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- SOUTHCOM Reconnaissance Systems Program
- Putin's Petroleum Paradise
- Iran and UAE in Yemen
- Space Power and U.S. Influence in Space
- Book Review of *The Rise and Fall of Peace on Earth*



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COVER PHOTO

An Atlas V rocket carrying the Space Based Infrared System GEO Flight 4 satellite lifts off from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Fla., Jan. 19, 2018. The SBIRS program delivers timely, reliable and accurate missile-warning and infrared surveillance information to the president, the secretary of defense, combatant commanders, the intelligence community and other key decision makers.

U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Dalton Williams.

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EDITORS' NOTE

Policy work inherently requires us to make rational value judgements, based on facts and evidence. The cherished exchange of ideas between private, non-profit, and governmental organizations — ever evident in Washington, D.C. — suggests that policymakers are heavily influenced by the discourse and publications presented as objective research and analysis. Often, it is anything but. Policy commentary and solutions are frequently limited by our subjective understanding of reality. Despite best intentions, news headlines and our own selective knowledge can shape conversations towards dangerous ends.

At *International Affairs Review*, we don't claim that our editors and writers — masters students just starting their careers — have overcome their biases and subjectivity. These challenges are ingrained in our culture and environment. Rather, we recognize our own limitations and do our best to examine and correct for them. We strive to understand biases, scrutinize headlines, and look past labels in order to formulate effective local, national, and international solutions. We encourage you — the reader — to consider these factors as you read through the journal. Our goal is to contribute positively to policy debates on the topics discussed. As such, we hope you find our analysis detailed, insightful, thought-provoking, and fair.

We sincerely thank our faculty advisors and the Elliott School of International Affairs for their continued support. This issue would not have been possible without the excellent work of our contributing writers and the tireless efforts of our editorial staff. Special acknowledgments are also due to Rebecca Giovannozzi, Zachary Abbott, and Jesse Ramsdell, who went above and beyond their official responsibilities throughout the editing process.

Hatim Bukhari, *Editor-In-Chief*
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The SOUTHCOM Reconnaissance Systems Program in Colombia

Tessa McLinden

Tessa McLinden is pursuing a M.A. in Security Policy Studies at the Elliott School of International Affairs, concentrating in Transnational Security and Conflict Resolution. Regionally focused in Latin America, Tessa spent the summer of 2018 working with the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies/Caritas Colombia in Bogotá tracking, analyzing, and verifying the implementation of the Colombian Peace Agreement between the Colombian Government and the FARC. She currently works as a research assistant for the Inclusive Peace Processes team and supports the Colombia team at the United States Institute of Peace.

ABSTRACT

For decades, Colombia has remained the strongest and most consistent military ally of the United States in Latin America. As the threat emanating from Colombia transformed from a communist red tide to a criminalized white powder, Colombia's geographical advantages and internal conflict positioned the Andean country to become America's primary supplier of cocaine. Seeking to choke off the drug trade at its source and recognizing the utility of private military contractors (PMCs), various U.S. agencies turned to the private sector to carry out counternarcotics and counterinsurgency operations funded through an initiative named Plan Colombia--the United States' military, diplomatic, and aid program combating Colombian narco trafficking and insurgent groups. One such 2002 contract resulted in the SOUTHCOM Reconnaissance Systems (SRS) program. Although the SRS program achieved some short-term success, the overall mission was ineffective due to technical deficiencies, mission creep, a dangerous hostage situation, and subsequent critical media coverage. A microcosm of the regulatory, oversight, and risks involved with the use of PMCs in implementing Plan Colombia, the SRS program is an interesting case for critics of U.S. reliance on PMCs and interventionism in Latin America.

INTRODUCTION

Colombia has remained the strongest and most consistent military ally of the United States in Latin America. Motivated by its preoccupation with purging the Western Hemisphere of the red threat of communism, the United States first began providing military assistance to Colombia in the 1950s. By the time the Reagan Administration declared its “War on Drugs” in the early 1980s, the threat emanating from Colombia had transformed from that of a red tide to white powder. As demand for cocaine skyrocketed in the United States, Colombia’s geographical advantage and internal civil conflict led it to become the primary supplier. Seeking to choke off the drug trade at its source, U.S. policymakers turned to the private sector to carry out counter-narcotics operations outlined by an initiative dubbed Plan Colombia. Introduced under President Clinton, Plan Colombia used security aid, military, and diplomatic measures to combat the illicit drug industry that had fallen under the control of left-wing guerrilla groups. Recognizing the utility of private military contractors (PMCs), various U.S. agencies contracted out a majority of the counternarcotics and counterinsurgency operations to contractors working for private military firms. One such 2002 contract resulted in the creation of the Southern Command Reconnaissance Systems (SOUTHCOM SRS) program.

This article examines the intent, execution, and outcome of the contract that authorized the SRS program in Colombia. It begins with a description of the historical political and military relationship between the United States and Colombia and then proceeds to provide an overview of American PMCs’ operations in Colombia. It then moves on to critically assess the work, execution, and implications of the SRS program, arguing that it serves as a useful case study for critics of U.S. reliance on PMCs and interventionism in Latin America. The analysis concludes that the SRS program achieved some short-term tactical success, but its ramifications rendered the overall mission ineffective. Based on this conclusion, the final section of the paper recommends a reassessment of current U.S. strategy. The reassessment must include a pivot away from the ineffective PMC dominated drug policy and towards treating the drug problem as a public health issue, while improving PMC regulations to ensure that military contracting as seen in Plan Colombia does not harm broader U.S. strategic interests in the region.

