of four decades has been that Jewish settlers in the Israeli-occupied West Bank commit violence in response to incidents of Palestinian terror. However, if settler violence were a product of Palestinian terrorism, one would expect that the 95% decrease in Palestinian attacks in the last five years (from 2007-2012) would yield a parallel decrease in settler attacks (Munayyer 2012, 2). Instead, the frequency of settler violence has increased by 315% (Munayyer 2012). Such data suggest that Jewish violent extremism is not reactionary self-defense, but rather a complex and evolving system of violence.

Originally, settler violence was an ideologically driven phenomenon seeking to return Jewish rule to biblical Israel and invoke Messianic redemption. Early instances of violence reflected careful planning and strategic, symbolic value. This is no longer the case. Over the past twenty-five years, settler violence has gradually devolved into a normalized culture of aggression. Today, Palestinians and international observers report an average of 2.6 settler attacks each day (Munayyer 2012). Instead of Palestinian political leaders, today’s victims are overwhelmingly children and the elderly (OCHAopT 2009). In 2011, the six most common types of violence, making up seventy-five percent of all violent attacks against Palestinians, were: arson, stone throwing, destruction of property, vehicular attack, shootings, and physical attacks (see: Figure 1). Other types of violence included stabbing, poisoning, and kidnapping.

¹This work is dedicated to Colby College Professor of Government Guilain Denoeux, for his patience, wisdom, and encouragement.
If settler violence is no longer the result of a carefully planned, ideologically driven strategy, what explains its prevalence today? After providing a brief historical background, I examine the four primary variables that drive settler violence. I discuss these variables in the chronological order that they emerged as decisive factors: cosmic war, Israeli government support, diaspora support, and impunity. These four concurrent and mutually reinforcing factors comprise a framework for understanding how Jewish settlers have the motive, means, and opportunity to commit violence.

My analysis puts forth two models for understanding settler violence in the West Bank (see: pp. 27-28), but the two should not be regarded as independent phases of Jewish violent extremism. Although the nature of settler violence today is significantly different than it was four decades ago, the devolution into normalized aggression does not reflect the end of one type of violence and the beginning of another. Rather, it suggests that the relationship between the four factors has changed over time. While ideology used to be the primary motivation of violence, the lack of punitive consequences that followed granted settlers a symbolic blank check to escalate the frequency and nature of their attacks. Now, rampant impunity is the most decisive variable in explaining the culture of violence in the West Bank.

In order to understand the emergence of impunity and the changing relationship between the variables leading to settler violence, I examine the components of those variables that compound their effect on settler violence. The interaction of these components suggests that although settler violence itself is rooted in ideology, the reason that it has sustained itself for so long is also due to factors independent of religious extremism. Specifically, the impunity that allows for continued settler violence primarily stems from strategic, political, and personal incentives that are sometimes independent of Jewish extremism.
Building the Settlement: 1967 and the Messianic Era

“The land of Israel, for the people of Israel, based on the Torah of Israel” (Whitfield 2009, 53).

Understanding the birth of Jewish violent extremism requires an understanding of the ideological context within which it exists. Jewish extremists believe that God will not send the second Messiah to redeem the world until the Jewish people reclaim the land God gave them, from “the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines and from the Desert to the River” (Exodus 23:21). These boundaries included territory outside of Israel’s control until the Arab-Israeli War that lasted from June sixth until June eleventh, 1967 and established what is known as the “Green Line.” The “Green Line” is an imaginary border marking the borders of Thus, the story of Jewish violent extremism arguably begins in the summer of 1967, when Israel took control of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, and the Sinai Peninsula. Radicals saw the victory as a sign from God that the time had come to reclaim Judea and Samaria. They embraced the miracle that would thenceforth mark the beginning of the Messianic Era.

From the late 1960s to the late 1990s, Gush Emunim—the leading Jewish extremist organization—recruited groups of twelve to twenty families to establish enclaves of Jewish communities, known as settlements, across the West Bank (Whitfield 2009). By the end of 2011, there were 123 settlements and 100 illegal outposts\(^2\) in the West Bank (Montell 2011). From 2011 to the beginning of 2012, the settler population grew by 4.9%, nearly three times Israel’s national growth rate (Montell 2011).

Cosmic War

“When you are in the midst of a divine process, and God is on your
\(^2\)Like settlements, outposts are also Jewish communities located east of the Green Line. The Green Line is an imaginary boundary that marks Israeli-occupied territory conquered during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Following the 1967 war, land “beyond the Green Line” included Jerusalem, the Golan Heights, the West Bank, the Sinai Peninsula, and the Gaza Strip. Today, land “beyond the Green Line” typically refers to East Jerusalem and the West Bank. The difference between outposts and settlements, however, is that the government technically recognizes settlements as Jewish neighborhoods while it recognizes outposts as military necessities. The outpost/settlement designation reflects the international laws of war. An occupying country may not transfer its civilian population into an occupied state. However, it may establish military outposts for purposes of security for the duration of the occupation. Thus, the government establishes Jewish communities in the West Bank under the guise of a military outpost so that it is not violating *jus in bello*.\]
side, you gradually lose your sensitivity to the suffering of the other. You become impervious, you see the big picture and little things like human beings disappear” (Zertal, Eldar and Eden 2007, 4).

Settler leadership did not originally call for violence against Palestinians. Many ideologues believed that Palestinians played a necessary role in re-creating the biblical landscape as long as they accepted Jewish rule (Sprinzak 1998). The threshold between Jewish extremism and Jewish violent extremism reflects a shift towards what professor of religious studies Mark Juergensmeyer terms “cosmic warfare” (Juergensmeyer 2003). Cosmic warfare refers to an ideological mindset through which religious radicals apply religious language to circumstances on the ground. For example, God tells Moses that if the people living in the nations He left for the Jews “refuse to make peace and they engage you in battle, lay siege to that city” (Deuteronomy 20:12-14). It was not until Palestinians began resisting Jewish rule that ideological extremists turned to violent tactics. Thus, while the story of Jewish violent extremism in the West Bank begins in 1967, the violence itself did not begin until the late 1970s, and the international community did not recognize it as an organized phenomenon until 1980 (OCHAoPT 2008).

The cosmic war mindset does not account for external factors independent of religion. Thus, radical extremists could not understand Palestinian resistance to Jewish rule as a rational, grievance-based response to occupation. Instead, they saw it as a challenge to the legitimacy of Jewish ideology. Because radicals regard religious language as definitive revelations, any individual or action that contradicts its edicts becomes a cosmic threat to a greater world redemption. This creates a bifurcated worldview that understands the present as a clash between order and chaos. Radical settlers viewed Palestinian resistance as heretical, rendering Palestinian leaders legitimate targets of violence.

Although Palestinian rejection of Jewish rule initiated the cosmic war, its escalation is a function of three other factors: disconfirmation, vigilantism, and isolation from mainstream society. As ideology began playing less of a role in motivating violence throughout the 1980s and 1990s, settlers less frequently used Jewish language to justify violence. However, in the early days of violent extremism, disconfirmation, vigilantism, and isolation intensified the perception of cosmic war and drove extremists to commit violence.

*The Dangers of Being Wrong: Events of Disconfirmation*

Disconfirmation refers to any significant event that seemingly discredits the
radical belief that Israel’s military victory in 1967 marked the beginning of the Messianic era. The three most significant events of disconfirmation thus far have been Israel’s military defeat in 1973, the Oslo II Accords in 1995 (Sprinzak 1998), and the disengagement from Gaza in 2005. According to extremist ideology, the 1967 conquest over Arab territory is irreversible. When extremist ideology proves so drastically incorrect, one would expect radicals to question (and even stray from) the belief that the Six Day War marked the beginning of the Messianic era. However, events of disconfirmation actually magnify the perception of cosmic war, creating an even stronger push towards violence.

Disconfirmation leads to group radicalization by weeding out ideological moderates, leaving behind a hardline, radical core. For example, following the 1973 defeat, disillusioned moderates rationalized that the Messianic era must not have begun in 1967. Returning to religious language, “If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken” (Deuteronomy 18:22). Thus, the same ideological ambition that brings religious soft-liners into the settlements leads them to abandon the movement and return to mainstream society following events of disconfirmation (Sprinzak 1998).

The remaining radical core attempts to find biblical precedent to explain the Messianic setback. If the core is able to do so, the setback intensifies settlers’ radical beliefs by confirming—rather than disconfirming—the Messianic promise. However, if the group is unable to reverse the setback (as has thus far been the case), it interprets the setback as a test of whether the group is worthy of God’s plan (Sprinzak 1998). This magnifies the stakes of the cosmic war and often leads to intensified violence, as settlers prove their loyalty to God and their commitment to bringing Messianic salvation.

Twenty Minutes Away, but So Far Gone

Isolated from mainstream society, religious settlers rarely interact with moderates. Moderates represent a demographic that does not neatly fit into the category of “primary enemy” or “Messianic saviors.” However, because the settlements are removed from the moderate world, religious extremists do not have to account for a middle ground that is inconsistent with their worldview. The geographic separation from mainstream society therefore reinforces the legitimacy of cosmic war. By only interacting with themselves and with the primary enemy, religious fanatics confirm their bifurcated perceptions of the world with the constructively limited social context in which they live.

The separation from mainstream society also leads settlers to feed off of each other’s religious enthusiasm. Settlers form intense, intimate connections
with each other by eating together, living together, and spending time together. As the literature on violent extremism shows, ideologically homogenous social groups tend to radicalize as group members reinforce and deepen each other’s ideologies (Sageman 2008). The more radicals glorify and solidify their own beliefs, the more they vilify their adversaries. This heightens the intensity of the cosmic war, motivating settlers to commit acts of violence in a simultaneous attempt to rid the world of evil and to pave the way for world salvation.

Taking Security into Their Own Hands

One of the consequences of living in such close proximity to the primary enemy is that settlers often perceive the Palestinian security threat as significantly larger than it is. The gravity and all-encompassing nature of cosmic war leads settlers to hold a broader definition of imminent danger than do the Israeli security forces deployed to protect them. For example, on the eve of Purim in 1994, Baruch Goldstein heard Palestinians taunt “slaughter the Jews” outside the Tomb of the Matriarchs (Juergensmeyer 2003, 49). The soldiers on guard showed minimal reaction, but to Goldstein, this was a legitimate threat that could not go unpunished. When the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) fail to respond to incidents that extremists consider threatening, settlers believe that government forces are indifferent to the gravity of the cosmic war; Yehuda Etzion, who plotted to blow up the Dome of the Rock, referred to the Israeli government as an “ostrich that buries its head in the sand” (Sprinzak 1998, 120).

Feeling that the government does an inadequate job protecting them, Jewish settlers assume a proactive role in “safeguarding themselves” (Sprinzak 1998). During the first Palestinian popular uprising in 1987, settlers had little faith in the IDF’s ability to protect them and decided to engage in preemptive violence to deter Palestinian attacks (Sprinzak 1998). Less than a decade later, on the morning of Purim 1994, Baruch Goldstein felt a similar need to take settler security into his own hands: he entered Hebron’s Ibrahimi mosque during Friday prayers and fired 111 shots from his Galili assault rifle at Palestinian Muslims (Juergensmeyer 2003). These actions stemmed from a belief that the Jewish people have the right and obligation to ensure their security when the government fails to prioritize the safety of its own people (Cromer 2004).

It all Began with State Support

The success of the settlement enterprise in its first few years reconfirmed the legitimacy of the 1967 Messianic promise. While many extremists attributed this early success to God, the settlement enterprise never would have survived
without the support of the government. Furthermore, it is unlikely that settler violence would have evolved into systematic violence without the explicit and implicit government support it received. The increase in extremist attacks against Palestinians between 1977 and 1992 directly correlates with the watershed transition of political power from the Labor party to the Likud, a party ideologically aligned with settlers, after the 1977 elections.

To say that Likud was sympathetic to the settler agenda would be a grave understatement. Upon visiting an unofficial settlement in the Qedum region, Prime Minister-elect Menachem Begin stated, “These are liberated territories which belong to the Jewish people. The new government will call upon young people to come and settle the land” (Zertal, Eldar & Eden 2007, 55). With Likud in power in 1977, voters and members of Knesset (MKs) effectively pressured more soft-line policy makers to support the settlement enterprise. Settlers’ tax breaks increased from 5% to 7% during Likud’s first year in power (Bassok 2003). Within eight years, 32% of the Knesset represented the Jewish extremist agenda (Lustick 1988).

