

SOCIAL SCIENCE

three pieces

INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SUPPORT AND INTERVENTION: THE UYGHUR MOVEMENT, XINJIANG PROVINCE, CHINA

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The following is an excerpt from a longer piece. For full text, please visit www.honorsjournal.com

ABSTRACT

In northwestern China, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), locally and historically recognized as East Turkestan, has seen rising ethnic tension between the Turkic-Muslim Uyghur population and China's majority population, the Han. Due to the Chinese government's intent to fully integrate the region and silence opposition, the Uyghurs have been severely harmed by repressive policies, human rights violations, rapid infrastructure development, and incentivized Han migration. Just south of the XUAR, in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), the Tibetan population has undergone similar circumstances of oppression inflicted by the Chinese state. However, the Tibetans have obtained immense social support from abroad, establishing an international campaign for Tibetan independence from China. The Uyghurs still remain largely invisible to the international community. The purpose of this thesis is to understand why the Uyghurs have not obtained international social support in their movement against oppression, using Tibet as a control to understand how social movements achieve social support. This paper advances the idea of international social support as a form of intervention due to the public's ability, particularly in Western countries, to pressure their governments to take a stand on issues that exist abroad. The global media's coverage, and depictions that portray the Uyghurs as violent terrorists, rather than an oppressed population, were found to be the most critical determinants of the Uyghurs' lack of support. The case of the Uyghurs

is an example of many media outlets' implicit Islamophobic rhetoric. In turn, an entire population that has been fighting to end the oppression of its people has been tied to a single identity and motive—terrorism.

INTRODUCTION

In consideration of the country's history and current day policies, China is undeniably no stranger to violating human rights, especially for the sake of government interests. Since the 1990s, the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), locally and historically recognized as East Turkestan, in northwestern China has been experiencing rising ethnic tensions between the ethnically Turkic-Muslim Uyghur population (one China's 55 ethnic minorities) and China's majority population, the Han. These tensions are rooted in China's economic and geopolitical interests in Xinjiang as a region that holds an abundance of natural resources and is strategically located, bordering eight countries. Since the establishment of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1949, China, formally recognized as the People's Republic of China (PRC), officially claimed the region as Chinese territory and accelerated efforts to fully integrate Xinjiang and accomplish its interests. This has involved rapid infrastructure development and renovation, incentivizing Han Chinese to migrate to Xinjiang from other parts of the country. In the process, Muslim-influenced architecture specific to Uyghur culture was destroyed and Han Chinese flooded the job market in which they are favored when acquiring positions.

Such changes have inflamed strife among the Uyghurs, increasing Uyghur organized separatist activity within Xinjiang and other parts of China. While the PRC has made great efforts to integrate Xinjiang, the Uyghurs are pushing for an independent state and are not willing to assimilate with Chinese society. The PRC's reaction to separatism has worked to combat unrest through "Strike Hard" campaigns that have been consistent for nearly 20 years and specifically target all Uyghurs in order to eliminate any potential threats. The East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) has been the only Uyghur separatist group officially recognized. While awareness of the organization has persisted since the 1990s, it was not until the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorists attacks in the United States that the PRC began identifying the ETIM as "radical Islamic terrorists." Since then, there have been correlated increases in human rights violations against the Uyghurs that have included evasive religious restrictions, restrictions of movement outside of Xinjiang, as well as forced life imprisonment and executions for those even suspected of being tied to separatist activity.

The XUAR is not the only region in China that has and is undergoing a rise in ethnic tensions, separatism, and state-authorized human rights violations against a specific ethnic group. In the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) discontent brought out by the Buddhist-Tibetan population is deeply comparable to the Uyghurs of Xinjiang. Like Xinjiang, Tibet was forcibly claimed as Chinese territory upon establishment of the PRC and has since fought for self-determination. In recent years, China invested in the development of Tibet which was directly causal for an influx of Han Chinese tourism and migration to region, worrying the Tibetan people that their traditional culture is slowly deteriorating. In 2008, Tibetan separatists in the TAR brought out mass violent protests against the Chinese state. In response, the PRC has been accused of using excessive force against the Tibetans and has since enacted heavy religious restrictions, as well as forced

life imprisonment and executions for those connected to activist or separatist activity.

Despite extremely similar circumstances of oppression of the Uyghurs and the Tibetans, there is one distinction that sets the two cases apart. Thousands of organizations and individuals globally have contributed greatly to the Tibetan cause financially and morally, which has sparked an international campaign advocating for Tibetan autonomy. On the other hand, most individuals in the world have probably not heard of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang, let alone have advocated for them. So why is it that the Tibetans have attracted international attention and social support, as intervention, while the Uyghurs have remained detached and invisible?

