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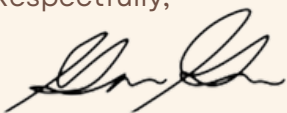
FOREWARD

Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security, and Conflict Transformation (WCAPS) is devoted to serving as a force multiplier for our membership in the peace, security, and conflict transformation field. WCAPS aims to be an incubator for greatness as we provide a platform for our members to engage in dialogue, conduct knowledge sharing activities, participate in mentorship programs, and host initiatives that are salient to changing the global landscape. Our mission is to advance the leadership and professional development of women of color in the fields of international peace, security, and conflict transformation, with the goal to ultimately impact sustainable change. We do this via hosting working groups, incorporating chapters, and providing spaces for our members to shift their ideas into initiatives.

WCAPS began in 2017, Ambassador Bonnie Jenkins with her belief that all people should be treated equally, fairly, and with respect, actioned her beliefs into practice when she founded WCAPS as a space where women of color could come together and gain access to resources and community, as well as showcase their expertise in spaces that they created. The central goal of WCAPS is to encourage, support, and ensure women of color have a seat at the table on issues of peace and security. WCAPS looks at the whole woman, no matter where they are in their professional journey, and utilizes the power of community, scholarship, and empowerment to help these women maneuver the peace and security space successfully. *Community* is found in our network of talented and energized members. *Scholarship* refers to the many areas of expertise and specialization our members hold, as well as the outputs produced by members. *Empowerment* means having the strength and resilience to keep fighting to overcome the hurdles we face as we work. This type of empowerment is needed if women of color are to tackle imbalances, namely related to gender and race, that exist in many policy-making circles, at all levels. In the spirit of community, scholarship, and empowerment, The WCAPS Pipeline Fellowship Program was born.

In February 2020, WCAPS welcomed the first batch of Fellows. For five months, fellows learned about and engaged with topics such as climate action, mentorship, and human rights, and were graced by some of the most dedicated and diligent women in the field. The program started locally in Washington D.C. and has since expanded to include participants from across the globe. This most recent cohort had participants from four continents! This dynamic group of women learned about a variety of topics to include Redefining National Security (RNS), emotional intelligence, Women Peace and Security (WPS), and international law as it relates to peacebuilding. WCAPS is very proud to present the policy papers these young women wrote, following months of rigorous research, coordination, and collaboration. There is no doubt that these women will go on to do incredible things, given the vigor and passion they hold for these topics and their desire to be a force for change. WCAPS would like to thank all of the authors, editors, and program managers who have ensured the continued success of **the WCAPS Pipeline Fellowship Program**. Bonne lecture!

Respectfully,



Gabrielle Gueye
WCAPS Pipeline Fellowship Program Lead



Click on the icons to join us!

EDITORS



Gabrielle Gueye serves as the Outreach, Engagement, and Training Officer at Women of Color Advancing Peace and Security (WCAPS). Before joining WCAPS full-time, she worked in humanitarian aid and development, at Catholic Relief Services, for a number of years, where she led Knowledge Management activities and provided Technical Assistance as part of the Impact Investing and Private Sector Engagement team. She has a BA in Justice Studies and Teaching English as a Foreign Language and an MA in Global Affairs and Management.



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Deyanira J. Murga is a security expert with an impressive track record spanning over two decades. As the Executive Director of Cerberus Risk Management & Security Consulting, she leads an organization known for its expertise in developing and implementing innovative security strategies tailored for Fortune 500 corporations across the Americas. She is also the visionary founder of Security NextGen, an initiative aimed at mobilizing young professionals to make a social impact and foster innovation in crime and violence prevention through the strategic use of technology.



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GENDER



CHAPTER 1

Gendered Disinformation is the New Canary for Democracy

Hanna Dasoo



Hanna is the senior policy and research analyst at Emgage Action, a Muslim civic advocacy organization, where she focuses on global Islamophobia, human rights, and Western counter-terrorism policies. She also holds a master's degree in Terrorism, Security, and Society from Kings College, London, and a bachelor's degree in Global Studies from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Hanna's main areas of research are disinformation campaigns, counter-radicalization and counter-terrorism policy.

According to V-Dem Institute, a research organization that measures the quality of governments, most recent report, 72%(1) of the world's population lives under authoritarian rule and disinformation remains a powerful tool for these regimes to exercise both power and influence. Twenty-first-century liberal democracies and developing states have been undermined by disinformation campaigns waged by adversaries, who have weaponized this digital age to sow discord and uncertainty, resulting in some of the most effective campaigns.

Disinformation thus remains one of the greatest (re)emerging threats to international peace and security, threatening to destabilize fragile fledgling democracies and aggravate polarization in Western nations by undermining national security and state sovereignty. Developing states are more at risk; in order to stem its spread, they may move towards authoritarianism, curtailing civil liberties, including freedom of speech. Defined as “verifiably false or misleading information that is disseminated for economic gain or to intentionally deceive the public,” (2) disinformation targets states to coordinate information warfare. Additionally, disinformation has become more dangerous thanks to advancements in digital technology. Campaigns can spread faster and farther via the Internet (3), relying not only on the perpetrators but also on the average person who can unwittingly aid in its dissemination. This engenders campaigns that are harder to track and control, making it easier to hide its creators.

Consider Covid-19 disinformation campaigns, a defining feature of the ongoing pandemic. Social media posts, fake news, and unverifiable news sources exacerbated the effects of the pandemic, causing unprecedented damage (4) on a global scale as people, impacted by the

by the uncertainty and confusion created by these campaigns, began to refuse life-saving vaccines and safety measures.

Disinformation has additionally been used in political elections to discredit political opponents and cast doubt on election results. In turn, this has led to a decrease in broad public trust (5) in major news organizations, governments, and institutions, fundamentally altering how the public holds its leaders accountable, and eroding trust in political systems. This consequence of dissatisfaction with government performance and response, as well as a lack of institutional accountability, creates a vicious cycle where those who are less trusting of institutions will naturally disengage from participating in governance and using these institutions, which subsequently leads to deteriorating public services.

Within the last several years, women, and particularly women of colour, have become the target for gendered disinformation, which has created yet another obstacle for women in the public eye. Lucina Di Meco, a prominent gender equality expert and the founder of #ShePersisted (6), defines gendered disinformation as the “spread of deceptive or inaccurate information or images used against women in public life.” (7) Online sexual harassment, misogyny, and violent and sexist rhetoric are just a few of the worrisome tactics used in gendered disinformation campaigns that build on negative stereotypes and tropes. All of this leads to “political violence, hate and the deterring of young women from considering a political career” (8) And in regard to the rise of authoritarianism, “misogyny and authoritarianism are not just common comorbidities but mutually reinforcing ills.” (9)

The Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) found that during the United States’ 2020 midterm election, female candidates were often subjected to personalised attacks and sexually abusive language, including derogatory remarks about their appearance, gender, and competence. (10) Moreover, female candidates of colour experienced even more abuse than their white female counterparts, with a significant amount of the attacks focusing on a candidate’s race, religion, or ethnicity. For example, Representative Ilhan Omar, who is a Black, Somali-American Muslim, was often labelled a traitor, a terrorist, an anti-Semite, and blamed for 9/11. (11) This abuse is not limited to just the United States; in India, female politicians experience higher abuse than their American or English counterparts. (12) In a country currently governed by a far-right fascist government, this is emblematic of a larger problem of democratic backsliding.

Women’s participation in politics not only promotes human rights but also represents a healthy democratic state. Recent research (13) has found that by implying or directly denigrating women as unfit for office, intellectually inferior, over-emotional, or untrustworthy actually puts countries’ national security at risk. So, when states engage in gendered disinformation campaigns, it is a deliberate choice, made to suppress opposition, government accountability, democratic processes, and marginalized communities, all of which contribute to a strong national security apparatus. Additionally, women’s involvement in politics tends to engender more progressive policies. They challenge traditional and

prevailing beliefs, opposing populism and “strong-arm” male politicians.

Gendered disinformation, as a result, becomes a powerful tool for male politicians to not only keep women out of politics but further entrench more illiberal and authoritarian policies, creating yet another obstacle to peace and security.

Online abuse and mis/disinformation against minority and female candidates have continued to proliferate with very little legislative or corporate intervention, deterring potential candidates from running for office or severely impacting their campaigns and success. To make matters worse, major tech companies are drastically cutting down their content moderation and ethics departments, which are responsible for identifying and combatting disinformation, hate, and extremism. Google’s parent company Alphabet, for example, has cut a third of its staff (14) dedicated to analysing and identifying extremism and dis/misinformation. X, formally known as Twitter, has laid off 15 percent of its trust and safety team, which includes the teams responsible for human rights and machine learning ethics and countering misinformation. (15) Not only are the candidates themselves at risk but those who work for the candidates as well as those who work on the elections (such as poll workers) are also at risk of both on and offline harm.

With most of the world sliding towards authoritarianism, tech companies and democratic governments remain even more crucial to protecting women in political and online spaces. Both Congress and social media companies therefore have an immediate responsibility to increase content moderation and address online harm especially in the run up to the 2024 presidential election.

Abusive users are adaptive and resilient, two factors that policymakers and tech companies should keep in mind. They know how to manipulate search engines, search recommendations, and tags to drive traffic towards their content. By facilitating collaboration between the public with multi-stakeholders, including government agencies and tech companies, successful countermeasures can be implemented. There are two potential areas for comprehensive regulatory approaches: social media sites/ tech companies and Congress.

Potential tech and social media company initiatives

These companies’ current approach erroneously relies too much on manual fact-checking and content removal, measures that are reactive rather than proactive. This is partially because the burden is on the user, rather than the platform, to detect and report online abuse. This hybrid mode of regulation involving human fact-checkers coupled with algorithmic outcomes cannot keep up with the vast amount of disinformation disseminated daily nor with how quickly these campaigns evolve in response to any countermeasures. Companies, therefore, have a responsibility to develop new features that detect abuse, hate, and harassment without relying heavily on users.

Disinformation is designed to make its audience react, relying on emotional responses and explains why these campaigns often exploit socio-political problems. Tech companies can take advantage of this by developing Artificial Intelligence that tracks and monitors emotion, rather than language, to detect disinformation. In other words, mapping negative emotions such as rage, resentment, or shock may be better indicators of a potential disinformation campaign, as factual posts do not generate extreme emotional responses.

One other major issue found on these sites is leaving up abusive content or suggesting additional content from abusive posters. The Institute for Strategic Dialogue’s report observed this, noting that “platforms suggest content from accounts or posts that the platforms themselves had previously labeled as containing disinformation or sensitive content.” (16) Social media and tech companies can counter this by including in their Terms of Agreement that if a user has multiple posts labelled as containing dis/misinformation or are removed due to their abusive content, that user should be either banned from posting or suspended from the platform and all posts containing that specific link should be disabled and taken down. Obviously one way users can get around this is by posting only once and making multiple accounts; however, many companies are already cracking down on users creating multiple accounts for this reason.

Congressional initiatives

Governments must require social media sites to implement disruption campaigns aimed at slowing down exposure and spread. By reducing engagement, disinformation is less likely to reach more people. For example, in 2020 WhatsApp announced it would limit text forwards in an attempt to delay the spread of misinformation. This impedes the speed of the spread, ensuring that less people will be exposed to false information and individual civil liberties are still respected. This remains a useful tactic in combating general extremism and thus, can be used in cases of disinformation.

Additionally, governments can develop programs that target the audience rather than perpetrators through comprehensive regulatory approaches and resilience-building methods. Accordingly, governments should view developing both critical thinking and media literacy as a strategic defence. Media literacy unfortunately is practiced in only two countries (17); its prioritization can aid in countering harmful content that targets women. Congress can, in conjunction with the Department of Education and major tech companies, design and execute a media literacy and skills framework that focuses on:

- Understanding and evaluating the type of media that is consumed;
- Protecting personal online data;
- Understanding how the online environment operates and how online content is created;
- Learning how to verify sources of information (rather than solely the information itself)
- Understanding the risks of online engagement and;
- Positive online engagement.

Moreover, it is becoming increasingly clear that tech and social media companies require immediate regulation to ensure they are compliant with basic civil and human rights. The European Parliament, for example, voted in favor of the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (18), which ensures that larger companies must conduct human rights and environmental due diligence to protect users from corporate-related abuses.

By adopting a similar measure, Congress can take the right steps to promote corporate accountability and simultaneously protect women and other marginalized populations from online abuse and harassment. In conjunction with the Federal Trade Commission and the Department of Justice, Congress can draft policies that promote government oversight of companies found to be in violation of basic civil and human rights. So far, companies have the power to amplify or restrict whatever information they want and thus, have the power to influence and sometimes even lead public conversations.

One way of achieving this is by passing the Safeguarding Against Fraud, Exploitation, Threats, Extremism and Consumer Harms (SAFE TECH) Act, (19) which reforms a critical section of the Communications Act of 1934. This Act created the Federal Communications Commission to oversee and regulate telephone, telegraph, and radio communications. Section 230 reflects Congress' desire to uplift free speech on the Internet by allowing companies to moderate user speech and content. In other words, it protects companies from being held accountable for whatever content is posted by third parties on their platforms and from lawsuits for whatever content they remove.

Senator Mark Warner's (D-VA) SAFE TECH Act would reform section 230 by allowing social media companies to be held accountable for enabling online abuse, harassment, and discrimination. By enacting measures against the platform itself, there are now genuine consequences for allowing abusive behavior such as gendered disinformation. Naturally, users who post abusive content are likely to seek other platforms, but by ensuring that the biggest companies and corporations can no longer allow this kind of content, those users are forced towards smaller, lesser-known platforms and therefore, cannot reach a larger audience.

Conclusion

There is a clear need for governments to invest in resources to identify gendered disinformation and promote online accountability. At a time when women's rights are being challenged and authoritarianism is steadily increasing across the globe, the need to address gendered disinformation is paramount and should be prioritized. So far, both governments and tech and social media companies have failed to protect women, with the latter prioritizing engagement and profit over user safety. If countries are serious about uplifting and protecting democracy from the rise of autocracies, they must not continue to allow gendered disinformation to proliferate in online spaces; its capricious nature ensures that this remains a genuine threat to peace and security.

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CHAPTER 2

The Gendered Politics of Democratic Transitions: The Case of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya

Desiree Winns



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The ambitions of exiled Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya can be summarized in her own words: “Only the new democratic Belarus will provide firm security guarantees for Ukraine and implement broad partnership with our neighbors.” (1) As an opposition leader, Tsikhanouskaya has become a symbol of the free, democratic Belarus desired by the country’s citizens and international diaspora. The authoritarian regime in Belarus, which has imprisoned over 600 political oppositionists for speaking against dictator Aliaksandr Lukaschenka, has charged Tsikhanouskaya with treason and sentenced her to fifteen years in prison. Lukaschenka’s dismissive evaluation of Tsikhanouskaya’s political ability was simply that Belarus could not be run by a woman, nor would she be supported by its people. International and domestic support of Tsikhanouskaya has proved otherwise, but the democratization of an authoritarian regime is always a complex, winding road that sometimes reverses. Any regime to transfer leadership from an authoritarian to a democrat faces an opportunity for bold criticism and distorted nostalgia. But how does gender specifically affect perception and criticism of a transitioning democratic government, and how will this be a challenge to Tsikhanouskaya’s leadership?

Masculinity in Lukashenka’s Belarus

Dictators often uphold an image of unbreakable masculinity to sell their leadership as strong and unwavering. This “strongman” illusion can be utilized in a literal sense by shirtless photoshoots, excessive weapons or elaborate military uniforms. A well-directed national propaganda campaign can also uplift the dictator as a savior, a messianic deliverer of peace and justice for a country. The association of masculinity with strength, protection and security places the male authoritarian on a paternal pedestal, from which he dictates the

duties and responsibilities of men and women.

In fact, Lukashenka has referred to himself as the “Batka”, or father, of the Belarussians. His military uniforms, worn on Victory Day and other events, evoke a familiar nostalgia for the Soviet era. Within his regime, masculinity is defined and enforced with strict gender roles. This begins for Belarussian citizens at a young age, as “the Belarussian Ministry of Education provides a gender and cultural education guideline for public curriculums stating that students must have an ‘understanding of a traditional natural culture image of a man and a woman; awareness about socially approved qualities of boys, male adolescents, men and girls, female adolescents and women.’” (2)

Men are furthermore encouraged to take roles in society such as police work, government, and scientific careers. However, the men who are viewed to be Belarus’ greatest strength are also the greatest risk to the regime. Male protestors in Belarus are more likely to be beaten, attacked, arrested and/or tortured. Socially, in Belarus, it is more acceptable to physically harm men. Women protestors have used societal norms to their advantage by taking to the streets in order to protect their men, and stirring discomfort in the police forces meant to repel them. The female-driven protests against their oppressive male dictator are a direct offense to the masculine, Soviet-style order so desired by Lukashenka. Lukashenka has also stated that “a woman’s vocation is to decorate the world, while a man’s is to protect the world and women.” (3)

The case of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya

When her husband, Siarhii Tsikhanovsky, was imprisoned for running as an oppositionist against Aliaksandr Lukaschenka, Tsikhanouskaya took his place as a presidential candidate. Initially, Lukashenka did not regard her as a threat to his leadership. In referring to her and other female opposition leaders Mariya Kalesnikava and Veranika Tsapkala, Lukashenka insisted that the Belarussian constitution did not “support” the possibility of their being in executive positions of power and that Belarussian society was not ready to elect a woman as president. (4) On August 9, 2020, Tsikhanouskaya was determined to be the winner of the presidential elections and so confirmed by independent election observers. However, Tsikhanouskaya was forced into exile by a charge of treason and a sentence of fifteen years in prison. Since her initial exile, Tsikhanouskaya “has visited 28 countries, gathering support and advocating for the release of more than 1,500 political prisoners and a peaceful transition of power through free and fair elections.” (5) She has also established a United Transitional Cabinet, a structure of government that operates outside of Belarus for the benefit of the opposition.

Tsikhanouskaya has described herself as a “housewife turned opposition leader” and continuously refers to her disregard for politics. Her intention is to remove Lukashenka from the dictatorship, stay with the democratic Belarus until new elections are in place, and then “step out of the way.” Her use of a quiet femininity, through her self-described role as a

mother and housewife grants her an appeal as an ordinary woman who simply wants change—similar to the men and women who also oppose Lukashenka’s regime.

This, in addition to her apolitical stance, makes her popular among the Free Belarus movement. Her political aims for Belarus are mostly centered around increasing sanctions against Lukashenka and fighting for the release of unrightfully imprisoned Belarusians.

Tsikhanouskaya pushes for global leaders to acknowledge the difference between the Belarusian government and the Belarusian people. The close friendship between Vladimir Putin and Aliaksandr Lukashenka has proved a dangerous connection. The dictators adopted a new joint military doctrine and military grouping now allows a broad Russian military presence in Belarus. Many Russian forces that invaded Ukraine were launched from Belarus’ southern border. While Lukashenka has referred to Belarus as Russia’s “little brother”, Tsikhanouskaya and many Belarussians have dismissed this idea. Tsikhanouskaya has supported efforts to sabotage Russian forces moving through Belarus and condemned the Lukashenka regime for permitting Belarusian territory to be used by Putin. However, she has always been certain to emphasize that in order to succeed, “[Belarus] need[s] more pressure from our international partners... to speak out on our independency and to bring Lukashenka to accountability.” (6) Continued international support of Tsikhanouskaya's transitional government includes increased sanctions on Lukashenka and undeterred advocacy for the democratization of Belarus, as well as the release of all wrongfully imprisoned Belarusians.

The troubles of democratization

Democracies installed directly after the dissolution of an authoritarian government are often perceived as weaker or less effective than their predecessors. An open society takes time and effort to adjust to after years of living under a restrictive regime. The incoming democratic leader may be criticized for any failure to provide reforms as quickly as promised or desired. Furthermore, democratization can take years to accomplish. Hybrid regimes, systems that incorporate elements of authoritarianism and the new democracy, can also give the appearance of stagnated progress. New democracies may have within themselves corrupt or inadequate institutions or individuals that make the system of democracy seem a failure or ineffective. Economic consequences of the transition, such as poverty or unemployment as the previous administrations’ functions are dismantled, also create dissatisfaction. Failure to acknowledge or resolve crimes of injustice also leaves citizens wanting.

In the case of Belarus, Tsikhanouskaya will be taking the arduous task of cleaning up after Lukashenka and clearing the way for new elections. The goals of her team are to “create conditions for economic development, constitutional reform and development of the country as a whole”. (7) While democratization possesses its own challenges, the incoming leader is often the focus of dissatisfaction and blame, and nostalgia can arise. Democracies installed after dictatorships are likely to be unstable, regardless of the gender of who is in power. They can be vulnerable to democratic backsliding, as new governments struggle with

the disorder and chaos that follow the dismantling of a previous regime.

The failure of the democracy to continue the economic or political standards of the dictatorship may inspire disappointed citizens to recall the “better days” under the iron fist. The disillusionment with democracy in many countries establishes the correlation between democracy and dysfunction. When democracy fails, people desire a stronger hand to lead the way. But when authoritarianism oppresses, people crave freedom and call for the end of the dictatorship. As the cycle continues, democratic backsliding and democratization occur.

Gender and democratic transitions

The aforementioned stability provided by the dictator, created by the dictator’s emphasis on oppressive security measures, can contribute to the correlative dichotomy between a “strong dictatorship” and a “weak democracy.” This correlation could be further emphasized with the association of the previous and current leader’s gender. Will a transitioning democracy, already bound to face harsh criticism and reversals, be more subject to scrutiny under a female president to follow the male authoritarian? Even though she has yet to take office or topple Lukashenka, Tsikhanouskaya has already been criticized for indecisiveness and unclear policies for a democratic Belarus. Her primary focus has been to increase pressure on the Lukashenka regime as well as economic support for Belarusians fighting the dictatorship. This economic plan has already been approved by the European Union, which has “promised financing for the first 2-3 years of development of new [democratic] Belarus.”⁸ Tsikhanouskaya also plans to rehabilitate Belarusians who were wrongfully imprisoned under Lukashenka, with one draft of a new act already approved and presented by her legal representative. As for her own political aspirations, Tsikhanouskaya’s website states that “the departure of Aliaksandr Lukashenka and new elections are the key objectives of [her] plan.”⁽⁸⁾ Assistance from the EU to build and maintain a democratic Belarus, and ensure that backsliding will not occur, are ideal for Tsikhanouskaya’s oppositional force. After being underestimated by Lukashenka for her gender, Tsikhanouskaya’s success in creating and keeping a democratic Belarus will be an outstanding and retributive accomplishment.