Begin was not the only Likudnik to facilitate the expansion of settlements and settler violence. Right-wing MKs also used their power in various ministries to bolster the radical agenda. As minister of housing, Ariel Sharon used his leverage to expand the settlement enterprise: in 1992 alone, Sharon approved 6,200 construction starts in the occupied territories (Zertal, Eldar & Eden 2007). In 2001, the Ministry of Industry and Trade transferred 6.3 million dollars to settlements located in areas occupied by Israel following the 1967 Arab-Israeli war (Settlement Monitor 2003). Just four years later, in 2005, the treasury allocated 13% of the fiscal budget to West Bank settlers who made up only 3.9% of the Israeli population at the time (Defense for Children International 2012).

The ascendance of Israel’s radical right to political power blurred the boundaries between the settlement lobby’s ability to pressure the government from the outside and its ability to sway policy from the inside. For example, Ariel Sharon appointed his long-time friend and head of Gush Emunim as consultant to the minister of settlement affairs (Pedahzur 2012). The line between settlers and the government that is supposed to regulate them remains nebulous today. When the economic decline in 2003 drove the government to cancel settlers’ tax benefits, Minister of Foreign Affairs Avigdor Lieberman—a settler himself—arranged a deal with the treasury to bolster financial benefits for Israel’s more ideological settlements. Sixty select settlements would receive tax breaks at a rate of 13% (double the percentage it was before) while other secular settlements would receive none (Bassok 2003).

Unlike cosmic war, government support to the settlements continues to be as important (perhaps even more important) in motivating settler violence
today as it was in the 1970s. While international pressure inhibits the government from overtly establishing new settlements, it still provides generous tax breaks, education benefits, and housing loans to settlers. Israeli policy-makers bypass bureaucratic roadblocks by funneling money into existing settlement municipalities. These municipalities then allocate the money to bolster illegal outposts or expand existing settlements. Continued government support legitimizes the radical worldview, incentivizes moving into Judea and Samaria, and facilitates impunity by turning a blind eye to ideologically-motivated violence. Thus, although government support may be less transparent today than it was forty years ago, it still plays just as decisive of a role in fueling and enabling Jewish violent extremism in the West Bank.

Although government support for the radical agenda largely stems from Likud’s ideological affinity to Jewish extremism,\(^3\) the Israeli government operates within a geo-political context. Ideology, therefore, is only one of the variables affecting Israeli government support. The other two most salient factors are political interests, and civil society influence.

**Strategic Political Interests in Palestine: The Top Priority**

In the early days of occupation, even the moderate-minded Labor party recognized the strategic benefits of establishing Jewish settlements in significant regions of the West Bank. On the one hand, settlements could serve as useful bargaining chips in future Arab-Israeli negotiations. On the other hand, maintaining control over hilltop regions—known as “the five fist holds”—along the coastal plain would allow Israel to defend itself against a surprise attack from neighboring Arab countries (Zertel, Eldar & Eden 2007, 8).

These strategic political considerations still drive Israel’s settlement policy today. The government categorizes settlements as Priority A, Priority B, or No Priority (Lein 2002). The National Priority system reflects broader Israeli interests in maximizing state territory in the event of a two-state solution (Lein 2002). Most Priority A areas are located in close proximity to the Green Line, typically less than a half-hour drive from Jerusalem or Tel Aviv. Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations thus far indicate that settlements with the highest concentration of Jews will purportedly become part of Israel in a series of land swaps with the Palestinian Authority. This creates an incentive for the Israeli government to expand both the geography and population of settlements in which it has a strategic interest.

Because the government wants to maximize Jewish demography in stra-
tegic strongholds, it offers discounts on leasing land, priority for university scholarship, grants for agricultural development, housing loans, subsidized mortgages, free transportation to school, grants for research and industrial development, and tax reductions to families willing to relocate to Priority A areas. In fact, to ensure that settlers remain in these high priority areas, half of all housing loans in Priority Area A turn into grants after fifteen years (Lein 2002). Thus, while the Likud government is best known for its ideological affinity to the radical agenda, its policies also reflect a degree of pragmatism.

Although political considerations largely drive government support, they also limit the extent to which Israeli politicians can bolster the settlements. Israel has long justified the settlement movement by claiming that customary international law allows it to maintain a temporary military presence in the territories for “security necessities.” In an effort to bypass international law, Israel funds and manages over 100 de-facto settlements under the guise of “military outposts” (B’Tselem 2011, 32). However, the international community increasingly investigates the legitimacy of Israel’s claim and applies severe pressure on it to evacuate these illegal outposts. This creates a conflict between political realities and ideological ambition. The government is a political entity above all else, and as such, it tends towards the former when it cannot reconcile the two. Thus, while strategic incentives drive the Israeli government to support the settlements, they can also render it susceptible to becoming a target of the violence it enables.

Political Interests in Domestic Policy: Immigration and the Settlements

Following the end of the Cold War, right-wing Israeli politicians feared that diaspora Jews from the former Soviet Union would immigrate to secular countries—namely the United States—instead of Israel (Pedahzur 2012). The Shamir government lured emigrating Jews to Israel with promises of employment opportunities, comfortable housing, and state subsidies (Pedahzur 2012). The plan was problematically successful; Israel absorbed just under one million immigrants from the former Soviet Union, increasing its population by nearly twenty percent (Ministry of Immigrant Absorption 1990).

The population increase triggered a housing crisis that the government was ill-equipped to address. The wave of immigration created a need for more land and more houses. Between 1990 and 1992, the Israeli government invested $1.3 million in building 18,000 homes east of the Green Line (Sabella 1993). By the mid-1990s, settlements were no longer just safe havens for the religiously inclined. They were also inexpensive absorption centers for immi-
grants who could not afford housing in Israel proper. The absorption crisis in the early 1990s created a domestic motive independent of religious fervor and of Israeli-Palestinian strategy that led the government to support the expansion of settlements.

*Winning Hearts and Minds: Civil Society Influence*

As a Parliamentary state, political party members tend to appease public opinion for their own personal interests in maintaining power and securing re-election. Following the 1967 war, 45-50% of Israeli voters affiliated with the religious right (Sprinzak 1998). In a public surge of patriotism, even the secular community aligned with the radical agenda to inhabit the territories. In fact, it was secular Jews who spearheaded the “Movement for a Greater Israel.” The movement’s founding manifesto claimed, “the whole of Eretz Yisrael is now in the hands of the Jewish people, and just as we are not allowed to give up the State of Israel, we are not allowed to give up the land of Israel” (Schenker 1994, 729). This gave the radical agenda significant leverage over the Labor party’s policies. For example, although the Labor party hesitated to approve settlements beyond the five security hilltops, Moshe Dayan ultimately conceded to extremists’ demands to add a “sixth fist,” the Etzion Bloc (Zertel, Eldar & Eden 2007).

Under the Likud government, settlers did not struggle to win support of the Knesset. However, public opinion turned against the religious right when settler violence became more frequent during the first Palestinian uprising in 1987. By May of 1989, settlers broke into Palestinian homes every night, damaging property and harming Palestinian civilians (Zertel, Eldar & Eden 2007). The changing nature of settler violence led the mainstream community to question the legitimacy of the claim that settlers were only violent in acts of self-defense. A public opinion poll from that summer found that 73% of Israelis disapproved of settler violence against Palestinians (Zertel, Eldar & Eden 2007). This created a conflict of interests for the government, whose support of settlers suffered increasing criticism from a resentful public.

Even in the face of international and domestic pressure today, the government continues to support religious extremists. In order to maintain power in a parliamentary democracy, Likud relies on the support from the other radical parties that make up its coalition: the National Religious Party, Shas, and United Torah Judaism. Taking a harsh stance on settlements risks losing the support of the coalition, and subsequently, being ousted from power. The strong networks of nonviolent extremists living in Israel proper comprise the extremist parties in the coalition, enabling the radical right to force the hand of Israeli policy in favor of the radical agenda, even though it has largely lost
the public’s sympathy.

In an effort to appease large-scale dissent from critics outside government, and members of the religious right on the inside, government support of the settlements became less transparent. However, the move away from overt support may actually be beneficial for the radical agenda. Using linguistic loopholes and political ambiguities, Likud’s right-wing government increased its fiscal support for the settlements without disclosing it to the public. The treasury’s books do not stipulate which funds go to the territories, allowing politicians to file funds used for building settler Yeshivas as general education expenditures (Bassok 2003). As a result, critics have a difficult time following the trail of shekels from the illegal outposts and ever-expanding settlements to the Knesset. Without having to disclose which funds go to the territories and which go to Israel proper, the government enjoys a degree of freedom in furthering the radical agenda under the guise or reinvesting capital into the country.

The American Jewish Community

About a decade after Likud took control of the Israeli government, the American Jewish community emerged as a key actor in Jewish extremism. The growing role of the diaspora community in enabling settler violence reflects the growing influence that lobbies (specifically, AIPAC) had on U.S. politics and the increasing connection between the Israeli and American publics. Throughout the last three decades, U.S. politicians increasingly conceded to demands, and relied on fiscal contributions, from special interest groups. Like Israel’s constituency of nonviolent extremists living in Israel proper, the Jewish lobby has crossed the imaginary threshold of influence in American politics. Substantial fiscal and voting power provides the Jewish community critical leverage over American policy. It uses this leverage to ensure the future of the settlement enterprise and discourages American presidents from implementing policies against it.5

The American Jewish community funnels money into settlements as tax-deductible donations through registered 501(c)(3) organizations. As of 2010, these non-profits gave a total of $308,097,520 to Jewish settlements (“Role of Shame” 2012). In addition to spreading Jewish ideology through funding Yeshivas directed by radical settlers,6 these funds also provide the physical

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5 As recently as 2011, President Obama utilized America’s UN Security Council veto against a resolution that would universally condemn settlements and halt their expansion.

6 For example, American Friends of Yeshiva High School of Kiryat Arba annually gives $370,000 to a Yeshiva headed by Rabbi Dov Lior (see: “Financial Report of Settlements by US Non-profits,” 1). Lior is one of the leading Rabbis offering rabbinical sanction for Jewish violence against Palestinians. He played a crucial role in recruiting settler extremists for the
means for settlers to carry out violence. For example, One Israel Fund’s project “No More Jewish Victims” provides settlers with “vital security equipment,” perimeter surveillance systems, and off-road vehicles capable of “chasing terrorists who flee into the hills of Judea and Samaria” (“No More Jewish Victims” 2012).

Significantly, diaspora support and Israeli government support are inexplicably intertwined. As American non-profits provide ideological settlers with assault rifles and other military weaponry, the government of Israel passes laws to facilitate diaspora assistance. For example, in the spring of 2011, the government passed a law that granted gun license preferences to settlers (Cohen 2011). Government support and diaspora support are thus mutually reinforcing. As the relationship between the two becomes more intractable, each will likely enjoy increased capacity to facilitate settler violence. While it is aided by the Israeli government, diaspora support stems from two primary sources: the personal connections between settlers and American Jews and perceived Palestinian threat to security.

Friends and Family

As of 2011, 71% of settlers were born in the diaspora (B’Tselem 2011). As discussed above, some of these alien-born settlers emigrated from the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s but most non-Israeli settlers are Americans living in ideological settlements. Settlements typically fall under three main categories: quality of life, religious, and ideological. Quality of life settlements are comprised of individuals who choose to move beyond the Green Line to increase their quality of life by taking advantage of government benefits offered only to settlers. While there is often overlap between ideological and religious settlements, ideological refers specifically to settlements inhabited by those with extremist worldviews. It is within these ideological settlements that most Jewish violent extremism emerges. These American settlers have families and friends back home, personalizing the settlements in the eyes of many American Jews. As a result, American Jews offer symbolic and financial support to the settlement enterprise. In their eyes, supporting the settlements is not a matter of ideological affiliation or religious fervor. It is a matter of supporting their co-workers, neighbors, and cousins.

The Palestinian Threat: “We Can Prevent the Terror Before the Tragedy Occurs” –One Israel Fund

Although the evidence indicates that Palestinian violence does not drive settler Jewish Underground, and continues to spread anti-Arab extremism today.
violence, the American Jewish community uses the perceived threat of terrorism to encourage Americans to donate to the settlements. One Israel Fund propagandizes that terrorist attacks have increased in the last decade, that Palestinian terrorists murder Jews in the middle of the night, and that American funding helps save hundreds of lives against terrorist offenses. These messages strike emotional chords in the hearts of Americans who often have strong personal connections to settlers. Regardless of whether the threat of terrorism is legitimate, American Jews act on their fear for the security of their friends and loved ones. Thus, the perceived fear of Palestinian terrorism motivates the diaspora community to supply settlers with the means to carry out acts of violence even though it does not motivate the violence itself.