The purpose of this thesis is to note that the Turkic-Muslim Uyghurs of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, better known as East Turkestan, have been oppressed by Chinese authority for centuries but have received little to no international recognition or assistance. The central question is why are organizations, countries, and individuals not socially supporting, as intervention, the Uyghur movement in Xinjiang? In order to approach this question, this thesis will seek to analyze which factors determine why organizations, countries, and individuals choose, or if they are able to choose, to intervene, directly or indirectly, in conflict. In this, analysis will work to determine and define intervention in particular regard to the case of the Tibet in order to understand if that same social support and intervention exists in the case of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang. Next is an analysis of the methods of protests that Tibetans and the Uyghurs use to defend and promote their movements against Chinese oppression. Ultimately, the case of Tibet will act as a control in order to understand which strategies of protests in social movements are successful in attracting international social support and intervention. Additionally, the global media's influence will be taken into account through analysis of overall

coverage and depictions of both the Uyghur and Tibetan movements.

This analysis of protest methods will only cover protests from and since 2008 due to the significance of protests in contemporary day. Contemporary analysis is particularly relevant in regard to the internationalization of global media and its increasing capabilities to obtain information regarding global issues and abilities to expand the scope of global audiences, which then obtain knowledge and information for themselves. Therefore, overall international awareness and perceptions of the Uyghur and Tibetan movements can be measured; thus, this thesis asks why the Uyghurs in Xinjiang are not attracting significant international attention in their social movement against Chinese oppression.

[...]

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Influences, Tactics, and Media Coverage of the Tibetan and Uyghur Social Movements

Following the years under Mao Zedong, specifically during the Cultural Revolution where activity of resistance, demonstrations, and revolts brought out by Tibetans and Uyghurs remained very low, the amount of Tibetan and Uyghur protests has escalated. Particularly since 2008 when China hosted the summer Olympics in Beijing, protests and violence spurred from both populations and remained relatively frequent. In March of 2008, Tibet's most significant uprising since 1959 occurred when Tibetan monks publically raised the banned Tibetan flag, chanting prayers for independence and the return of the Dalai Lama. Those peaceful protests then erupted into violent riots throughout Tibet and other provinces that involved gasoline bombs that had burned down a police station (The New York Times, 2008). Just north in Xinjiang, the Uyghurs were also very active in protesting against the Chinese state, particularly targeting the police with knives and homemade explosives (Wong, 2008). Later on in 2009, a mass Uyghur riot broke out in the Xinjiang

capital of Urumqi and was stated to be "the largest ethnic clash in China since the Tibetan uprising in March 2008" (Wong, 2009).

In coherence with increased international attention that was brought to China at the time of the Olympics, it only makes sense that both groups would more largely and significantly erupt into mass demonstrations of dissent of the Chinese state. With continuous and sustained consciousness of China and its role in the international community, eyes are locked on the country's actions domestically and internationally. This public aspect has factored into the activity of the Tibetan and Uyghur movements in their fight against Chinese oppression and in obtaining international attention. Nonetheless, the Tibetan and Uyghur movements have key differences that play a role in how often recognized and how they are perceived, particularly by foreign media sources. Thus, while many other violent and peaceful Uyghur and Tibetan demonstrations have taken place before 2008, only protests from and since 2008 will be analyzed for the purpose of understanding various degrees of tactics of protests used to attract foreign attention as well as the media's coverage and depictions of the events.

[...]

The Role of the Media

Coverage and Depictions of the Uyghurs and Tibetans

[...]

With such broad advancements and expansion of reach, the media may even hold more power in international relations than most governments, IGOs, or NGOs. This role of the media is no different when it comes to the Uyghur and Tibetan social movements and their differing successes in attracting international social support and intervention. Through the media's overall coverage and depictions of Uyghurs and Tibetans, people may hold varying degrees of awareness for one movement opposed to the other or may have misconstrued perceptions due to the

differing portrayals. Because of the power and influence of Western states, organizations, and individuals, the most read and viewed media sources from the mainly the United States and Europe will be analyzed. No Chinese media sources will be under analysis due to heavy bias and propaganda used to portray Tibetans and Uyghurs as enemies to Chinese national stability and society.

[...]

UYGHUR DEPICTIONS

The search results regarding Xinjiang and the Uyghurs found that the article titles and sampled sentences emphasized the topic of violence. The word 'violence' itself was frequently referred to in several article titles and the majority of sampled sentences. Other words that seemed to frequently reoccur also related to violence, such as 'death,' 'kill,' 'attack,' and 'rioting.' In addition, there were many articles that focused on sentences of imprisonment and death of Uyghurs convicted by the Chinese state for participating in violent activities. Based off of many of these article titles and sampled sentences, the Uyghurs are depicted and emphasized to be an out of control and highly violent ethnic group that acts out in their resentment against the state. As stated previously, Tibetan self-immolation protests create a sense of sympathy for the reader because they are self-inflicted acts. The Uyghurs on the other hand are more dubiously described as violent rioters. For the readers, this creates a sense that Uyghurs are immoral as they inflict harm on others for a purpose. In this respect, the background of the Chinese inflicted harm and oppression upon the Uyghurs becomes blurred and misconstrued.