Corazon “Cory” Aquino, who was elected president of the Philippines after the ousting of infamous dictator Ferdinand Marcos Sr., shares a similar backstory to Tsikhanouskaya. Not only was she also referred to as a reluctant housewife in politics and her nation’s “Joan of Arc,” but Aquino’s husband, Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino Jr., was also a victim of the previous regime. Aquino Jr. was murdered after returning to the Philippines from exile in 1983. His widow won the election in 1986, and after the People’s Power Revolution that forced the Marcos family to flee to Hawaii, Aquino ascended to the office to provide the long-sought democracy that the people of the Philippines had protested for. However, her term as President was wrought with the typical troubles of a democratic transition. The shift from martial law to an open democracy inspired Marcos loyalists, Communist insurgents, and

militants divided by loyalty to become vocally and physically active. Aquino survived six attempts to overthrow her.

Although she had succeeded in toppling a dictator and installing a democracy in the Philippines, Aquino was criticized for a lack of direction and intention. Common views of her included phrases such as "We like Cory personally, but nothing has changed," and "She is sincere, moral and honest, but the presidency is obviously beyond her, beyond her capabilities, beyond her experience." (9) Aquino believed that restoring the institutions of democracy would fundamentally fix the rest of the Philippines' economic and political issues. Her personal approach to the presidency was to "lead by example", however, her policies failed to resolve issues of poverty and corruption. Without any prior political experience or interest, Aquino was easily viewed as someone unprepared and unqualified for the role, even as a symbol of the democracy desired in the Philippines. The Philippines also represents a country where nostalgia for a previous authoritarian has affected contemporary politics. In 2022, Ferdinand Marcos' only son, Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr., was elected to the presidency after a twenty-year campaign that utilized both historical revisionism and nostalgia on social media to evoke and rehabilitate his father's image.

Conclusion

It is inevitable that any president to be elected after the ousting, deposing or death of a dictator will face scrutiny for delayed or failed delivery of promised reforms. Suggesting that all women in politics should be exempt from criticism is an unhealthy and unproductive attitude. However, it could be possible that Tsikhanouskaya, if she does assume a presidential role after Lukashenka is out of power, may face criticisms similar to Aquino. Tsikhanouskaya has already described herself as someone who does not enjoy politics, and who wants to step away as soon as democracy is assured in Belarus. Aquino viewed herself the same way. A democratic transition in Belarus will require international support to remain consistent. That support provided by the EU and led by Tsikhanouskaya's transitional government will determine whether or not Tsikhanouskaya will be admired on a personal level and not a political one.

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CHAPTER 3

Gendered Disinformation: Digital Spaces as a Platform for Violence Against Women

Alessandra Restifo



Alessandra is a passionate supporter of global civil society and human rights networks. Born and raised in Philadelphia, PA, she regularly engaged with local community organizations that instilled the importance of not only advocating for yourself but others as well. She continued to pursue this interest while obtaining her Bachelor's degree in Political Science and Global Studies at Temple University, where she developed dual concentrations on civil society strengthening as a method of conflict prevention and the unique barriers presented to marginalized communities.

The concept of women, peace, and security does not only exist on a global scale but also on an interpersonal one. This is more predominant on social media platforms. With the emergence of tech giants such as Meta and Twitter, most women involved in civic and political spaces have become increasingly vulnerable to online abuse and harassment. Digital gendered disinformation, a specific form of online abuse, has pushed women out of public spaces, limiting their ability to advocate for themselves and others. Women's political participation is crucial to good governance and national security, yet there is a lack of research on this threat and few initiatives aimed at addressing the gendered impacts of disinformation. As social media platforms retreat from accountability, this report aims to identify alternative entities that can protect women from online disinformation attacks.

Defining 'gendered disinformation'

To distinguish gendered disinformation from other forms of online abuse, this report will focus on the following key characteristics identified by the Wilson Center's findings: falsity, malign intent, and coordination. (1) Falsity can range from written lies about the targeted actor to the spread of manipulated images as long as it affirms preexisting stereotypes around women. These false narratives portray women as overly emotional or unintelligent to undermine their credibility and eligibility in public spheres. (2) Discrediting women is one aspect of the 'malign intent' component. Intimidation and shaming, which can take the form of threats to safety and information leaks, are other strategies to deter women from challenging existing structures. (3)

The coordination behind gendered disinformation campaigns varies depending on the

context. As observed in Poland and the Philippines, supporters of the state utilize formal and informal networks to intimidate women who criticize nondemocratic actions. (4)

Foreign actors may also align themselves with anti-women online communities to interfere in elections. For example, evidence shows that Russian information operations targeted Hillary Clinton in the leadup to the 2016 presidential election and continued participating in online attacks led by domestic anti-feminist groups against leaders of the Women’s March. (5, 6) Indicators of coordinated efforts include repeated language, targeted online followings, and abusive posting patterns. (7) Thus, ‘gendered disinformation’ must be defined as organized efforts to remove or prevent women from participation in public arenas through deceptively affirming harmful gender biases.

Observed and potential impacts

As implied by the definition, (online) disinformation campaigns are influenced by pre-existing norms. A report by the Center for Democracy and Technology revealed women of color candidates in the 2020 election cycle were more likely to be targets of disinformation and faced more online abuse than other candidates. (8) Along with a rise in anti-transgender sentiments, bad actors have increasingly utilized transphobia in disinformation campaigns against high profile cisgender women politicians, specifically women of color. (9) LGBTQ+ women face similarly targeted attacks. Notably, Hungarian state-aligned actors conducted a disinformation campaign and doxed lesbian activist Emma Krasznahorkai. (10)

The escalation of gendered disinformation has extended beyond the digital space. Members of a paramilitary group attempted to kidnap Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitman following a series of disinformation campaigns, while Indian officials falsely accused and imprisoned leaders of the Pinjra Tod, a women’s rights movement. (11, 12) In a more general sense, successful gendered disinformation campaigns result in women leaders withdrawing from the public sphere and increasing self-censorship. (13) In some cases, the threat of violence may grow so extreme that women are forced to go into hiding and delete their digital presence. (14)

Gendered disinformation creates higher barriers to political participation for women, specifically those with intersectional identities. The lack of involvement of women, whether they be politicians, activists, or journalists, poses a clear threat to good governance. In illiberal states, gendered disinformation has also provided an alternative to autocratic gender washing, or the inclusion of “gender-equality reforms to boost regime legitimacy while shifting attention away from violations of electoral integrity and human rights.” (15) Nondemocratic leaders, including those in democratic states, are increasingly relying on tech-based forms of violence against women to silence women and undermine systems of governance. (16)

Ongoing efforts against mis- and disinformation

Destabilization caused by gendered disinformation could also pose a threat to national security for states that do not take action. As mentioned, malignant foreign actors have identified online gendered disinformation as a base to expand interference in democratic societies. The destabilization of political structures and norms can also be observed when real life violence results from online threats against women political leaders. (17) As a result, the state has a role to play in addressing online forms of violence against women.

In the Poynter Institute’s global analysis of anti-misinformation actions, Funke and Flamini identify six methods among fifty-two countries. Twenty of these countries enacted laws that have since been used to target journalists, activists, and oppressed groups. (18) The report highlights alternative methods to legislation, including government mandated task forces and reports to further the understanding of misinformation in various contexts. (19) While less enforceable, these options allow for more informed efforts that pose a lesser threat to individual rights. For example, the Canadian government increased its disinformation monitoring capabilities and its investment in media literacy four years prior to the passage of the Digital Charter Implementation Act in 2023. In both Oman and Sweden, governments have focused their efforts on educating various agencies prior to implementing solutions for the public. (20)

Others have called on social media companies to take on more accountability for the rise in mis- and disinformation. Various factors contribute to the high levels of misuse of these platforms, including low financial and social costs to entry, as well as the fast spread of harmful messaging. (21) Major companies have limited a majority of their anti-misinformation efforts to election-based programs, while general disinformation is combated through monitoring. (22) Despite early efforts, companies have reduced their efforts to monitor disinformation. Notably, recent layoffs at Meta and YouTube heavily affected content moderation teams, while Twitter has pivoted toward community notes for fact checking. (23) Those against regulating social media companies argue that these platforms act as the ‘public square,’ despite their existence as private, for-profit entities. Legal scholar Mary Anne Frank further argues, “the extent to which social-media forums do resemble physical public squares is no cause for celebration... the public square has historically tended to reinforce legal and social hierarchies... rather than foster radically democratic and inclusive dialogue.” (24)

Recommendations

It must be noted that the successful implementation of any potential solution relies on additional research into disinformation and its gendered impacts. To address this issue in socio-political spaces, it is essential for researchers to prioritize tracking how online forms of violence against women impact national security and good governance.

Future investigations should center on the impacts on those most affected by disinformation campaigns, notably women with intersectional identities and those in transitioning states. Only through inclusive research and implementation can we effectively combat gendered disinformation attacks.

- **Strengthening legal understandings:** Adjusting the understanding of gendered disinformation as an act of violence against women provides pathways for resolution. In some contexts, framing the act of disinformation as the “willful and malicious spreading of false information” places it under the jurisdiction of defamation laws, allowing individual women to pursue legal means of justice. (25) Empowering more women able to combat gendered disinformation individually in more just systems increases the cost to perpetrators of gendered disinformation and the platforms on which it exists.
- **Government task forces:** The creation of government task forces provides the base for more informed regulatory bodies, policies, and general discussions around gendered disinformation. Alternatively, identifying the intersection of gender-based violence and disinformation allows for existing government task forces to include online abuse against women in their portfolios or to collaborate on efforts. For example, this report’s definition of gendered disinformation places it under the purview of the White House Gender Policy Council, thus bringing more resources and attention to the issue. Following an expansion of knowledge, governments should consider enacting regulatory measures that hold social media platforms accountable for their role in facilitating the spread of gendered disinformation.
- **Collaborative efforts:** Despite the lack of effort from social media, there are several opportunities for collaboration to fight gendered disinformation.
 - **Social media companies:** First, the creation of frameworks like the EU Digital Service Act supports a friendlier relationship between regulators and companies by focusing on “how to regulate.” Social media companies would then have a pathway toward more cost-effective content moderation, which could serve as an incentive to join the fight against gendered forms of disinformation.
 - **Public-private partnerships:** A rising number of startups and nongovernmental organizations are focused on fighting disinformation. (26) These bodies could provide support for public services, like media literacy education, or tools for individuals to more efficiently fight disinformation.
 - **Community engagement:** As noted, sexist norms provide the basis for the mass spread of gendered disinformation campaigns. Advocacy groups and nonprofits should continue to collaborate with communities to change attitudes toward women. Engaging communities in conversations about gendered disinformation is crucial for raising awareness and fostering collective action. This may be the most challenging, but most effective solution.

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CHAPTER 4

Intersectionality of Gender, Conflict, and Peace-building: Gendered Impact of Conflict in the Horn of Africa

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Gender dynamics play a significant role in conflict and post-conflict environments. Integrating an intersectional lens into peacebuilding initiatives can help mitigate the adverse consequences women experience during and after a conflict. This policy paper aims to examine the gendered dimensions of conflict and understand the extreme violence and insecurity faced by women due to institutional and systemic norms. By studying the impact of conflict in the Horn of Africa on women's peace and security, this paper seeks to study the intricate nature of these dynamics. Furthermore, it presents recommendations to enhance protection for women and establish strong systems that foster women's participation in peacebuilding processes.

Conceptualizing women, peace, and security

Including women in peace and security, efforts is not just about representation but recognizing their unique perspectives, knowledge, and contributions. Women often play crucial roles as peacebuilders, negotiators, mediators, and community leaders, drawing on their experiences and networks to foster dialogue, reconciliation, and sustainable peace.

Their involvement can lead to more inclusive and comprehensive peace agreements that address the needs of diverse communities.

The intersectionality of gender, conflict, and peacebuilding highlights the need to recognize and address the diverse experiences and needs of individuals with different gender identities during times of conflict and in post-conflict settings. By adopting an intersectional lens, peacebuilding efforts can become more inclusive, comprehensive, and effective in fostering sustainable peace that benefits all members of society.

Women's participation in conflict transformation and peacebuilding is of utmost importance for building sustainable peace and fostering inclusive societies. Historically, women have often been disproportionately affected by armed conflicts, bearing the brunt of violence, displacement, and loss. (1) However, women's experiences and perspectives are also critical in shaping effective strategies for conflict resolution, reconciliation, and peacebuilding.

Efforts to promote women's participation in conflict transformation and peacebuilding have gained recognition globally. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, adopted in 2000, acknowledges the importance of women's involvement and their protection in conflict situations. (2) Additionally, numerous grassroots organizations and international initiatives have emerged to support and amplify women's voices in peace processes.

It is crucial to ensure that women are not only included but also empowered in decision-making processes related to conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Providing access to education, training, and resources, as well as combating gender-based violence and discrimination, are vital steps toward creating an enabling environment for women's full participation. By harnessing the potential of women, societies can realize more just, inclusive, and sustainable peace.

Conflict unveils systems that are conducive to gender violence and inequalities. In times of conflict, women often endure physical violence and emotional distress, facing devastating challenges such as increased sexual violence attacks, displacement, and socioeconomic risks. (3) Perpetrators exploit women as weapons, demoralizing them to weaken the opposition and gain control over civilians. The use of women as part of war tactics leads to profound consequences for the victims. Therefore, it is imperative to implement measures that prioritize the safety and security of women and girls in conflict zones.

Unequal power dynamics within societies contribute to the prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV). Harmful gender norms and systemic factors underpin the steep rates of violence against women. Traditional masculine traits and norms incentivize aggressive behavior, gender hierarchies, and patriarchal structures. The prevalence of militarized masculinity and lawlessness further heightens the risks of rape, sexual assault, and forced marriages. (4)

This results in the exclusion of women from decision-making processes as well as the perpetuation of GVB. Women in conflict zones are no strangers to GBV, they encounter various forms of sexual assault, female genital mutilation, child marriage, and trafficking. As conflict escalates, women become primary targets of senseless violence, placing them at a severe disadvantage in conflict-ridden zones. Consequently, many women flee their homes, leading to displacement crises.

Displacement emerges as a dire consequence of conflict, disproportionately affecting women. When conflict erupts in their homes, individuals and communities confront the harsh reality of displacement and seeking refuge elsewhere. In their search for shelter, food, and a semblance of security, displaced individuals encounter numerous challenges. (5) Given the heightened threat to women during conflict, they comprise a majority of displaced populations. Women do not have many protections in refugee camps. Numerous women and girls have fled from persecution in certain East African countries to seek refuge in such camps. However, due to overcrowding and lack of resources in refugee camps, these individuals face many challenges. For instance, there is an innate lack of protection as a result of the systemic dangers in refugee camps. In post-conflict environments, displaced women and girls often encounter further abuse and exploitation. (6)

Institutional challenges prevalent in certain East African countries pose significant threats to women's security. Weak legal frameworks and limited gender-responsive policies further jeopardize women's safety. Inadequate laws addressing GBV exacerbate the vulnerability of women. (7) Notably, certain countries like South Sudan foster a culture of impunity that allows perpetrators of violence against women to evade legal repercussions. (8) Additionally, limited access to resources and the socioeconomic aftermath of conflicts profoundly impact the livelihoods of displaced communities.

Case studies

The Horn of Africa has witnessed numerous conflicts and peace processes over the years, presenting an interesting case study for examining women's participation in peacebuilding efforts. While the region has experienced a complex and diverse range of conflicts, there are two examples in the broader Horn of Africa where women's participation in peace processes and negotiations, has impacted the conflict situation for the better.

Sudanese peace process

The Sudanese peace process, particularly the negotiations that led to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 and the subsequent peace process in South Sudan, showcased the significant role of women in peacebuilding. In the early stages of negotiations, women's participation was limited. However, women's groups and civil society organizations actively campaigned for inclusion and played a crucial role in advocating for women's rights, gender equality, and women's inclusion in the peace talks. (9)

Eventually, they succeeded in securing a provision in the CPA that guaranteed a minimum of 25% representation for women in all levels of government. (10)

Moreover, women's organizations played a pivotal role in grassroots mobilization, peace education, and reconciliation efforts within communities affected by the conflict. They created platforms for dialogue and promoted women's perspectives and priorities in the peace process. Despite challenges and setbacks, women's participation contributed to a more inclusive and gender-sensitive peace process in Sudan.

Somali peace process

The Somali peace process has been marked by protracted conflict and state collapse. Women's participation in peacebuilding efforts in Somalia has been crucial in advancing inclusive dialogue and fostering community reconciliation. The Somali Women Civil Society Organizations (CSO) and other women-led initiatives have played a significant role in advocating for gender equality and women's inclusion in the peace process. (11)

In 2000, the Somali National Reconciliation Conference (SNRC) was organized, which aimed to bring together Somalis from various clans and regions to discuss peace and reconciliation. (12) This conference was an important milestone, as it provided a platform for women's voices and perspectives to be heard. However, the overall participation of women in subsequent peace talks and decision-making processes remained limited.

Efforts to increase women's participation continued, and in 2010, the Somali government adopted a National Gender Policy that recognized women's role in peacebuilding and committed to promoting their participation. Additionally, UNSCR 1325 has been crucial in advocating for women's inclusion in peace processes in Somalia.

Despite these positive developments, challenges persist, including cultural and societal norms, security concerns, and limited resources for women's organizations. However, women's groups and activists continue to advocate for their meaningful participation and the integration of a gender perspective in peacebuilding efforts.

The case studies of Sudan and Somalia in the Horn of Africa highlight the important role of women in peace processes. Women's organizations have actively campaigned for inclusion, advocated for gender equality, and contributed to grassroots peacebuilding efforts. While progress has been made, ongoing efforts are needed to overcome challenges and ensure women's full participation and meaningful involvement in peace processes throughout the region.

Policy recommendations

Advancing women's participation in peace negotiations is crucial for creating inclusive and sustainable peace processes. Here are some policy recommendations to promote and support women's involvement in peace negotiations and processes:

- Providing capacity-building and leadership training for women
 - Provide targeted training programs to enhance women's knowledge and skills in negotiation, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding
 - Educate women and girls about consent, bodily autonomy, and accountability
- Establishing specialized courts or tribunals for addressing violence against women
 - Enforcing legislation against gender-based violence
 - Enacting legal consequences for perpetrators of violence against women and eradicating impunity for such acts
- Investing in gender-responsive humanitarian and development programs
 - Allocate resources to aid displaced women and girls in refugee camps
 - Increase security and surveillance around shelters to decrease violence against women in camps
- Collect gender-aggregated data
 - Improve data collection and analysis to understand the specific challenges and opportunities for women's participation in peace processes. This information can inform evidence-based policies and strategies for advancing women's involvement in negotiation and decision-making.
- Promote international commitments
 - Make intentional efforts to invest in the safety and security of women and girls in conflict zones by providing mission-specific humanitarian aid to women and girls
 - Continue to develop programs to increase women's political participation

By implementing these policy recommendations, policymakers can help create an inclusive and gender-responsive approach to peace negotiations, fostering sustainable peace and addressing the needs and aspirations of all members of society.

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CHAPTER 5

Women, Life, Freedom: The Mahsa Zhina Amini Revolution and Gender Apartheid in Iran

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The world's first women-led revolution commenced on September 16th, 2022, after twenty-two-year-old Mahsa Zhina Amini was killed in the custody of Iran's Morality Police. (1) The Morality Police, known as the Gashth-e-Ershad, is a division of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) that focuses on patrolling public and private spaces to ensure that Islamic laws, specifically Islamic dress laws, are enforced in public spaces. (2) Amini was a Kurdish-Iranian woman who was visiting Tehran during her arrest. She was properly wearing her hijab, despite her arrest. (3) Amini was arrested, and killed in morality police custody. (4) Mahsa Zhina Amini's murder by the Morality Police became a symbol for Iranians fighting against religious dictatorship and gender apartheid. Since her death, Iran has become consumed by a revolution, with cities across the country protesting, rioting, and fighting against state repression. (5) A brutal crackdown on revolutionaries has ensued by the IRGC. This is particularly the case in ethnic and religious minority areas, specifically the Kurdish region. (6) Mahsa Zhina Amini has emerged as an international icon for women's rights. From Canada to Luxembourg to South Korea, protests in solidarity with Iranian protests have taken place around the globe.

Gender apartheid in Iran

The existence of a gender apartheid system is an intrinsic component of the Islamic Republic. The end of the gender apartheid system would mean an end to the Islamic Republic. The stratification of women has been critical in ensuring that women have less force to revolt against the system. Since the inception of the Islamic Republic, Iranian women have fought against oppressive Islamic laws. (7) The Mahsa Zhina Amini revolution is unique because it is women-led, with women's liberation at the forefront.

By unifying men, women, and other genders against the gender apartheid system, in tandem with the other systems of oppression created by the Islamic Republic, the revolution has engineered conditions that have led to the point of no return between the Islamic Republic and the Iranian people.