Judicial Leniency

“Most of the violence we experienced was not with the Palestinians. They didn’t have a chance. There is nothing they can do facing the soldiers. It was the settlers who were violent. [...] Because no one will do anything about them. Not the police, not your company commander, no one.” – Former IDF Soldier (Breaking the Silence 2010)

In the early days of Jewish violent extremism, the opportunity to commit violence came from Jewish Law: religious ideology permits violence if a Rabbi sanctions it. Because the settlements attracted radical rabbis, such sanction was not difficult to acquire. In fact, many rabbis—namely Rabbis Dov Lior, Zvi Leiberman, and Meir Yehuda Getz—glorified settlers seeking approval for violence against Palestinians. These Rabbis typically cited din rodef (law of the pursuer), which allowed the extrajudicial killing of a non-Jew with murderous intent.

In the few instances where the Israeli judicial system held Jewish perpetrators accountable for their crimes, settlers received light sentences with early parole. For example, members of the Jewish Underground who bombed six Palestinian mayors in June of 1980 received light sentences relative to the law (Zertal, Eldar & Eden 2007). The judge ignored the prosecutor’s argument for strong retribution and lessened the sentences from “attempted murder” to “grave damage” (Zertal, Eldar & Eden 2007, 93). The tendency towards legal leniency illustrates the interconnected nature of government support and cosmic war ideology in the early days of Jewish violent extremism.

Legal leniency led extremist rabbis to adopt looser interpretations of Jewish Law. Din rodef no longer applied only to Palestinians with intent to kill Jews; it also applied to Palestinians whose presence indirectly threatened Jew-
Jewish Violent Extremism in the West Bank

ish life. Testing the Israeli judicial system’s tolerance for violent extremism, radical rabbis continued broadening the confines of Jewish law until it validated any act of violence against Palestinians. One Yeshiva dean from the extremist Yitzhar settlement issued a statement claiming that anyone who directly or indirectly aides a combatant against a Jew, anyone who supports a nation that is against the Jews, and any baby who might grow up and harm a Jew is a rodef (pursuer) (Blumenthal 2010). While he was careful not to explicitly mention Palestinians, his words offered a blanket endorsement for all settler violence against them. Furthermore, his words represented a one-versus-all perception of cosmic warfare that revered non-Arabs and non-Palestinians as potential cosmic enemies; those tangentially involved in resisting occupation could be legitimate targets.

By the early 2000s, legal leniency became legal impunity. The Human Rights Group Yesh Din found that only fourteen percent of cases filed alleging settler violence in 2011 resulted in indictments (Yesh-Din 2011). Seventy-three percent of the cases failing to lead to indictments were closed on the grounds of “perpetrator unknown” or “lack of evidence” (Yesh-Din 2011). Even when the Israeli civil authorities did open investigations, over ninety percent of them failed to comply with investigation standards (Yesh-Din 2012). Settlers believe they are above the law, and the government’s reluctance to investigate incidents of settler violence gives them little reason to think otherwise. Jewish violent extremism now represents a culture of violence, with settlers regularly carrying out unprovoked attacks. There are three significant reasons this normalized aggression thrives: dual systems of law, lack of motive to indict, and failure to report violence.

One Land, Two Laws

Ninety percent of settler violence occurs within Area C of the West Bank, where Israel retains civil and security control pursuant to the Oslo II Accords of 1995 (Munayyer 2012). However, Israel codified the dual systems of law a year earlier, in 1994, when Attorney General Michael Ben-Yair issued a directive extending Israeli civil police jurisdiction to Jews living in the occupied territories (Ben-Yair 1994). Thenceforth, settlers would be subject to Israeli civil law while Palestinians remained subject to martial law. The directive was intended to deter incidents of settler violence and to provide more accountability for those incidents that did occur. However, the dual systems of law had the opposite effect. The government deployed minimal police to the territories, which de-facto institutionalized impunity because there were not enough police available to patrol the settlements or respond to reported violence. In the absence of law enforcement, settlers increased violence with the knowledge
that the extensive IDF presence left their victims with little opportunity to retaliate. In an effort to fill the void of limited security patrols, the Israeli government began funding civilian security officers—community watchdogs—to relieve some pressure the IDF and Israeli civilian police were facing. However, the CSO programs have only imparted upon radical settlers the military authority to carry out attacks against Palestinians, to force the IDF to carry out illegal orders, and to protect themselves from punitive legal consequences (Gurvitz 2013). Thus, what may have begun as a pragmatic response to limited police capacity ultimately exacerbated the dual systems of law in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The only way to end the dual systems of law in Area C would be to extend civil law to the Palestinians or to equally subject Israeli settlers to martial law; however, doing so would work at cross purposes with Israeli security and political concerns. In the absence of martial law, Israel would lose legitimate control over Area C unless it annexed those sections of the West Bank into Israel. Ending martial law without annexation would likely create security concerns from the American Jewish lobby, upset from the settler community, and increased nationalism from Palestinians in the West Bank. However, annexing occupied territory would likely receive significant international condemnation, violate international laws of war, challenge the Jewish demographic of Israel, and reveal Israel’s policies of institutionalized discrimination. There would be no way for Israel to justify the egregiously different standards of justice for Jews and Palestinians if both races were subject to the same standards of law.

**Turning a Blind Eye**

In 2011, when the Human Rights Group B’tselem inquired about 352 cases supposed to prosecute settler violence, the Israeli Civil Police revealed that they had closed 139 of the cases without investigation and had not even opened 112 others (B’Tselem 2011).

The Israeli government has political incentives not to indict violent settlers. It would be difficult for the Israeli government to justify the settlements while also prosecuting those living in them for political violence. In order to maintain the settlement enterprise, Israel needs to be able to argue that it is upholding its duty to protect the civilians in the occupied territories. This cannot happen in the wake of rampant cases of violence and discrimination. Furthermore, increasing investigations and prosecutions risk revealing the reality that the

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7For example, the Hague IV and its two subsequent protocols’ laws on occupation and Geneva IV article 27 guidelines for occupying forces.
government does not have control over its own citizens. Each of these interests decreases motivation to issue indictments against settlers and leads settlers to believe that they are accountable only to themselves. In a religious and political area as highly contentious as the West Bank, such an assumption increases the prospects for tensions to break into violence.

Training from the government, checks from the settlement

One of the reasons for failure to file police reports may be due to the Civilian Security Officers (CSO) programs in the settlements. CSOs are typically former Israeli soldiers living in the settlements who use their army training to work alongside the military in Area C of the West Bank. CSOs act as another layer of law enforcement. As a result, they have the authority to use military force against Palestinians. In positions of military authority, CSOs who commit instances of violence rarely report themselves to the authorities, and they often fail to report acts of violence committed by other community members. Yesh Din’s Yossi Gurvitz refers to CSOs as settlement sheriffs, claiming that they are more accountable to the values and norms of their communities than to the external law enforcement institutions that trained them (Gurvitz 2013).

While CSOs use their training and expertise from the IDF, they are not accountable to IDF commanding officers. As a result, CSOs can have their cake and eat it too: as civilian security officers, they are authorized to use military force; yet, they are not bound by military regulations and do not answer to the IDF chain of command. Because they receive their employment checks from the settlement councils rather than the IDF, CSOs are technically employees of Yesha Council (Gurvitz 2013). However, the funding for the CSOs officially comes from the federal government, making it unclear as to whether these civilian officers should answer to army commanders or local leaders.

Because the local councils tend to represent the more extreme members of the settlements, they rarely provide the oversight of law enforcement that they should. This gives CSOs leeway to abuse power and use their military authorization to carry out attacks on Palestinians. Authority without oversight creates a new level of institutionalized impunity for settlers who use the community policing systems as a means of exerting more Jewish power over neighboring Palestinian communities.8

8In a wave of contention among right-wing politicians following the 2013 Israeli elections, the government decided not to increase funding for the 210 existing CSOs in the West Bank (see: Lazaroff, Tovah. “Settlers Angry about Security Cuts.” JPost (Tel Aviv, Israel), February 27, 2013). Settler leadership viewed this as a budget cut that undermined the government’s commitment to security in the occupied territories. With Benjamin Netanyahu’s difficulty establishing a stable coalition, some radical settlers worry that Likud might succumb to pressure to take a stronger stance against impunity in the coming years.
Structural Barriers to Reporting Violence

The CSO program creates additional deterrents to reporting violence. The constant rotation of IDF soldiers means that witnesses to settler violence are rarely stationed at the post where the violence occurred by the time civil investigations begin. Aware of this, civilian security officers have more leeway to break military regulations and give illegal orders. CSOs in radical settlements reportedly threaten Palestinians with charges of conspiracy to commit terror in an effort to deter them from passing by settlement regions (Gurvitz 2013). They also give illegal orders to IDF forces, who cannot refuse them because of the ambiguous chain of command. In February 2013, CSOs in Bat Ayin ordered border patrols to forbid non-Jewish Israeli citizens from entering settlement regions (Gurvitz 2013). Such an order is illegal under Israeli law; however, there was no higher authority to question the CSOs orders.

The lack of legitimate legal accountability results in failure to report incidents of violence. Once a soldier reports settler violence, his or her commander is supposed to report violence to the police, who are then supposed to begin an investigation. One IDF soldier testified for Shovrim Shtika, an organization of Israeli soldiers speaking out against the realities of the dual system of law:

The policeman can’t do anything about it either. He can stop the kid, but everyone knows everyone there anyways. The policemen know the settlers, the policemen are frustrated, they know the kids, they know the parents, they know everyone—the stone throwing continues, no change. (Breaking the Silence 2010).

Normalized violence leads many soldiers to conclude—correctly—that impunity has become so deeply embedded into the culture of Area C that nothing can be done to hold these settlers accountable to their actions. As a result, many lose faith in legal mechanisms and choose not to report the violence at all.

A similar sense of hopelessness exists among Palestinians, whom military authorities often treat like perpetrators if and when they file complaints against settlers. Such was the case with Ibrahim a-Nawaj’ah, a Palestinian from Susya who underwent interrogation after reporting settlers for beating him with stones and picks. Israeli police did not interview suspects, witnesses, or IDF soldiers from the area. They accused a-Nawaj’ah of provoking the attack by stealing from settlers and then dropped the case as “offender unknown” (B’Tselem 2011). Cases like these deter Palestinians from reporting instances of violence, creating further opportunity for settlers to carry out attacks without punishment. Not only does impunity mean that instances of violence go
unpunished, but the lack of reporting means that there sometimes is no record that they occurred at all. The disillusionment that is both a driver and a consequence of impunity ultimately bolsters the culture of aggression.

The Evolution of Impunity

The impunity settlers enjoy today results from the mutually reinforcing relationship among the factors discussed above. Because reports of settler violence are significantly underreported, the American Jewish community is more likely to read about Palestinian aggression against settlers than about violence committed by Jews. This intensifies the American Jewish perception of the Palestinian terror threat, leading the diaspora community to increase support for settler “self-defense.” The American Jewish community then exercises its political influence to limit Washington’s ability to insist Israel take a stronger stance against settler violence. This bodes well for the Israeli government, whose strategic interest in maintaining the settlements render it hesitant to end the culture of impunity. The resulting impunity then reinforces settler ideology, further radicalizing Jewish violent extremists.
The changing nature of settler violence is commonly misunderstood as separate from the ideologically-motivated violence of the 1970s and 1980s. Thus, although Figures 2 and 3 (pictured above) portray two different models leading to two different types of violence, these two types of violence are anything but independent of each other. The model in Figure 2 *devolved* into the model in Figure 3. The latter shows how the network of interests independent of religious ideology enable cosmic war to manifest itself as normalized violence. Understanding these models in relation to each other rather than independent of each other is important because the model depicted in Figure 3 cannot exist without that in Figure 2.

As impunity emerged as a more decisive factor in explaining settler violence, the relationship between the four motivating factors became more complex. In the early years of settler violence, the primary factor (cosmic war) and the enabling environment for violence (legal leniency) were separate. With the rising importance of impunity, the primary driver and the enabling environment
are now intertwined. This helps explain how isolated attacks have devolved into a normalized culture of aggression because the opportunities to engage in violence are now equal to—if not more prevalent than—the motivation to do so. The red arrows in Figure 3 reveal that impunity is largely a byproduct of the Israeli government’s interests rather than of internal settlement radicalization. Thus, the motivations for violence today are far more intractable and mutually reinforcing than they used to be. This makes addressing settler violence even more difficult than in the past because too many parties have vested interests in maintaining the status quo.