[...]

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper has been to draw attention to Uyghurs of Xinjiang province, a population that has been oppressed by China for centuries and yet

has received little to no recognition or support. The central question is, "why are organizations, countries, and individuals not socially supporting, as intervention, the Uyghur movement in Xinjiang?" While it can be argued that there is no way to even begin to support oppressed populations in China due to the country's power and standing in the international community, the case of Tibet in this study highlights a different argument by expanding the concept of intervention. Additionally, the examination of both the Uyghur and Tibetan movements contributes to literature regarding the influence of global media and its ability to shape the perceptions of entire populations and societies.

By expanding the concept of intervention to cover the idea of international social support, suggestions can be made regarding issues of defending populations within powerful, oppressive countries such as China. China's power and standing in the international community makes it nearly impossible for other countries to address issues, particularly human rights violations, within China's domestic affairs. The case of Tibet signals that with the mass social support from Western country populations, Western leaders can be pressured to speak out on issues abroad, even when they involve China. This aspect suggests a strategy to overcome the barrier that China has regarding the country's domestic affairs. When marginalized or oppressed groups or populations feel that they are heard and supported in their movement, especially by foreign political leaders, they are empowered because it means that people from all over the world are also fighting for their cause. While the outcomes regarding the Tibetan movement are somewhat unclear right now, there is potential in this research of international social support to explain the current and/or future successes, or failures, of social movements from all over the world.

The support that Tibet has obtained more significantly keys into the important role that the media plays in rallying support as well as how it portrays Muslim popula-

tions. The Uyghurs and Tibetans are two populations within China that have been severely harmed by China's oppression and forceful integration. However, the media does not highlight this central factor for both populations and instead portrays the Uyghurs as violent terrorists. In regards to social support, the media's coverage and depictions of the Uyghurs has ultimately stunted the Uyghurs' ability to obtain international social support to fight Chinese oppression. This contributes and draws on implications for research regarding the global media's influence and ability to shape perceptions regarding Muslim populations in general. By forming these perceptions, the media, in this case, has shown that instead of building social support for an oppressed population, it can do the exact opposite; particularly if that population is Muslim.

With the current global political climate, especially concerning the fear of terrorism and 'Islam,' it is the responsibility of the global media, particularly the media from Western countries, to be extremely mindful in how it portrays Muslim communities and populations. Stigma against Muslims seems to be ever-increasing, establishing a global divide between what is seen as West and what is seen as Islam. The case of the Uyghurs clearly displays the idea of 'Islamophobic' rhetoric used by the media. In return, the entire Uyghur population that has been fighting to end Chinese rule and oppression for centuries has been tied a single identity and motive: terrorism.

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GIVING UP ON THE SUPREME COURT: THE ROLE OF POLITICAL GRIEVANCE AND BETRAYAL

Lauren Strauss

The following is an excerpt from a longer piece. For full text, please visit www.honorsjournal.com

INTRODUCTION

The current political landscape in the United States is overridden with individuals who are largely unhappy with and even distrustful of government. Not only did the past presidential election expose widespread discontent with both presidential nominees, it revealed that a large portion of the American population is distrustful of Washington, and more specifically, the political elite. President Donald Trump, for example, based his campaign on a conservative platform emphasizing a need to shift political decision-making from what he calls the 'political elite' to the general public.

Various scholars have found an interest in understanding the possible causes and implications of cynical attitudes toward the government. Joshua Dyck, for example, found that higher levels of political distrust are shown to contribute to an increase in support for conservative policy due to the voters' pervasive desire to obtain greater control over the federal government (Dyck 2010). Perhaps this was one of the many forces that led to President Trump's election. However, as the Miller-Citrin debate illustrates, there are divergent theories that attempt to understand what these cynical feelings are reflecting, alienation or a mere dissatisfaction with political figures (Citrin 1974; Miller 1974a; Miller 1974b; Citrin and Green 1986). With this in mind, numerous questions remain unanswered. For instance, is governmental distrust and discontent merely superficial in nature, meaning it does not lead to acute cynical feelings toward the government, or is this

distrust representing true alienation from the government as a whole? In addition, this further elicits a strong curiosity regarding other possible measures of governmental cynicism and whether this cynicism is affecting the strength and stability of the United States' democracy.