BACKGROUND

Incited by the commencement of the Cuban Revolution in 1953, fear of communism pervaded U.S. policy toward Latin America. As the *Fidelista* movement grew, Colombia found itself in the throes of *La Violencia*--a period marked by widespread terror and systematic political violence. This tumultuous

time precipitated Colombia's communist-leaning insurgent movements.¹ At the request of Colombian President Alberto Lleras Camargo, an American survey team of CIA and military personnel was sent to Colombia in 1959 to study the "terrorist problem" and offer recommendations.² At the behest of the United States, Colombia initiated an internal defense plan, *Plan Lazo*, which deployed intelligence groups and mercenary teams to destroy communist insurgent enclaves.³ A group of guerrillas who survived these attacks, including Manuel Marulanda, went on to found Colombia's largest, deadliest, and wealthiest guerrilla armies— *Las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC).⁴ Lleras Camargo's invitation represents one of many initial binding ties to the United States, as well as the establishment and structure of Colombia's modern internal security state—a security state credited for making Colombia the "showpiece for U.S. internal security policy in Latin America."⁵

Over the next two decades, the survival of the guerrilla movement in Colombia drove continued U.S.-Colombian military cooperation. However, Colombia became less of a strategic priority when the Carter Administration's focus pivoted to Nicaragua and Guatemala, in order to combat the growing strength of other regional guerrilla movements. Meanwhile in Colombia, other rebel groups formed and grew alongside the FARC, including the National Liberation Army (ELN), the People's Liberation Army (EPL), and the April 19th Movement (M-19.) Local self-defense groups were established under the ostensible claim of countering the rebels, many of which transformed into right-wing paramilitary groups. Concurrently, trade in marijuana and cocaine began to flourish with the founding of the notorious Medellín drug cartel in 1976 and Cali drug cartel in 1977. ⁶ Although some left-wing groups, such as FARC and ELN, initially eschewed narco-trafficking as a means for financing their activities, by the early 1980s, guerrillas and paramilitaries had joined the cartels in exploiting this lucrative enterprise. The groups fortified their control over various drug trafficking routes and regions by taking advantage of maritime access and the land bridge through Panama.

As drug trafficking spread throughout the region, the fervor surrounding the "War on Drugs" reached a fever pitch in the United States. With cocaine demand at an all-time high, a 1985 legislative bill passed by the U.S. Congress earmarked \$200 million worth of aid for the Andean region via drug crop eradication efforts.⁷ Years later, in 1993, U.S. intelligence agents helped Colombian Special Forces murder narco-kingpin Pablo Escobar. Although the powerful cartels had begun to fall, factions of rebels, paramilitaries, and criminals filled the power vacuum left by the cartels, and thereafter controlled much of the drug trade. By 1999, FARC ranks had swelled to 18,000 combatants, controlling 42,000 square miles of land in central-southern Colombia.⁸ Colombia's cocaine production and cocoa cultivation reached its peak in 2000 at 700 metric tons of powder and 160,000

hectares of coca plants respectively--a demoralizing fact given ongoing counternarcotics efforts.⁹ As cocaine flows to the United States increased--90 percent of which claimed Colombian origin--the Clinton Administration's initiation of Plan Colombia increased funding nearly threefold from the 1985 bill to \$765 million in 2000.¹⁰

U.S. influence over Colombia's military and internal security was highlighted in the initial stages of Plan Colombia. Publicly, military components were downplayed in comparison to the coca crop eradication and fumigation plan. However, 70 percent of the total aid package went to military operations--the rationale being that ending the flow of drug imports was directly related to successfully exterminating guerrilla movements.¹¹ Responsible for counternarcotics operations abroad, the State Department supplied the Colombian military with weapons, training, and equipment to fight the guerrillas through contracts with American PMCs.¹² The strategic use of PMCs was relatively novel in U.S. foreign policy. Adam Isacson--then Director of the Center for International Policy--observed that "the drug war in general, but Colombia in particular, was the testing ground for the use of military contractors."¹³ For decades afterward, the United States has tethered itself to the funding, training, and organization of Colombia's internal security apparatus, a role it has yet to extricate itself from.