**Mapping the Violence: Areas of Vulnerability**

The fact that normalized violence takes place primarily in ultra-orthodox settlements\(^9\) suggests that ideology is still a primary driver, even if it is not the most decisive factor. This suggests that the phenomenon of settler violence is significantly more motivated by religious extremism than it is by secular grievances. Table 1 depicts the eight most frequently targeted Palestinian villages and their corresponding governorates (Yesh-Din 2012).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Palestinian Village</th>
<th>Attacks Reported to Yesh Din in 2011(^7)</th>
<th>Governorate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burin</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Nablus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebron City</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Hebron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kfar Qedum</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Qalqilya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kfar Thulth</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Nablus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al Mughayyir</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Ramallah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far'ata</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Qalqilya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immatin</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Nablus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qaryut</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Nablus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of violence occurs in the Nablus and Hebron governorates, areas with the most religious significance and the highest populations of Jews who settle in the West Bank for ideological reasons. In 2011, six of the top ten most dangerous settlements were from either the Nablus or Hebron governorates. Nablus—in Hebrew, *schem*—represents the capital of biblical Israel. Hebron is where Abraham purchased the first plot of Jewish land and is home to

\(^9\) Although settler violence occurs primarily in ideological settlements, secular settlers have increasingly engaged in violence in the last few years. However, because secular violence is minimal, this analysis does not seek to address it in-depth.
the tomb of the matriarchs. The city of Hebron itself has the highest frequency of settler violence attacks, namely because it is the only city that is physically split, with Palestinians and settlers occupying the same area.\textsuperscript{10}

Hebron aside, settler violence in the West Bank has seen an upward trend in the last year. Ramallah, Qalqilya, and Tulkarem regions are more vulnerable than they have been in the past while most southern regions have remained relatively quiet. In 2010, only one fifth of the violence took place in these northern regions, while in 2011 it was nearly one third (Munayyer 2012).

The “Price” of Cosmic War

Although cosmic war plays a much smaller role in driving settler violence today, its influence has magnified ten-fold among a small spin-off group of extremists known as the “Hilltop Youth.” The group emerged after the 2005 disengagement from Gaza, one of the three major events of disconfirmation. Rather than recognizing the strategic necessity in withdrawing Jewish settlements from the Gaza strip, these radicals understood Sharon’s policy as an imminent threat to Messianic redemption. Although they only constitute a small minority of Jewish extremists (upwards of a couple thousand), members of the Hilltop Youth spearhead a new form of intensified settler violence: price tag attacks (Byman and Sachs 2012).

Officially recognized as form of settler violence in 2008, price tag attacks represent the only type of violence in which the target of violence and the target of response are not the same. The Hilltop Youth torch Palestinian land, vandalize mosques and cemeteries, erect road blocks, and attack Palestinian civilians (OCHAoPT 2011). However, the target of response is the government of Israel. Marked with the Hebrew word “\textit{machir}” (price), the attacks intend to alert the government that dismantling the settlement enterprise is heretical, and doing so will only be met with more violence.

According to extremists who strictly follow \textit{halachic} law, the holy trinity of Jewish ideology—the people of Israel, the land of Israel, and the Torah of Israel—does not include the political entity of the state of Israel (Sprinzak 1993). The absolutist nature of cosmic warfare does not tolerate the pragmatism of fair-minded politicians who attempt to reconcile radical demands with political and economic realities. As one extremist stated, “Every Jew who is killed has two killers: the Arab who killed him and the government that let it happen.”\textsuperscript{11} Sharon’s evacuating the settlements in Gaza cast the state of Israel as a secondary enemy in the cosmic battle between good and evil (Byman and Sachs 2012). Thus, although extremists depend on support from the govern-

\textsuperscript{10}For more on violence in Hebron, see Appendix A.
\textsuperscript{11}Juergensmeyer, \textit{Terror in the Mind of God}, 57.
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ment to maintain the settlements, their loyalty to it is conditional on whether Israeli policies further or threaten the radical agenda.

One glimmer of hope amidst the seemingly cyclical violence is the marginalization of the Hilltop Youth in the eyes of the American government, the Israeli government, and even the settlement movement itself. The United States officially recognizes the Hilltop Youth as a terrorist organization: in 2011, the U.S. Country Report identified three price tag attacks as acts of terrorism (Ravid 2012). Such a move represents the first step in a more aggressive stance against Jewish violent extremism. Israeli government officials are also discussing whether they should label the Hilltop Youth as terrorists. If they do so, it will be very difficult to turn a blind eye to some settler violence while reprimanding others. On the other hand, deeming the Hilltop Youth terrorists will allow the government to launch a coordinated effort against these fringe radicals. Such a move may serve as the deterrent against engaging in a kind of violence that has been long absent in the territories.

Even the settler leadership is unsure of how to address the new sub-culture. The Hilltop Youth delegitimize settler leaders who negotiate with the state of Israel, leaving the Youth accountable only to themselves and the dictates of cosmic war. Last summer, the Hilltop Youth slashed the tires of Ze’ev Hever’s car when he continued negotiating settlement expansion plans with the government (Byman and Sachs 2012). Hever, a former member of the Jewish Underground himself, controls the construction arm of the settlement enterprise and utilizes his connections with government officials to ensure continued funding. The uncontrollable nature of the Hilltop Youth arguably gives settler leaders a taste of their own lawlessness. The settler leadership’s inability to control their own radicals is making it difficult for settler leaders to offer credible negotiations with the Israeli government. This bears an uncanny resemblance to Israel’s difficulty in making credible negotiations with Palestinian leaders while being unable to control its settlers.

The influence of the Hilltop Youth on the future of settlements will also affect the relationship between the two models presented in this analysis. Currently, the models are inherently connected, the second being an evolution of the first. However, if the Israeli government joins the United States in labeling the Hilltop Youth a terrorist organization and the settler leadership disowns its ultra-extreme minority, the two models might begin to function simultaneously. The Hilltop Youth will return to the original model—motivated primarily by cosmic war, without the support of the diaspora community and with questionable support from a skeptical government—while the “mainstream settlers” can only hope that the complex interplay of the second model’s sub-variables allow for continued impunity.

However, if the Hilltop Youth do not splinter from the existing settle-
ment enterprise, cosmic war will likely play a more decisive role in the second model, and the two will continue to function in tandem. In the same way the government kowtows to settler leadership, settler leadership will likely have to appease the Hilltop Youth in order to maintain some degree of control over its members. Because the Israeli government cannot afford to fight a two front war in the West Bank, a more cohesive and radical settlement enterprise might further entrench government support rather than undermine it. Such a result would likely make settler violence self-sustaining, as its continuation would correlate with increased means and opportunity. If this is the case, and the Hilltop Youth do not cause a splinter in the extremist movement, the two models may become more deeply connected than they are now.

Conclusion

The induction of Israel’s thirty-third government appears filled with settlers and settler-allies, meaning that ministerial positions will likely function as opportunities for extremist, religious ideology to further infiltrate politics. While political analysts initially worried about Prime Minister Netanyahu’s ability to solidify a coalition government following the January 2013 elections, Bibi’s ultimate decision to pull Yisrael Beiteinu, Habait Yehudi, Yesh Atid, and Hatnuah into the coalition bodes well for the settler agenda. The housing and construction minister is a former head of the Yesha Council (settlement leadership), the chair of the finance committee is a former secretary-general of Gush Emunim, and the defense minister is a settler himself. Housing and Construction Minister Uri Ariel will, as Ariel Sharon did, likely use his power to approve construction starts in the West Bank. Finance Chair Nissan Sloimanski will likely protect, and even increase, funds to the Yesha Council. Defense minister Moshe Ya’alon will likely take a more militant stance against Palestinian resistance. Given the makeup of Israel’s new government, the relationship between the settlers and the government is likely to become more inextricable than it has been in the past.

An Israel that does not seek to control the violence of its citizens might end up sacrificing short-term goals for long-term disaster. Government inaction risks sidelining the moderate Palestinian leaders (namely, President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad) whose inability to pressure Israel into ending settler violence could make them appear feeble. This may

\[12\] Netanyahu’s Likud won 31 seats, compared to the 42 it received in the 2009 elections. Had Bibi chosen to maintain his traditional allegiances with the political right, his coalition government would pass with a mere 61 seats. Holding 61 out of 120 seats in Knesset would have been a dangerous risk, as it would give each coalition MK the power to hold the government hostage.

\[13\] Daniel Byman and Natan Sachs (2012) analogize the situation to Israeli public
lead to the further radicalization of the Palestinian public, as disillusioned Palestini ans turn to Hamas leadership. If the Israeli government continues down the path of enabling Jewish radicalization—and if the United States government continues passively allowing it to do so—Israel may end up creating two monsters it cannot control: a more radical settlement enterprise and a more radical Palestinian leadership, both of whom will likely find peace negotiations intolerable.

Appendix: Special Focus on Hebron

Commonly known as the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the city of Hebron has both religious and historical significance in the Jewish narrative. Hebron is where Abraham purchased the first plot of Jewish land, symbolically claiming biblical Israel for the Jews. It also contains the Tomb of the Matriarchs, making it the second holiest city in the Jewish religion. The religious significance of Hebron makes it a popular choice for ultra-radical rabbis who believe whole-heartedly in the Messianic promise. These Rabbis are the ones who represent the most extreme form of Jewish ideology and tend to promote violence against Palestinians. As a result, Hebron has consistently been a vulnerable area for settler violence.

Figure 4

Source: www.peacenow.org.il

skepticism towards Yassir Arafat when continuing suicide bombing suggested the Palestinian leader was either unwilling or unable to control his own people. Pursuing negotiations with a country that lacks legitimate control over the violence of its people risks a public backlash similar to that in Israel following the Oslo Accords.
The first Hebron settlement began during Passover of 1968, in the Park Hotel. Jewish extremists received permission from the government to spend the high holiday in the Old City of Hebron; however, once inside, the radicals refused to leave. Settlers implemented their tactic of “establishing facts on the ground,” building schools, developing parks, and starting local businesses. By the time the settlers asked the Israeli government to recognize Hebron as an official settlement, many of them had already established centers of life in the Old City. This increased pressure on the government to approve their request, which was granted two years later in 1970.

What makes Hebron such a vulnerable hotspot for violence is the fact that it is the only area in which Jewish settlements exist within the Palestinian city. Four Israeli settlements (Beit Hadassah, Beit Romano, Tel Rumeida, and Avraham Aveinu) exist among Palestinian homes and shops. As a result, one street in the Old City may be under Israeli control while another street may be under Palestinian control. This makes violence more likely because the increased proximity between Palestinians and settlers provide more opportunities for attacks to occur. The Baruch Goldstein Massacre of 1994 led Israeli politicians to support complete separation of Palestinians and Jews in Hebron. The shooting correlated with an increase of Palestinian terror attacks within Israel proper, leading the government to believe that segregation might assuage some of the inter-racial violence. Initially, separation existed primarily in the areas surrounding the Ibrahimi Mosque—the sight of the massacre—and the Tomb of the Matriarchs. However, between 1994 and 1997, segregation spread elsewhere across the city. By 1997, the Israeli government and the Palestinian Liberation Organization signed the Protocol Concerning the Redeployment of Hebron. The protocol institutionalized the divide in Hebron by splitting the city into H1, which would become Area A, and H2, which would become Area C. As a result, much of the city is divided: one part for Jews and another for Palestinians. For example, the Tomb of the Matriarchs only comprises one half of the holy building: the other half is the Ibrahimi Mosque. Even the old market place is divided: Palestinian shops exist on the ground level of the Old City while the Jewish settlement Avraham Aveinu occupies the second and third floors of the market’s various buildings.

Figure 5 depicts the borders of Hebron today. While the Israeli-controlled H2 is far smaller than H1 (colloquially known as “New Hebron”), it contained Hebron’s political and commercial headquarters. Not only does H2 encompass the four Israeli settlements in Hebron, but it also encompasses Hebron’s Old City. Until the 1990s, the Old City contained the most bustling Palestinian markets in the southern West Bank. The Hebron Central Bus Station served as a traffic artery transporting Palestinians from north to south. Palestinian Hebron’s fire department, police department, and municipality building all stood
in the Old City. Following the 1997 protocol, however, all of these central institutions had to relocate into the less-developed areas of H1. The forced relocation of Palestinian homes, schools, and offices symbolically legitimized settlers’ presence in the Old City and fueled further violence against those Palestinians who chose to remain in their H2 homes.