Identifying how perceptions of the government influence support for the institutional legitimacy of the United States Supreme Court can likely indicate the stability of democracy. Support for the institutional legitimacy of the U.S. Supreme Court has been relatively high and constant despite the established separation of the U.S. Supreme Court from the voting population (Tanenhaus and Murphy 1981; Gibson 1991; Tyler and Rasinski 1991; Caldeira and Gibson 1992; Gibson and Caldeira 1992; Caldeira and Baird 1998; Gibson, Caldeira, and Spence 2003; Ramirez 2008; Gibson and Caldeira 2011). Most importantly, in most countries, but particularly within the United States, the Supreme Court is the most popular governmental institution (Gibson, Caldeira, and Baird 1998). This phenomenon is observed even when controlling for the policy preferences of individuals (Caldeira and Gibson 1992) and their party identification (Gibson, Caldeira, and Spence 2003; Tanenhaus and Murphy 1981; Nicholson and Howard, 2003). Identifying possible instances when high levels of diffuse support are threatened provides insight into the relative strength of the United States democracy because opposing an institution that has been highly supported over time, one that upholds the constitutional rights and liberties that are essential to the United States' democracy,

arguably indicates a disregard for the rule of law.

[...]

METHOD

Survey

I facilitated a survey through Amazon's Mechanical Turk that yielded 1,000 respondents in late November of 2016. The respondents were compensated \$0.50 for their participation in the study. In terms of the demographic of this study, white individuals are more heavily represented. Hispanic Americans and Black/Afro-Caribbean/African American, for example, are underrepresented. This sample is not representative of national percentages, the former accounting for roughly 7% of the sample and the latter accounting for roughly 6%. White individuals, however, accounted for about 77% of the sample, while the other racial/ethnic groups accounted for about 10% altogether. This includes American Indian/Alaskan Natives, South/East Asian Americans, Middle Eastern/Arab Americans, and other. As for sex, females are slightly less represented than males, accounting for 45% of the sample. However, the primary purpose of my study is to not distinguish between these groups of people, but rather look at the sample as a whole. That being said, it is valuable to keep these discrepancies in mind when considering the results of this study.

Regarding the possible biases that could arise from using Amazon's Mechanical Turk specifically, it is important to recognize that respondents have the ability to pick and choose which survey they wish to complete. Although compensation is likely a determining factor in this decision, it is probable that the respondents that completed this survey are more politically interested and aware. In addition, it is also possible that the respondents in my study have more available leisure time. Those who cannot make the time to respond to internet surveys as a result of work schedules, family life, or availability of internet access may not be well represented. Further, it is quite possible that

the immediate shock of the election in 2016 further disillusioned people and is skewing these results; however, the degree of this effect will need to be further studied. These are important considerations to keep in mind when analyzing the results of this survey specifically.

MEASURES

Diffuse Support

With regard to evaluating diffuse support of the U.S. Supreme Court for the purposes of this study, I used two of Gibson and Caldeira's diffuse support measures¹ (Gibson and Caldeira 2009). The first question addresses whether individuals believe that the U.S. Supreme Court's power should be reduced, while the other addresses whether individuals believe the U.S. Supreme Court should be made less independent. A five-item scale is used to measure respondent's answers. This scale uses 'agree strongly,' 'agree somewhat,' 'neither agree nor disagree,' 'disagree somewhat,' and 'disagree strongly' to gauge respondent's perceptions. As Caldeira and Gibson mention, "diffuse support is opposition to basic structural and functional change" (1992, 639). These two measures of diffuse support allow a reasonable assessment of whether respondents wish to oppose possible changes to the institution and structure of the United States Supreme Court or not. For the purposes of this study, this is captured through an evaluation of a respondent's willingness to reduce the Court's power or make the Court less independent. Together, these actions would result in significant changes to both the functionality of the Court, as well as the inherent structure that is set out within the Constitution.

Governmental Trust

In order to measure governmental trust, I am using the ANES Trust in Government

¹ Gibson and Caldeira's measure reads as follows: "The right of the Supreme Court to decide certain types of controversial issues should be reduced" (2009, 145). The measure used within this study simplifies this question by removing the phrase, 'certain types of controversial issues,' and replacing it with 'certain issues.' This slight alteration in the wording is not significant, as this question still captures the essence of diffuse support, namely the aspect of reducing the U.S. Supreme Court's power.

item used by Miller and Citrin in their research.² It is notable, however, that a couple of scholars have raised concerns over the accuracy of this particular measure (Cook and Gronke 2005). Cook and Gronke convey discontent with this measure because it does not differentiate between individuals that are “skeptical” or individuals that are “deeply cynical” (2005, 786). While this is a legitimate concern, my study seeks to separate this distinction by interacting political betrayal with governmental trust in an attempt to uncover when governmental distrust is measuring individuals who are “deeply cynical” (Cook and Gronke 2005). Therefore, the ANES Trust in Government item is sufficient for the purposes of this study.