PMCS AND PLAN COLOMBIA

The downsizing of militaries post-Cold War, the political palatability of employing contractors, and the economic utility of contracting led to the mass expansion of the private security sector during the 1990s and U.S. reliance on such services. Heavy PMC-use throughout Plan Colombia represented the newest iteration of U.S. interventionism in Latin America. Through a \$99 million contract with the State Department in 1991, DynCorp became the first and largest PMC working in Colombia.¹⁴ Subsequently, a \$170 million contract renewal authorized DynCorp to work on anti-drug projects composed of eradication missions.¹⁵ An additional contractor, L-3 Military Professional Resources Inc. (MPRI), worked with the Colombian Army and National Police on the ground and engaged with FARC rebels in direct combat. However, the L-3 MPRI "force modernization" contract was not renewed in 2001, likely because of the "poor results in engaging the FARC."¹⁶ Another contractor, Northrop Grumman, began its work in Colombia in 1998 by operating the *Counternarcotics Surveillance and Control System*, which monitored cocaine distribution routes and traffic patterns.¹⁷ The crop eradication and intelligence-gathering operations were incredibly dangerous, and between 1998 and 2003, the FARC shot down 21 U.S.-titled aircraft involved in operations of Lockheed Martin, DynCorp, Northrop

Grumman, and other contractors.¹⁸ Part of President Clinton's "Air Bridge Strategy," a law passed in 1994, exempted U.S. government officials and employees from liability for mistakes made while cooperating with another country's shoot-down policy.¹⁹ This exemption was one of the many examples of the United States granting PMCs controversial latitude in carrying out operations in Colombia.

Nonetheless, the United States defended its preference for PMC use in the context of Plan Colombia through economic, military, and political justifications. Not only did PMCs provide well-trained contractors, they were also cost-effective and politically more popular than direct military intervention. However, their involvement in the Colombian context has been criticized heavily for lack of effective control, oversight, and accountability for their dangerous activities, resulting in embarrassing mishaps and overall mission failures. The exact number of PMCs and personnel employed during Plan Colombia is unknown due to limited records. Though the Vigilance and Private Security Superintendence (VPSS), a Colombian governmental superintendence, was meant to monitor private military security companies (PMSCs,) many companies were not registered with the organization.²⁰ Furthermore, because PMCs were not regulated or limited by a legal and judicial system, the likelihood of civil, labor, and penal incidents was high. For example, a 2003 bilateral immunity agreement between the United States and Colombia extended immunity to PMC contractors working in Colombia, limiting the ability of victims to seek redress outside of Colombia.²¹ In 2004, contractors from the Tolimaida base recorded a pornographic movie with minors and in 2007, an American contractor from the same base was accused of raping a 12-year-old girl.²² Both cases are still unresolved as the Colombian judicial system cannot make an extradition request, nor can it summon the defendants. Similarly, in 2001, evidence emerged of heroin, cocaine, and amphetamine use and smuggling by DynCorp employees, but was never acknowledged by U.S. or Colombian authorities.²³ The United States can withhold information on these cases on the grounds of national security, and PMCs themselves can plead corporate confidentiality to obscure activities.

Despite the building controversy around American PMCs in Colombia in the early 2000s, the fight against guerrilla strongholds ratcheted up. Under Colombian President Álvaro Uribe's hardline, large-scale "Plan Patriota" offensive in 2003, demand for U.S. personnel increased. Consequently, the existing 400 personnel cap on American PMCs was increased to 800 military personnel and 600 civilian contractors.²⁴ PMCs were able to get around the cap limits by hiring non-U.S. citizens, who did not count towards the civilian cap limit.²⁵

Kendall Bianchi, a researcher at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, has characterized the U.S. government's practice of private military contracting as a "risk-transfer mechanism" that makes U.S. interventionism more palatable for the general public by using contractors instead of American soldiers.²⁶ However, Bianchi argues this transfer ends up incurring more risk by generating moral hazard, due to a reduction in the government's ability to oversee risk levels in implementation of U.S. policy, and the existence of profit incentives that compromise personnel safety. The following evaluation demonstrates how the SRS program--with the decision to employ PMCs during Plan Colombia--serves as a microcosm for the regulatory, oversight, and other risks that Bianchi describes.

THE SOUTHCOM SRS PROGRAM: A CASE STUDY

Kick-started in 1998, the SRS program was the Defense Department's "cost-effective" aerial surveillance program in Colombia.²⁷ The program was first contracted to Lockheed Martin and then subcontracted to Northrop Grumman, before being subcontracted a third time to a Grumman subsidiary, California Microwave Systems (CMS).²⁸ Since Northrop's aircrafts were less expensive and air-based operations required fewer men, the company was able to 'low-ball' the bid. The United States awarded Northrop a contract for \$8.6 million in FY 2002.²⁹ The mandate of the program was to fly intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) missions over the Colombian jungle to identify drug production areas and trafficking routes of guerrilla groups--specifically the FARC.³⁰ The air interdiction flights were used to identify and photograph cocaine laboratories and trafficking routes so that drug infrastructure could be destroyed.³¹ Yet, the dual-purpose mission of countering narcotics and political insurgents, combined with technical failings, mission creep, a dangerous hostage situation, and subsequent critical media coverage, characterized the major challenges of the program.