Iran's laws and policies reflect the policies necessary to sustain the gender apartheid system. Iranian laws are implemented in a way that maintains the domination of men over women by restricting women's autonomy and erasing the humanity of women. Women are treated as second-class citizens and legal minors at the hands of their male guardians. Women are forbidden from traveling without permission from their male guardians or attending sporting events. (9) Male guardians reserve the right to prohibit women from accepting jobs and pursuing fields of study that they do not deem acceptable or find to be contrary to family values. (10) Iranian women are forced to wear a hijab from puberty. A misplaced headscarf is punishable by up to fifteen years in prison, lashes, and fines. (11) Through Iran's laws and policies, women are banned from meaningful participation in government and politics. According to Iranian law, women are forbidden from becoming President, Supreme Leader, or holding any military, judiciary, or religious positions. (12) Women are prohibited from serving on the three highest councils in the country: the Assembly of Experts, the Expediency Discernment Council, or the Guardian Council. Moreover, in Iranian law, it is written that one woman has half the value of a man. (13)

Poisoning of schoolgirls

The Islamic Republic's reliance on gender apartheid to entrench power has resulted in a brutal crackdown against protestors who have protested against gender apartheid. Since the genesis of the revolution, the regime has deliberately poisoned more than seven thousand school girls and university students who have dissented against the regime. (14) Schoolgirls and university students have led protests and demonstrations against the government inside their educational institutions, rendering them targets for the Islamic Republic. (15) Due to the widespread hospitalization of schoolgirls, many parents have taken their children out of school. (16) Educational institutions are designed to be safe places to expand learning and knowledge, especially for children. (17) The regime has transformed schools into battlefields.

Recommendations

- States, especially Western democracies, should work multilaterally to support Iranian protestors in the fight against the brutality of the Islamic Republic and gender apartheid by designating the IRGC as a terrorist entity.
- States, especially Western democracies, should end diplomatic relations and recall their ambassadors from Iran, demonstrating their condemnation of the regime's actions.

- States, especially Western democracies, should engage in political sponsorship of arrested protestors, especially those facing the possibility of execution.
- Consult and work with Iranian diaspora groups to create meaningful policy solutions that will uplift Iranian voices, specifically Iranian women and girls.

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ENVIRONMENT



CHAPTER 6

Climate Resiliency and Gender-Responsive Development for US Military Bases in the Indo-Pacific: A Comprehensive Approach to Counterbalancing China's Sphere of Influence

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The Indo-Pacific region holds significant strategic importance for the United States given its economic, political, and security interests. (1) However, as the geopolitical landscape evolves, China's development agenda and presence in the region have raised concerns about its rapidly expanding sphere of influence. The United States must adopt a comprehensive and forward-thinking approach to counterbalance China's growing presence. (2) Climate change also further exacerbates the vulnerability of US military bases in the Indo-Pacific. Rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and changing environmental conditions pose significant risks to military infrastructure, readiness, and operational capabilities. (3) These challenges not only compromise the effectiveness of US forces but also have the potential to strain relationships with host nations in the region. (4) Given China's poor track record on human rights and lack of transparency in its aid policies, the United States must develop an alternative approach that addresses climate change as a threat multiplier and incorporates principles of good governance, human rights, and gender equity.

Some may mistake the issue of climate change as solely an environmental concern, but it is absolutely a development challenge with profound social and economic implications. It affects various aspects of human life, including livelihoods, health, and security; furthermore, climate change impacts are not evenly distributed, and certain groups, particularly women and marginalized communities, bear a disproportionate burden. Gender inequalities, coupled with socio-cultural norms and unequal power relations, exacerbate the vulnerability of women to the effects of climate change. (5)

Women, for instance, are more vulnerable to changes in weather patterns and the availability of natural resources in agricultural areas since they are often responsible for food

production, water collection, and household energy. They also may be more vulnerable to the risks associated with the climate crisis due to their reduced access to land, recognition, and knowledge. Planning for climate resilience must consider these gendered vulnerabilities and adequately address them.

This policy paper will advocate for an integrated, gender-responsive approach to improving the climate resiliency of US military bases in the Indo-Pacific. In the following sections, this paper will explore the intricate links between climate change, development, gender inequity, and military presence in the Indo-Pacific. It will highlight the need for climate resiliency of US military bases, propose an integrated approach for future-proofing these bases, and provide actionable recommendations for implementation.

By embracing an inclusive and gender-responsive strategy, the United States can enhance the climate resiliency of its military installations, contribute to sustainable development, and foster goodwill by empowering local communities in the Indo-Pacific region. (6) Making changes with consideration for the interconnectedness of climate change, development, and gender inequity is a strategy the US should utilize to counterbalance China's development agenda while addressing the vulnerabilities of its military installations. (7) This approach also will need to go beyond technocratic solutions, instead offering local governments opportunities to enhance climate resiliency in the surrounding areas, fostering political support, and empowering local communities, particularly women.

Climate change in the context of Indo-Pacific power dynamics

Understanding the links between climate change, development, and gender inequity is particularly important in the context of the Indo-Pacific region. Development efforts, both by China and other donor countries, have the potential to either exacerbate or alleviate the impacts of climate change. (8) Beijing has continually sought to expand its sphere of influence in the Global South through policies such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a massive infrastructure that has enabled China to expand its overseas military presence and provide debt financing contracts with dubious repayment clauses. In all, China's aid policies have been critiqued for their lack of transparency and as a way for it to shirk its responsibility to human rights. This presents an opportunity for the United States to offer an alternative model that integrates climate resilience, development, and gender equity.

The presence of US military personnel in the Indo-Pacific region has historically led to harm and violence against local communities, particularly women. (9) Gender inequity has always intersected with armed conflict and climate change, often further complicating existent situations. (10) Recognizing this reality is an essential first step for adopting a gender-responsive approach to military operations and development initiatives. (11) By considering the gendered dimensions of climate change and development, the United States can contribute to peacebuilding efforts, mitigate the impacts of climate change, and foster sustainable development in the Indo-Pacific region.

Assessing the climate resiliency of US military bases in the Indo-Pacific

The vulnerability of US military bases in the Indo-Pacific to the impacts of climate change has been widely documented. Existing reports and research from the US military (cite) demonstrate that the effects of climate change such as rising sea levels, increased frequency and intensity of storms, and coastal erosion pose a threat to military infrastructure and operations. (12) In addition, extreme weather events such as typhoons and hurricanes can disrupt logistical operations, damage critical facilities, and impede readiness. (13) As such, the US military must account for the effects of climate change in the planning and design of military bases in the Indo-Pacific. The vulnerability of military bases to these impacts compromises the ability to respond effectively to security challenges and imposes significant financial burdens for repair and maintenance. (14) For instance, a report by the US House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services found that the \$1 billion USD Air Force installation in the Marshall Islands could be underwater by 2035. (15) A Category 5 storm, Hurricane Michael, caused extensive damage to the Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida in 2018, with the cost of repair estimated at approximately \$3 billion USD. (16) Moreover, the risks posed by climate change extend beyond the physical aspects of military bases. Political support for the United States military presence in the Indo-Pacific could be undermined if the impacts of climate change are not adequately addressed. (17) Host nations may perceive the inability of the United States to protect its infrastructure from climate risks as a sign of inadequate preparedness and lack of commitment, leading to strained relationships and potential challenges to the continued presence of US forces.

In light of these factors, the United States must prioritize climate resiliency and account for the vulnerabilities of military bases in the Indo-Pacific. (18) To effectively address the vulnerability of US military bases to climate change, the United States government can conduct comprehensive assessments to mitigate the risks of extreme weather events on infrastructure and operations. (19) These assessments should consider the specific impacts of climate change, such as sea-level rise, extreme weather events, and coastal erosion, as well as their implications for military infrastructure, operations, and political support. (20) By understanding the unique challenges of climate change, the United States can develop targeted strategies to safeguard its military bases and ensure their long-term sustainability and effectiveness in the face of a changing climate and geopolitical environment. (21)

Improving climate resiliency and integrating gender-responsive development

The United States can effectively future-proof its military bases in the Indo-Pacific by integrating climate resiliency and gender-responsive development agendas as part of its mission at home and abroad. For instance, all branches of the US military may continue to update their base and facility design in response to projected changes in the surrounding climate; however, the unique environment in the Pacific Theater also offers opportunities to integrate a gendered view of the bases' surrounding communities and their responses to major operational and infrastructural projects.

Such an approach goes beyond technocratic solutions and recognizes the interconnectedness of climate change, development, and gender inequity. (22) By addressing these issues holistically, the United States can enhance the resilience of its military bases while empowering local communities and fostering sustainable development. One key aspect of this integrated approach is leveraging the expertise of the military Civil Affairs and Engineers Corps. Civil Affairs units, responsible for engaging with local populations, need to be gender-aware not only in the field but also in doctrine. (23) By ensuring that Civil Affairs units understand and address the differential impacts of climate change on women and marginalized groups, they can contribute to more inclusive and effective development initiatives. (24) In addition, a collaboration between Civil Affairs and Engineers is crucial to implementing climate-resilient infrastructure projects that are also gender-responsive. (25) First, however, it is essential to acknowledge existing gender-awareness gaps within the doctrine of both Civil Affairs and Engineers, which must be addressed to implement this integrated approach successfully. (26)

An integrated approach that leverages the expertise of both Civil Affairs soldiers and military engineers enables the United States to enhance the resilience of military installations and contribute to sustainable development and social justice in the Indo-Pacific region. (27) Collaboration across units would allow for a greater ability to identify specific areas where the risk of climate change effects and underlying gender inequity are most pronounced. (28) Importantly, offering opportunities for enhancing climate resiliency in the surrounding areas of military bases can improve political support and positively impact local communities, particularly women disproportionately affected by climate change.

Recommendations for implementation

Several actionable recommendations should be adopted to operationalize the proposed integrated approach of climate resiliency and gender-responsive development for US military bases in the Indo-Pacific. These recommendations focus on developing practical tools, strengthening collaboration with local stakeholders, investing in training and capacity building, and fostering knowledge sharing and partnerships. (29)

First, developing simplified but actionable **staff products** can facilitate the identification of areas with strong climate change risks and underlying gender inequity. One example could include developing and using a data-driven GIS model to assess the combined impacts of armed conflict and climate change in areas characterized by gender inequality. (30) In all, these products should provide clear guidance and be accessible to military personnel involved in planning and decision-making processes. By utilizing these tools, military units can effectively assess the impacts of climate change and gender disparities, leading to targeted interventions and strategies.

Second, strengthening collaboration with local governments and communities is crucial for successful implementation. (31) Engaging local stakeholders, such as women's groups,

community organizations and indigenous communities ensure that climate resilience initiatives are context-specific, responsive to local needs, and aligned with existing efforts. In addition, collaborative approaches foster sustainable development and enhance initiatives' social acceptance and effectiveness. Investing in training and capacity building is also essential to promote gender awareness and inclusivity within military operations. Training programs should address gender norms, power dynamics, and the differential impacts of climate change. (32) Civil Affairs and Engineering units, in particular, should receive gender-focused training to bridge existing gender-awareness gaps in doctrine. By integrating gender-responsive approaches into military practices, the United States can effectively address women's and marginalized groups' specific needs and vulnerabilities.

In addition, **fostering knowledge-sharing and partnerships** is vital for the success of climate resiliency and gender-responsive development initiatives. Collaboration with international organizations, research institutions, and local NGOs will help facilitate the exchange of best practices, lessons learned, and innovative solutions. In addition, these partnerships will allow for joint research projects, capacity-building initiatives, and resource sharing, further enhancing the effectiveness of interventions. (33) As part of these efforts, the US military should actively engage in capacity-building and knowledge-sharing initiatives, which may include training and technical assistance to local communities, governments, and military personnel on climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies. Furthermore, the US military should actively participate in regional forums and partnerships to share knowledge and empower local communities and allies in the Indo-Pacific region.

Furthermore, **monitoring and evaluating** the effectiveness of implemented interventions is crucial. Establishing mechanisms to track outcomes and impacts allows for ongoing assessment and adaptive management. Regular evaluations should consider social, economic, and environmental outcomes, as well as the level of community participation and gender inclusion. Lessons learned from these evaluations can inform future decision-making and refine strategies and approaches.

Finally, to ensure the **inclusion and empowerment of women** in climate-resilient development efforts, the US military should support **gender mainstreaming**. The passage of the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017 (WPS) has led the DOD to spend \$5.5 million in FY2021 to establish policies and programs to advance the implementation of the WPS agenda, train personnel, and integrate WPS into relevant training curriculum and professional military education for the Armed Forces. (34) Continued implementation and additional integration of the WPS agenda is welcome; this involves incorporating gender perspectives and promoting women's leadership and participation in decision-making processes related to climate resilience. The US military should also collaborate with civil affairs units and engineers to develop frameworks that allow for identifying the complex mosaic of how climate change's effects may compound with underlying gender inequity in the region. (35) By addressing gender disparities and promoting gender equity in strategic missions abroad,

the US military can enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of climate resilience initiatives.

The United States can translate the proposed integrated approach into concrete actions by implementing these recommendations. These actions will enhance the climate resiliency of military bases in the Indo-Pacific and contribute to sustainable development, gender equity, and strengthened partnerships with local communities. (36) An integrated approach to climate resilience should prioritize the promotion of sustainable livelihoods and economic opportunities for local communities. This can be achieved through supporting climate-resilient agriculture, developing sustainable tourism initiatives, and promoting green entrepreneurship. By investing in local economies and fostering sustainable development, the US military can build stronger relationships with host nations and contribute to long-term stability and prosperity in the region.

Conclusion

Adopting a comprehensive, gender-responsive strategy to improve the climate resiliency of US military bases in the Indo-Pacific is of utmost importance and urgency. The vulnerability of these bases to climate change impacts necessitates proactive measures to ensure their operational effectiveness and long-term sustainability. By integrating climate resiliency efforts with gender-responsive development approaches, the United States can address the differential impacts of climate change on women and marginalized groups. (37) This inclusive approach acknowledges these communities' disproportionate burdens and actively empowers them to participate in decision-making processes. Furthermore, it recognizes the historical harms experienced by local communities, particularly women, due to the presence of US military personnel.

Implementing the recommended strategies offers several potential benefits. First, by engaging local governments and communities, the United States can foster sustainable development and enhance the political amenability of Indo-Pacific nations toward continued US military presence. This collaboration ensures that climate resilience initiatives are context-specific, responsive to local needs, and aligned with existing efforts. Moreover, a gender-responsive approach addresses climate change's impacts and promotes gender equity and social inclusion within military operations. (38) By bridging gender-awareness gaps in doctrine and investing in training and capacity building, the United States can empower military personnel to respond effectively to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women and marginalized groups. The proposed integrated approach also highlights the significance of knowledge sharing and partnerships. Collaboration with international organizations, research institutions, and local NGOs facilitates the exchange of best practices, innovative solutions, and resources. This collaborative effort enhances the effectiveness of climate resilience initiatives and contributes to broader sustainable development goals.

However, it is essential to recognize that addressing climate change and development challenges is ongoing. The evolving nature of climate change requires continuous adaptation and evaluation of implemented interventions. Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of strategies will allow for the refinement of approaches, identification of best practices, and informed decision-making. (39) An integrated, gender-responsive approach to improving the climate resiliency of US military bases in the Indo-Pacific region is vital for countering China’s increasing development presence. By offering opportunities for local communities to enhance their climate resiliency, the United States can strengthen political support and empower marginalized groups, particularly women, who bear the brunt of climate change’s impacts. Ongoing collaboration, knowledge sharing, and adaptation are essential to address the multifaceted challenges of climate change and development effectively. (40) By embracing this comprehensive approach, the United States can safeguard its strategic interests while promoting sustainable and equitable development in the Indo-Pacific region as an alternative to China’s increasing strategic presence and influence in the region.

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CHAPTER 7

Inequitable Burden: Unmasking Environmental Injustices and Reproductive Health Disparities among Black Women

Ailyah Banks



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A disturbing truth emerges with the climate change crisis and persistent environmental inequalities: Black women bear an inequitable burden. Environmental injustice, climate change, and reproductive health disparities have ignited this pressing concern. These intertwined forces, marked by the hazardous exposures faced by marginalized communities, pose grave threats to the reproductive well-being of Black women. Reproductive health disparities among Black women have long been a compelling issue.

Black women face higher maternal mortality rates, preterm birth, low birth weight, and other adverse outcomes than their White counterparts. (1) These disparities result from many interconnected factors, including socioeconomic inequities, limited access to healthcare, systemic racism within healthcare systems, and the compounded effects of environmental injustices and climate change. The intersection between environmental injustices and reproductive health disparities among Black women is particularly alarming. Black communities often bear disproportionate ecological hazards, such as proximity to toxic waste sites and air pollution. (2) The impacts of climate change further amplify these environmental injustices. The combination of environmental injustices and climate change intensifies the risks faced by Black women, making their reproductive health challenges even more daunting.

This policy brief aims to comprehensively analyze the intersections between environmental injustices, climate change, and reproductive health disparities among Black women. By examining the current landscape and highlighting specific instances where environmental injustices and climate change impact Black women's reproductive health, this brief aims to inform policymakers, researchers, and advocates in developing strategies to promote reproductive health equity through a climate lens. Through targeted interventions and policy

recommendations, we can work towards ensuring the well-being and agency of Black women in the face of these challenges.

Understanding the context: Environmental injustice and climate change

Environmental injustice is the excessive exposure of marginalized communities, including Black communities, to environmental hazards and pollutants. (3) These communities often bear the burden of toxic waste sites, industrial pollution, and inadequate clean air and water access. Such environmental hazards can harm reproductive health, contributing to higher rates of infertility, adverse pregnancy outcomes, and long-term health consequences for Black women and their children. Climate change is characterized by rising temperatures, changing weather patterns, and environmental disruptions. The impacts of climate change, such as extreme heat events, increased frequency and intensity of storms, and altered disease patterns, pose additional challenges to reproductive health. Black women, particularly those in low-income communities, face heightened vulnerability due to limited resources and inadequate infrastructure to cope with climate-related hazards. (4)

The intersections between environmental injustices and climate change compound the reproductive health disparities Black women face. For instance, the overexposure of Black communities to air pollution significantly correlates with adverse birth outcomes such as preterm births, low birth weight, and developmental issues. (5) Additionally, this exposure can contribute to a higher incidence of respiratory ailments and cardiovascular problems among mothers and newborns in these communities. Understanding the context of environmental injustices and climate change is crucial for addressing reproductive health disparities among Black women. This policy brief provides case studies as evidence of the systemic inequities and environmental burdens these communities face. By recognizing these injustices, we can develop comprehensive strategies that mitigate the impacts of environmental hazards and climate change on reproductive health.

Exploring reproductive health disparities among Black women

In the realm of reproductive health, a stark contrast in outcomes becomes evident when comparing Black women to their White counterparts. This contrast extends beyond surface differences, revealing a deeply ingrained pattern of disparities. One of the most unsettling aspects is the glaring contrast in maternal mortality rates. Black women face a staggering three to four times higher risk of maternal mortality compared to White women. (6) This discrepancy isn't limited to maternal mortality alone; it permeates various facets of reproductive health. Black women are more likely to experience preterm birth, low birth weight, and infant mortality. (7)

Consider the elevated risk of preterm births among Black women. Preterm birth not only ushers in immediate health challenges for newborns, such as respiratory difficulties and

developmental issues but also sets the stage for a cascade of potential long-term effects. Children born prematurely might encounter learning difficulties, developmental delays, and a higher likelihood of chronic health conditions as they grow. Additionally, infants born with low birth weight often face a range of health problems, including a heightened risk of infections, neurological issues, and even higher mortality rates. (9) These distressing outcomes are not the result of happenstance, but rather a complex interplay of social, economic, and healthcare factors.

Socioeconomic inequities play a significant role in reproductive health disparities among Black women. Limited access to quality healthcare services, including prenatal care and family planning resources, contributes to suboptimal health outcomes. (10) The direct link between inadequate access to timely and comprehensive healthcare and adverse outcomes like preterm birth and low birth weight is undeniable. However, an even more intricate layer of this issue emerges from the shadows—the pervasive influence of structural racism and systemic biases within healthcare systems. These deeply rooted biases not only shape the quality of care received by Black women but also influence patient-provider interactions. (11) The result is a perpetuation of disparities, as Black women often encounter barriers to effective communication and culturally sensitive care, ultimately impacting their reproductive health outcomes.

Furthermore, the nexus between environmental injustices, climate change, and reproductive health disparities deepens the challenges encountered by Black women. Notably, specific instances of environmental injustice, including the uneven proximity to pollution sources and inadequate access to green spaces, have been directly correlated with adverse reproductive health outcomes among Black women. (12) The additional impact of climate change introduces new dimensions, exemplified by heat stress and the heightened prevalence of vector-borne diseases, both intricately intertwining with the reproductive health landscape for Black women. (13) As we delve into this intricate web of factors, a comprehensive understanding emerges—one that underscores the urgency of addressing not only the disparities but also their systemic roots.

Case studies: Environmental injustices and climate change impacts

The following case studies provide concrete examples of how environmental injustices and climate change impact reproductive health. These real-life examples shed light on the experiences and challenges faced by Black women in specific communities, highlighting the urgent need for policy interventions to address these systemic disparities.

- *Case study I: Industrial pollution and reproductive health disparities in Chicago*

The South Side of Chicago, home to predominantly Black neighborhoods, has long grappled with environmental injustices that harm reproductive health. One notable case study is the impact of industrial pollution on the community of Altgeld Gardens. This public housing

development is near multiple industrial facilities emitting hazardous pollutants.

Studies have revealed a concerning association between environmental exposures in Altgeld Gardens and adverse reproductive health outcomes among Black women. For instance, research by the University of Illinois at Chicago found higher rates of preterm birth and low birth weight among infants born to mothers in the area. (14) These disparities can be attributed, in part, to the elevated levels of air and soil pollutants emitted by nearby industries.

- *Case study II: Toxic waste and reproductive health in Michigan*

In Flint, Michigan, the water crisis that emerged in 2014 illustrates the intersection between environmental injustices and reproductive health disparities. The predominantly Black community of Flint was exposed to lead-contaminated drinking water due to inadequate infrastructure and decision-making processes. Studies have shown a significant increase in fetal deaths, preterm births, and developmental issues among infants born to mothers in Flint. (15) This case study highlights how environmental injustice, in the form of toxic waste exposure, can profoundly affect the reproductive health of Black women and their children.