Because of the intense proximity between settlers and Palestinians, the nature of attacks in Hebron is extremely personal. The attacks overwhelmingly involve stone throwing, beating, harassment and vehicular attack (Munayyer 2012). The attacks are also geographically concentrated: sixty percent of all violence in the greater Hebron governorate occurs within the bounds of the Old City (Munayyer 2012). The geographic concentration and personal nature of the attacks serve the purpose of intimidating Palestinians out of their homes, a tactic known as “silent land acquisition.” The tactic has proved successful, as Palestinians have vacated 41.9% of the homes located in H2 since 1997 (Fauerstein 2007).

The success of the violence may explain why it has slightly decreased over the last few years. In 2006, 54% of all settler violence was in Hebron. In 2007, the number dropped to 42%, and in 2008, it dropped to 41% (OCHAoPT 2008). While the decrease in percentage of attacks could reflect the international community drawing its attention to Hebron in the recent years, it is more likely that the decrease reflects the continually draining Palestinian presence in the Old City. As Palestinians relocate from H2 to H1, there exists less viable targets of attack. Even at 41%, the proportion of violence occurring in Hebron City is still extremely high. In fact, tension is so high in Hebron that not all settler attacks target Palestinians: settlers increasingly attack IDF soldiers and international peace activists perceived to threaten the radical agenda to reclaim the entirety of biblical Hebron.

Hebron is not only religiously significant to the Jews. The Ibrahimi Mosque is a holy Muslim site, leading many Palestinians in Hebron to resist Jewish infiltration more vehemently than they may have in other regions. This compounds the tension between the two sides and intensifies the perceived security threat. Capitalizing on the fear of Palestinian violence, Jewish settlers have been able to manipulate both the American community and the Israeli government to provide significantly higher support for Hebron than for other Jewish settlements. For example, following the establishment of the first Hebron settlement, extremists argued that they needed to establish a Jewish metropolis in the Southern Hebron Hills in order to provide necessary oversight of the Arab city (Zertal, Eldar & Eden 2007). Such was the rationale for explaining the establishment of Kiryat Arba, now one of the most violent settlements in the entire West Bank. This increased perception also bolsters diaspora support for Hebron, leading American non-profits to focus funds on providing
security equipment for settlers rather than general fiscal support.

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The Mystery of the Vanishing Big Stick: A Game Theoretic Analysis of Modern American Military Intervention

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In light of the changing nature of world conflict since the end of the Cold War, this study approaches the phenomenon of intervention through a game theoretic analysis. It tests a model of the intervention decision based on a hybrid sequential and simultaneous move game. The study focuses on modeling the factors impacting the value of United States payoffs, testing the model through case studies of the recent conflicts and Libya and Syria, which, though similar, have seen vastly different American response.

What factors prompt direct military intervention into an internal conflict by the United States? The question addressing why the United States may choose to intervene militarily in one intrastate conflict and not in another similar situation is of particular importance as internal conflicts have become the most common type of military conflict today. They occur in many different contexts and often generate different reactions from the global community. The 2011 Libya conflict, for example, prompted wide international condemnation and a multilateral military intervention that the involved powers touted as a great humanitarian and democratic triumph. However, the 2011 Syrian uprising, which on its face seems strikingly similar to the Libyan uprising, has not seen any direct military intervention resembling that employed in Libya. Both conflicts carried significant humanitarian costs, yet only one, and the one that incurred a much lower death toll, prompted an American military response. This study will address this puzzle through a model focusing on the conflict characteristics which determine the United States’ payoffs, and thus influence the United States’ response. By focusing on the relative importance of each factor to the United States, the study seeks to illuminate a decision process that differentiates seemingly similar conflicts in terms of American strategic response.

The following section reviews existing research concerning influences on the decision of a state to intervene in an intrastate conflict. The second section presents a game theoretic model of the intervention decision process that focuses on calculating United States intervention payoffs based on various specific strategic and security interests. The third section presents case studies of the Libyan and Syrian uprisings to test the ability of the model to distinguish the conflicts and explain the divergent United States responses. The final section discusses the model’s success in explaining the divergent responses and
assesses its applicability to future conflicts. Overall, the model demonstrates that the determining consideration that differentiates United States response is that of the risk to United States troops and the potential to spark long lasting regional conflict.

**Literature Review**

A great deal of research is devoted to explaining the nature and causes of both United States military intervention and military intervention more generally. The research falls into one of three general categories: Diversionary, Strategic Interests, or Strategic International Relations Interests.

**Diversionary**

A significant body of research explores the concept of diversionary military interventions—the idea that a government will employ military intervention in order to divert public attention away from disadvantageous domestic conditions. Clark, for example, focuses on the relationship between a state’s domestic conditions and its decision to engage in military intervention (2003). He argues that domestic conditions influence the opportunities to use force and also provide an incentive to do so to distract from domestic difficulties. Similarly, Fordham’s earlier work studies the impact of economic and domestic political conditions on military intervention (1998). He found that high unemployment and a presidential reelection year in the absence of ongoing wars correlated with more frequent uses of force, concluding that economic and domestic political conditions can make intervention appealing as a means to divert attention from domestic failures.

Pickering and Kisangani also devote a great deal of research to examining the facets of diversionary intervention theory (2005). In their earlier work, they expand the focus of diversionary intervention theory to encompass many different kinds of regimes rather than merely the major world powers. They study democracies and autocracies of varying stability and find that mature democracies and consolidating autocracies are the quickest to engage in diversionary intervention when elite constituencies are unhappy with domestic policies. In their 2007 article Pickering and Kisangani expand the focus on diversionary intervention to include “benevolent” interventions that focus on providing humanitarian aid rather than full military engagement in order to reap the benefits of diversion while strategically avoiding disadvantageous conflicts (2007). They find that strategic conflict theory does not constrain democratic leaders to the extent that had been expected, but that benevolent intervention forms a key tool that they will employ alongside traditional mili-
tary operations to read diversionary benefits.

Overall, the diversionary school of thought represents a great amount of research into this specific theory of intervention motivations. However, the scope of diversionary theory is limited to domestic factors influencing government decisions. It does not consider the strategic foreign policy or security interests that may influence such decisions separately from concerns of domestic political gain.

*Strategic Interests*

Another significant number of researchers focus on explaining the decision to intervene from a strategic interest perspective. These articles focus on the decision to intervene as influenced primarily by the potential for national gain and the furthering of military, security, and foreign policy interests.

Kegley and Hermann, for example, primarily evaluate the Democratic Peace Theory by measuring the number interventions conducted by democracies (1996). Defining intervention as the direct use of military force often resulting in casualties, the researchers found that an increase in the number of democratic states correlated with an increase in intervention. Kegley and Hermann concluded that the findings tend to challenge the Democratic Peace Theory, indicating that democracies will tend pursue strategic advantage above peace, but they will also tend to intervene in autocratic states rather than in other democracies. Kivimaki builds on this finding by examining the particular intervention history of the United States (2012). He asserts that the United States pursues national gain over ideals of freedom, tending to support autocratic regimes in interventions in North Africa and the Middle East. While the United States would like to emphasize the humanitarian benefits of intervention, Kivimaki concludes, they will be more likely to act in the interest of national gain rather than in the interest of promoting peace or democracy.

Fordham approaches the strategic question from a slightly different perspective by examining the influence of strategic capabilities on American intervention propensity (2004). He argues that advances in military capabilities influence the tendency of American leadership to use force, concluding that the greater the military capability, the more likely a president will employ military solutions.

Additionally, Yoon models United States interventions in third world internal conflicts during the Cold War and attempts to predict their occurrence and form (1997). He defines each category of factors generally: strategic interests consist of Soviet-related activity and geographic factors, economic interests consist of trade relationships, and domestic factors consist of the electoral cycle, misery index, and the impact of the Vietnam War. While he does not
consider strategic interests alone, he does conclude that strategic interests are the most important of factors determining intervention. Of all the strategic interest studies, Yoon’s provides the most comprehensive model for predicting American military intervention. However, it examines intervention during the Cold War and therefore, as the author himself acknowledges, its applicability to post-Cold War interventions is limited.

While strategic interest literature provides a wide range of studies that conclude that strategic interests are the most important in intervention decision making, none of these studies explore a wide range of specific strategic or security interests in any given conflict. Notably, these studies do not examine the presence of active terrorist group participation in intrastate conflicts, which has become an especially relevant strategic concern in the post-9/11 world. This paper seeks to fill this gap by calculating intervention decision making as influenced by a wide range of specific strategic interest variables, including various terrorist organization involvement.

**Strategic International Relations Interests**

Finally, a few researchers focus on the influence of international diplomatic and economic relations on intervention decision making. Fordham, for example, analyzes the economic influences on intervention, specifically analyzing the impact of existing alliances, trade relationships, and rival interventions on American uses of force (2012). Fordham discovered a significant relationship between the existence of an alliance with an involved party and an American use of force, while trade relationships did not correlate with intervention. Most importantly, Fordham confirmed security interests as paramount to American intervention decision making, but also confirmed that the impact on ally nations is an important security concern.

Gent, on the other hand, focuses on explaining divergent responses to similar conflicts by evaluating the influence of international interest consensus on the decision of major powers to intervene (2007). Using a game theoretic approach to map the intervention decision making process, Gent finds that major powers are more likely to intervene jointly when they have different interests in the conflict. In contrast, when the major powers’ interests are the same, it creates a free-rider incentive that prompts states to reserve the option to intervene in the hope that someone else will go to the expense. Of all the research, Gent focuses most on the same question as this paper—explaining divergent responses to similar conflicts through the decision-mapping advantages of a game theoretic model. However, Gent’s model provides a complex tennis match of decisions in a game where payoffs are determined by the actions of other states rather than on the nature of the conflict itself. He defines
strategic interests as the divisiveness of the issue, relative capability of both the target state and the major power, colonial legacies, battle deaths, and distance to the target state, focusing primarily on the impact of ally involvement as the differentiating factor determining conflict involvement. Gent’s model does not specifically consider the influence of factors such as national security threats, threat to the nation’s citizens, regional instability, the risk of provoking conflict with geopolitical adversaries, the presence of weapons of mass destruction, and the involvement of terrorist organizations. This paper endeavors to fill this gap through a game that focuses on the decision of a single state actor to intervene in a conflict and which bases that state’s payoffs on specific strategic considerations within the conflict.

**Summary**

The existing literature regarding American interventionism provide a multi-faceted picture of the phenomenon. Overall, the body of research overwhelmingly points to intervention as a political and strategic decision rather than a humanitarian one. However, the research does not examine the individual influences of specific national interests in the intervention decision making process to any large extent, instead coding strategic interest as a single variable or tending to focus on domestic concerns altogether. This tendency to reduce a highly multi-faceted and varied influence to a single generalized variable (or not to consider it at all, as is the case in much of the diversionary theory literature) results in a general lack of ability to distinguish between similar conflicts that reflect individual strategic nuances prompting divergent intervention responses. The research tends to lack emphasis on specific variables such as the national security threats, risk to the intervening power’s citizens, involvement of weapons of mass destruction, regional instability, required long-term troop commitments, and historical interstate relations beyond colonial legacy. This paper focuses on presenting a game theoretic approach to model these nuances of conflict factors in order to explain the divergent responses. Also, this paper will address the specific variable of terrorist involvement in conflicts, which has gone relatively untouched in the previous research.

The existing research does, however, provide important information concerning the weighting of particular variables in this paper’s model payoff calculations. The overwhelming consensus emphasizes the preeminent importance of national strategic interests in decision making. As a result, this paper will rank the factors influencing payoffs based on the importance of the factor’s immediate ramifications for national security interests. It will also highly rank the factor of ally involvement based on the conclusions of Fordham’s 2007 study.
The Game

Basic Structure

This study models factors within a violent internal conflict in a third-party authoritarian state that influence a United States decision to launch direct military intervention. The study is limited to conflicts within authoritarian states in order to focus on the most likely targets of intervention actions based on the analysis of the Democratic Peace Theory provided by Kegley and Hermann (1996). Since modern democracies tend to intervene in autocratic states but not in other democracies, the focus of a democratic major power would tend to be on autocratic states. However, in future research the model could be adjusted to assess intervention in uprisings in democratic states.

A game theoretic approach is employed in order to allow the expedient modeling of specific influences on the decision making process. The game theoretic model allows the calculation of a robust payoff value that encompasses a large number of factors without sacrificing the ability to clearly and easily differentiate conflicts in terms of United States response.