TECHNICAL INADEQUACY

The SRS program suffered an array of technical difficulties under CMS. The aircrafts used in these intelligence-gathering operations were two single-engine Cessna 208 Grand Caravans.³² As they patrolled, forward looking infrared (FLIR) identified heat, which given off by human bodies and microwave ovens served as indicators of a drug lab or an insurgent hide-out.³³ The data gathered was relayed back to the U.S. embassy in Bogotá, and Colombian ground forces would destroy the labs and "track the rebels."³⁴ Though the strategy to identify and dismantle these routes and sites was clear, the tactical elements involved were problematic. The Cessnas ran on a turbine engine that barely had enough

power to fly over the high altitudes of the Andes, and the protocol was for the aircraft to take off with half-full tanks, because they could not climb over the mountains with the weight of a full tank.³⁵ Despite being “packed with weapons, radios, cameras, and other equipment, the flights were given special exemption from the Federal Aviation Administration to fly five hundred pounds overweight”.³⁶ Considering Colombia was a “war zone” at the time, flying “any-single engine airplane by itself over the jungle [was] dangerous. [And flying] any single-airplane over the jungle where they’re shooting at you [was] extremely dangerous.”³⁷

Northrop Grumman surveillance pilots Paul Hooper and Douglas Cokes were critical of the company’s choice to use the unsatisfactory aircraft. In a 2002 letter to CMS, the men warned the choice would “invite a catastrophic aviation mishap and potential corporate liability in the event of engine failure,” and that “these actions demonstrate a failure in management and leadership.”³⁸ The pilots recommended the company to switch to a dual-engine plane. However, CMS liked to “run things on the cheap” (with some employees calling the surveillance program “Econ-Recon”) and the update would have cost millions of dollars.³⁹ Cokes and Hooper were given written reprimands “for their ‘negative attitude and divisive tendencies,’” and ended up resigning a few months later.⁴⁰ In 2001, the Cessna suffered engine failure over the ocean outside of Cartagena.⁴¹ However, because the pilot was skilled enough to fly the aircraft to safety, the engine was merely replaced, and the plane continued to be used by the CMS contractors for operations.⁴²

MISSION CREEP

While technical concerns were highlighting the dangerous situation, the SRS program also began falling victim to mission creep. Following tactical successes in mission performance, the mission’s “payload, distance, and location” were increased and “stretched,” and limits on mountain and night flying went ignored.⁴³ Furthermore, the attitude of the pilots contracted by CMS greatly contributed to the mission creep. Pressure on pilots to deliver results was constant because of the CMS practice of obfuscating contract lengths.⁴⁴ Many pilots bringing home a paycheck of \$150,000 a year were enthusiastic about conducting night missions, and worried that a more aggressive company could steal the CMS contract if they underperformed.⁴⁵

HOSTAGE SITUATIONS

The combined dangers of deficient aircrafts and mission creep came to a head on February 13, 2003. Due to engine failure, the Cessna Grand Caravan carrying four American contractors and one Colombian operative crashed in

the jungles of Caquetá--a zone in Colombia dominated by FARC.⁴⁶ Swarmed by rebels after the crash, American contractors Keith Stansell, Marc Gonsalves, and Thomas Howes were taken hostage in the jungle.⁴⁷ American pilot “[Tom] Janis and Colombian intelligence operative Sgt. Luis Alcides Cruz were immediately shot by the female guerilla -- known as *La Pilosa* -- who had spotted the Cessna and received permission from the FARC commander to take it down.⁴⁸

The hostage situation surrounding the three American contractors was a complex and dramatic ordeal. These hostage takings were especially difficult situations because the U.S. military did not have direct responsibility to rescue contractors working under the purview of the State Department-led Plan Colombia.⁴⁹ In addition, the contractors’ status as non-military personnel meant that they were not protected under the Geneva Conventions.⁵⁰ However, Colombia was so notorious for its kidnappings during this time that there was an established protocol to foreign captures. Northrop Grumman hired Control Risks Group, a security company, to establish contact with the kidnappers and to provide operational guidance.⁵¹ Despite a State Department policy prohibiting concessions to kidnappers, an FBI negotiator partnered with the company to negotiate hostage releases.⁵²

The negotiations process itself was fraught with difficulties. Because of the war-like setting, it was likely that FARC leaders viewed the contractors as mercenaries fighting alongside the hardline administration of Colombian president Álvaro Uribe. They demanded the release of FARC prisoners and a demilitarized zone from the Colombian government in exchange for hostages, which included the American contractors, Colombian state legislators and a Colombian presidential candidate.⁵³ While such high political concessions had worked for the rebels with previous Colombian president Andrés Pastrana, they had disastrous results for the government.⁵⁴ President Uribe refused to make any such concessions, resulting in “1,967 days in captivity” for the three Americans.⁵⁵ The hostage negotiations suffered breakdown after breakdown--even involving Venezuelan dictator Hugo Chávez at one point--before the men were finally rescued five years after their crash in an operation dubbed Operation Jaque.⁵⁶

PUBLIC MEDIA COVERAGE

During and shortly after the hostage-taking situation, the public media coverage was disastrous for Northrop Grumman and their CMS subsidiary. The immediate U.S. response was to ensure as little as possible was reported on the situation, given that large media coverage could have enhanced the value of the hostages.⁵⁷ It is also believed that the United States wanted to avoid drawing attention to the classified programs, in order to skirt any criticism of its

activities in Colombia.⁵⁸ As Adam Isacson notes, “Obviously it’s embarrassing to the U.S. because [the kidnapping] causes people to ask questions about the policy being carried out in Colombia and the role of contractors in general.”⁵⁹ Former U.S. Ambassador to Colombia, Myles Frechette, even claimed, “It’s very handy to have an outfit not part of U.S. forces.... Nobody wants to see American military men killed.”⁶⁰ At first, there was success in turning the hostage crisis “into a non-story,” as the crash had occurred five weeks before the high-profile launch of operation Iraqi Freedom. With the media focused on Iraq, the State Department advised families of the hostages to stay quiet and placed a gag order on the case, effectively keeping the story under wraps.⁶¹ Recognizing the PR nightmare, Northrop Grumman dissolved the CMS subsidiary and rebranded as CIAO, Inc. The name, however, proved a poor choice, as the use of the letters CIA led the FARC captors to assume the contractors were CIA.⁶²