Political Grievance and Political Betrayal

[...]

Political grievance seeks to uncover whether individuals feel the government is to blame for their own problems, a question that has largely been unstudied within the discourse, while political betrayal measures a form of alienation. Political alienation measures a feeling of estrangement or separation from the government (Citrin, McClosky, and Sniderman 1975), and a perception of betrayal by the United States government is a reflection of estrangement because betrayal runs deeper than distrust and discontent. It reflects a sentiment that the institution sworn to protect its people has turned its back on them. Therefore, this feeling of desertion likely disillusioned citizens and creates ideological distance between themselves and the government.

[...]

IMPLICATIONS

² The ANES Trust in Government item seeks to look at how often people believe they can trust the federal government. This item is worded as follows: “How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?” Respondents were given the option to indicate “just about always,” “most of the time,” or “only some of the time.”

The results from the preceding analysis not only uncover a few underlying explanations of low levels of diffuse support, this analysis provides insight that is especially valuable to the study of governmental cynicism. With regard to furthering the diffuse support discourse, this study has provided two novel concepts (political grievance and political betrayal) that have the capacity to causally explain instances when diffuse support of the U.S. Supreme Court is reduced. More specifically, those that associate their own problems with the problems in the political system, and those that perceive betrayal on the part of the U.S. government, are more likely to have little support for the institutional legitimacy of the U.S. Supreme Court. As for governmental distrust, the relationship between distrust and diffuse support is not significant; however, governmental distrust is related to diffuse support under the condition of high political betrayal. These three concepts represent varying degrees of governmental cynicism, and while there is likely some commonality among them, these perceptions stem from a few distinct demographic factors.

For the purposes of this study, identifying the possible causal explanations of why a specific demographic of people perceive a certain degree of governmental cynicism is outside the scope of this analysis, yet it is a puzzling finding that necessitates further inquiry. Within this paper, I am most interested in explaining the commonalities between individuals who hold political aggrieved and betrayed feelings, how these are distinct from those that are merely distrustful of government, and ultimately, how this relates to diffuse support of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Income is the one variable that has the capacity to explain levels of both political betrayal and political grievance. Income is significantly related to political grievance, and while the relationship between income and political betrayal does not reach the .05 threshold, it is notably close. Thus, these findings indicate that individuals who are worse off in terms of

yearly household income, are more inclined to attribute their own problems to the problems within the political system, and ultimately, they are more likely to feel alienated. This could likely come from a place of desperation. Living paycheck to paycheck, for example, can be stressful, and it is possible that families with lower incomes feel that the government is not doing enough to advocate for them or provide governmental assistance. Therefore, perceptions of grievance and betrayal from the government can arguably stem from income-related issues. This in turn results in low support for the U.S. Supreme Court as an institution.

Even when controlling for party affiliation, these perceptions, held by lower-income families, are still significant. Thus, the party in power is likely not the cause of these income-related grievances, indicating that the betrayed and aggrieved perceptions people hold are derived from something more than a reaction to the party affiliation of government officials. This does partly explain why levels of diffuse support are reduced when individuals feel politically betrayed and aggrieved because alienation and grievance have implications for the institutional legitimacy and structure of government more broadly. In other words, these feelings are removed from a superficial dislike of the party in power and are likely a reflection of the dissatisfaction with the structure of governmental institutions.

To contrast, a couple of variables that indicate levels of governmental distrust that are distinct from both political betrayal and political grievance are party affiliation and income. These findings not only assist with the understanding of the distinction between the three concepts, but it aid in our understanding of levels of diffuse support. Governmental distrust is not a suitable indicator of diffuse support levels, while political betrayal and grievance are. Since party affiliation, for example, is significantly correlated with governmental distrust, and then in turn, governmental distrust is not significantly related to diffuse support, it can

be argued that this feeling of distrust is superficial in nature, rather than a reflection of alienation. Thus, governmental distrust by itself is a poor indicator of deeply cynical or alienated feelings. Only when interacted with political betrayal did this come closer to predicting levels of diffuse support.