The game is composed of both sequential and simultaneous moves. For the purposes of this game, the environment assumes an ongoing conflict already exists. Thus, the first move belongs to the United States. A third party authoritarian state is defined as a state controlled by a dictatorship or a similarly repressive, authoritarian government in which the United States has no direct or immediate interest. The United States may have strategic interests in or relating to the state, but they are neither a direct adversary nor an ally and are not engaged in war against an ally. Finally, the game is concerned only with modeling direct military intervention rather than other forms of intervention, such as covert assistance, diplomatic approaches, or monetary assistance. For the purposes of this study, these non-military interventions fall under the decision option of “Do Not Intervene.”

Players and Payoffs

The game consists of three players: the United States, the Dictator, and the Rebels. This game treats the United States as a unitary actor with a simple choice to Intervene or Not Intervene. The Dictator player is the designation for the ruler or government of the authoritarian state. The Rebels player consists of those either opposing the dictator, or those the Dictator is violently targeting, whether they are in an actual state of revolt or not. Both the Dictator and Rebels may choose to either Fight or Flee (cooperate), and make this decision within a simultaneous move game which follows the United States’ initial
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decision to Intervene or Not to Intervene.

The Dictator may receive either the payoff of Power (P), Loss of Power (-P), Exile (E), or Death (D). The Rebels may receive Freedom (F), Repression (R), or Death (D). For the purposes of this game, the term Freedom is used loosely, indicating only that the rebels have succeeded in deposing the dictator, not necessarily that they have instituted a liberal democracy. A Repression payoff indicates that the dictator fled the country, but his government still retains control of the state and can continue a repressive policy. This payoff would occur in an instance in which both the rebels and dictator choose to flee or cooperate, and the dictator would receive the payoff of Exile. In the simultaneous move game, a decision by one party to fight while the other decides to flee results in the payoffs of Power (or Freedom) and Death, respectively. If both choose to fight, Nature will determine which player wins the conflict. The Dictator will prefer payoffs in the following order: Power > Loss of Power > Exile > Death (the Loss of Power payoff will be explained below). The Rebels will prefer payoffs in the following order: Freedom > Repression > Death. As a result, both sides have a Fight dominant strategy, and the Nash Equilibrium of the simultaneous move game is the Fight/Fight square. Thus, Nature will ultimately determine the outcome of the conflict.

If the United States chooses to intervene, Nature will determine whether the United States wins or loses. If the United States wins, they receive the payoff of a Strategic Win (SW), indicating that the United States secured its strategic interests with few negative repercussions. The Rebel force will receive the payoff of Freedom, while the Dictator receives Death. Should the United States lose, they receive the payoff of Strategic Loss (SL), indicating that the United States either failed to secure its strategic interests or did so only with severe negative repercussions. In the event the United States loses, the environment within the state would tend to devolve into regional upheaval characterized by widespread terrorism and general anarchy. In such a situation, the Rebels receive the payoff of Repression (R) as they would likely be fighting with each other or terrorist groups, resulting in an environment made repressive by violence and human rights abuses, if not by dictatorial power. While the dictator may not have lost all power, his power would tend to be diminished by his lack of ability to control the violence in the state and thus he receives the payoff of Loss of Power (-P).

If the United States chooses not to intervene, Nature determines whether the Rebels win or lose the conflict. If the Rebels win, they receive Freedom while the Dictator receives Death. If the Rebels lose, the Dictator receives Power while the Rebels receive Death. In either case, the United States receives the payoff of Status Quo (SQ), in which circumstances develop outside the United States’ ability to make a meaningful decision to alter the conflict and its outcomes.
Figure 1 shows a diagram of the game, which lists payoffs in the following order: United States, Rebel, Dictator.

**United States Payoff Structure**

Since the study intends to research the conflict factors impacting the United States’ decision, the primary calculations in the game focus on the factors determining the value of the United States’ payoffs. The outcome of the game ultimately rests with how the presence or absence of binary factors will change the relative values of the United States payoffs for intervening in the civil war, and thus alter their decision. As the values of the Strategic Win and Strategic Loss payoffs follow a zero-sum structure, identical factors (collectively termed Intervention Factors) impact their values. Separate Non-Intervention Factors will impact the value of the Status Quo payoff. Some factors tend to carry more importance in the decision process than others, and each factor receives a relative weighted value according to how imminently and significantly it impacts US national security and strategic interests based on the conclusions of previous literature. It is important to note, however, that these weighted values are arbitrary in numerical value and derive significance only in comparison to each other.

In calculating the United States Intervention payoff, an absolute Strategic Win assumes that each factor is present, while an absolute Strategic Loss assumes that each factor is absent. To determine the expected payoff value of Intervention, these absolute payoff values (twenty-four and negative twenty-four, respectively) are multiplied by the probabilities of each outcome (the
calculations for which are explained below) and the results added together):

\[
\text{Expected Intervention payoff value} = (24)(\text{probability of } SW) + (-24)(\text{probability of } SL)
\]

The Intervention factors, their general definitions, and weighted values consist of the following:

- **Secure National Security Interests**: United States national security interests are either impacted favorably or not threatened (impacted neutrally) as a result of the intervention. Weighted Value: 4.
- **Low United States Casualties**: casualties sustained by United States forces are considered to be within an acceptable margin. Weighted Value: 4.
- **Low threat to U.S. citizens**: United States citizens in the conflict country do not face an imminent threat from the conflict. Weighted Value: 4.
- **Low threat to NATO/Ally states**: the changing circumstances in the conflict country as a result of the intervention pose no proximate threats to NATO or other US Ally states. Weighted Value: 3.
- **No protracted regional conflict results from the intervention**: neighboring states initially uninvolved do not engage militarily in the conflict or in conflicts directly resulting from the original conflict. Weighted Value: 3.
- **Low further required troop commitment**: after the intervention, the number of United States troops required to remain in the conflict country to maintain order and secure United States interests does not constitute a significant commitment or one larger than anticipated. Weighted Value: 2.
- **Low risk of conflict with geopolitical adversaries**: in conducting the intervention, the United States has not provoked conflict with its geopolitical adversaries (such as Russia or China). Weighted Value: 2.
- **End of humanitarian crisis**: civilian casualties within the conflict either cease or come within tolerable margins. Weighted Value: 1.
• High NATO/UN support: the United States intervention has not adversely impacted its standing in the UN or NATO. Weighted Value: 1

The factors comprising the Status Quo United States payoffs will be calculated by counting the total weighted value of the number of factors absent and subtracting the total weighted value of the number of factors present:

\[ Value \ of \ SQ = total \ weighted \ value \ of \ factors \ absent - total \ weighted \ value \ of \ factors \ present \]

The factors impacting the Status Quo consist of the following:

• Significant National Security Interests Threatened: failure to intervene leaves United States’ interests of direct consequence to national security vulnerable. Weighted Value: 4

• Direct threat to US Citizens: US citizens in the state face proximate threat of death or serious injury as a result of the conflict. Weighted Value: 4

• Direct threat to NATO/Ally states: NATO or other United States ally states face a proximate threat as a result of the intrastate conflict or any resulting interstate conflict. Weighted Value: 3 (4 if Israel).

• Dictator Possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction: the Dictator is known (or reasonably suspected) to possess weapons of mass destruction or significant conventional heavy weapons stocks (such as missiles). Weighted Value: 3 (4 if WMDs are nuclear weapons)

• Dictator Support or Receipt of Support from Terrorist Groups: known terrorist groups either render support or receive support from the Dictator or his government. Weighted Value: 2

• High Humanitarian Concerns: civilian death toll exceeds the normal state of affairs in that state and (or) draw severe sanction from international organizations. Weighted Value: 1

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1The weighted value of Humanitarian concerns throughout the model is ranked lowest because of the findings of research noted in the literature review, several of which consistently note humanitarian concerns are not the primary concern of the United States in deciding to intervene.
Probability Calculation Model

In the case of either United States decision, Nature ultimately determines the victor of the conflict. Consideration of several factors will determine the probability of each eventuality. If the United States intervenes, the probability of a United States win is determined by adding the weighted value of the factors present and dividing that number by the total weighted value of all the factors possible.

\[ P \text{ (probability US wins)} = \frac{\text{total weighted value of factors present}}{\text{total weighted value of factors possible}} \]

The probability of a U.S. Loss is simply 1-p. In the event the United States chooses Do Not Intervene, the probability of a Rebel win (q) or a Rebel loss (1-q) will be calculated in a similar manner.

The Intervention Probability Factors consist of the following:

- Low regional instability: the intrastate conflict occurs in a region with little instability and a low probability that the conflict would devolve into a regional interstate conflict. Weighted Value: 3

- Low rebel support of or receipt of support from terrorist groups: there is no significant terrorist group involvement, with terrorist groups neither rendering support nor receiving support from the Rebels. Weighted Value: 2

- Low dictator support or receipt of support from terrorist groups: known terrorist groups either render support or receive support from the Dictator. Weighted Value: 2

- Low geopolitical adversary involvement: the United States’ geopolitical adversaries do not possess large economic or military interests in the conflict states and do not render significant aid to either Rebels or Dictators. Weighted Value: 2

- High UN/NATO Support: UN and NATO express support and (or) act in support of US intervention. Weighted Value: 1

Non-Intervention Probability Factors:

- Strong Rebel Force: Rebel forces are reasonably unified and have sufficient leadership and tactical capabilities that they could reasonably challenge Dictator forces. Weighted Value: 3

- Covert or Monetary United States Support of Rebels: the United
States renders indirect assistance to the Rebels in the form of covert military forces, monetary support, arms and ammunition, supplies, or training. Weighted Value: 2

- Low outside support for the Dictator: the Dictator receives little support from other state or organizational actors and thus has few allies to which to turn for aid. Weighted Value: 2

- Weak Dictator Government: the Dictator’s government lacks the unification, military strength, or tactical capability to effectively maintain power over the state and defeat the rebel force. Weighted Value: 2

- Rebels are in the ethnic or religious majority (if applicable): if the region and culture function heavily around ethnic or religious classifications, the Rebels are in the ethnic or religious majorities and thus accepted by society and not at risk of suffering repression or lack of cooperation from the general population. Weighted Value: 1

**Expected Results and Implications**

If the model functions as expected, as the United States Status Quo payoff decreases, the risk posed to United States interests by failing to intervene will increase. As the Status Quo payoff becomes less than the Intervention payoffs, the United States will choose to intervene. However, as the projected costs of intervening increase, the United States will be more reluctant to intervene and tend to favor maintaining the Status Quo. Ultimately, the United States will tend to favor the Status Quo unless it becomes too risky or intervention becomes too appealing. In the Dictator’s payoff structure, if the United States intervenes, at the very least he will lose some measure of his power. Therefore, the decisions of the Dictator would tend to attempt to approximate a tension whereby the dictator may retain enough strength to win a conflict with the rebels but avoids provoking a United States intervention. Likewise, since the Rebels tend to have a better chance at receiving Freedom (and at the worst receive Repression, not Death) if the United States intervenes, the decisions of the Rebels would tend to attempt to provoke a United States intervention either by direct appeal or by attempting to portray the dictator as dangerous to the United States or its allies. The case studies in the Libyan and Syrian conflicts are expected to reflect these predictions.

In the 2011 Libyan Conflict and subsequent NATO intervention, it is ex-
pected that the decision to intervene came as a result of the presence of several key factors: Qadhafi’s historical support of terrorism, multilateral agreement, generally weakened dictator forces, and the strategic interest in Libya’s surface-to-air missiles. Thus, generally speaking, it is expected that in this case the Status Quo did not become too risky to maintain, but the prospect of intervention became more attractive because of favorable conditions, a moderately important strategic interest, and historical tensions with the Qadhafi regime (“Lockerbie Bombing Timeline” 2012).

The ongoing Syrian conflict as yet has not seen direct United States military intervention. It is anticipated that this is because an intervention would carry high risks in form of regional instability, the involvement of Russia, Iran, and various terrorist groups, as well as the weakness and ambiguity of rebel forces, and the strength of the dictator (“Syria: The Military Nuances of the Conflict” 2012). While humanitarian concerns surrounding the crisis increase, a United States decision to Intervene would likely come from the more heavily weighted Risk to Allies factor, such as the recent attacks on US allies Turkey and Israel (“Syrian Conflict Spills Into Israel” 2012). Thus, it is expected that humanitarian concerns are not enough to outweigh the large risks that would accompany an intervention, although a large enough threat to a close ally has the potential to make the status quo too costly.