The dissolution of the subsidiary incensed the hostages’ families and after months of poor communication from both Northrop and the State Department, Marc Gonsalves’ mother felt pushed to make the information public.⁶³ The initial story in the Hartford Courier led to a flood of other articles and news coverage, especially after a proof-of-life video surfaced.⁶⁴ The entire operation was cast in a negative light, with much criticism coming from Congress. Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) introduced a bill that would have prohibited the use of civilian contractors in the Andean region, arguing that outsourcing counter narcotics assistance “shrouds in secrecy very sensitive activities in the Andean region that may be pulling the U.S. into violence.”⁶⁵ Representative Bill Delahunt (D-MA) claimed that contract work in Colombia lacked sufficient transparency to ensure accountability.⁶⁶ After an additional three Northrop Grumman employees were killed in a plane crash while on a rescue mission searching for the kidnapped men, a lawsuit against the Department of Defense and Northrop Grumman was filed in a Georgia district court.⁶⁷ The complaint claimed that “the United States ‘privatizes’ dangerous missions, thereby placing contractors directly on the front lines of the drug war for no reason other than to save a few dollars.”⁶⁸ The lawsuit and the media coverage, which prompted further congressional criticism, destroyed any credibility or achievements of the SRS program.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The SRS program was a dangerous combination of U.S. intervention in Latin America and the use of PMCs writ large. Taken together, the program’s ill-equipped aircrafts, its disregard for flying restrictions, the government’s lack of awareness of many of the activities taking place, and the profit motives of the pilots illustrate the consequences of using PMCs as a risk-transfer mechanism. The degree of separation between contractors, sub-contractors, and subsidiaries

passed the buck of accountability without a clear chain of operational or investigative command. Furthermore, the Northrop Grumman-CMS-CIAO matryoshka exemplified the trend of major corporations buying small military companies without providing oversight.⁶⁹ With two crashed planes, hostage-taking of three contractors, and four American deaths, the outcomes of the SRS program support the claim of Victoria Bruce—the author of *Hostage Nation: Colombia's Guerrilla Army and the Failed War on Drugs* – that, “the outsourcing of the war on drugs in Colombia was designed to protect the United States from liability should anything go awry.”⁷⁰

To accurately evaluate the SRS program's effectiveness in a strictly transactional manner, it is essential to discern if the objectives of the program were achieved. In the short-term, the tactical achievements of identifying cocaine laboratories, trafficking routes, and guerrilla movements cannot be denied. Between 2001 and 2004, coca cultivation and cocaine production declined consistently, and the FARC's numbers decreased dramatically.⁷¹ However, looking at the long-term picture, identifiable success of the program remains ambiguous. The decline in cocaine production and the depletion of the FARC ranks may have had less to do with the contracted programs and more to do with the hardline military approach of President Uribe, which involved countless human rights violations.⁷² Further highlighting the inefficiency of the U.S. program, cocaine production in Colombia peaked again in 2007 and in 2016.⁷³ Additionally, even with the signing of a peace deal with the FARC in 2016, other dangerous armed groups, such as the ELN and criminal gangs known as *bandas criminales (bacrim)*, are usurping FARC-vacated territory, mirroring events following the fall of the drug cartels in the 1990s.

Although U.S. assistance contributed to the gradual stabilization of the country, it was much less effective in stemming the flow of narcotics. In 2017, the availability of cocaine in the United States was on the rise for the first time in almost a decade.⁷⁴ Unsurprisingly, Colombia continues to supply almost all the cocaine reaching American markets.⁷⁵ Nonetheless, the United States is persistent in continuing to battle the seemingly unwinnable war on drugs. After spending \$10 billion over 15 years on Plan Colombia and despite President Trump's threat to decertify Colombia as a partner in the war on drugs⁷⁶, the United States transitioned to a new aid package called Peace Colombia.⁷⁷ The aid package provided \$391 million to Colombia in 2018, \$143 million of which was earmarked for international narcotics control and \$38.5 million for foreign military financing.⁷⁸ However, for such aid to have a positive and sustainable impact, the United States also needs to address the failures of past policy.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The illicit cocaine trade will certainly continue to be the center of gravity for the security relationship between Colombia and the United States. Given that the anti-drug strategies implemented under Plan Colombia were ineffective and costly, the United States must seek a new approach. Policies must focus on an effective strategy that prioritizes stability in the region and continued U.S. commitment to the precarious Colombian peace process, especially considering the spillover effects of the current crisis in neighboring Venezuela.