- *Case study III: Climate change and maternal health in coastal communities*

Coastal communities, including those inhabited predominantly by Black populations, face unique challenges due to the impacts of climate change. In the Gulf Coast region, hurricanes and extreme weather events have become more frequent and intense. Following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, research revealed increased adverse birth outcomes among Black women in the affected areas. (16) The stress and disruptions caused by climate-related disasters can lead to complications during pregnancy, including preterm birth and maternal mental health issues. This case study underscores the vulnerability of Black women to climate change-related events and the critical need for targeted interventions.

Policy recommendations

To address the reproductive health disparities faced by Black women exacerbated by environmental injustices and climate change, the following policy recommendations are crucial:

- **Strengthen environmental regulations and enforcement**

This involves implementing stricter regulations to reduce the disproportionate pollution burden on communities inhabited by Black women and enhancing monitoring and assessment of environmental hazards in these areas. Furthermore, fostering community engagement and participation in decision-making processes related to environmental policies is essential.

- **Integrate environmental justice into climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies**

This entails developing comprehensive climate change plans that prioritize the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in marginalized communities—implementing climate adaptation strategies that address Black women's unique vulnerabilities and needs, such as improving healthcare infrastructure and access to quality prenatal and maternal care in climate-affected regions.

- **Promote representation and leadership of Black women in environmental and health sectors**

This can be achieved by establishing targeted programs and scholarships to increase representation, supporting leadership development and mentorship initiatives, and fostering partnerships between academic institutions, community-based organizations, and industry stakeholders.

By implementing these policy recommendations, we can strive towards a more equitable future that protects Black women's reproductive health and well-being, addresses environmental injustices, and builds resilience in the face of climate change. Furthermore, promoting diversity and inclusion in leadership roles will ensure that the voices and perspectives of Black women are actively represented and contribute to decision-making processes in the environmental and health sectors.

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CHAPTER 8

Women and Farmer-Herder Conflict in Nigeria: Centering Women's Voices in Peace Building and Climate Mitigation

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Ezi holds a Bachelor of Arts in Global Studies and a Master of Public Health from the University of Southern California (USC). She is interested in human rights as they relate to systems and institutions of governance and is passionate about history and storytelling with a regional focus on the African continent. This interest draws from a strong interest in global governance systems related to human rights and an understanding that African diasporic and other marginalized voices have yet to find a strong voice in the present international order.

Climate change and conflict are two multifaceted and intersecting issues that detrimentally impact people and the environment. They drive violence, displacement, and natural resource competition, foster and or propel insecurity, and rupture family and kinship ties, alongside broader political, economic, social, environmental, and infrastructural harms. (1) In particular, climate change acts as a threat multiplier in fragile regions—pushing already weak governance and social cohesion over the edge and thus, increasing the likelihood of insecurity. (2) At the intersection of climate change and conflict, women and girls are a key vulnerable population. For example, where entrenched gender inequalities and disparities in access to resources come into greater focus in times of crisis or conflict, women and girls may see a furthering of inequity, violence, and the reduction of opportunities and resources available to them. (3) Furthermore, where gender intersects with ethnicity, race, and socioeconomic status, these harms may be further exacerbated. (4)

While acknowledging the increased vulnerabilities that women and girls face in times of conflict or crisis, this is not to strip them of agency and discount the active role that women and girls already play in resource management and as conflict actors, especially considering the role they can play as stakeholders in conflict mediation. (5) In demonstrating how the climate-gender-conflict nexus can impact the role and extent of participation of women and girls in their specific environments, this paper will also highlight and explore the untapped potential of women and girls in mitigating this nexus—adding to the emerging literature on women as actors rather than solely victims of conflict. (6) In this vein, this paper follows the feminist peace and security model, one that advocates for anti-war, anti-racist, anti-patriarchy, post-colonial, gender-affirming, and rights-based approaches to peacebuilding that empower women and those who identify beyond the gender binary to address violence at the root. (7) To understand the aforementioned climate-gender-conflict nexus and the

importance of a feminist peace and security perspective this paper will explore the cross-cutting role of gender at the intersection of climate change and conflict that take shape in farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria while showcasing the potential of conflict transformation and climate mitigation that arise from the inclusion of women and girls. The feminist peace and security model will underscore this case study analysis and build on the climate-gender-conflict nexus, putting into focus the extent of women's participation in farmer-herder climate and conflict mitigation and recommendations for the future of peacebuilding and climate change in Nigeria.

Feminist peace and security and the climate-gender-conflict nexus

In the climate-gender-conflict nexus, gender acts as a link that sheds light on the risks faced by women, where climate change and conflict intersect, and how these conditions combine to affect the economic, social, and political opportunities of women. Yet, while accounting for what occurs during the fallout of violence, the climate-gender-nexus also sheds light on the pre-conditions of structural-gendered violence, including physical, psychological, economic, and sexual violence, that women face before the onset of the conflict, especially those from historically marginalized backgrounds. (8, 9) In this climate-gender-conflict nexus, a feminist peace and security model is necessary to not only understand the implications of violence on women, and their needs, and acknowledge their voices during the conflict but what can be done to promote peace and prevent violence before and during times of non-physical conflict—addressing, for example, in the context of Nigeria's farmer-herder conflict, how limited land rights for women inhibit women's ability to express their interests and bring their practices into perspective and help drive conservation, mitigation, and adaptation efforts. (10) With this in mind, as feminist peace and security argue, centering the voices of women is vital and requires not only an acknowledgment of the violence they face but also warrants a shift in power and resource distribution necessary to address structural violence and create gender and life-affirming societies.

Farmer-herder conflict Nigeria

Farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria provides an ample example and commentary on the climate-gender-conflict nexus and the importance of the feminist peace and security lens. These conflicts shed light on the limitations of peacebuilding and climate change efforts where women's voices are excluded and or not considered. As an active peace and security issue in Nigeria, efforts to promote peace and find solutions to the conflicts underlying climate triggers, require the inclusion and empowerment of women and other marginalized voices. This case study analysis will not only assess the climate-gender-conflict nexus as it takes shape in these conflicts but will also provide insight into how farmer-herder conflict can be transformed through a feminist peace and security model. It will begin with a brief overview of the conflict, and its impacts on women and girls, considering the conditions of

women and girls in Nigeria, and the role women can play in conflict mediation and climate mitigation.

- **Background**

In Nigeria, the farmer-herder conflict pre-dates the colonial creation of Nigeria and is ethnoreligious and climate-related, putting Fulani pastoralists in conflict with Christian farmers from various ethnic groups. Pre-colonial land use regulations systems (i.e. Ruga and burti systems) mediated conflicts, ensuring that farmers and herders lived in collective peace. The Ruga system saw the election of a male Fulani official that regulated grazing routes and sites as well as resolved disputes between farmers and herders, while the burti system gave designated grazing land to Fulani herders, nearby grazing routes, to ensure minimal conflict between herders and farmers. (11) However, due to colonialism, these systems were destroyed and replaced by land privatization and sole regulation powers vested in the hands of state governors. With the collapse of these systems and over the years with increased urbanization, population growth, herder migration and settlement in farmlands and protected forests, farming encroachment on traditional grazing routes, and increasing competition for land and water resources, alongside growing militarization and government inaction, clashes have increased in frequency and violence. (12) These conflicts have had a devastating effect on peace and security—killing nearly 4,000 people as documented by Amnesty International between January 2016 and October 2018 and continuing to cause death and induce displacement across Nigeria. (13)

- **Gendered impact and implications of farmer-herder conflict**

In considering the gendered impacts of farmer-herder conflict, for women in farming and herding communities, violent clashes not only disrupt their cattle, farming, and trade activity but also break down integral familial and communal structures, navigated and negotiated by women, that protect communities from violence and harm. (14) As a result of these disruptions and breakdowns, women and girls are vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) alongside additional burdens of raising children and sustaining themselves and extended family networks in the absence of husbands and male community leaders. (15) However, in noting the pre-conditions of violence and specifically the role and positionality of women in these herding and farming communities, they are often restricted by a traditionally male-dominated social makeup that fails to take into consideration their voices and interests in conflict prevention, negotiation, and or mediation.

To this point, while women account for 37% of agricultural labor in Nigeria, few women have land-holding rights and face routine discrimination regarding credit, farm inputs, training, and more. This reality is affirmed by customary land laws that traditionally exclude women from land ownership. (16, 17) Furthermore, where traditional pastoral grazing routes are often trumped by land use laws, nomadic and or semi-nomadic pastoral activity is often unrecognized and open to repeated violation—pushing herders into remote locals, often

harboring gangs and criminal entities, prompting their arming and triggering discontent that can be manipulated to prompt extremism and violence. (18) As these activities unfold, the risks of pastoral women and girls are further amplified by a lack of enforced recognition and protection.

While discriminatory land laws are apparent, this does not take away from the role women play as farmers, herders, mothers, wives, daughters, and more in such conflicts. There is a need to acknowledge women in farmer-herder conflict as not only victims but actors. Among the farmer-herder conflicts that occurred in northern Nigerian states, women were found to have been active participants in clashes as they played explicit and shadow roles to look out for their economic interests and try to protect their families and communities against the perceived enemy. (19) In light of this, while it is clear that farmer-herder conflict negatively affects women, the pre-conditions of these conflicts limit the role women could play in resource management and climate resilience. For example, in the Obi Local Government Area in Nasarawa State, women farmers have relied on poultry droppings to revitalize the soil, boost crop yields, and protect their farms from desertification while also creating temporary irrigation channels to support crops as irregular rainfall persists in the area. (20) Women farmers have also advocated for further government investment in women's farming activity and ways to combat climate change to ward off conflict. For example, replanting trees to combat desertification and revitalize the soil. (21) Yet, despite the impacts of farmer-herder conflict on women their inclusion in peacebuilding and climate mitigation efforts remains limited.

In mid-February, during the National Conference on Livestock Reforms and Mitigation of Associated Conflicts, 500 stakeholders across government agencies, industry, and academia, including scholars, traditional leaders, agricultural specialists and more met in Kano to deliberate on the future of insecurity and sustainable livestock reforms and conflict mitigation. (22) Recommended solutions to address the farmer-herder conflict included the establishment of Rural Grazing Areas (RUGA)—not to be confused with the pre-colonial Ruga system—which would designate grazing land areas for herders and their cattle. Other suggestions included the establishment of a ministry for livestock resources and research institutions for beef, dairy, and pasture production, adopting climate-smart agricultural practices (CSA) to balance climate mitigation and the need for food security, and bolstering security to combat crime and violence to name a few. (23) Yet, absent from the conference and apparent in the suggestions made were the voices and perspectives of women stakeholders.

While women stakeholders were largely absent from these deliberations, their interests and role in the future of peacebuilding and climate change are not lost. This is evident in local community efforts, like that of Kabara dispute resolution committees among the Shuwa community of Adamawa State, Nigeria. Kabara, meaning “common ground” in the Marghi language, is a language of the Adamawa state. (24) These committees bring together

multiple stakeholders from traditional and religious leaders to local authorities and most importantly, include youth and women’s associations in dialogue—ensuring all voices are included and securing stakeholder buy-in that has helped reduce violent conflict in the area. (25)

Conclusion and recommendations

To the knowledge of this analysis, no studies or provisions have been conducted to implement these committees as a best practice and model for future dialogues. It is evident, however, that traditional mediation infrastructure may still exist, though conflict may have disrupted and limited their effectiveness. To rebuild, support and bolster this infrastructure, intervention with the assistance of local interlocutors is necessary to bridge the conflict divide and once again find common ground between farmers and herders. These discussions must ensure that all perspectives, especially those of women, are considered.

While the suggestions of the livestock conference are adequate, except for the RUGA which many local farmers believe will see the “colonization” of their farmlands and indicate that more dialogue and explanation is needed in this area, additional recommendations are warranted due mainly to the failure of existing solutions to foster a holistic approach to ending violence and ensuring all voices in this conflict, especially women, are heard. (26)

Government officials should:

1. Work to reform customary land laws that restrict women’s land ownership
2. provide financial and technical resources to female farmers and herdswomen
3. enlist the expertise of local women's organizations in conflict mediation
4. fund the education of women farmers and herders in resource management, and climate adaptation and mitigation practices building on existing traditional knowledge and practices and include their perspectives and voices in research and development.

Without the perspectives of women, existing solutions are limited in scope and effectiveness. Thus, the future of peacebuilding and climate mitigation must include women as stakeholders to ensure that Nigeria can face the future of climate change with the knowledge and expertise of all its citizens and infrastructure that is gender-affirming and inclusive.

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CHAPTER 9

The Intersectionality of Climate Change and Conflict: The Effects on Women's Livelihoods

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Agartha is a recent Ghanaian graduate from American University. Agartha graduated with a master's in International Development with a concentration in Gender and Development. Agartha's passion is to help the less marginalized, minority, and vulnerable in society, especially women and children in poverty-stricken situations, and help them access opportunities such as education, health, participating in decision-making and economic development, and through that, help improve their standard of living.



Nandini is a quantitative political analyst, campaign strategist, and researcher based in New York. Her research and advocacy work from past experiences at UNICEF, Yale University, and committees, focused on evidence-based behavioral strategies, systems thinking, and human-centered design for positive social, environmental, and political initiatives. She holds a dual Bachelor's degree in Applied Mathematics & Statistics, with a concentration in International Relations, from Stony Brook and Harvard University.

Climate change has, over the period, destabilized political systems, undermined agricultural production, and deepened poverty. Looking at it from a fragile context, climate change has aggravated political, social, and economic conditions that have increased conflict (Smith et al., 2021). The fragility has pressured natural resources, including freshwater, arable land, and forest resources. It is important to note that this has deepened livelihoods and food insecurities. The status quo has worsened pre-existing livelihood and food insecurities, which has eroded peace and security (Smith et al., 2021). Climate-conflict linkages have created a lot of gendered effects. In most developing countries, especially in rural areas, women often rely on natural resources which serve as a source of livelihood for women and their families. The reliance on the environment plays a critical role in women's lives (Smith et al., 2021).

In this light, the environment must be recognized as an integral part of conflict prevention. There have been growing calls for action beyond multilateral talks on carbon reduction. Worldwide, increasing advocacy has been to protect the environment from climate change, caused by human activities. Delving deeply, the environment has been a direct target in wars, as biological weapons have been dropped to kill people, erase vegetation, and

introduce toxins in food and water supplies. Furthermore, water, oil, and natural gas pipelines t blown up during wars affect livelihoods. Most wars and conflicts occur in communities where precious resources and minerals are targeted. In all this, looking at vulnerability, women are the ones that suffer when these activities occur.

Objectives of the policy

The main aim of the paper

To delve into the impact of climate changes and conflicts that affect women in society.

Specific research objectives

1. The vulnerability of women in conflict areas
2. The effects of conflicts on women’s livelihoods

The paper further investigates the recommendations and conclusions that can help reduce the intersection of conflict and climate.

Vulnerability of women in climate and conflict areas

With the advent of climate emergencies, worldwide advocacy has been to protect the environment against degradation. There has been widespread recognition that governments and corporations neglect the ecological well-being of the environment. This can be related to the issue of powerful entities prioritizing profit before sustainable livelihoods and ecosystems. This has called human rights organizations and government agencies to cooperate with climate change; research has shown that human activities are its root cause (MacKenzie et al., N. (2021). In championing this cause amid conflict, a section of people has been left out. These sections of people are women, as women bear the consequences and are vulnerable. Most importantly, women are left in the peace-keeping processes.

Climate change significantly impacts developing countries, and the effects are far-reaching, devastatingly impacting women and their communities, leading to adverse social and economic consequences. The drastic temperature change, extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and decreased water availability must cause competition for resources (Smith et al. 20,21). Conflict can degrade and poison the environment and contribute to CO2 emissions, advancing in turn. Climate and conflict are interlinked, as they impact women’s livelihoods and their vulnerability within defense and military; their livelihoods are affected by scarcity and the state of the economy when women’s economic mobility is hindered (Smith et al.,2021).

In most cases, women are used as weapons of war. A key example is the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). An exclusive part of the DRC war strategy was women being raped by armed actors. This had ripple effects as this did not only affect women in so many wars. In terms of vulnerability. It is important to note that most women are

are gatekeepers of the environment, including that the environment intersects with women's livelihoods in agriculture, extraction of minerals, and many others. In this regard, destroying the environment and climate change affect women's vulnerability (Feminist Solution to Peace). A vital cause of the conflict in the Eastern part of DRC was the result of the natural resources, as DRC is well noted for its rich endowment in natural resources. As such, this plays a huge economic factor as most of these armed actors and forces spent a year looting valuable resources in the DRC. These served as most women's livelihoods, resulting in a huge economic vulnerability.

Furthermore, in conflict-fragile countries such as Northern Iraq, Rohingya, women and girls in Myanmar. Although sexual and gender-based violence in conflict affects women and girls. In these fragile countries, women face increased gender-based violence from armed groups. Similarly, intersecting conflict with climate change has different gendered impacts, as climate change has exacerbated the conflict by aggravating pre-existing and underlying tensions, including weak governance and poor cohesion, while taking into consideration the fragility of their natural resources that most women depend on for their livelihoods and this is seen in war-torn countries where the environment suffers from exacerbating conflicts issues and climate shocks in these communities (Smith et al., 2021). It is important to note that these resources are scarce in most developing countries, and women depend on these for survival. A typical example is climate change affecting water shortages in Karachi, Pakistan. This has triggered the rise of a network of informal water providers who engage in illegally extracting and reselling water, leading to community violence between the illegal water producers and the local population. Climate change has destabilized and worsened the situation (Smith et al.).

Effects of climate and conflict on women's livelihoods

Economic vulnerability

Climate and conflict have been proven to affect women's livelihoods. In the Sahel region, 80 percent of people rely on agriculture. This mostly happens in Africa, where agriculture is the backbone of most developing countries. Also, the region is highly vulnerable to climate change (Smith et al., 2021). As per the Gender Climate Nexus by Georgetown University, "This is especially true in the case of weak states, where the struggle to absorb climate shocks can overwhelm their limited resources and erode social cohesion. Climate and conflict are closely interlinked in a feedback loop, further impacted by gender dynamics" (Smith et al., 2021). Many of the ways women in developing countries are exposed to other vulnerabilities are exacerbated in a crisis state (Smith et al., 2021). In African countries where agriculture is the bedrock of development, this has degraded swathes of once-arable land, increased poverty and a lack of economic opportunity; women are the most vulnerable to these developments (Smith et al., 2021). Owing to this, it has also intensified by inter-ethnic conflicts in countries where the patriarchal system is high. All these translate into higher

vulnerability for women who are thus disproportionately impacted by climate change (Smith et al., 2021).

Violence and displacement

Another way that women are subjected to violence and displacement is how their inherent value is considered the same as livestock, “Kaabong, a town in the Northern region of Uganda, there are long droughts followed by too much rain which links directly to making girls vulnerable during the periods of associated hardship. They stated that girls are given away in exchange for livestock food or in times of disaster” (Yoshida et al., 2021). Their value in society becomes less than second class, which is how scarcity of resources adds pressure to social cohesion.

Recommendations

It is important to note that in solving these climate and conflict-gendered impact issues, women must be part of the peace processes and decision-making as they are the ones that are highly affected by them. It is questionable as the UN peace-building architecture recognized that development, peace and security, and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. Still, they have failed to include the environment within this formulation (Mackenzie, M., & Wegner, N. (2021).

In throwing light on these issues, which include:

- Scarcity of resources
- The patriarchal system (traditional roles assigned to women)
- Women were used as weapons of war.

All these comprise to increase the gender-based violence coupled with climate change women experience during conflict. As such, there is a need for some interventions and solutions to be put in place. These include:

- Most women live closer to the forest and are responsible for water management. In most cases, rural women have the expertise and understanding of the intersections of environment and gender. As women should be represented during the implementation process and be part of peace talks and deliberations (Mackenzie et al., N. (2021).
- Furthermore, women should be included in creating, developing, implementing, and monitoring policies and plans on climate change and disaster risk reduction policies and procedures (Mackenzie et al., N. (2021).

- There should be placeholder systems for any needs (such as women’s livelihood, as most women in conflict zone areas and developing countries are into agricultural production and other environmental activities are given the needed resources in times of vulnerability, as there would be no one to advocate or defend, i.e., during periods of sexual violence).
- There should be the inclusion of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional, and international institutions and mechanisms, as well as the increment of women in UN structures in missions and conflict zone areas (Pratt, 2013)
- There should be a more integrated gender policy system that would recognize that gender equality measures must include environmental protection and should ensure that gender is adequately budgeted for (Mackenzie et al., N. (2021)).
- An environmental gender-sensitive framework should be integrated into the Women’s Peace and Security Agenda. This would help provide an Earth-centered approach to conflict prevention and help to join up frameworks that remain siloed (Mackenzie et al., N. (2021)).

To conclude, it is essential to highlight that ensuring women’s inclusion in peacebuilding and conflict resolution in all aspects, including climate change mitigation, would not only end the conflict but will increase the likelihood that peace agreements are honored.

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CHAPTER 10

How Animal Agriculture Affects the Environment, and How Veganism Can Combat It

Kaylee Ponder



Kaylee is a current undergraduate student at the University of North Florida. She is double majoring in Political Science and International Studies and double minoring in Asian Studies and Environmental Studies. Her interest in international affairs began when she took an international relations course that focused on the U.S. policy-making process. In this class, she co-wrote a policy paper on the conflict in Israel/Palestine and presented it to officials from the State Department, Defense Department, National Security Council, foreign governments, an NGO, and a think tank.