On the other hand, income is not significantly related to governmental distrust, while it is significantly related to political grievance and political betrayal. This may indicate that a basic distrust in government may not be driven by desperation, it is merely a reflection of an individual's party preferences. In reference to the Miller-Citrin debate, it seems my findings are in tension with Miller's understanding of governmental distrust. While distrust can indicate more entrenched cynical feelings when accounting for alienation, as indicated within my analysis, this concept alone is not sufficient for understanding political alienation. Perhaps Citrin was right, and distrust in government is merely "ritualistic" in nature (Citrin 1974, 68).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

It is important to note, however, that while these results are significant, the United States Supreme Court was the only governmental institution used within this study. While it is possible that I am overstating the implications of my results, the U.S. Supreme Court still remains the most popular institution within the United States (Gibson, Caldeira, and Baird 1998). If individuals have lost all support for the institutional legitimacy of the U.S. Supreme Court, it is possible that these feelings are not isolated and targeted at the Court alone. This could also transfer to other governmental institutions, indicating that perceptions of political grievance and betrayal lead to disapproval of the very structure of government. While this argument is liberally constructed, these findings are significant to our understanding of how politically aggrieved and betrayed feelings can lead to a possible

disregard for not only decisions handed down by the Court, but for government altogether. This would unravel the rule of law and threaten the very fabric of our democracy.

These findings shed light on our understanding of diffuse support of the U.S. Supreme Court, yet there are questions that are still unanswered. Further research should look deeper into the causes and consequences of political betrayal and political grievance in order to fully understand why people feel this way, who is more likely to develop these perceptions, and what the possible ramifications of these feelings will be. This would assist in the expansion of the diffuse support literature, the alienation literature, and could very well influence the emerging study of political grievance.

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DISPOSSESSED BY DEVELOPMENT:

STRUGGLE FOR ACCESS, RIGHTS, AND LIVELIHOODS IN PRAIA DO SONO, BRAZIL

Claire Lepercq

The following is an excerpt from a longer piece. For full text, please visit www.honorsjournal.com

INTRODUCTION

[...]

Praia do Sono is a traditional fishing community in the municipality of Paraty, Rio de Janeiro State, Brazil. Praia do Sono, “Sleepy Beach” in Portuguese, has approximately 380 residents or 70 families, and has existed on the beach for six generations. The community can only be accessed via boat or 3km hiking trail. Traditional residents of communities on the southeast Atlantic Forest Coast are known as Caiçaras, an ethnic group traditionally characterized by a strong relationship with the Atlantic Forest and the sea. Historically, Caiçaras were primarily subsistence fishers and farmers, although now their livelihoods are shifting towards tourism and the service sector. Construction of the first highway in the 1960s opened the region to widespread development interests and real estate speculation, against whom Praia do Sono and other Caiçara communities have historically resisted. Some developers, including a gated community of vacation mansions and the descendants of a man who legally “claimed” a piece of land including Praia do Sono, are still in direct conflict with the Praia do Sono community today.

Praia do Sono now falls within two environmentally protected areas, one federally managed and one managed by the state of Rio de Janeiro. The environmental regulations offer protection against real estate speculation by outside developing agents, but they also limit the development interests and forest-based liveli-

hood activities of the community itself. The infrastructure in the Praia do Sono community is neglected by the municipal government of Paraty. Additionally, a growing tourism sector brings in more and more outsiders to Praia do Sono which adds a source of livelihood yet, some claim, has a negative impact on local culture. Furthermore, there are divides within the community over the best method of development, especially across generations.

Using a political ecology lens, this study aims to identify the forces shaping the Praia do Sono Caiçara community’s experience of development, how those forces are experienced by the community, and forms of community resistance and inhibitors to such resistance. I performed ethnographic observation and conducted semi-structured interviews (n = 17) in the Praia do Sono community with multiple visits in 2016 and 2017 to get a deeper understanding of their experiences. During this time, I observed changes in lifestyle between low and high tourism season and changing relationships to antagonists during different times of year.

The two forces that most shape the community’s experience are the growth machine, where the interests of a land-owning elite influence public policy disproportionately to non-elite, and neoliberal conservation policies, where protected areas are created to commodify ecosystems and traditional culture, at the expense of local livelihoods and at the benefit of an outside consumer.

BACKGROUND

Caiçara Identity and Livelihoods

Caiçaras are a traditional ethnic group descended from the intermingling of escaped slaves, 16th century European colonists, and indigenous peoples. They live on the Atlantic Forest Coast of southeast Brazil in the states of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Pará. They have participated in multiple resource boom and bust cycles, notably sugarcane in the late 19th century. However, Caiçaras are most famous for their artisanal fishing and subsistence agriculture "between the mountains and the sea," to which they turned to after the sugarcane bust. Some traditional practices include making canoes and fishing nets by hand and an artisanal method of slash-and-burn agriculture to grow manioc, beans, tropical fruit, and many other products in the fertile Atlantic forest.