While more resources and attention have shifted to Venezuela, it is especially important to not waste time or funding on tactics that do not have a history of success. Introduction of new tactics gained priority in 2015, when aerial eradication was banned in Colombia for fear of health effects caused by the chemicals used in past operations.⁷⁹ While the ban eroded later, it signaled that Colombia was pivoting its focus away from coca eradication and toward treating the cocaine problem as a public health issue. The United States should follow suit. Nearly 20 years of eradication efforts have not resulted in a net decrease in cocaine production or trade. This is compounded by the fact that, over this period, the number of American cocaine users has increased, with 90 percent of their supplies originating from Colombia.⁸⁰ Treating the demand side of the cocaine trade by framing it in a purely criminal or militarized context has had negligible success. Thus, policy should shift to focus on public health solutions.

American PMCs will continue to work in the Andean region for the immediate future and a robust regulatory framework for PMC use must be established. Adam Isacson has noted that Peace Colombia is still heavily focused on military aid and is not radically different than its predecessor.⁸¹ For example, as part of Plan Colombia, \$3.4 billion were spent on private contractors and military companies by the United States.⁸² The U.S. Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration predicts that there will be a requirement for training, parts, and maintenance of older aircraft used during Plan Colombia.⁸³ For effective and judicious use of taxpayer money, comprehensive and accountable regulation of American PMC use must be established and clarified by the government agencies which utilize them. This regulation must come from Congress or be taken on by the individual agencies themselves. Regardless of the entity that takes on this role, regulations must examine the legal, moral, and political aspects of using PMCs internationally, and the dangers they pose without strict oversight.

As United States' ceaseless war on drugs in Colombia continues, PMC use will oftentimes be a favored option of policymakers for coca crop eradication (aerially, manually, or by drone) or combating armed groups (guerrillas, cartels, or *bacrim*). However, as evidenced by the SRS program in 2002, the profit-

driven nature of PMCs can create complications in an environment with few restrictions, inadequate consequences for violations, and little accountability. As government procurement expert Steve Schooner has pointed out, “It’s easy to blame the contractor... but the government is the one paying.”⁸⁴ Therefore, PMC accountability and regulation will have to follow the money back to its source, and originate in effective U.S. legislation.

ENDNOTES

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Putin's Petroleum Paradise

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ABSTRACT

In Latin America, Russia has allied with authoritarian regimes and expanded its influence to counter the United States – a strategy that is evident in Venezuela. While policymakers have focused on China's economic expansion in Venezuela, Russia's use of energy diplomacy in Venezuela has garnered less attention. Russian leadership capitalized on Venezuela's economic vulnerability to gain access to its oil reserves (which are the largest in the world), while gaining a strategic base close to the U.S. and transforming Venezuela into a satellite state for Russian hybrid warfare. Russia's energy investments in Venezuela have political, economic, diplomatic, and military ramifications that will directly impact U.S. foreign policy for years to come.

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, Russia has expanded its presence in the Venezuelan energy industry as part of a larger strategy to counter U.S. influence in the Southern Cone. President Vladimir Putin has used “energy diplomacy” to build strong ties with the Nicolás Maduro regime, while simultaneously making it more dependent on Russian financing. Russia continues to stand by the fundamental belief that energy diplomacy is a key factor in strengthening bilateral and multilateral relations on the global stage. The recent political crisis in Venezuela threatens Russia's investment in and control over Venezuelan energy projects. This article will examine the political, economic, diplomatic, and military strategies Russia has employed to facilitate its expansion into Venezuela's

energy industry. Russia's multifaceted energy expansion strategy in Venezuela underscores a larger effort to undermine U.S. policy in Latin America.

RUSSIA'S QUEST FOR PROFITS

Venezuela is home to the world's largest proven oil reserves and is ranked as having the ninth largest proven natural gas reserves.¹ The Venezuelan economy is heavily dependent on oil exports, which account for ninety-five percent of the country's total export revenue.² The international plunge in oil prices, in combination with U.S. sanctions, have caused President Maduro to seek financial assistance from creditors like Russia and China.

Russia has exploited Venezuela's economic vulnerability to gain access to its prized heavy crude oil reserves in the Orinoco Belt and in Lake Maracaibo. International sanctions against Russia's ability to access financing and technology from international markets forced it to explore international energy projects to avoid a reduction in its production capabilities.³ Venezuela was an ideal partner through which to expand Russian influence in international energy markets, due to the country's economic vulnerability, large oil reserves, and history of anti-U.S. rhetoric. As seen in the case of BP, Chevron, and ExxonMobil, smart investments can lead to billions of dollars in profits when oil prices increase.⁴

President Putin and his allies continue to prop up the Maduro regime to ensure that the Venezuelan government does not default on Russia's billion-dollar investments. In 2017, Russia restructured \$3 billion dollars of Venezuela's outstanding debt, to be paid over a ten-year period.⁵ Over the past four years, Russia has also provided Venezuela with more than \$10 billion dollars in financial assistance, designed to be repaid in the form of oil exports.⁶

For Putin, the Venezuelan oil market presents significant "potential for profitability," as it offers the opportunity to gain access to the largest oil reserves in the world as well as increase Russia's control over oil that is exported to the United States and other countries in Latin America.⁷