When thinking about national security issues, the general public drifts toward thoughts about military defense and cybersecurity. While these are genuine national security concerns, the issue regarding climate change and environmental degradation is frequently overlooked or downplayed. The issue of climate change and environmental degradation affects every country and should be one of the many priorities that every country has. However, it is often believed that the largest climate emitters are not doing enough to combat climate change, and while the effects are already impacting places such as small island countries, the future will be in a dreadful situation. This results in people feeling disappointed in their countries and not feeling that they can rely on their governing bodies and elected officials. People commonly target the fossil fuels industry and hope to see policies that restrict its activities, while also advocating for alternative energy sources. While these are fair points, there are other ways in which people can help to combat climate change. One solution can include shifting to a vegan lifestyle to offset the effects that animal agriculture has on the planet. Animal agriculture is responsible for the release of greenhouse gasses, deforestation, and immense water usage. To put into perspective, if cows, for example, had their own country, they would be placed as the third largest greenhouse emitters in the world. (1) Ultimately, if more people transitioned to a vegan diet, they would be helping to significantly combat environmental degradation and climate change.

Greenhouse gasses

Globally, 57% of greenhouse gas emissions from food production are due to meat and dairy. (2) The average person has probably heard that cows are “bad” for the environment. Methane emissions from animals make up roughly 25% of all emissions, a close second to

natural gas and petroleum systems at 29%. (3) Sheep, cattle, pigs, and goats all emit methane into the atmosphere as they produce methane naturally due to their digestive systems. (4) However, some animals' digestive systems operate differently and emit more than others, cows for instance are a major contributor to methane emissions. (5) Also, manure that is held in lagoons eventually produces methane that also is emitted into the atmosphere. (6)

Deforestation

Regarding deforestation, it is estimated that approximately 80% of the Amazon deforestation is to provide for cattle ranching. (7) The trees in the Amazon have approximately 123 billion tons of carbon, that would be released once cleared, contributing to the effect that carbon emissions have on climate change. (8) While the percentage varies, it is estimated that, globally, 40% of all deforestation occurs to provide land for farm animals. (9) In addition, approximately, six billion trees are cleared every year for animal agriculture. (10)

Government assistance

The meat and dairy industries are heavily subsidized by the U.S. government. According to a 2015 study, the U.S. government supplies the meat and dairy industries with over \$38 billion a year, but the fruit and vegetables industries only receive approximately \$17 million a year. (11) Due to subsidies, the price of meat and dairy products is reduced. To illustrate, a Big Mac, priced at \$4, would actually be \$11 if all the production costs were taken into account. (12)

Water

The meat and dairy industries utilize a substantial amount of water to sustain animals. To put more perspective into the food demand and consumption, quarter pounder burger from Mcdonald's, on average, requires approximately 1,695 liters of water. (13) This would be the equivalent of about 30 showers. (14) Also, to compare the amount of water used by the meat industry and the plant-based meat industry, the amount of water in an average swimming pool can yield approximately 312 beef burgers but can produce nearly 61,000 Beyond burgers, which is a plant-based meat alternative. (15) The average American consumes three burgers a week. (16) If Americans, for one year, replaced one out of the three burgers with a Beyond burger, it would be equivalent to removing 12 million cars from operating and emitting greenhouse gasses. (17) In addition, animal products account for approximately 27% of the global water usage or footprint. (18)

The vegan diet and its ties to lower greenhouse gas emissions

There was a 2015 study conducted in Great Britain that tested the difference between dietary choices and the corresponding GHG emissions. (19) The study consisted of

approximately 2,000 vegans, 15,8000 vegetarians, 8,000 pescatarians, and over 29,000 meat eaters. (20) The consumption from meat-eaters was 7.2 kg of co2 emissions, while vegetarians and those who consumed fish had 3.8kg of co2 emissions and vegans had 2.9kg. (21) Also worth noting, it is expected that a global shift towards a plant-based diet could reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 70% by the year 2050. (22)

The role of women of color

Women of color can play a major role in promoting veganism to combat climate change. Veganism is commonly associated with the White community, but the origins of veganism trace back to West Asia and ancient India. (23) In addition, in 2020, it was reported that nonwhite Americans were cutting down on meat more than White Americans, with 31% of nonwhite Americans stating that they have been decreasing their meat intake. (24) Also, the majority of vegans are women, with roughly 79% of vegans being women. (25)

Recommendations

Reallocate government subsidies to provide more financial assistance to the fruit and vegetable industry and the plant-based food industry

Due to the U.S. government's financial assistance to the meat and dairy industry, meat and dairy products can be sold for a price that is much lower than it would be if the subsidies were not presented. The food production costs are not being taken into full account, and while it is helpful to those who purchase meat and dairy, the planet will continue to suffer due to the demand for meat and dairy products. However, if the government reallocated the subsidies to create an equal share to both industries and the plant-based food industry, people would be able to purchase fruits, vegetables, and plant-based products without having to pay such a high price.

Produce a congressional resolution that will address the importance that veganism can have on the environment

The U.S. Congress should produce a resolution that highlights the impact that a vegan diet can have on the environment. This will promote veganism to the general public and inform more Americans about the effects animal agriculture has on the environment. This resolution will be a formal statement that shows that the United States recognizes the relationship and has decided to promote veganism as a way for Americans to combat climate change.

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CHAPTER 11

Not with the Pits! Plutonium Pit Production at the Savannah River Site and Environmental Justice implications for Georgia and South Carolina

Sarah Bartley



Sarah obtained her B.S. in Physics from Agnes Scott College and her M.S. in Physics from the University of Central Florida. She is a Ph.D. student in Nanoengineering at North Carolina A&T University. She accepted an IBIEM (Integrative Bioinformatics for Investigating and Engineering Microbiomes) fellowship for the year 2020-2021 to focus on microbiome research. She has accepted the Chancellor Fellowship for the year 2021-2025. She is also the host of a podcast called Funding is the Matter. For the first series, she is investigating the lack of funds for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

In 1951, the Savannah River Site (SRS), located in Aiken, South Carolina, was created by the Atomic Energy Commission (David White, 2000). The SRS has five nuclear facilities and nine coal fuel stations for the production of plutonium. In 1954, the nuclear facility F extracted plutonium and uranium, and the waste was disposed of in a seepage basin (Dai, M., 2002). This disposal method stopped in 1988, and the basin was closed off with clay in 1990 (Dai, M., 2002). After closing the site in the 1990s, reports of groundwater contamination with metal ions, such as plutonium, mercury, lead, arsenic, cadmium, and uranium, around the Ash Basin area have been reported (Tannenbaum, L. V., 2016). Before the closure of the SRS, groundwater around facility F was sampled and the transport of plutonium 30 m downstream was reported (Dai, M., 2002). The same year, mercury levels were measured in raccoons, a common target for hunters living around the drainage of facility B (Lord, C. G., 2002). The researchers were concerned about the impacts of high mercury levels in the raccoons on the hunters around the area. Raccoons can provide indications of water contamination due to biomagnification with their diet of fish (Lord, C. G., 2002). The group collected the liver, spleen, and hair and detected mercury concentrations with inductively coupled plasma mass spectroscopy (ICP-MS) (Lord, C. G., 2002). Mercury poisoning levels range from 13-69 ppm in the kidney for mammals, and intoxication levels for animals are 30 ppm. The group reported mercury concentrations ranging from 3.74 ppm to 15.14 ppm.

Despite these being below the intoxication level, Eisler has questioned if the mercury levels in animals need to be lowered to 1.1 ppm (Eisler, R., 1987). With this range, it would factor in biomagnification. As reported in the Lord paper, raccoons are not largely consumed by the hunters. They are used as food for other game that are consumed by the hunters.

However, there is still concern about the long-term effects of consuming animals in the areas around the SRS. The impacts on humans have still not been determined. Currently, the University of Georgia has partnered with the SRS facility to investigate antimicrobial resistance around the area, since previous work shows that increased metal ion deposits could result in increased antibiotic resistance (Thomas IV, J. C., 2020). To define potential heavy metal contamination, the group detailed the different microbial communities collected from the soil surrounding the four site areas. For the four areas (Pond B, Upper 3 Runs, Ash Basins and Tim's Branch), cobalt and strontium were recorded in Ash Basins and Tim Branch and antibiotic resistance was found in all four regions (Thomas IV, J. C., 2020). This concerning data is evidence that strategies to both detect and mitigate the influx of metal ion pollution at the SRS, as well as other sites around the country, are critically needed to protect local citizens.

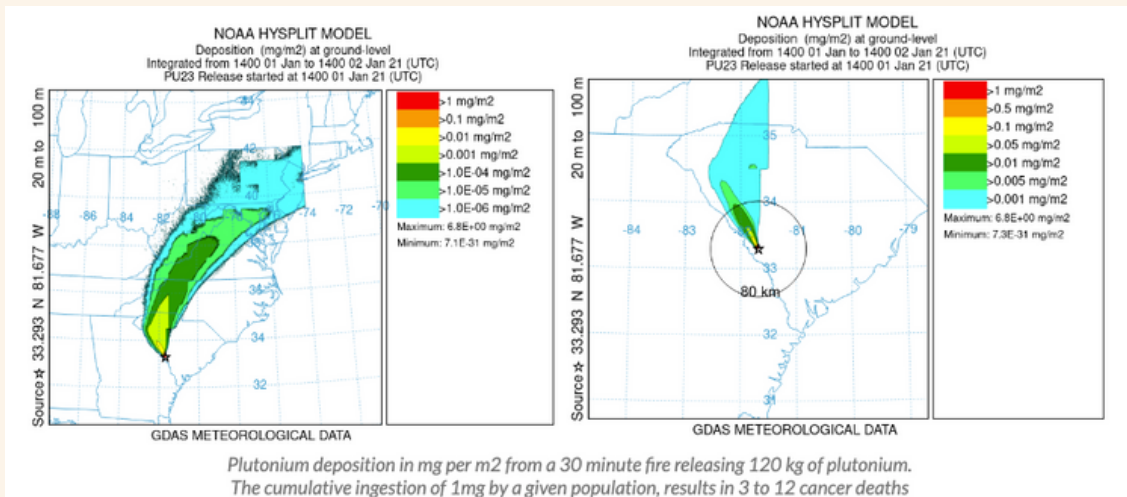
Blue-collar versus White-collar workers and pay codes

In this section, the significance of this work is detailed by providing a review of the literature on the impact of radioactive and coal ash on blue-collar workers, race, and low pay codes. With the use of radioactive and coal material, there has been a history of contamination at the Savannah River Site, including by-products of coal ash, uranium, plutonium, americium, curium, and neptunium (Dai, M., 2002). **Blue-collar workers were called to enter high radiation sites without proper equipment and the removal of radiation detectors (Angelon-Gaetz, K. A., 2010). This is reported as unmonitored data (Angelon-Gaetz, K. A., 2010).** In the Richardson paper, they recorded 18,883 workers at SRS between 1950 and 1986 (Richardson, D. B., 2007). In their 2011 study, the research group reflects on the different pay codes and the work environment impact on lung cancer rates in the male population (Richardson, D. B., 2011). For the highest pay code to the lowest, the standardized mortality rates are 0.52, 0.75, and 1.12, respectively (Richardson, D. B., 2011).

Due to insufficient data on the smoking history of the workers, the Richardson group found evidence of negative confounding of smoking history and radiation exposure (Richardson, D. B., 2011). **The relationship between race and pay code jobs has also been discussed.** Despite Black residents being 36.3% of the Aiken, SC population, 5.4% were hired during the 1950s (Angelon-Gaetz, K. A., 2010). More than 50% of the SRS worker population was hired in the 1950s (Angelon-Gaetz, K. A., 2010). Until the 70s, 90% of the hourly workers or blue-collar workers were Black male workers (Angelon-Gaetz, K. A., 2010). As previously stated in Richardson, there are more reports of cancer rates amount to low pay codes versus high pay codes. For average annual radiation dose, it is reported that the highest mean dose was 718.3 mRem for Black female workers in 1968 (Angelon-Gaetz, K. A., 2010). Without the inclusion of gender, Black workers had the highest annual radiation dose from 1978 to 1985 (Angelon-Gaetz, K. A., 2010). The Savannah River Site has had a transition of ownership from Dupont to the Department of Energy (DOE). With the transition of power, there were short operations under the DOE before the shutdown of the facility in the 1990s (White, D. L., 2000).

Many workers developed cancer, resulting in various class action lawsuits filed by previous workers. They do not have evidence of the contamination of the soil, water, air, or bodies on the site. The class action lawsuits have been divided instead of grouped together to make a more powerful case. However, these lawsuits have been cast to the side. So far over 10,000 former SRS workers have filed claims and received \$1 billion in payout via worker's compensation. This program granted compensation based on death or illness speculated from the radiation exposure to former workers. For additional local impacts, there are environmental concerns about the clean-up progress.

The cleanup of the site began in 1992, and it costs \$1.3 billion a year to clean up. Currently, the Savannah River Site is being repurposed to make plutonium pits. The DOE has completed an environmental report about the impact of plutonium on Aiken, SC. It has stated that it will have limited to no impact on the area. The report has not taken into consideration the previous contamination, relocation of 40 tons of plutonium from New Mexico to South Carolina, and potential fires from plutonium. Grassroots organizers are calling for an additional environmental briefing of the site in Aiken, SC. There is a separate lawsuit to stop the transition of the site into a plutonium pit production facility. The current lawsuit by local community groups is asking for the delay of the pit production in SC and a more comprehensive impact assessment. A careful analysis of the impact assessment raises questions about source terms and modelization of accidents. For the impact assessment, there needs to be a model of potential plutonium fires at the site. I computed plutonium air concentration and deposition downwind with the NOAA Hysplit atmospheric transport software, including beyond the 50 mile radius zone that bounds the DOE environmental impact assessment. For future work, we need to explore the potential health impact on the community downwind for different total amounts of plutonium released.

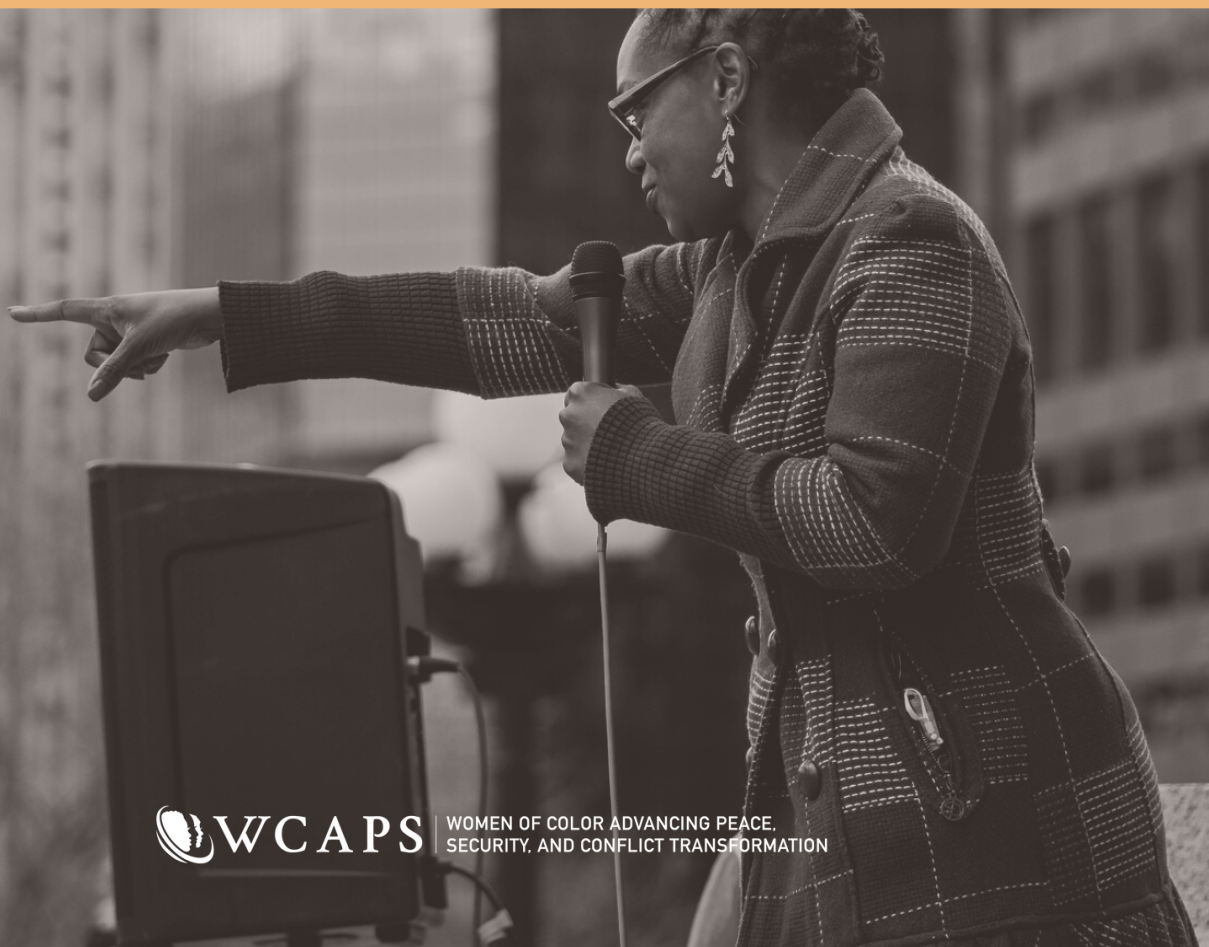


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POLITICS



CHAPTER 12

Mitigating the Threat of Digital Propaganda on Vulnerable Demographics Leading up to Crimes Against Humanity

Tehreem Fatima



Tehreem is Pakistani-Canadian social impact strategist with an interest in civic innovation and peacebuilding. Having completed her Bachelor of Arts from the University of Toronto, where she specialized in political science and minored in philosophy, Tehreem often finds herself at the intersection of politics and philosophy as a researcher, activist, and social innovator. Her recent research has centered on the role digital media tools play in defining the future of political discourse and democratic organizing; she is interested in finding a solution to the challenges of social media activism and using digital tools to advance global peacebuilding efforts.

Social media is a double-edged sword; an unparalleled, globalized network of never-ending information accompanied by an unparalleled vulnerability to malicious propaganda. This paper briefly examines the role of digital propaganda campaigns carried out through a sustained abuse of social media algorithms, in catalyzing crimes against humanity. Specifically, it outlines how key actors use digital propaganda to target a specific demographic and abuse social media algorithms to exploit pre-existing polarization and increase hyper-nationalism, creating conditions for crimes against humanity. Using Myanmar and India's digital propaganda against their minority Muslim populations as an example, the paper breaks down the Firehose of Falsehood disinformation strategy and recommends options for mitigating the threat of digital propaganda that targets its exploitation of political issues, human sociology, and cyberspace.

Digital propaganda against Muslim minorities in Myanmar and India

Rohingya Muslims make up the largest stateless population and qualify as the most persecuted minority in the world. This demographic has suffered decades of religious persecution in Myanmar, where they have been disenfranchised and targeted with an ethnic cleansing campaign that continues today. Despite Rohingya Muslims making up less than 5% of the population, many ultranationalist Buddhist groups, who belong to the 90% Buddhist majority, have come to strongly believe that their state is vulnerable to a complete Islamist takeover (Gunasingham, 2019). These fears pre-date the implementation of social media in the region but have been carefully exploited and exaggerated through the military's strategic abuse of Facebook algorithms and dissemination of anti-Muslim digital propaganda. Investigations into Myanmar's Rohingya genocide found the military guilty of

of orchestrating a multi-year sustained propaganda campaign against Rohingya Muslims to radicalize Buddhist nationalists into supporting heightened measures for self-defence and the ethnic cleansing of the demographic by broadcasting false information about the actions and intentions of Rohingya Muslims (Fink, 2018). This propaganda campaign began in 2012 when Myanmar was initiating its democratization after a long history of military rule and catalyzed the Rohingya genocide which started on August 25th, 2017 when the military, aided by armed Buddhist nationalists, burned down Rohingya villages, slaughtered over 24,000 people, raped and assaulted Rohingya women and girls, and forced over 900,000 Rohingya Muslims out of the country (Schmelzer et al, 2021).

Similarly in India, pre-existing conflict between the Hindu majority and Muslim minority has been strategically exploited and exaggerated through the use of digital propaganda and abuse of social media algorithms (Sharma, 2019). This nationalism has emerged with increasing passion following the election of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Hindu nationalist party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Like in the case of Myanmar, this ultranationalism is enflamed through anti-Muslim propaganda campaigns that deliberately misrepresent and vilify the intentions of India's Muslim minority through targeted propaganda that is distributed on platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Reddit, and more (Roy, 2022). This propaganda campaign has made a significant impact in anti-Muslim rhetoric, violence, and persecution in India which ranges from members of the BJP openly calling for genocide against Muslims, to mob riots that assault Muslim students, vandalize Muslim businesses and places of worship, and kill Muslim civilians. It has also allowed for the passing of anti-Muslim legislation such as the Citizenship Amendment Act which allows non-Muslim migrants to fast-track their way to citizenship while Muslim migrants are kept under the label of "illegal migrants" and made vulnerable to state abuse (OHCHR, 2020). Activists have highlighted the potential this has to further the disenfranchisement of Indian Muslims. Most recently, India has manipulated school textbook chapters that explore Muslim contributions to Indian society and erased chapters on the 2002 riots in the state of Gujarat where over a thousand people, disproportionately Muslim, were killed in mob riots by Hindu extremists as local police watched on with little to no intervention (Kaur, 2023). India has also banned a 2023 BBC documentary exploring Prime Minister Modi's complicity in the 2002 riots and massacre titled "The Modi Question". It is evident from these events that digital propaganda and algorithm abuse have helped create conditions for crimes against humanity against Indian Muslims.

Firehose of falsehood

In both these cases, the propaganda strategy used was a domesticated replica of Russia's "Firehose of Falsehood" disinformation tactic. This strategy enlists the support of volunteers or employees in creating a mass of troll accounts, news pages, celebrity pages, and entertainment pages across multimedia platforms to inject and boost curated propaganda into the algorithm and onto cyberspace (Blythe Jr, Calhoun, 2019). Myanmar's military has previously deployed its members to study this strategy in Russia and constructed bases with

teams of employees creating and managing troll accounts on Facebook - a platform that is as ubiquitous as the internet in the country (Schmelzer et al, 2021). In India, whistleblowers confessed to instigators leaning on the support of volunteers to create and manage accounts on platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp (Sharma, 2019). This strategy intentionally creates provocative and outrageous content meant to further polarize and radicalize one demographic against another by exploiting existing sociopolitical differences and conflicts. It aims to encourage conflict, paranoia, and confusion in place of sound, compassionate public opinion. In the case of India and Myanmar, it has brought new life and reach to existing nationalist movements.