Since any conflict is unique and complex, the factors the model considers are certainly not comprehensive. However, the study endeavors to include those factors that make the most significant impact on national security and strategic interests across every conflict. Since compiling and analyzing a comprehensive list of the thousands of minute factors unique to a conflict region that potentially influence the nature of that conflict would not only take a prohibitive amount of time but would reduce the model’s applicability to other conflicts, this project will not address such a list. As a result, the numerical values of payoffs and probabilities serve not as hard numerical facts but as approximations drawn from factors weighted in relation to each other.

2011 Libyan Conflict

Overview

In February of 2011, violent protests against the Qadhafi regime broke out in the city of Benghazi. These protests spread to surrounding cities and developed into an armed revolt. The Qadhafi government retaliated, using its air superiority to attempt to quash the rebellion. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) authorized military intervention for the purpose of protecting civilians in March of 2011. NATO forces, including the United States,
launched Operation Unified Protector shortly thereafter, establishing a no-fly zone over Libya and effectively serving as air support for the Libyan Rebels. The rebels went on to take Tripoli in August of 2011, later capturing and killing Qadhafi in October. NATO ended its intervention on October 31st, 2011 and withdrew its forces, leaving the rebel groups to determine the future government of Libya (Blanchard 2011).

Players

The major players in the Libyan conflict consist of the United States, Qadhafi and his government, and the rebel groups. The United States in this case worked as a part of a multilateral intervention effort authorized by the United Nations and conducted by NATO coalition forces. Qadhafi responded to the uprising by attempting to violently crush it, rallying his supporters and directing the Libyan military in efforts that made significant gains against the rebel forces by mid-March, stamping out rebels in Tripoli and advancing to threaten Benghazi, a rebel stronghold in the east (Blanchard 2011). Historically, Qadhafi long prohibited any opposing political party and used various forms of violence to both repress opposition within the state as well as outside it, employing both assassinations and terrorism when convenient (Blanchard 2011).

The rebel groups consist of various groups from different areas and tribes whose shared goal of deposing Qadhafi unified them during the revolt. These groups formed a representative body called the Interim Transitional National Council (TNC). It is composed of forty-five members and claims to represent all Libyans, seeking international recognition as the legitimate political voice of Libya. Several statements released in March express an intent to construct a Libyan constitution based around a separation of powers and protection of voting and individual expression rights. The Interim Transitional National Council also expressed affiliation with “moderate Islamic values” and claims to reject terrorism, specifically expressing support of UNSC resolutions against Al Qaeda and the Taliban. However, while the opposition groups encouraged international intervention, they specifically expressed a strong preference against the deployment of foreign troops on the ground in Libya. Several nations, including the United States, have recognized the legitimacy of the Interim Transitional National Council to some extent (Blanchard 2011).

Payoff Calculations

The United States Status Quo payoff consists of the value of the factors absent
minus the value of the factors present.

- Significant National Security Interests Threatened: Absent.\(^2\) Value: 4
- Direct Threat to US Citizens: Absent.\(^3\) Value: 4
- Direct Threat to NATO/Allies: Absent.\(^4\) Value: 3
- Dictator possesses WMDs: Present.\(^5\) Value: 3
- Dictator Supports or is Supported by Terrorist Groups: Absent.\(^6\) Value: 2
- High Humanitarian Concerns: Present.\(^7\) Value: 1
- This results in a value of thirteen absent and four present. Subtracting the present value from the absent value results in a Status Quo payoff value of nine. \(13 \text{ (factors absent)} - 4 \text{ (factors present)} = 9 \text{ SQ payoff value}\)

The probability of a United States win in the case it chose to intervene is calculated by dividing the value of factors present by the total value possible if all were present:

- Low Regional Instability: Absent.\(^8\) Value: 3

\(^2\) According to different statements of various defense spokespersons, including then-Secretary of Defense Gates, the only national security interest in Libya was one of general counter-terrorism, not a proximate threat (Stephens 2011, Woodward 2011).

\(^3\) The Congressional Research Service indicated that all US citizens in Libya were evacuated in February of 2011. Thus, the continuing violence posed no threat to US citizens (Blanchard 2011).

\(^4\) According to a statement in February of 2011 by the Secretary General of NATO, the unrest in North Africa (including Libya) did not directly threaten NATO member states (“Egypt: Unrest Could Increase Illegal Immigration to Europe 2011”).

\(^5\) The WMD variable also includes the possession of significant conventional (non-WMD) weapons stocks that present a threat if used by the dictator or lost to terrorist groups. UNSC resolutions indicate Qadhafi’s government possessed significant stockpiles of portable surface-to-air missiles (United Nations Security Council 2011).

\(^6\) Despite Qadhafi’s history of supporting international terrorism, the several years leading up to the uprising saw Qadhafi distance from terrorism and Libya begin to gain international acceptance. Also, indications are that Qadhafi did not tolerate domestic terrorism and those terrorist groups tend to oppose him and would likely gain from his death (“Libya Profile” 2012).

\(^7\) According to UNSC Resolution 1973 and NATO descriptions of Operation Unified Protector, concerns over civilian casualties and other humanitarian concerns were high (“Fact Sheet” 2011).

\(^8\) Libya itself was not a stable country, and its neighbors Tunisia and Egypt were at the
- Low Rebel Support or Receipt of Support from Terrorist Groups: Present.\(^\text{9}\) Value: 2

- Low Dictator Support or Receipt of Support from Terrorist Groups: Present.\(^\text{10}\) Value: 2

- Low Involvement of Geopolitical Adversaries: Present.\(^\text{11}\) Value: 2

- High UN and NATO Support: Present.\(^\text{12}\) Value: 1

Thus, a weighted value of seven out the possible ten results in the Intervention probability of a US win of seventy percent to a thirty percent probability of a US loss.

\[
\text{US Win: } 7 \text{ (value present)} \div 10 \text{ (value possible)} = 0.7 \text{ or } p = 70\%
\]

\[
\text{US Loss: } 1-p = 1 - 0.3 = 30\%
\]

The Non-Intervention probabilities were calculated similarly, with the value of the factors present divided by the value of the factors possible:

- Strong Rebel Force: Absent.\(^\text{13}\) Value: 3

- Covert or Monetary Support of Rebels: Present.\(^\text{14}\) Value: 2

- Low Outside Support for Dictator: Present.\(^\text{15}\) Value: 2

Various analyses indicate that although terrorist groups could take advantage of the situation surrounding the uprising, the uprising itself was popular in origin and there was no indication that terrorist groups were among Libyan opposition groups (Blanchard 2011, 44).\(^\text{9}\)

Libyan support of terrorism had dwindled in the years leading up to the uprising and terrorist groups were not actively supporting Qadhafi during the uprising (Blanchard 2011, 38; “Libya Profile” 2012).\(^\text{10}\)

Indications are that Qadhafi’s government itself had little specific international support, and Russia and China did not have significant interests in Libya, supporting UNSC Resolution 1973 authorizing the NATO intervention (Blanchard 2011, 3; “The Gadhafi Regime” 2011).\(^\text{11}\)

Based on information from NATO and UNSC documents. (“Operation Unified Protector” 2011, UN Security Council Resolution 2011).\(^\text{12}\)

Various analyses describe the rebel forces as disorganized and untrained, lacking in strong capacity to counter Qadhafi’s forces (Blanchard 2011, 4, “The Problem with Arming Libyan Rebels” 2011).\(^\text{13}\)

The United States rendered both covert support and weapons to the rebel groups (Blanchard 2011, 10, Etzioni 2012, “NATO’s Doctrine Supporting Rebels 2011)\(^\text{14}\)

Russia, China, and other international powers distanced themselves from Qadhafi
• Weak Dictator Government: Present.\textsuperscript{16} Value: 2

• Rebels in the Ethnic or Religious Majority: Absent.\textsuperscript{17} Value: 1

Thus, a weighted value of six out of the possible ten results in a sixty percent chance of a rebel win in the event the United States did not intervene.

\textit{Rebel Win:} 6 (value present) $\div$ 10 (value possible) = 0.6 or $q = 60\%$

\textit{Rebel Loss:} 1-$q = 1 - 0.6 = 0.4$ or 40\%

The Expected Values of the United States Intervention payoff consist of the following calculations:

$$\text{Expected Value} = (\text{Absolute SW Value}) \times \text{(probability of SW)} + (\text{Absolute SL Value}) \times \text{(probability of SL)}$$

$$(24 \times 0.7) + (-24 \times 0.3) = 16.8 - 7.2 = 9.6$$

Thus, the expected value of Intervention consists of 9.6 for the United States, 0.7F - 0.3R for the Rebels, and -0.7D + 0.3P for the Dictator (the positive and negative signs of which have been reversed because Death tends to be regarded as worse than a loss of power).

The expected value of not intervening consists of 9 for the United States, 0.6F - 0.4D for the Rebels, and 0.4P - 0.6D for the Dictator.

Figure 2 shows the finished game model for the 2011 Libyan uprising, with a rollback equilibrium of Intervene, Nature, and payoffs of 9.6, 0.7F - 0.3R, -0.7D + 0.3P.

\begin{itemize}
  \item and his government and were not invested in the preservation of the regime (“The Gadhafi Regime” 2011).
  \item Although the exact strength of the Libyan military proved unavailable, various sources describe the Libyan government as weak and fractured, the military intentionally weakened because Qadhafi distrusted it (Blanchard 2011, 37, “Jihadists and the Libya Uprising” 2011, “The Status of the Libyan Military” 2011).
  \item The Libyan opposition forces derive from various different tribes and have the potential to fracture since the primary reason for their cooperation is the shared goal of deposing Qadhafi.
\end{itemize}
Game Analysis

The model tended to work well in reflecting the United States’ decision to intervene as well as the limited nature of the intervention. The value of the Status Quo for the United States was not terrible. Indeed, it was very close to the expected value of an Intervention. However, though the United States did not have much to lose in retaining the Status Quo, the choice of Intervention provided a slightly more attractive choice. Intervention’s payoff became positively differentiated from the Status Quo by the factors of High UN/NATO Support and Ending a Humanitarian Crisis combined with absent risk factors (such as high terrorist involvement). Thus, the Libyan uprising provided an opportunity to gain international reputation advantages from participating in a multilateral mission and being perceived to have ended a humanitarian crisis while risking very little. Furthermore, the slight numerical difference between the Intervention and Status Quo payoffs seems to have translated into an extremely limited military intervention. The United States did not play an overwhelmingly leading role in the NATO intervention, and the NATO intervention itself was marked with restraint as NATO largely kept boots off the ground in favor of flying air support for rebel groups as they struggled to defeat Qadhafi’s forces (Etzioni 2012).

However, the longer-term actual payoff for the United States indicates that while the game may adequately model the decision to intervene, its projection for potential strategic outcomes may not be entirely accurate. When each of the factors is measured at the time of this writing, approximately one year since the intervention concluded, the Intervention payoff holds a maximum value of seven (although it may more realistically work out to four), certainly a strategic loss. This is due to three heavily weighted factors that became ab-
sent in the long term: Secure National Security Interests, Low Threat to U.S. Citizens, and Low Further Required Troop Commitment. Analyses tend to indicate that the sole absent Intervention Probability factor, Low Regional Instability, has proven to provide significant opportunities to terrorist groups and has eroded United States interests. Al Qaeda, as well as other regional groups such as Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, has used the instability following the uprising to spread their operations, notably in Mali (Gearon 2012). This flourishing of terrorist organizations, in turn, has removed the Low Threat to U.S. Citizens and the Low Troop Commitment factors with the attack on the U.S. Benghazi consulate and the resulting increase in U.S. troop presence (Bruce 2012). Furthermore, the surface-to-air missiles are still largely missing and thought to be in the hands of terrorist organizations (“The Continuing Threat of Libyan Missiles” 2012). The difference between the game’s projected payoff and the long term real payoff may indicate that the game works best as a model of short-term payoffs. Ultimately, the Regional Instability factor may not carry a heavy enough weight in the game to reflect the reality of the long-ranging consequences of terrorist opportunism. However, as a model of the decision process itself, the game model seems to retain accuracy in predicting the decision to intervene, if not the exact outcome.