IGOR SECHIN AND ROSNEFT'S EXPANSION IN VENEZUELA

Natural gas and oil revenues account for one-third of Russia's federal budget, meaning that the Russian economy is heavily dependent on steady and profitable energy production, and dynamic energy companies.⁸ Rosneft, Russia's state-owned energy company, is one of the world's largest publicly traded oil companies.⁹ In 2016, Rosneft was responsible for six percent of the world's crude oil output, which was valued at \$65 billion in revenue. Of this, \$53 billion was transferred to the Russian state that same year, which indicates

the economic importance of the company to the Kremlin.¹⁰

Russian energy companies are dominated by politics, self-interest, and oligarchs close to the Kremlin. Igor Sechin, CEO of Rosneft, is a longtime ally of Vladimir Putin and served as the deputy minister for energy during Putin's tenure as prime minister.¹¹ The influence that Sechin holds in conjunction with his relationship to Putin have led many to believe that he is the second most powerful man in Russia and setting the stage for a presidential run in 2023.¹² Sechin took advantage of the exodus of Western and Russian companies from Venezuela to achieve his goal of turning Rosneft into the next oil supermajor, like BP or ExxonMobil.¹³ Under his leadership, Rosneft has expanded presence on the international stage, increased competition with other energy companies, and become a political instrument for Sechin to challenge traditional energy politics in Russia.

Despite the highly competitive and political environment, in 2008, five Russian energy companies – Gazprom, Rosneft, Lukoil, TNK-BP, and Surgutneftegaz – formed a National Energy Consortium to consolidate their interests and begin exploring Venezuelan fields.¹⁴ By 2013, Venezuela's oil minister stated that Rosneft and others Russian oil producers planned to invest \$17 billion in Venezuela to quadruple their combined output.¹⁵ The 2014 western sanctions that threatened Russia's domestic production capabilities¹⁶ made Sechin more aggressive in undermining Russian competitors and expanding Rosneft's projects to Asia, the Middle East, and most importantly, Venezuela.

Venezuela's economic troubles gave Sechin the leverage he needed to negotiate oil deals at low prices, thus expanding Rosneft's presence into a market dominated by U.S. companies. In 2016, PDVSA, Venezuela's cash strapped state oil company, put up a forty-nine percent stake of the U.S.-based company Citgo as collateral in exchange for a loan from Rosneft.¹⁷ The deal gave Rosneft direct access to U.S.-based oil refineries and gas stations, which could hypothetically be seized as collateral were Venezuela to default on the loan. In 2017, Rosneft negotiated a contract for gas field exploration over a period of thirty years, with the company maintaining the right to sell and export all of the production.¹⁸ Rosneft's expansion into natural gas projects was a direct challenge to the traditional energy order in Russia, where Rosneft focused solely on oil and Gazprom dominated the gas industry.¹⁹

To this day, Sechin continues to take advantage of Venezuela's vulnerability with the hope of bringing the Western Hemisphere's largest oil reserves under Russian control. Expansion into Venezuela is part of Rosneft's strategy to meet its 2022 goal of annually producing thirty million tons of oil equivalent.²⁰ Also, Rosneft's operations in Venezuela helped ensure that the company's image as an international player in energy markets is solidified.

Sechin also seeks to ensure that Venezuela follows through on its

production commitments to Russia. This is highly challenging because of Venezuela's lack of investment in its oil infrastructure, the current economic crisis, and widespread corruption in PDVSA.²¹ Yet, such risky investments have proven necessary due to Russia's over-reliance on hydrocarbon revenue to fund its budget.²²

However, Rosneft's continued presence in Venezuela's crumbling energy industry demonstrates that Russia is motivated by both economic and political factors. Rosneft's aggressive expansion and production goals are representative of Putin's strategy to reassert Russia's role in international oil negotiations with OPEC. By controlling more of the world's oil supply, Russia seeks to stabilize international oil prices, while hedging against the increase in the United States domestic energy production. The increasing investment of Rosneft in Venezuelan oil (and, to a lesser extent, gas) markets demonstrates that Rosneft has long-term policy objectives in Venezuela.²³

FROM OPEC TO ROPEC

Russia's interests in Venezuelan energy are part of a calculated effort to circumvent sanctions, increase Russia's power in energy negotiations and balance against powers like China, Saudi Arabia, and the United States.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries' (OPEC) continued push to cut oil production to mitigate the impact of low oil prices constitutes a threat to Russian energy companies, who desire to continue producing and selling oil on the global market. While Russia is comfortable with oil prices between \$43-\$60 a barrel, other countries require high oil prices to fund their budget.²⁴ Saudi Arabian officials, for example, would prefer higher oil prices to balance government budgets and maintain economic growth, which explains their efforts to limit production.²⁵ The fact that Russia has a lower baseline price allows it to continue high levels of production despite oil price fluctuations, and provides it with increased leverage in international oil negotiations.