Its design takes into account key factors of the human condition such as the need to belong to a community and unwillingness to be outcasted. Through this inference, the strategy thrives on a belief that consumers of media are likely to judge content credibility based on its reception by other members subscribed to the same ideologies, rather than taking time to fact-check propaganda (Blythe Jr, Calhoun, 2019). The bot account strategy deployed in Myanmar and India hones in on this philosophy by curating a mass of fake digital personalities that infiltrate the cyberspace and build credibility around digital propaganda through fake engagement, boosting the content while signalling to viewers that it is taken seriously by a sizeable number of people who share their values or interests. This coupled with the way social media algorithms cage users into an echo chamber of content judged to be of interest to them, traps users in a digital bubble of misinformation that is only strengthened over time, fuelling polarization and radicalization.

Gendered perspective

Another similarity that exists between Myanmar and India's propaganda against their Muslim populations is the centering of the rape and assault of women and girls as symbolic of conquering and being conquered. Both nations have operationalized propaganda to exploit the fear of being conquered by their Muslim minorities. In Myanmar, Buddhist monks share this sentiment in disinformation about Rohingya women being overly fertile, and Rohingya men being predatory and intent on raping Buddhist women to force conversion to Islam (Schmelzer et al, 2021). Similarly, Indian Hindu extremists share a similar depiction of Muslim men as predators wanting to force Islam onto Hindu women through rape. In another example, Yogi Adityanath, an Indian political official called on his supporters to end the "Love Jihad", the supposed scheme of Muslim youth to date Hindu girls for the sake of conversion (this is disinformation), while his supporters called on their fellow men to rape the corpses of Muslim women, and Adityanath himself stated "if they take one Hindu girl we will take 100 Muslim girls" (Bhowmick, 2017). In both countries, it is common for fabricated accounts of Muslim men assaulting Buddhist/Hindu women to force them into Islam to circulate on platforms like Facebook.

The objectification of women as metaphors for territory is necessary to understanding the intention of ethnic cleansing these campaigns operate with, and the added assault and

persecution women have to endure in times of violent conflict through the mass rape and assaults inflicted onto them by the conquering army, as their bodies are seen as something to be possessed and surrendered rather than an autonomous, dignified entity. The centering of rape against women in this discourse is tied to the metaphor of nation-building and reproduction. The fertility of Muslim women is a threat because it signifies the reproduction of their demographic. Thus the destruction of the woman is seen as a strategic victory (Schmelzer et al., 2021).

Analysis

This strategy thrives because it intends to increase nationalism by curating an environment of paranoia through the exploitation of existing political issues, human sociology, and digital platforms. In mitigating the threat digital propaganda and algorithm abuse pose to marginalized demographics like Rohingya and Indian Muslims, the solution has to address all three subjects of exploitation. Currently championed solutions to this issue fall short of adequately mitigating the specific threat digital propaganda poses against vulnerable demographics when employed through the firehose of falsehood framework.

Digital media literacy is a popular option among solutions to this crisis, and although it highlights the need to make users aware of the manipulation they may be subjected to, this alone is not adequate in addressing the threat of digital propaganda in facilitating crimes against humanity for the following reasons:

- Digital media literacy aims to educate the population on digital propaganda tactics to raise awareness about fake news and manipulative content they may be subjected to. This does not guarantee that users will reject false content (Woolley, 2021). Because the firehose of falsehood model exploits pre-existing concerns and group-think nature, research shows that users are more likely to question the validity of content favoring opposing ideologies than their own (Boyd, 2017).
- In cases like India and Myanmar where powerful state actors are the instigators of propaganda, the widespread implementation of digital literacy programming that allows civilians to weed out digital propaganda is unlikely.

Another favored solution is policy and corporation-facilitated regulation of social media content to minimize disinformation and take down troll accounts. This solution has made headway and is being improved constantly, yet despite this, it falls short of mitigating the threat for the following reasons:

- It relies on cooperative and anti-propaganda political attitudes to be implemented which do not exist in the decision-making realm of states that are active instigators of digital disinformation.

- Social networks used in these contexts, namely Facebook, are homogenous and centralized to the Western user experience and repeatedly fail to take into account the various geopolitical contexts of the regions they operate in, unable to provide localized and region-specific monitoring. Unless this hurdle is overcome, companies will not be able to mitigate the threat of digital propaganda on their platforms through a one-size-fits-all monitoring strategy.

Social Media, in its current global state, is homogenous and provides a one-size-fits-all algorithmic design that fails to take into consideration the varying geopolitical and intersectional contexts of its users throughout different regions of the world (Consentino, 2020). This lack of an intersectional and decentralized approach props up an incomplete cyberspace that is easily manipulated and weaponized in the absence of contextualized and locally informed monitoring. Digital media literacy and government and corporation-driven monitoring might assist in combatting disinformation in the Western context, but that does not translate to more extreme circumstances. A whistleblower from Facebook shared that despite making up only 9% of its audience, over 80% of Facebook's misinformation monitoring budget is spent on monitoring English language content (Milmo, 2021). In addition to the design of social networks and media platforms failing to accommodate diverse regional cyber environments, the platforms are not, in their current state, adept for political discourse as they are, by design, meant for commercial and entertainment use. Ad revenue being a primary income source for these social networks, their algorithms are designed to favor content that racks up the most engagement, be it through conspiracy, outrageous propaganda, or calls for violence (Cosentino, 2020).

Recommendations

Mitigating the threat of digital propaganda and algorithm abuse requires a solution that responds to the exploitation of political issues, human sociology, and cyberspace. The following recommendations outline individual possibilities that can collectively make meaningful progress in fighting the threat of digital propaganda.

Mitigating the Exploitation of Political Issues:

Social media algorithms are designed for entertainment, to display customized content on one's feed based on their likes and dislikes. This algorithm is not adept for political discourse which democratically flourishes in the plurality of opinions and perspectives from authentic sources as well as meaningful conversations and community building with those of differing opinions. To mitigate the exploitation of political issues by a firehose of falsehood framework, social media networks should innovate alternative algorithms that can coexist with and parallel the original entertainment-focused algorithm but provide politically charged content with a less hostile, less penetrable cyberspace that is designed to boost content through an additional metric of accuracy in conjunction with metrics of engagement.

According to social media marketing expert Hootsuite, algorithms are a way to organize the movement of data through ranking signals. Ranking signals are automated metrics used to rank content on social media based on an individual's probability of engaging with the content. These signals are highly individualized and take into account a user's existing following list, searches, location, and time spent hovering over and or watching content (Newberry, Kwok, Martin, 2022). Because ranking signals are highly individualized, they are prone to categorizing users in digital echo chambers of endless targeted content. In the context of political discourse, specifically the use of the firehose of falsehood framework, this makes users vulnerable to digital propaganda by limiting their exposure to alternative points of view and feeding into paranoia by providing an endless stream of content that exploits existing sociopolitical biases against a target demographic, paranoia that is reinforced by the accounts and pages they interact with. With this algorithm, simply taking down propaganda and harmful content after it has acquired significant engagement online will not solve the issue of digital propaganda. As research shows, the longer the content stays online, the wider it is shared, regardless of how fiercely it is debunked, the damage has already been done because widespread interaction with the content does give it the illusion of credibility (Boyd, 2018). Therefore, what social networking sites need to disrupt are the factors of their algorithms that allow troll accounts to build echo chambers of disinformation and trap users in their existing socio-political biases and fears.

Some platforms like Meta (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp) and Twitter have taken action against disinformation by altering their algorithms and flagging misinformation for users. Twitter specifically has made positive headway by limiting misinformation's sway on its algorithm, allowing users to attach further context and verifiable sources on misleading tweets, and removing content that carries a risk of inciting offline harm (Twitter, 2023). Comparatively, Meta, which has 3.74 billion monthly active users worldwide, seven times the monthly active users of Twitter (Dixon, 2023), has also pledged to limit the sway of misinformation on its algorithm through third-party vetting and content flagging. However, Meta is not proactive in removing harmful content and does not fact-check speech from politicians or opinion content unless the opinion content is based on underlying misinformation, in which case it is flagged and not removed. Although Meta claims to use accuracy as a metric in their algorithm ranking, Meta's misinformation strategy targets "viral misinformation" and hunts down clickbait and false engagement as opposed to targeted digital propaganda despite its platform being used to catalyze the Rohingya genocide, and increasing hate against a minority demographic in a country that hosts Meta's largest user base. To combat misinformation Meta partners with third-party fact-checkers that review potentially misleading content through trend monitoring or individual requests by users; the reach of the content under review is limited while its credibility is assessed and if the content is deemed misleading, Meta tags it as such and limits its reach on its platform (Meta, 2023). Although these are positive advancements, they do not target the foundation of the firehose of falsehood framework.

The firehose of falsehood framework succeeds through the building of digital echo

chambers, and consistent publishing of targeted propaganda building on existing biases and increasing paranoia of one demographic against another. Political discourse flourishes in the plurality of opinion, when people are exposed to differing points of view and have access to multiple verified sources and opportunities for community building with opposing parties instead of being digitally confined in echo chambers of like-minded users consuming the same information and carrying the same biases. To combat this, platforms like Meta should work towards designing an alternative algorithm specifically for the monitoring of sociopolitical engagement that can coexist with their existing algorithm catering to individual entertainment; building a two-algorithm-system, one for socio-political discourse, the other for regular entertainment. The new algorithm should omit sociopolitical engagement from metrics used to develop ranking signals, allowing users freedom of information through greater exposure to differing opinions, more verified sources, and most importantly, opportunities to directly engage and build community with the opposing demographic in a non-hostile cyberspace. Furthermore, platforms like Meta should do more to combat socio-political disinformation beyond just flagging content as misleading. There should be a way to apply the metric of accuracy to sociopolitical content, not just click-bait content, to judge its sway on the algorithm, and there should be more proactive measures taken to suspend and remove accounts that consistently engage with and or publish misinformation in an attempt to build these echo chambers of digital propaganda, along with the prompt removal of content which holds a risk of curating offline harm.

Mitigating the exploitation of human sociology:

Expanding on the aforementioned solution of content and user regulation through policy and corporate regulation, because digital propaganda campaigns aim to target pressure spots in a society, any monitoring strategy must have a complete understanding of the sociopolitical landscape of a country to monitor and prevent the publishing and spread of propaganda and block algorithm abuse. In the context of states like India and Myanmar, it is not acceptable to expect the monitoring to be conducted through state governments, instead, corporations responsible for the social networks in play should make a stronger effort to hire and develop context-specific network monitoring teams that are comprised of local experts who can apply a cultured, intersectional analysis of the social network's impact on the region's cultural sociology and pre-existing conflicts to identify potential problems that may arise from the echo-chambers of social media and vilification of a specific demographic. Additionally, social networks must incorporate the opinions and analysis of women in the monitoring work as a gendered analysis is critical to peace-building. Muslim Rohingya and Indian women are subject to an added context of violence in times of conflict, and their input in the monitoring of dialogue and propaganda is essential to their safety.

Mitigating the exploitation of the cyberspace:

Mental autonomy is described as the right to control one's mind free from manipulation or coercion and is guaranteed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. As we

continue to learn the contours and challenges of the 21st century, a strong, global foundation on the threats, and protection from threats of a globalized social network, especially as technology and cyber developments continue to morph into existence, is necessary. Developing the concept of mental autonomy further within the context of digital propaganda and the firehose of falsehood framework will be a critical step in securing mental autonomy as a human right for all, and by extension, allow local governments and international bodies valid ground to hold corporations and other actors responsible for any violation of this right. Having mental autonomy validated as a right across the international governance structure will open doors for accountability and push corporations to innovate fixes to the problems in their networks which allow for mental autonomy to be infringed upon (Jones, 2020).

Furthermore, states must work collaboratively to create and apply a diplomatic framework of accountability against states that weaponize social media to spread propaganda against a marginalized demographic and create conditions for crimes against humanity. For example, India as a part of the G20 should not be hosting a high-profile international event while its leadership is currently involved in instigating violence against Muslim minorities by re-writing domestic history and boosting anti-Muslim propaganda that has resulted in violence. There needs to be a consistent commitment to peace and security at the international level. The evidence of digital propaganda's role in facilitating crimes against humanity is overwhelming, and participating in it should have impactful consequences at the international level for any member state that is found to be directly or indirectly guilty of doing so.

Conclusion

Digital propaganda and algorithm abuse help prime the stage for crimes against humanity against marginalized demographics. When maneuvered by state actors against a religious minority, as is the case of Myanmar and India, these tactics can facilitate a dangerous environment of deliberate disinformation encouraging violent polarization and hyper-nationalism. Against strategies such as the firehose of falsehood, social networks and peace-builders face a new challenge in mitigating the spread of fake news and propaganda on social media. This strategy aims to target and exploit existing political issues, human sociology, and cyberspace in order to increase chaos, polarization and nationalism. This paper recognizes the positives and shortcomings of popular solutions to the threat of digital propaganda such as digital media literacy and content regulation. In addition, it offers the following recommendations: investment in the innovation of an alternative social media algorithm for political discourse that relies on the metric of accuracy in addition to engagement; the decentralization and local contextualization of cyber monitoring and regulation strategies carried out by social networks; the incorporation of mental autonomy as a human right; and the development and execution of a collaborative, international diplomatic accountability framework to confront states partaking in the facilitation of crimes against humanity by deploying digital propaganda against a target demographic.

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CHAPTER 13

Unlocking Malawi's Potential: Fostering Progress through Quality Education and Decent Work

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The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 global goals adopted by the United Nations in 2015 to address some of the world's most pressing challenges, including poverty, inequality, and climate change. In Malawi, the government has made significant strides towards achieving these goals, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). However, there is still much to be done to ensure that every Malawian has access to quality education and decent work. This op-ed highlights some of the key challenges facing Malawi in achieving SDG 4 and 8 and provides recommendations on what needs to be done to address them.

I. The Challenge of quality education in Malawi

A. Overview of the state of education in Malawi

Education is a fundamental human right critical for personal and societal development. In Malawi, the government has made significant efforts to improve access to education, especially for girls and children from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, despite these efforts, the quality of education in Malawi remains poor, with a high dropout rate, low literacy levels, and inadequate infrastructure.

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), about 35% of primary school-age children are out of school, while only about 10% of secondary school-age children are enrolled in school (UNDP 2020). Additionally, the student-teacher ratio in Malawi is high, with an average of 1 teacher to 70 students, which makes it challenging for teachers to provide individual attention to students (World Bank 2019).

The low literacy levels in Malawi are also a cause for concern. According to the World Bank (2019), only about 66% of children who start primary school complete their primary education, and only 36% of children who start secondary school complete their secondary education. This means that a large number of children in Malawi do not have access to quality education, which limits their potential for personal growth and development.

B. Factors contributing to the poor quality of education

Several factors contribute to the poor quality of education in Malawi. Firstly, inadequate funding for education has resulted in a shortage of resources and infrastructure, including a lack of classrooms, textbooks, and teaching materials. The UNDP (2020) reports that Malawi allocates only 17% of its national budget to education, which is insufficient to provide quality education for all children in the country. This lack of resources and infrastructure leads to overcrowded classrooms, lack of access to teaching and learning materials, and poor hygiene and sanitation facilities.

Secondly, the quality of teaching in Malawi is substandard due to a lack of qualified and motivated teachers. The poor working conditions of teachers, including low salaries, unpaid allowances, and poor working conditions, have resulted in low morale and high rates of absenteeism (Banda and Wane 2021). This has a negative impact on the quality of education, as students are less likely to receive quality instruction and individual attention from their teachers. Furthermore, due to the shortage of qualified teachers, many schools in Malawi rely on untrained and unqualified teachers, which further exacerbates the problem.

Thirdly, there is a high dropout rate in Malawi due to poverty, early marriage, and cultural beliefs that prioritize boys' education over girls. According to UNESCO (2019), 23% of girls in Malawi marry before the age of 18, which often leads to them dropping out of school. Poverty is also a significant contributor to the high dropout rate, as many families cannot afford to pay school fees or meet the costs associated with sending their children to school.

II. The challenge of decent work and economic growth in Malawi

A. Overview of the state of the economy in Malawi:

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world, with a GDP per capita of \$428 in 2020 (World Bank, 2021). The country's economy is heavily reliant on agriculture, which accounts for over 30% of its GDP and employs over 80% of the population (World Bank, 2021). However, agriculture in Malawi is primarily rain-fed, and climate change has made it increasingly difficult for farmers to grow crops consistently. As a result, Malawi is facing severe food insecurity, with over 3 million people in need of food assistance in 2021 (World Food Programme, 2021).

In addition to the challenges in agriculture, Malawi's economy also faces a persistent trade

deficit, with imports exceeding exports by a significant margin (African Development Bank, 2021). The country is heavily reliant on donor aid to finance its budget, and foreign aid accounts for around 40% of Malawi's total revenue (World Bank, 2021). This dependence on aid limits the country's ability to finance its development agenda and create decent work opportunities for its population.

Despite these challenges, Malawi's economy has shown some signs of growth in recent years. In 2019, the country's GDP grew by 3.6%, up from 3.2% in the previous year (African Development Bank, 2021). However, this growth has not translated into significant job creation or poverty reduction, and Malawi remains one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world.

B. Factors contributing to the lack of decent work opportunities:

1. **Limited access to education and skills development:** A significant proportion of Malawi's population lacks formal education and skills, which makes it difficult for them to secure decent work opportunities. This is particularly true for women and girls, who face significant barriers to education.
2. **Limited investment in infrastructure:** Poor infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, limits economic activity and employment opportunities. This includes a lack of reliable energy supply, inadequate transport infrastructure, and limited access to water and sanitation.
3. **Political instability and corruption:** Malawi's political environment is characterized by instability, corruption, and weak governance. This has created a challenging business environment that discourages investment and hinders economic growth.
4. **Limited access to finance:** Many entrepreneurs and small businesses struggle to access finance to start and grow their businesses. This is due to a lack of financial institutions and restrictive lending practices.
5. **Inadequate regulatory environment:** The regulatory environment in Malawi is weak, making it difficult for businesses to operate and create jobs. This includes a complex tax system, inadequate legal frameworks, and limited protection for workers' rights.

III. The interconnectedness of SDG 4 and 8

A. Highlighting the importance of achieving both SDGs for sustainable development in Malawi

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 focuses on quality education and aims to ensure inclusive and equitable education for all by 2030. SDG 8, on the other hand, aims to promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. These two goals are closely interconnected and both are critical for the sustainable development of Malawi.

Achieving SDG 4 is important because education is a key driver of economic growth and development. Education provides individuals with the knowledge and skills they need to participate in the workforce, start businesses, and contribute to the economy. Furthermore, education promotes gender equality, reduces poverty, and improves health outcomes. In Malawi, where access to quality education is limited, achieving SDG 4 is critical for breaking the cycle of poverty and promoting sustainable development.

Achieving SDG 8 is equally important because it focuses on creating decent work and economic growth. Decent work and economic growth are essential for reducing poverty, promoting social inclusion, and achieving sustainable development. Creating job opportunities and promoting economic growth can help to reduce inequality and improve the standard of living for all. In Malawi, where the majority of the population works in the informal sector, achieving SDG 8 is crucial for promoting economic development and reducing poverty.

B. Identifying areas of synergy between SDG 4 and 8

There are several areas of synergy between SDG 4 and 8 in Malawi. One area of synergy is education and skills development. Investing in education and skills development can help to create a workforce that is equipped with the knowledge and skills needed for the 21st-century economy. This, in turn, can promote economic growth and create job opportunities. For example, by providing quality education that is relevant to the needs of the economy, Malawi can create a workforce that is equipped with the skills needed to compete in the global economy.

Another area of synergy is entrepreneurship and innovation. Promoting entrepreneurship and innovation can help to create job opportunities and promote economic growth. By providing support to entrepreneurs and promoting innovation, Malawi can create a culture of entrepreneurship that can help to drive economic growth and create job opportunities. For example, by providing access to funding, mentorship, and networking opportunities, Malawi can help entrepreneurs start and grow successful businesses that can create job opportunities.

Finally, investing in infrastructure can play a crucial role in promoting both SDG 4 and 8. The development of school infrastructure not only improves educational access but also has wider socio-economic benefits. Investing in infrastructure, such as school buildings, classrooms, libraries, and technology, creates a conducive learning environment for students. Upgraded facilities can enhance teaching and learning experiences, promote engagement, and foster a positive educational atmosphere. Furthermore, infrastructure development extends beyond education. By investing in transport infrastructure, reliable energy supply, and water and sanitation facilities, Malawi can create a business environment that attracts foreign investment and stimulates economic growth. Improved infrastructure supports the growth of industries, enhances productivity, and creates job opportunities.

Accessible and reliable infrastructure contributes to sustainable economic development, which aligns with the objectives of SDG 8, promoting decent work and economic growth.

IV. Recommendations

A. Recommendations for improving the quality of education in Malawi

To improve the quality of education in Malawi, the government and stakeholders need to implement several recommendations, including the following:

1. Investing in the construction of school blocks in remote areas and motivating teachers through timely payment and competitive salaries offers numerous benefits for education quality. By building new classrooms in rural and remote regions, the government can expand access to education for children currently unable to attend school. Additionally, providing teachers with fair compensation and timely payments fosters their motivation and commitment to delivering quality education. According to the World Bank (2019), increasing teachers' salaries by 30% would require only 0.4% of the national budget, a relatively small amount compared to the substantial benefits of improved education quality. This investment ensures a stable teaching workforce, reduces turnover rates, and positively impacts student learning outcomes.
2. Expanding access to quality education by providing free education in at least one school per district: The government should prioritize the establishment of at least one school per district that provides free quality education for all children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This will help to address the high dropout rate and improve access to education for all children in Malawi.
3. Strengthening teacher training and professional development: The government should invest in teacher training and professional development programs to ensure that teachers are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to provide quality education. The training should focus on innovative and interactive teaching methods, including the use of technology in the classroom, to enhance student engagement and improve learning outcomes.
4. Addressing gender inequalities in education: The government needs to take action to address gender inequalities in education by increasing access to education for girls and providing incentives for families to keep their daughters in school. This can be achieved by providing free sanitary products, such as pads, to girls, and implementing policies that address the root causes of early marriages and gender-based violence in schools.