**2011 Syrian Uprising**

*Overview*

In March of 2011, protests broke out against the repressive Asad regime in the cities of Damascus and Deraa, sparking a chain of government reprisals against continued protests and violent resistance. In the conflict that followed, which has continued to the present, various opposition groups fought (and continue to fight) the Asad government forces, which, in turn, utilize heavy weaponry and air superiority to inflict severe civilian casualties in an attempt to halt the rebellion. As of July of 2013, it was estimated that 100,000 Syrian citizens had been killed in the conflict (“Syrian Death Toll Now Above 100,000” 2013). While the international community in general has condemned the violence, attempts at unifying international opposition to the Asad regime have proven ineffective as Russia and China have vetoed United Nations Security Council resolutions and continue to maintain significant interests in the success of the Asad government. The conflict carries significant risks of spilling over into surrounding territories, and each side has drawn support from outside factions. The Arab nations and Sunni terrorist groups tend to support the opposition groups, while Iran, Russia, China, and Shiite terrorist groups tend to support Asad. Furthermore, the U.S. allies of Turkey and Israel have sustained cross-
border fire from Syrian troops, and Israel has attacked a Syrian convoy. Humanitarian concerns are certainly great, but despite severe civilian casualties, the United States has not yet intervened (Sterling & Abdelaziz 2012).

Players

The major players in the Syrian conflict consist of the United States, the Asad government, and the opposition groups. Currently, the United States is choosing not to intervene, expressing verbal condemnation of the conflict and its humanitarian toll, but doing little else.

Bashar al Asad succeeded his father in the Syrian presidency in 2000. He and his family are of the Alawite Islamic sect, which falls under the broad classification of Shiite Islam. The controlling Baath Party relies on the Alawites as a core of support, despite their status as only twelve percent of the population. Asad recently lifted the long-standing state of emergency, but continues his historical use of overwhelming force against all those who oppose the government. He has also expressed an unwillingness to resign peacefully (Blanchard & Sharp 2012).

The opposition groups consist of two competing coalition groups and the locally organized armed resistance militias known as the Free Syrian Army. The Syrian National Council (SNC) consists of three hundred ten members and an eight seat executive committee. It originated in Turkey in October of 2011, draws significant support from the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, and tends to favor international intervention. However, it also suffers from extensive internal conflicts. The SNC’s competitor is the National Coordination Body for Democratic Change (NCB). It began in the summer of 2011 and draws support from left-leaning political groups as well as Kurdish activist organizations. The NCB expresses that it will negotiate with Asad and opposes foreign intervention. The Free Syrian Army is a network of volunteer fighters with local organization and a number of the membership drawn from Syrian military defectors. They have little national organization, training, or armament, and groups tend to vary across different communities.

Payoff Calculations

The United States Status Quo payoff consists of the following:

- Significant National Security Interests Threatened: Present.\(^\text{18}\) Value: 4

\(^{18}\)The Congressional Research Service reports that the key United States security interests consist of concerns that extremist groups affiliated with Al Qaeda are spreading in Syria as well as the potential for the Syria’s chemical weapons stockpiles to fall into unfriendly hands (Blanchard & Sharp 2012).
• Direct Threat to US Citizens: Absent.\(^{19}\) Value: 4

• Direct Threat to NATO or Ally nations: Present.\(^{20}\) Value: 4

• Dictator possesses WMDs: Present.\(^{21}\) Value: 3

• Dictator supports or is supported by terrorist groups: Present.\(^{22}\) Value: 2

• High Humanitarian Concerns: Present.\(^{23}\) Value: 1

This results in a total weighted value of fourteen present and four absent, for a total Status Quo value of negative ten.

\[
4 \text{ (factors absent)} - 14 \text{ (factors present)} = -10 \text{ SQ payoff value}
\]

The probability of a United States Intervention Win or Loss consists of the following:

• Low Regional Instability: Absent.\(^{24}\) Value: 3

• Low Rebel Support or Receipt of Support from Terrorist Groups: Absent.\(^{25}\) Value: 2

\(^{19}\)No sources indicate threats to US citizens, and the Congressional Research Service noted threats to US citizens in their report on the Libya conflict. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that no direct or important threats exist.

\(^{20}\)Turkey and Israel have both suffered cross-border fire, Turkey has requested NATO missiles be moved to fortify its border, and Israel has launched strikes against a Syrian convoy and deployed Iron Dome missiles to the border (“Israel: An Airstrike at the Syria-Lebanon Border” 2013, “Israel Questions Stray Fire from Syria” 2012, “Syrian Conflict Spills into Israel” 2012, “Turkey: Ankara to Request Missiles from NATO” 2012).


\(^{22}\)The Asad government has a long-standing relationship with Shiite terrorist groups Hezbollah and Hamas, which both support his government and receive support from him. Turkey and Israel have both suffered cross-border fire, Turkey has requested NATO missiles be moved to fortify its border, and Israel has launched strikes against a Syrian convoy and deployed Iron Dome missiles to the border (“Israel: An Airstrike at the Syria-Lebanon Border” 2013, “Israel Questions Stray Fire from Syria” 2012, “Syrian Conflict Spills into Israel” 2012, “Turkey: Ankara to Request Missiles from NATO” 2012).

\(^{23}\)Estimates of casualties place the number between 25,000 and 30,000 as of November of 2012, with estimates closer to 60,000 as of January of 2013 (Blanchard and Sharp 2012, Sterling and Abdelaziz 2013).


\(^{25}\)Reports indicate that several Sunni terrorist groups, including Al Qaeda, have moved to support the Syrian opposition (Blanchard and Sharp 2012, 7, Diehl 2012, Dreazen, and Kitfield 2012, “Implications of Beirut Bombing” 2012).
• Low Dictator Support or Receipt of Support from Terrorist Groups: Absent.  

Value: 2

• Low Geopolitical Adversary Involvement: Absent.  

Value: 2

• High UN/NATO Support: Absent.  

Value: 1

This results in the probability that the US would have a 0% chance of receiving a Strategic Win if they were to intervene. Thus, if the United States were to intervene it could expect to receive the full Strategic Loss payoff of negative twenty-four.

\[
0 \text{ (factors present)} \div 10 \text{ (factors possible)} = 0.0 \text{ or } 0\% \text{ chance of a Strategic Win.}
\]

\[
1-p = 1-0 = 100\% \text{ chance of a Strategic Loss.}
\]

The Non-Intervention probabilities were calculated similarly, with the value of the factors present divided by the value of the factors possible:

• Strong Rebel Force: Absent.  

Value: 3

• Covert or monetary Support of Rebels: Present.  

Value: 2

• Low Outside Support for Dictator: Absent.  

Value: 2

• Weak Dictator Government: Absent.  

Value: 2

26 Hezbollah and Hamas have historically supported Asad and continue to do so in the current situation (Dreazen, and Kitfield 2012, “Implications of the Beirut Bombing” 2012)


28 The UN has not been able to pass a resolution of unified support condemning the Asad government or authorizing intervention (“Syria: Russia, China Block UNSC Approval of Military Intervention” 2012, “Syria: Russia, China Veto UN Sanctions Resolution” 2012).


32 Sources describe the Asad government as having the potential to fracture, but other-
• Rebels in the Ethnic or Religious Majority: Present.\textsuperscript{33} Value: 1

Thus, if the US chooses not to intervene, the rebels have a forty-three percent chance of winning, and a fifty-seven percent chance of losing.

\textit{Rebel Win: 3 (value present) ÷ 7 (value possible) = 0.43 or 43%}.

\textit{Rebel Loss: 1-p = 1 - 0.43 = 0.57 or 57%}.

The Expected Values of the United States Intervention payoff consist of the following calculations:

\textit{Expected Value = (Absolute Value of SW)(Probability of SW) + (Absolute Value of SL)(Probability of SL)}

\textit{Expected Value = (24)(0) + (-24)(1) = 0 + (-24) = -24}

This results in the following total expected payoffs:

\textit{Expected Values of Intervention: -24 for the United States, R for the Rebels, and -P for Asad.}

\textit{Expected Values of Do Not Intervene: -10 for the United States, 0.43F - 0.57D for the Rebels, and 0.57P - 0.43D for Asad.}

Figure 3 shows the finished game for the Syria uprising, with a rollback equilibrium of Do Not Intervene, Nature, and payoff values of -10, 0.43F - 0.57D, 0.57P - 0.43D.

\textsuperscript{33}Rebels groups largely belong to the Sunni majority (Blanchard and Sharp 2012, “Syria” 2012).
Game Analysis

While the Syrian conflict’s resolution remains ambiguous at present, the game illuminates a stark rationale to the United States’ current strategy of Do Not Intervene. The Status Quo may carry a negative payoff, but a decision to Intervene most likely a much higher cost. In addition, if the United States were to intervene, both the Rebels and the Dictator would receive undesirable payoffs, Repression and Loss of Power, respectively. Thus, in general, a United States’ decision not to intervene seems beneficial (or at least less harmful) to all parties involved, which was not expected. Indeed, at least one of the rebel groups has asserted its preference that the United States not intervene (Blanchard & Sharp 2012). However, other rebel groups call for United States intervention as the death toll continues to skyrocket, and the theoretical benefit of nonintervention becomes lost in the daily horrific news reports. Overall, in this case the game seems to function well in differentiating the Libyan and Syrian conflicts and explaining the United States’ responses.

However, the Syria case study also demonstrates a shortcoming in the model’s scope. First, the model fails to consider any strategic gains the status quo affords the U.S. in addition to the threats to U.S interests that it currently considers. In the calculation of the Status Quo payoffs, at least one source indicates that the uprising itself, even though it is causing instability, may help U.S. interests by undermining a staunch Iranian ally and a state sponsor of terrorism, even if the U.S. does nothing (Blanchard & Sharp 2012). Thus, the Status Quo payoff may in reality be even higher than the game model indicates. Furthermore, two eventualities have the potential to alter the United States strategy towards Syria dramatically, but currently lie beyond the scope of the game. First, if Syria were to directly attack or invade a U.S. ally, such as Israel, the United States’ equilibrium would likely change to Intervene. Second, the game does not currently include a variable accounting for the possibility and potential impact on U.S. responses if the Asad regime actually used its chemical weapons. However, various reports indicate that the Asad regime has used chemical weapons, and the United States response has remained the same. Thus, the model has proven accurate so far in its prediction that the United States will continue to choose not to intervene and that the “red line” is not so clear as the rhetoric of the American leadership would like to portray it.

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34 At least one source describes a Syrian invasion of Israel as a legitimate, though not overwhelmingly likely, possibility (“Israel Questions Stray Fire from Syria” 2012).

35 In December of 2012, a rebel group claimed the Asad regime used chemical weapons against them. In June of 2013, the White House announced that they had confirmed the use of chemical weapons in Syria. No direct military intervention was forthcoming (Dawber 2012, Hughes 2013)
Conclusion

The United States’ history of intervention is almost as lengthy as the country’s existence. The deceptively simple question asking the reason for intervention reveals a multifaceted and complex range of answers that address anything from foreign policy and military factors to the domestic environment, economic conditions, and reelection year politics. However, as the context of intervention has altered from Cold War era priorities to focus on terrorism and the Middle East as it impacts national security, it has reframed the questions surrounding intervention and how it will continue to impact the world after 9/11. The question of which factors within intrastate conflicts determine if the United States implements military intervention is therefore one of critical relevance to the study of developing world conditions and United States foreign policy in the twenty-first century.

This study addressed this question with a game theoretic model of intervention decision processes, focusing on the United States’ payoff structures and the factors within a conflict that influence them. By using a hybrid game and focusing on the factors within the conflict itself, the model successfully approximates the intervention decision process and the conflict characteristics that influence it. In examining two differing cases of uprisings within third-party autocracies, it succeeded in correctly differentiating two seemingly similar cases that have received differing United States responses. As expected, humanitarian concerns did not prove to be the driving factor in intervention decisions, and national security interests did prove one of the most important factors. However, the relative safety for troops (casualties, long-term troop commitment, and terrorist involvement) and the potential conflict with geopolitical adversaries proved the determining influences that differentiate United States response. Simply put, the greater the risk of prolonged and costly conflict, the less likely the United States will intervene, regardless of any humanitarian considerations. As the Syrian conflict wears on, popular explanations for the United States’ inaction tend to focus on the involvement of Russia and China in the conflict or a lack of a UN Security Council authorization. However, these explanations fail to account for a fuller spectrum of strategic security concerns that make up this complex conflict and its Libyan predecessor. By addressing the specific strategic and security factors that influence the decision to intervene, the model is able to explain differentiated responses where explanations that focus on single strategic concerns or domestic factors cannot.

Further research could examine the weighted factor values in more detail, potentially giving more weight to the factor of Regional Instability to better reflect more accurate probabilities of a United States win or loss in both the
short and long terms. Further research could also expand the factors to include the possibility of the conflict involving a close United States ally in war as well as the possibility of the Dictator using weapons of mass destruction rather than merely possessing them. As the model stands, such occurrences would move the conflict out of the scope of the game. However, on the whole the game provides a sound model of the decision process determining whether the United States will or will not intervene militarily in a post-9/11 conflict.

References


Colophon

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