Caiçara communities in the region are transitioning to a tourism-based economy. Large-scale development and multinational investment began in the 1960s with the construction of the BR-101 Rio-Santos highway. The new highway facilitated access to the previously remote coastal region and massively increased real estate speculation. Caiçara communities throughout the region have faced immense pressure to leave their traditional lands on the seashores. Praia do Sono is no exception and has had a very strong historical resistance movement against many, at times physically violent, antagonists.

Caiçara communities still practice traditional fishing and agriculture methods and rely heavily on access to the sea. However, today their main economic activity is moving more and more towards tourism due to the picturesque nature of the beaches Caiçaras inhabit, as well as protected area regulations limiting their livelihood rights. Although on paper they have legal protection derived from a 2006 federal law protecting indigenous rights to land and livelihood, in reality it is common in Brazil that the rights of tradi-

tional communities are considered less important than elite development interests and tourism consumers.

Development of the Paraty Coast

In 1974, Rio de Janeiro Governor Carlos Lacerda appropriated a piece of land on the Atlantic Forest Coast of Paraty called Laranjeiras Farm, named for the Caiçara community on the property, Laranjeiras. It was sold to the construction group Brascan and Adela, funded in part by the United States, to build a luxury community of vacation homes called Condomínio Laranjeiras, the first of its kind in Brazil. To construct Condomínio Laranjeiras, it was necessary to remove the Laranjeiras Caiçara village that occupied the coastal space. Brascan and Adela made a deal with the Laranjeiras Caiçara community members to receive a payment of R\$20,000 and a new house built inland.

[...]

On the other side of the ridge one beach over, a man named Gibrael arrived in the Praia do Sono Caiçara community in the late 1970s with promises to help the community invest in social and infrastructure projects. In reality, he tricked illiterate residents to sign over deeds to their land using thumb prints, despite that none of the residents of Praia do Sono possessed formal land title. This new parcel of dubiously acquired land was called Santa Maria Farm. Residents resisted Gibrael, and the conflict violently escalated. The developer set fire to Caiçara houses, and brought loose bulls to destroy property and subsistence vegetable gardens. Residents clandestinely rebuilt houses, replanted agricultural systems, and resisted. According to local accounts, one day Gibrael arrived with armed men and went for a swim in the pristine water. As he exited the water in his speedo, a female resident beat Gibrael with a poisonous branch on his back and

torso until he allegedly defecated himself in pain and never returned in Praia do Sono. Praia do Sono residents supported by leftist student activists lobbied for the creation of a preserve so the Caiçaras could live in peace on their traditional lands. This led to the creation of the Juatinga Ecological Reserve in 1992, against which descendants of Gibrael have pending litigation in Brasilia.

[...]

DISCUSSION

Neoliberal Conservation

Praia do Sono's relationship to neoliberal conservationism is riddled with paradoxes. On one hand, protected area policy serves as a protection against real estate speculation, as it is illegal to buy and sell land within the reserves. However, the protected area policy has also forbidden many traditional livelihood activities. These policies have two opposing effects. On one hand, they push residents to look for other income sources through the tourism industry and buy into the commodification of their community by outside tourists. Yet protected area policy also forces them into a state of neglect by and dependency on the Paraty government, due to the stipulation that they must remain "traditional Caiçaras," to remain inside the protected areas, yet using resources for traditional Caiçara artisanal and subsistence activities is forbidden.

Praia do Sono fits well within the scope of previous literature analyzing the effects of neoliberal conservation policies on local communities, showing a trade-off between environmental conservation, traditional livelihoods, and commodification for the consumption of outside beneficiaries. Praia do Sono's source of livelihood and unique relationship with Atlantic forest ecosystem resources is now a commodity for elite Brazilian and international tourists to consume... Caiçaras of Praia do Sono have traded their wooden canoes for taxi-boats.

[...]

The body of literature suggesting that neoliberal conservation drives or forces livelihood shifts in local communities impacted is strongly at play in Praia do Sono. Traditional subsistence activities using forest resources and slash-and-burn traditional agriculture were outright banned... This also exemplifies the neoliberal discourse that locals are the primary threat to biodiversity conservation (Brockington & Igoe, 2006), despite the fact that this discourse is generally criticized in neoliberal conservation literature, and ethnoecological studies on Caiçara communities in the region also do not support the claim.