B. Recommendations for promoting decent work and economic growth in Malawi:

- 1. Investing in infrastructure development:** Investing in infrastructure development can have a significant impact on Malawi's economy by improving the business environment and attracting foreign investment. The government can prioritize transport infrastructure projects, such as the construction of roads, bridges, and ports, to improve the movement of goods and people across the country. For example, in 2019, Malawi launched the Njakwa-Livingstonia Road project, which is expected to improve access to health and education facilities and promote economic growth in the northern region of the country (African Development Bank, 2019). The government can also invest in reliable energy supply to support industrial development and create jobs. In 2017, Malawi launched the Malawi Energy Access Project, which aims to increase access to modern energy services for households, businesses, and public institutions (World Bank, 2021). Finally, the government can invest in water and sanitation facilities to improve public health and productivity. In 2018, the government launched the National Water Development Program, which aims to provide access to clean water and sanitation to all Malawians by 2030 (UNICEF, 2020).
- 2. Promoting entrepreneurship and innovation:** The government can promote entrepreneurship and innovation by offering special loans and grants to entrepreneurs and restructuring the internship program to provide practical experience and mentorship. The government can create a fund specifically dedicated to supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by providing low-interest loans and grants for start-ups. In addition, the government can restructure the internship program to provide practical experience and mentorship for young people who are interested in entrepreneurship. The program can be designed to help interns develop business plans, access funding, and build networks. Finally, the government can support the development of innovation hubs and business incubators to provide entrepreneurs with the necessary resources and support to start and grow successful businesses. For example, in 2019, the Malawi Innovation Challenge Fund (MICF) was launched to provide funding and technical assistance to SMEs working in the areas of agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism (MICF, 2019).
- 3. Encouraging foreign investment:** The government can encourage foreign investment by providing a stable business environment, simplifying investment procedures, and creating investment incentives such as tax breaks and land allocation. The government can work to improve the regulatory environment by reducing bureaucracy and streamlining investment procedures. For example, in 2019, Malawi passed a new Companies Act, which aims to simplify the process of starting and registering a business (Government of Malawi, 2019). The government can also provide tax breaks and other incentives to attract foreign investors. For example, in 2020, the Malawi Investment and Trade Center (MITC) launched a tax holiday program that provides a five-year tax break to companies investing in Malawi's priority sectors (MITC, 2020). Finally, the government can allocate land for investment projects, particularly in the agriculture and manufacturing sectors, which have the potential to create significant employment opportunities.

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CHAPTER 14

The Future of Cybersecurity and Its Legal and Ethical Implications on National Security

Fatema Basouny and Andrea Fuentes



Fatema holds a Master's degree in International Affairs specializing in International Security. I strive to be part of a bigger cause and support the role of women of color in advancing peace and security. The technological innovations and challenges from AI and cyber security present a global issue of peace and security, creating a gap between gender roles. I hope I can contribute to this discussion, and have a positive impact and younger girls and women of color.



Andrea is a current Masters candidate from Chicago, IL at Johns Hopkins University- Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies. She currently holds a B.A from St. Norbert College in Political Science and International Studies, a minor in Peace and Justice studies and a pre-law certificate. At SAIS, she is focusing on security, strategy and statecraft between the U.S. and Latin America. She has worked as an international rule of law project coordinator at the U.S. Department of State. Her areas of interest include, human rights law, transnational crime, gender-based violence and youth development.

The ethical and legal framework of cyber security

In the 21st century, cyber security has been a prominent issue and topic of discussion in domestic and international policy and legislation. Through the rapid geopolitical changes and technological advancements in the world, technology and its power have brought great benefits to developing countries. The profit of the advancement of technology includes simplifying tasks, the mass production of media or other news, facilitating and expanding communication, and more. Technology has created a new form of diplomacy and negotiation in the 21st century that promotes international cooperative business and strategic dialogue. However, the impact of technology and information systems advancing everyday lives and creating new opportunities for our world has also caused a new international threat to form that affects the integrity, safety, and privacy of people, organizations, and nations digitally. Cybersecurity entails monitoring and protecting computer, information and intelligence systems to prevent digital attacks of obstruction, damage or unauthorized access. The implementation of cybersecurity can include risk assessments, developing security policies, creating network securities (such as firewalls or

VPN), data leak protection systems, and regularly updating and auditing cybersecurity measures to comply with recent developments or breaches.

To understand what constitutes ethical when discussing cybersecurity, we need to examine the variables of the digital sphere that need to be protected and private. Recognizing the ethical principles necessary to create and promote effective and moral cybersecurity processes is crucial for creating change. One of the main principles of ethical cybersecurity is (A) integrity. Professionals in cybersecurity should guard against unwanted data modification, deletion, or alteration, and guarantee the reliability of networks, hardware, and software in compromising situations. Maintaining integrity entails making sure that data and systems are accurate, trustworthy, and reliable. An example of integrity includes digital signatures on websites such as DocuSign which allows for contracts or other documents to honor or accept a digital signature. Websites that allow digital signatures need to recognize that the digital signature made is solely for that one-time occurrence, and the data cannot be encrypted into any other document or database for convenience without the consent of the signatory. Another variable of ethical principles of cybersecurity is (B) transparency. Transparency is achieved by being open and honest about cybersecurity procedures, rules, and vulnerabilities.

Cybersecurity experts should properly convey security risks and vulnerabilities to stakeholders, reveal known flaws, and promote a trusting and collaborative atmosphere. For example, when filling out an online form or application, there should be transparency as to why certain information is necessary. Public discourse in cybersecurity can allow for transparency. Another form of an ethical principle for cybersecurity is © accountability. The personal lives and privacy of many people are digital due to the convenience of new technology, this includes compiling a lot of professional or personal information on laptops, tablets, and smartphones. Additionally, many organizations use technology to compile information and data on others involved in the organization. Oftentimes, digital holders have data leaks which is a security breach in which sensitive, protected, or confidential data is copied, communicated, viewed, stolen, altered, or used by an unauthorized individual. Digital platforms notify a person if a part of their data has been leaked or breached, however, rarely does the platform specify what specific information or data was accessed. Putting an emphasis on accountability entails accepting responsibility for one's actions and decisions. Cybersecurity professionals should be open about their procedures, follow applicable rules and regulations, and report and handle security events or breaches as soon as possible. Similar to the need for accountability, availability is equally important for ethical cybersecurity. When data is breached, there needs to be constant availability of cyber professionals to dismantle the situation as much as possible and to continue to develop more strategies to combat cyber threats. The final and arguably the most important ethical principle is (D) confidentiality. Confidentiality means protecting sensitive data and information from illegal access, disclosure, or usage. To retain confidentiality, cybersecurity experts should prioritize the protection of data and use encryption, access controls, and safe solutions.

Legal framework for cybersecurity

The ethical and legal issues in the field of cybersecurity arise from various activities from stakeholders and the different levels of security. The intensity of the risks that individuals should consider as ethical risks occur in every aspect of life. The risks of cybersecurity have different effects such as violating the rights of privacy and dignity (Allhoff, 2018). Detrimental effects on economic activity such as hacking and security breaches require entities to become well-equipped before any mitigation measures (Barber, 2001). Large-scale processing includes the processing of sensitive data, having a higher risk for individuals. Data privacy is of great importance since it tackles information inequality. Personal information when used in different contexts leads to unfair use of data subjects (Bellaby, 2021). The use of new technologies is uncontrolled with the motive of protecting public security and individuals with sensitive information. Privacy regulations aim to preserve human dignity and protect marginalized communities from unfair treatment (Bishop, 2017). Privacy regulations preserve human dignity from outside forces that could have a negative impact on their decision-making process.

In order to maintain a safe and secure digital environment, the United States government spends 12 billion dollars annually, with the budget increasing by 13% each year to match developing technology and threats. The Federal Emergency and Management agency in conjunction with the Department of Homeland Security has provided state and local funding for cybersecurity which adds up to 128 million dollars a year. As of March 2023, the Biden-Harris administration is requesting 26 billion dollars for next year. The amount of funding requested and provided for national cybersecurity strategies shows how obligated the United States feels to combat cyber threats and protect national security, defend against economic espionage, safeguard critical infrastructure, and dismantle cybercrime. To be as effective as possible, the United States creates intense strategies to decrease the threat of digital harm.

While the United States has been fairly successful with the strategies created and implemented, it has created a fine line between protection and unwarranted disclosure. The United States has a dire need to protect its information, so much so that it compromises a citizen's right to digital and personal information. The need for a strong legal and ethical framework to protect people, corporations, and nations from cyber dangers has become crucial given the exponential rise of cyberspace. Due to new and drastically changing cyber policies, there has been unauthorized access, the exploitation of vulnerable information, a lack of transparency and an invasion of privacy that surrounds current cybersecurity policy and legislation. This essay examines the ethical and legal aspects of cybersecurity and emphasizes the need for a comprehensive framework in tackling the complicated challenges surrounding this sector. It also discusses how more ethical policies and laws can be implemented while maintaining the same level of security.

Ethical considerations in cybersecurity

In view of the risks and liabilities mentioned in the previous section, certain actions need action to ensure full compliance with organizational activities (Burkert, 1997). Special technologies that ensure the protection of specific rights and freedoms. An impact assessment and conformity should be done before any new technology is developed to create a list of requirements for development (Dimov, 2022). This framework was adopted by the European Commission's Horizon 2020 Programme under the GUARD project with a fixed set of requirements covering design, functionality, performance, ethics, and data protection. Implementing organizational measures is a crucial base to ensure compliance with the fundamental ethical principles (Dimov, 2022). However, in most cases, implementation of organizational measures is not sufficient and additional technical measures must be included. This depends on the severity of cybersecurity risks after proper assessments are concluded (Ertem, 2020).

The measures that can be implemented are 1) preparations of ethical codes of conduct for staff members and technical developers, 2) internal training for staff members on fundamental ethics, 3) compliance mechanisms with core ethical principles, 4) adopting incidental findings for unforeseen information, and 5) introduction of ethical personnel to oversee ethical standards implemented. The establishment of procedures for periodic monitoring with fundamental ethical principles (Floridi, 2016). An assessment of the nature of the system should be adopted and implemented. For example, a system that stores publicly available information and data should not be exposed to a detailed monitoring procedure unlike personal data processing (Floridi, 2016). A clear judgment should be made with caution in regard to the nature of the system to determine the monitoring period, adequate resources, and time (Milin, 2022). The proper implementation of compliance measures is relevant to achieve ethical compliance. The improper implementation of compliance measures would impede the objective of compliance mechanisms (Floridi, 2016).

To ensure ethical compliance, an assessment of the impact on the rights and freedoms of citizens is a crucial measure to take in order to ensure ethical compliance (D'Acquisto, 2015). These assessments are recognized by the Council of Europe and EU regulations. Specifically, EU law under Article 35 of the GDPR states that impact assessment is necessary to be carried out when processing results in a high risk to the freedom of citizens (Ertem, 2020). This assessment is envisaged to cover the fundamental rights and freedoms stated in the International legislative act such as the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) (Cybersecurity, 2015). This assessment is usually covered by a data controller and aims to ensure accountability and compliance with ethical principles and relevant legislation.

Conclusion

This paper aims to present some of the ethical and legal issues that occur in the field of cybersecurity, with reference to the EU funded project GUARD. Some measures dedicated to

protecting the privacy and data subjects were presented that could serve as basic recommendations. It is crucial to develop a list of requirements, especially ethical ones when developing new technologies in a system before any action is taken further. This will ensure compliance with the legal rights of 'individuals' personal data at the highest level and mitigate any negative effects.

Regarding the ethical risks that could occur, they may vary in intensity and could affect freedom and human rights in different areas of our lives. We could summarize that the issues regarding ethical and legal problems in cyber security are complex and require an institutional system and robust approach. Each emerging risk must be assessed to determine its negative effect on individuals. After careful assessment, it would be possible to choose the appropriate response. Stakeholders and experts in the field should come together to participate in diverse measures to achieve better results with no harm to individuals.

After addressing and highlighting the ethical principles needed for our modern-day cybersecurity policy. It is important that we do not repeat history in regards to trying to protect people, while simultaneously compromising their privacy. A situation similar to the current issue regarding cybersecurity and privacy is the U.S. Patriot Act of 2001. After the attacks on September 9th, 2001, the United States federal government created this act to create and develop security laws to prevent a similar attack from happening. Shortly after its implementation, the Patriot Act became controversial since many believed that it was an invasion of privacy since it essentially allowed the government to spy on individuals by information sharing, wiretapping and entering personal areas without consent.

The government felt that it was crucial to create and implement this act to protect its national security, even though it was an obvious infringement on human rights. In 2015, the Obama Administration created the US Freedom Act, (Uniting and Strengthening America by Fulfilling Rights and Ensuring Effective Discipline Over Monitoring), which created a more ethical procedure for the way the government collects data while protecting its citizens. This act was great in theory, however, it did not predict the sudden and drastic change of the digital age taking over. Currently, in federal policy and legislation regarding cybersecurity, the U.S. Department of Justice claims that “the Act also expands the list of situations in which the Secret Service may participate in the investigation of computer crimes and authorizes the U.S. Attorney General to establish regional computer forensic laboratories to train Federal, State, and local law enforcement in investigating computer crimes. Substantively, the Act expands the scope of key money laundering statutes; includes computer fraud and abuse as part of the grounds for charges of terrorism; and modifies the computer fraud statute, including permitting extraterritorial jurisdiction.” This is all that the Department of Justice offers when it comes to the dimensions of cybersecurity and the infringement of rights. As we have seen, this part of the Act is not honored in all situations of cybersecurity.

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CHAPTER 15

COVID-19's Impact on Vulnerable Populations: Building Social Safety Nets for Displaced, Undocumented, and Unhoused Communities to Bridge Health Disparities

Sumaya Abdullahi and Sophia Jesteadt



Sumaya is a health equity activist currently focused on expanding the application of technology to bridge health disparities and increase access to healthcare in low-income countries and destabilized regions. She graduated from the University of Minnesota with a background in Biology and her research contributions in Cell Biology and Genetics, Biochemistry, to Cancer and Cardiovascular Health. Currently, she is a Master's student and a research assistant at the University of Minnesota's Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy addressing drug insecurity and promoting drug resiliency in the US.



Sophia is an undergraduate student at the University of Pennsylvania studying Health and Societies. A first-generation Indian-American raised in Philadelphia, Sophia has a deep-rooted passion for healthcare and public policy. She has worked at various levels of government, including the United States Senate and, currently, the City of Philadelphia's Department of Public Health, to explore policy and practice. Sophia plans to attend graduate school to further her interests in improving accessibility and public health on a global scale. Outside of school, Sophia enjoys staying active, testing NYT baking recipes, and doing craftwork.

Displaced groups face significant challenges in obtaining access to basic human necessities due to a complex global legal framework that fails to consider their needs; a challenge that is currently exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to UNESCO, displaced persons are defined as “persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters.” (1) This definition encompasses both cases of internal and cross-border displacement. The legal term "refugee status" refers to individuals who are forced to leave their country due to a confirmed threat of persecution, conflict, or violence. (2) To obtain refugee status, individuals must meet the criteria defined by international refugee laws, such as the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

The pandemic introduced additional obstacles for displaced populations and asylum seekers, including, but not limited to, limited access to health care, reduced humanitarian aid, border closures and mobility restrictions, and protection concerns. The complexity of

these challenges have required many international organizations, governments, and humanitarian efforts to be implemented and tailored to mitigate the impact on displaced persons and their rights. This paper will examine the unique difficulties faced by refugees and displaced persons in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, critically analyzing the impact of global health governance on these communities and highlighting the need for social security networks to reduce the disproportionate burden endured by them.

Impact of COVID-19 on refugees and displaced persons

Continuous assessment and refinement of policy measures remain integral to the success of COVID-19 protocols. Valuable lessons drawn from various nations' strategies can shape future pandemic preparedness and response initiatives. Several nations and regions have been commended for their guidelines. Countries such as New Zealand, Australia, Taiwan, and Singapore implemented measures like extensive testing, contact tracing, strict border controls, and public health campaigns. (3) In addition to implementing effective testing and contact tracing procedures, nations like South Korea, Japan, Germany, and Norway established guidelines for social distancing. (4) As a result of their early adaptation and efforts, these nations were able to significantly slow virus transmission compared to other regions. However, it is important to acknowledge available data does not capture the specific impact of the pandemic on vulnerable groups, including unhoused, undocumented, and displaced populations. At a global scale, a staggering number of approximately 1.6 billion people find themselves without official documentation, lacking access to proper housing, employment, and essential healthcare services, (5) The World Economic Forum's data indicates that more than 150 million individuals worldwide live without adequate shelter, further highlighting the urgency of addressing housing disparities. (6) Moreover, the United Nations estimates that around 103 million people endure the harsh reality of being forcibly displaced from their homes, and over 80 million live in non-state armed-group controlled territories, requiring urgent attention and targeted support. (7)

While many countries adopted COVID-19 measures, such as mobile vaccination units and home immunization programs, only a few aided unhoused, undocumented, and displaced individuals. One noteworthy example is Turkey, which hosts the largest refugee population of 4 million people. Turkey provided unemployment benefits to millions of individuals across the country who were laid off after March 2020. However, this assistance did not extend to the hundreds of thousands of refugee day workers who were part of the informal economy. (8) Similarly, in India, pandemic-induced poverty prompted a partnership with the UNHCR to address the urgent needs of high-density, impoverished refugee settlements. (9) Despite these efforts in some countries, deportation fears hindered many undocumented individuals from participating in essential health measures, such as contact tracing and seeking medical care. (10) Consequently, this reluctance has led to significant health disparities and an increase in COVID-19-related fatalities.

Social mobility and asylum status

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on the freedom of movement, particularly for displaced individuals. Restrictive public health measures led to the closure of borders and travel restrictions, significantly affecting those seeking refuge and asylum. An example of this is the United States' decision to close its border with Mexico to asylum seekers, tragically forcing many, including children, to return to the desperate conditions they had originally fled. Tragically, those unable to seek asylum embarked on dangerous journeys back, resulting in numerous deaths due to extreme weather and exhaustion. (11)

Due to border closures and travel restrictions, the pandemic has caused a sharp decline in the number of asylum applications, leaving many displaced individuals vulnerable to abuse and suffering as a consequence. Stigmatization of refugee groups as carriers of infectious diseases fueled xenophobia, while ad-hoc policies promoting racial and ethnic discrimination worsened the situation. Notably, India's hostile migration policies regarding Rohingya migrants, and the US' Title 42, criticized for targeting Black immigrant populations by restricting Haitian immigration, have exacerbated the condition of displaced populations seeking asylum. (12, 13)

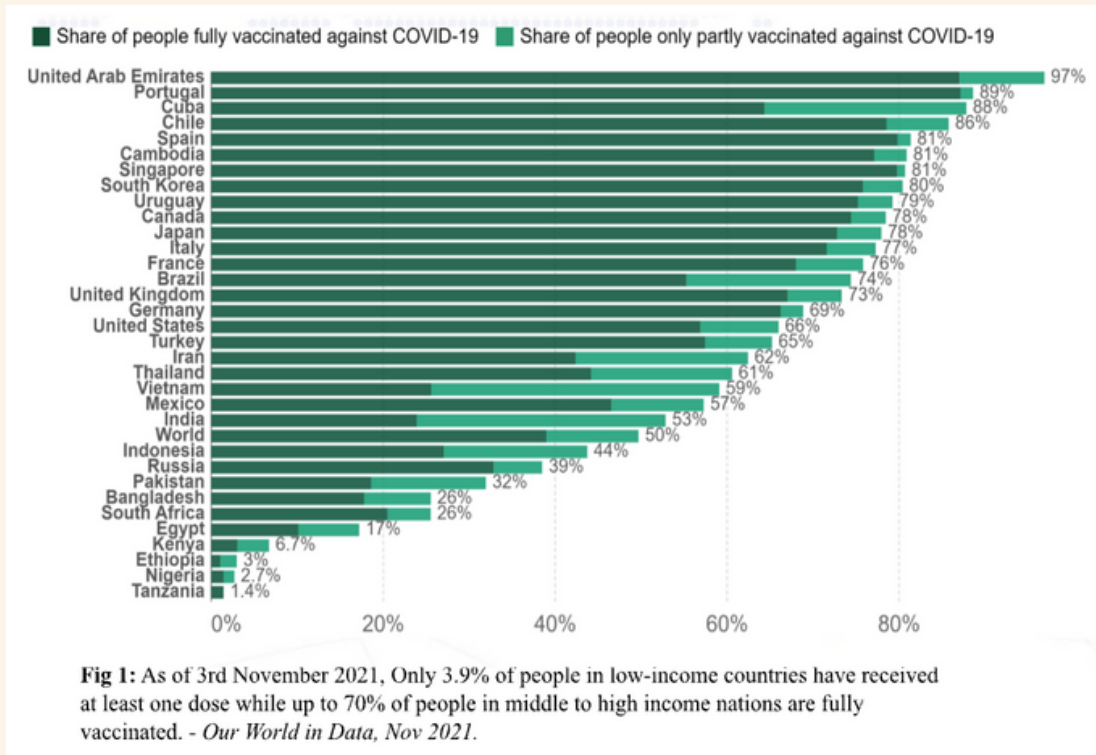
Furthermore, many countries have reduced their capacity to process asylum applications, denying refugees access to education, health care, and housing. Delays in processing these applications have severe consequences, placing asylum seekers at risk of deportation and legal repercussions. The strain from these challenges extends to governing nations and international organizations, such as the UNHCR, which face resource and capacity constraints. As a result, assistance for specific refugee groups has been deprioritized in countries like India and Jordan, heightening the difficulties faced by displaced populations. (14)

Remote work and education

In addition to border control measures, the COVID-19 pandemic has had far-reaching effects on the employment and education of vulnerable communities. The implementation of restrictions (i.e. requiring proof of vaccination) and the elimination of social activities have intensified racial, gender, and religious inequalities while fostering xenophobia and denying minority communities access to shared spaces. Educational systems have been disrupted, particularly impacting low-income individuals' ability to access learning opportunities. Girls and women have been disproportionately affected, facing limited technology access and inadequate support for their education at home.

Remote learning widens the digital divide and hinders the educational engagement of girls and women in developing nations who are unable to fully participate due to domestic duties. The closure of schools has also led to increased domestic abuse rates, as girls and women lose the security provided by educational institutions. (15) Remote work and education

further exposes them to prolonged periods with their abusers. Additionally, the suspension of school food programs has worsened food insecurity for unhoused and displaced students, and hindered the socio-economic progress of low-income learners. Undocumented, unhoused, and displaced individuals have faced particular challenges due to the disruption or temporary halt of social support networks. These consequences highlight the need for comprehensive approaches to address the broader impacts of the pandemic beyond border control measures.



Researchers and scientists developed secure and efficient COVID-19 vaccines using various technologies such as protein subunit, viral vector, and mRNA vaccines as the COVID-19 virus spread over the world. Regulatory agencies approved vaccines based on clinical trial data, leading to national immunization programs that prioritized high-risk groups. (16) Efforts were made to assist low- and middle-income nations through COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX), in collaboration with GAVI, the WHO, and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, which aimed to achieve global vaccination equity through multilateral global procurement agreements. Some nations with an abundance of vaccines made an attempt to donate or share doses with nations that had trouble obtaining and accessing vaccines via UNICEF. These programs made an effort to reduce vaccination inequities and achieve better worldwide coverage. Similar collaborative initiatives like ACT-A and the TRIPS waiver were established to address health disparities by facilitating access to affordable vaccines for low-income nations. The Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A), led by the World Health Organization (WHO) and involving governments, pharmaceutical companies, and non-profit organizations, focuses on fair access to COVID-19 therapeutics and technologies through resource and information pooling. The TRIPS-Waiver, on the other hand, offers

temporary intellectual property rights relief to increase global production capacity. (17) While many nations and organizations recognize the disproportionate burden undocumented and displaced peoples face, very few programs are designed to reach refugee populations. In an attempt to bridge this gap, the COVAX Humanitarian Buffer was established to provide a percentage of COVID-19 vaccines and resources to displaced communities. However, the COVAX Humanitarian Buffer continues to face significant challenges with its efficacy hindered by scarcities in supply and logistical hurdles. (18) This largely arises from inclusive endeavors being after-thoughts rather than incorporated in initial measures.

Recommendation

The post-pandemic landscape requires significant effort and global collaboration to address health inequities, environmental consequences, and the pandemic's overall burden. Health disparities persist, which is evident in the limited access to health care and uneven vaccine distribution marginalized communities face. Environmental impacts include changes in climate priorities, temporary pollution reductions, and challenges in waste management. Targeted interventions for vulnerable populations, sustainable recovery plans, equitable healthcare access, and renewed commitments to climate action are crucial responses. The pandemic's economic effects include decreased workforce participation, job losses, income inequality, small business closures, healthcare disparities, and a widening digital divide. Pre-existing social, economic, and systemic inequalities exacerbated the pandemic's effects and disparities. Addressing racial and gender inequality in economic recovery and resilience efforts becomes imperative. Undocumented individuals face varying vaccine availability and accessibility across regions. The pandemic highlighted the need for appropriate policies and initiatives to address racial and gender inequality in economic recovery and upcoming resilience efforts causing these disparities.

The aforementioned policies, despite their goal of addressing global health inequities, fail to provide healthcare services and COVID-19 vaccinations to displaced people. It is important to consider increasing social safety net programs for undocumented, unhoused, and displaced communities during global emergencies. These programs can provide crucial support to both refugees and undocumented individuals who may be facing heightened vulnerabilities and socioeconomic challenges. Governments and humanitarian organizations should strengthen social safety net programs to provide refugees and undocumented individuals with financial assistance, health care coverage, and access to basic necessities. Similarly, research must be done to ensure refugees and undocumented individuals have access to health care services, including COVID-19 testing, treatment, and vaccination, without fear of immigration enforcement or discrimination. We recommend having these policies and programs prepared prior to national or global emergencies so obstacles to implementation are limited. For example, the COVAX Humanitarian Buffer experienced barriers to delivery as a result of insufficient financial support, legal issues such as liability

and indemnity agreements, and lack of clarity surrounding the buffer, which slowed widespread rollout of vaccines to those most at risk. These challenges could be greatly reduced by incorporating undocumented and unhoused populations in existing programs and policies, such as expanding Medicare in the US to undocumented migrants or providing asylum seekers with temporary statuses and identification numbers during global pandemics to ensure they have the same access to health care services and vaccines without over-burdening administrative systems and delaying care. Similarly, by pooling resources globally to ensure humanitarian entities such as UNICEF are equipped to deliver care to unstable regions, we can help mitigate the economic and social impacts of the pandemic on the world's most vulnerable population and ensure a more equitable recovery.

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CHAPTER 16

The Framework of Accountability for Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, and Justice for Survivors: What Are The Barriers?

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Under the Statute of the International Criminal Court, rape and other forms of sexual violence during conflict are classified as war crimes. In addition, the International Human Rights Law, as well as the International Humanitarian Law and International Criminal Law, have identified conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) as a tactic of war that is both preventable and punishable. Yet, sexual violence during conflict remains prevalent and largely unpunished in current conflicts and crises around the world.

When considering the matter of attaining justice for survivors and taking action to hold perpetrators of CRSV accountable for their crimes, such goals are considered a “rare exception.”

A weapon of war

Conflict-related sexual violence is defined by the United Nations as a form of sexual violence including rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization and forced marriage. In conflict-affected communities, CRSV is a tactic of sexual gender-based violence and extremism committed to terrorize, humiliate and control civilians for political, military and economic motives.

During conflict, perpetrators of CRSV against civilian populations can be militia groups, traffickers, or security and military officials. CRSV is also a form of gender-based violence that targets men, women and children. Women and girls are primarily targeted; the RAND Corporation describes sexual violence during conflict as one of the most devastating forms

of violence committed against women and girls.

Reports of CRSV in current conflict and crises

As the civil war in the Tigray region of Ethiopia took place over the course of two years, Amnesty International reported accounts of gang rape, sexual slavery and mutilation, and rape and torture committed against Tigrayan women and girls by militia groups and members of the Ethiopian National Defense. Amid the peace deal reached between the Ethiopian government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front in November of 2022, which ended the war, accounts of rape continue to surface despite the peace deal's enactment.

In Ukraine, multiple accounts of sexual violence and torture against Ukrainian men, women and children have been reported since the beginning of the country's invasion by the Russian military in 2022. The UN Human Rights Office documented 133 cases of CRSV against men, women and children between February 2022 to 31 January 2023.

Since the beginning of deadly clashes between dissenting military groups in Sudan, reports of CRSV have surfaced. In July, incidents of CRSV involving at least 57 women and girls, including 10 girls, were reported by the World Health Organization, as well as an attack where up to 20 women were raped. The United for Combating Violence against Women in Sudan has also documented at least 42 alleged cases of CRSV in Khartoum, and 46 in Darfur.

The social and economic aftermath of CRSV for survivors

Survivors of CRSV are left with severe trauma to their physical and mental health. Their trauma places them at risk of anxiety, depression, and the transmission of sexually transmitted infections and diseases like HIV. The stigma of rape can also prevent survivors from accessing social services and job seeking.

For women, stigma in environments prevalent with unequal views on social norms and gender equity can also result in feelings of self-blame and rejection by their family or community. In these environments, the lack of support and understanding around their trauma poses a hindrance to their recovery if they are experiencing depression.

Institutional responses for deterrence

The United Nations underscores prosecution and prevention as means of achieving justice and accountability for women who have experienced sexual violence during war. As part of this mission, the UN has implemented global peacekeeping operations to accomplish this mission through documenting, and mapping conflict-affected areas where civilians are vulnerable to sexual violence, engaging in negotiations, advocacy and conducting training with the goal of preventing CRSV. Currently, the UN Security Council is carrying out four peacekeeping missions in South Sudan, Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic to supplement its response to prevent CRSV.

In 2012, the United Kingdom launched the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative to create awareness around sexual violence in armed conflict. In November of 2022, the UK government hosted the International Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative, an aspect of the government’s priority to address CRSV globally.

As part of the administration of President Joseph Biden’s goal to address gender-based violence around the world, President Biden signed the Presidential Memorandum to Promote Accountability for Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in 2022. The Memorandum acknowledged the United States’ commitment to utilize legal, financial, diplomatic and policy tools to deter future violence, and its refusal to accept CRSV as an “inevitable cost of armed conflict.”

Barriers to justice and accountability

It is certain that enacting a framework of justice and accountability for matters of CRSV is a matter of global concern. However, several factors create a barrier to reaching this goal to its fullest extent, despite the strong action taken by institutions around the world.

Underreporting is a factor of this goal; in 2022, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) reported an increase in cases of rape and sexual violence in conflict; 10 to 20 cases, the UNDP reported, were undocumented and unaddressed. Stigma, discrimination and the lack of safety and fear of retaliation are contributors to underreporting. Impunity for perpetrators, even if their actions are reported to authorities, also presents a challenge for accountability, including in environments where conflict has resulted in the breakdown of law and social structure.

Concerning its response to CRSV, the United Nations noted the “denials of access” by authorities and instability as logistical challenges to the organization’s goal of monitoring and verifying cases of sexual violence. At the beginning of the conflict in Tigray, for example, internet and telecommunications services were shut down by authorities.

Policy Recommendations:

1. Maintain the prioritization of ensuring the support, funding and sustenance of global NGOs and nonprofit organizations committed to eradicating stigma and the discrimination of survivors of sexual violence in conflict-affected areas.
2. Continuously evaluate the gaps within the existing framework for monitoring and reporting sexual violence during the conflict by governments and peacekeeping institutions collaborating to identify and address these deficiencies.
3. Enact the collaboration of governments and institutions worldwide to create a joint strategy on creating awareness around the prevalence of CRSV and the importance of collectively working toward deterrence in conflict-affected areas.

Conclusion

As CRSV remains an ongoing threat to the safety and well-being of civilians caught in the middle of conflict, it is crucial that decisive action is taken to address this pervasive issue in conflict-affected areas. These policy recommendations can contribute to a more comprehensive and effective approach in addressing conflict-related sexual violence.

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CHAPTER 17

Barriers: The Role Access to Educational Institutions has on African Americans Joining the U.S. Foreign Service

Ihechi Ezuruonye



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Within the U.S. Foreign Service (FS), African Americans represent a very small percentage of Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) with 5.4 percent being FSO generalists and 9 percent as specialists. (1) This report explores how access to higher education and institutional resources, such as specific university programs to include the Ivy League, foreign service preparatory programs, and other exclusive pipelines, are often provided to or reserved for privileged students and often inaccessible to African Americans and other marginalized groups. A promoter of peace, a supporter of prosperity, and a protector of American citizens while advancing the interests of the United States abroad. These three roles encapsulate the role of a U.S. Foreign Service Officer. In 2023, where geopolitical tensions are heightened by ongoing wars, territorial disputes, and political rifts across parties and between countries, the important role of diplomacy becomes ever more apparent. FSOs play a pivotal role and require key negotiation skills, intercultural understanding, and a willingness to step out of their comfort zone to learn about regions and cultures different from their own. With a position based on traveling and building relationships with people from all around the world, it seems evident that the people upholding these positions must come from a variety of backgrounds reflective of today's global society, particularly when focusing on the United States.

As a representative of the U.S. Government abroad, the path to becoming an FSO is extensive as the position can have implications on national security and international relations. At an initial glance, no specified educational level or proficiency in a foreign language is required. Other eligibility requirements include: being a U.S. citizen, being at least 20 years old and no older than 59 on the day you submit your registration package, and an availability to work on worldwide assignments. (2) Yet these requirements are a precursor

to the process needed to make it to FSO status. In the United States, to become an FSO one has to pass each step in a rigorous eight-step selection process. The first step begins with deciding on a career track that includes the: consular, economic, management, political, and public diplomacy tracks and registering for the foreign service officer test (FSOT) which is only held three times a year. The next steps include passing the following; the FSOT, the personal narratives, the FS oral assessment, medical and security clearances, the suitability review panel, and entering your name in the Register, which is a rank-ordered list of successful candidates. (3) Once a candidate passes all qualifications necessary to become an FSO, they transition to the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), where they will participate in courses on language, diplomatic tradecraft, regional area studies training, technology training, and leadership and management training. (4)

Yet, a historical analysis of the foreign service makes evident that it was not always an “accessible” line of work, and it primarily catered to individuals from specific backgrounds. The Foreign Service Journals’ 2021 publication of a photographic register of all 701 officers in 1936, showcases that 700 were white men and one was a white woman, drawing attention to the fact that one demographic was overwhelmingly represented during the 1930s. (5) In the subsequent decades, the introduction of new national legislation made it more accessible for African Americans and People of Color (6) to pursue the FSO career path. The report further details that in the 1970s “Black officers were disproportionately assigned to Africa and parts of Latin America, a problem that persists today.” Additionally, it was not until discussions amongst Black officers in foreign affairs agencies led to the pursuit of two class action suits in federal court that noted that the “State Department ‘typically’ discriminated against Black officers in assignments, performance evaluations, and promotions.” (7) Although the numbers of African Americans today are higher than they were in the 1930s they still lag behind their white counterparts.

Data as of 12/31/2022

RACE & ETHNICITY	All Ranks				Senior Ranks*				
	Civil Service	Foreign Service Generalist	Foreign Service Specialist	Grand Total	Civil Service	Foreign Service Generalist	Foreign Service Specialist	Foreign Service Total	Senior 1
RACE									
AFRICAN AMERICAN	24.4%	6.5%	10.2%	15.6%	7.3%	4.2%	9.9%	5.0%	!
AMERICAN INDIAN	0.8%	0.6%	0.9%	0.7%	0.3%	0.2%	0.7%	0.3%	(
ASIAN	8.1%	7.5%	7.5%	7.8%	8.0%	4.7%	5.3%	4.8%	!
MULTI-RACE	3.0%	3.8%	3.8%	3.4%	1.7%	2.2%	3.3%	2.4%	:
NATIVE HAWAIIAN	0.3%	0.1%	0.3%	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%	0.7%	0.2%	(
WHITE	61.4%	79.7%	73.6%	69.9%	81.1%	85.6%	74.8%	84.0%	8:
UNSPECIFIED	2.1%	1.9%	3.8%	2.4%	1.4%	2.9%	5.3%	3.3%	:

8 Data from the Department of State full-time Permanent Workforce Diversity (December 2022) notes the percentages by race and ethnicity of Foreign Service staff.

The data above is one indicator that demonstrates how even with legislation changes, African American representation is still far behind that of white Americans. One key reason for the barriers presented can be attributed to educational opportunities. Although there is no official educational requirement to become an FSO, studies indicate that nearly 62 percent of FSOs earn a bachelor's degree, 27 percent earn a master's, and 6 percent have a doctoral degree. (9) As such, those who obtain a degree make up more than half of FSOs.

As stated previously, the FSOT and its subsequent process is a long and arduous undertaking that although is “free” and with no minimum score to pass, the competition is fierce as the test is only offered three times a year (October, February, June). With few opportunities to take the exam and an annual average of 9,000 test takers, methods to help boost chances of passing such as practice exams, tutors and prep sessions are more likely. (10) However, the level of access an individual can have is often dependent on their proximity and access to certain institutions that often provide resources for FSO training and access to mentorship.

According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), approximately 9 percent of the 23,160 FS career officials examined from 2002 to 2018, had a degree from one of the eight Ivy League institutions. (11) Foreign Policy reports that within the top ten universities for an international relations degree (the 2nd most common degree for an FSO) only three (Georgetown, American University, and University of California Berkeley) are not considered “Ivy League.” (12) Within the top twenty rankings are schools such as American University, Georgetown University, George Washington University, and Johns Hopkins University. The common thread between these schools is their proximity to Washington D.C. – the center for American diplomacy, and headquarters for the Department of State and the FSI. Furthermore, several of these universities have “International or Foreign Service” in their title, alluding to the fact that they are known as preparatory institutions for those explicitly aiming to enter government or the FS. As an African American woman and an attendee of one of these institutions, even without the Ivy League title, the opportunity to be taught by current or retired ambassadors, the prospect of mentorship from an FSO, and the access to guest speakers that were high ranking diplomats or State Department officials, granted me opportunities individuals who did not attend such an institution would not have access to. As a Louisiana State University graduate, Linda-Thomas Greenfield, the current U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations with a 35-year FS career and an African American woman, elaborates on this fact in an article, where she notes that after traveling to many colleges and even high schools to discuss her work and attract more students, students at private high schools and Ivy League and prominent colleges, already had knowledge about the FS and how it works. Yet that was not the case for students at other U.S. educational institutions. (13)

In addition to the school one has attended, having the position of being a graduate student also opens the door for another avenue into the FS, through highly competitive fellowships. The Charles B. Rangel Graduate Fellowship Program has 45 fellows annually, and the USAID

Donald Payne Development Fellowship has 30 fellowships. (14, 15) These are available only to graduate students interested in pursuing a career in the FS and provide graduate school tuition assistance for those selected for two-year study. The Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship also provides a path to the FS for undergraduate and graduate students. Throughout their time in graduate school, fellows receive mentorship from FSOs, and access to webinars, conferences, and materials that will help them in their career as an FSO. Upon completion of their degree, the fellows have a direct path into the foreign service.

With such key resources available to those who obtain fellowships and attend either prestigious universities or schools with programs designed for FSO preparation, the educational barrier alone is one that undoubtedly prevents many African Americans from entering the FS. In 2017, The New York Times reported that African American students are more underrepresented at the nation's top colleges and universities today than 35 years ago, with African Americans making up just 6 percent of college freshmen, and 9 percent of the freshmen at Ivy League schools even though 15 percent of African Americans are of college-age. (16) Other statistics show that 14 percent of Black adults have attained a bachelor's degree compared with 23.7 percent of White adults, and at the graduate degree level, only "7.8 percent of Black adults have earned a degree compared with 13.4 percent of White adults – a gap of 5.6 percentage points." (17) As the numbers of African Americans pursuing higher education are already fewer when compared to their White counterparts, access to prestigious universities or preparatory schools with programs for individuals aiming for a career in the FS are even more limited. This is in addition to the costs incurred by school tuition, room and board expenses, and access to food are often barricades that can prevent African Americans from pursuing undergraduate or graduate degrees.

An analysis of the path to a career as an FSO makes evident that it is perhaps not as straightforward as one might assume. Firstly, although the FSOT does not have an educational requirement, more than half of FSOs have a degree of some kind, leaving a small percentage of those who do not. Yet even for degree holders and in addition to non-degree holders, alternative options may include self-study or seeking out guidance either through tutors, prep sessions, or even study groups, all of which may be at an extra cost to the individual, for an exam that is "reportedly free." Secondly, for individuals who do pursue a university education, a distinct difference to their path as an FSO, will reside in 1.) the location of their university; and 2) a university with access to FSO resources and materials. These two factors provide huge advantages, as proximity to diplomatic hubs and availability of certain resources and people may contribute to ensuring an individual's acceptance into the FS. Lastly, the ability to pursue graduate-level education, is one few African Americans are privileged to do. Yet if one reaches this level, the fellowships that may provide an easier path to the FS are limited and highly competitive. For many African Americans, the road to the FS is one often curtailed by educational barriers, that without access to, can significantly impact the chances of becoming a Foreign Service Officer.

However, the inclusion of more African Americans in the Foreign service allows for not only a wider diversity of perspectives to be showcased but also a more accurate representation of the United States of today. As FSOs work worldwide, it is important that the types of Americans represented at U.S. embassies and consulates are not limited to a select few, but instead encapsulate the melting pot that is American society. As the daughter of immigrant parents, a key reason my parents chose to migrate to America was that they saw people who looked like them establishing livelihoods in the U.S. African Americans are not a monolith and higher numbers of African American representation in the FS do more than just create a more diverse workforce and institution, it provides opportunities for the inclusion of African Americans across the diaspora, including those with immigrant backgrounds such as those from the African continent and Caribbean Islands, who bring a richness of language, culture, and religion with them. African American history is American history, and African Americans deserve to be at the forefront, as representatives of American diplomacy.

Policy recommendations

- Expand the Diplomat in Residence (DIR) Program. In most cases, there is just one DIR for an entire state or even region. This is limiting not only to prospective FSOs but also to the DIR themselves. Depending on one person to answer the questions of an entire state limits the accessibility for both the DIR and the prospective FSO. Having more than one DIR per state, at the very least in major cities is one step to expanding the reach to communities of color, particularly those with higher percentages of African American populations.
- The development of resources specifically for African Americans interested in the FS through review preparation for the FSOT and the opportunity for FSO mentorship. This can be in the form of local formal or informal study groups that provide prospective students the chance to ask FSO questions, exchange study tactics, and meet people from similar backgrounds interested in joining the FS.
- Providing opportunities for African American FSOs to visit not only Historically Black Colleges and Universities but also community colleges and inner-city high schools with higher populations of African Americans to expose students from younger ages to the option for a career in the FS. Early exposure to FS career provides students with a longer timeframe to consider becoming an FSO, as well as a better opportunity for those students to utilize the services that are only available to them as students such as the fellowships mentioned above.

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