Additionally, the Caiçara residents of Praia do Sono and the myth of their traditional culture itself is commodified and used as another tourist attraction and legal requirement for them to stay on their land... This valuation of their traditional identity puts Praia do Sono at the mercy of a paradox of desiring to develop and modernize how they themselves determine, yet being shackled by the requirement to remain "traditional." What defines the Caiçara identity? Government agencies believe it is the relationship between the Caiçaras and the ecosystem through artisanal subsistence activities, yet traditional livelihood activities are all banned or heavily regulated. Residents themselves believe their identity is rooted in the relationship with place, as all respondents put heavy emphasis on being "born [in Praia do Sono]" and having relatives live and die there in the community. The manager of Condominio Laranjeiras who said that "you cannot wear Nikes and be a Caiçara" has bought into Caiçara culture myth and its commodification as a rural escape for tourists and elites to experience and consume when they choose. The municipal government of Paraty, as well, has profited from this narrative by failing to provide basic services to the community, therefore catering to tourists looking to gain the "traditional Caiçara experience" and reconnect with nature on the beach.

Lastly, residents are highly concerned

about the further territorialization of their land on two fronts. One is the recategorization of the protected area. Possible outcomes are that 1) the area could become a park and they could be evicted or forbidden from any future construction, 2) they could gain a collective land title and the reserve would become a Sustainable Development Reserve, or 3) individual land titles granted to each resident, which would speed up the neoliberalization process explained by Igoe and Brockington (2007), that territorialization and real estate values increase when individual land rights exist and enter the market. Residents already sell plots of land under the table, but interviewees were horrified by the idea of the legalization, since collective land rights protect against real estate speculation, especially by Condomínio Laranjeiras, who want to acquire their land, according to some residents and circumstantial evidence in the area.

The literature addressing resistance to neoliberal conservationism frequently addresses policy itself, but this is very difficult in the Praia do Sono community, which has limited social capital due to operation of growth machine dynamics favoring interests of elite Condomínio Laranjeiras and middle-class tourists over traditional and indigenous people.

Growth Machine

Growth machine dynamics are in the initial stages in Praia do Sono, as it is currently illegal to purchase land in the community, and construction development is highly regulated by the environmental bodies. However, the political aspects of the growth machine, where local government caters to the interests of the land-owning elite, appear to be in full force. However, the expansion of the tourism industry in Praia do Sono contradicts the growth machine because elites and city government are not in favor of its expansion.

Since a full multi-actor ethnography was not possible within the scope of this study, it is impossible to thor-

oughly analyze any actors, other than the Praia do Sono residents, with the data collected. However, residents of Praia do Sono offered interpretations of the actions of the municipal government and Condomínio Laranjeiras. The most innocuous interpretation is that Condomínio Laranjeiras just wants peace, quiet, and security for their elite residents, and part of that safety includes limiting access of people, tourists, and loud trucks with construction materials. Along those lines, residents in this category believe the environmental agencies are truly trying to protect the extremely endangered Atlantic Forest from further destruction. These theories would not follow the growth machine.

However, more cynical residents shared that they believe Condomínio Laranjeiras owners want to expand and acquire Praia do Sono, and that they have influence over environmental agencies and municipal policymaking to achieve these goals. Support for this theory is the newly enacted tourism restriction specifically targeting Praia do Sono and no other Caiçara communities on the peninsula. Additionally, residents speculate that the political and financial power exhibited by Condomínio Laranjeiras owners influences environmental policy.

[...]

Resistance tactics

As they have done historically, Praia do Sono's biggest strength is individual resilience and resistance. One community-based initiative that seems to offer promise is further education for tourists on Caiçara culture by having a Praia do Sono Caiçara museum of some sort in the community. This would be a good solution for keeping alive the Caiçara identity and taking back agency over their own narrative, and be a benefit in the legal paradox inflicted by the current environmental policies. However, this would also further commodify their culture and buy further into the neoliberal system.

Another solution is to keep pushing for the "Sustainable Development Reserve"

categorization which would allow more livelihood choice and allow community members to return to forest-based livelihoods if they choose. This would also remove the paradox of "traditional" but economically restricted, potentially leading to higher incomes and improved infrastructure in Praia do Sono.

Caiçaras show resistance to these forces by not selling their land and fighting for the recategorization to occur in their favor. They are split over whether they favor the construction of a road or not, as construction would open their community for easier access and more economic development, as well as more opportunities for self-determination and education. Residents believe this would be a double-edged sword. They could develop themselves without having to cross through Laranjeiras but they fear the influx of tourists, increase in real estate prices, and further commodification of their community. This would be an extremely interesting developing situation to monitor through future study.

Lastly, residents resist by physically staying in Praia do Sono and demanding their human rights from outside actors. They creatively continue their own tourism industry, despite legal barriers. The boat drivers subverting the tourism restriction over New Year's exemplifies direct resistance to elite-driven growth machine. Individual leaders in Praia do Sono need to continue to step up and to gain public sympathy and allies in Brazilian and international society higher on power structures to pressure governments to take Caiçara interests into account. Inspiringly, when asked if they would ever consider leaving the community, 100% of respondents answered with a resounding "no."

[...]

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