Despite some scholars' projections that Russia's energy industry is at risk of crumbling, Russia continues to maintain its influence in OPEC.²⁶ Although Russia lacks the technology necessary for shale extraction, it remains a significant player in the global energy markets as a result of Putin's aggressive expansion into markets in Africa, Iraq, and Venezuela. This makes Russian cooperation necessary when OPEC desires to make production cuts.²⁷ The continued cooperation between Russia and OPEC nations has led some scholars to forecast that OPEC is morphing into a Russian-OPEC Alliance (ROPEC).²⁸

Russia's increasing influence within global energy markets can be seen through high profile visits and continued cooperation with U.S.-allies such as Saudi Arabia. In 2017, the King of Saudi Arabia traveled to meet Vladimir

Putin in Moscow for the first time in history.²⁹ Historically, Russia and Saudi Arabia have clashed over the level of oil production in the international market. Saudi Arabia has a reputation as an oil “price setter,” while Russia has historically been considered a “price taker.”³⁰ While some may view cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Russia as contrary to Russia’s pro-production price taker attitude, it signals that, despite sanctions, Russia continues to remain a prominent player in international oil markets.

Russia’s expansion into Venezuelan oil markets is relevant to the Russian-Saudi relationship as Venezuela is a vulnerable OPEC country over which Russia now has considerable influence. Venezuela holds the largest oil reserves in the world, meaning that Russian investment in the oil sector could significantly increase the supply of oil in the international market, which could threaten Saudi Arabia’s dominance over global oil supply. In addition, Rosneft is continuing to expand globally with the hope of gaining key alliances, which would allow Russia to combat OPEC production cuts and resist Western sanctions. By transforming Venezuela into a new “satellite” state, Russia gains direct access to the internal workings of OPEC. This clearly demonstrates that Rosneft’s investment in Latin America, and Venezuela in particular, cannot be separated from Putin’s foreign policy goals.³¹

RUSSIA'S DIPLOMATIC INTERESTS IN VENEZUELA

It is too simplistic to assume that Russia’s interests in Venezuela solely relate to funding its state budget or to gain an upper hand in ROPEC. Rather, Venezuela is part of Putin’s foreign policy strategy of restoring Russia to the great power status and challenging American unilateralism. Putin’s desire to increase Russia’s global influence is what motivated him to re-engage old Soviet allies and seek out new ones in Latin America.³² Since the time of Hugo Chávez, Venezuela and Russia have worked together to undermine U.S. efforts in the region. Ultimately, Putin’s policy objectives in Venezuela are part of a long-term strategy to disrupt U.S. diplomatic efforts while simultaneously profiting from cheap energy deals.³³

Russia’s maneuvers in the Venezuelan energy sector are closely tied to its foreign policy. Putin continues to use the control of energy markets as one of many diplomatic tools to pressure the United States, all the while reasserting Russia’s ability to act in the “far-abroad”. Indeed, authors like Andrei Tsygankov argue that Russia uses foreign policy tools to build pragmatic alliances that reassert Russia’s global reach.³⁴ For example, Putin uses arms sales, energy deals, and large-scale investments to garner favor in Venezuela and the region.³⁵

Hugo Chávez helped create anti-U.S. cooperation blocs, like Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), to oppose U.S.

economic and political dominance in Latin America. Russia focused on integrating into these organizations as an observer, which created stronger diplomatic relations between Moscow and Venezuela's allies.³⁶ Russia's success owes a lot to Putin's ability to present Russia as an alternative partner to the "imperialist" United States. In Latin America, he has achieved this by creating partnerships with authoritarian democracies.³⁷ Moreover, Russia's increasing influence over Venezuela manifests itself in regional and global institutions such as the United Nations.

Russia has successfully exploited its diplomatic relations with Venezuela to challenge the United States at the United Nations. For example, in 2014, the U.N. General Assembly Resolution "Territorial Integrity of Ukraine" failed to gain significant support from Latin American countries, which demonstrated a rejection of U.S. foreign policy priorities.³⁸ Fourteen Latin American countries abstained, while four voted against the resolution. The countries that opposed the measure included Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela.³⁹ In 2016, Venezuela also voted with China and Russia to veto the Aleppo Truce before the U.N. Security Council.⁴⁰ Finally, Venezuela has shown its diplomatic solidarity with Russia through its recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, signaling Russia's diplomatic success in shaping Venezuelan foreign policy.⁴¹

Russia continues to work with Venezuela to promote the two countries' shared vision of a multipolar world. Ever since the presidency of Hugo Chávez, Russia and Venezuela have promoted the idea of a multipolar order in which the United States no longer dominates. For this purpose, Russia has promoted itself as "... [becoming] a center for all [countries] who feel discontented and aggrieved [by the U.S.]".⁴² Putin has focused on dominating diplomatic relations and creating a strong alliance with Venezuela to build an anti-U.S. coalition on the global stage.

COMPETITION IN CHINA

While China has provided significant economic assistance to Venezuela, it has not taken an aggressive approach towards diplomatic relations, as seen in the case of Russia. Putin has been much more strategic in his relations with Maduro. For example, one study found that while on the U.N. Security Council, Venezuela's voting history has aligned more closely with Russia's than with China's.⁴³ Victor Mijares argues that Venezuela's voting patterns demonstrate Putin's success in fostering strong diplomatic relations by reaffirming Russia and Venezuela's shared geopolitical visions and regime characteristics.⁴⁴ Putin's strong focus on diplomacy has allowed him to gain the "trust" of Maduro through an emphasis on shared grievances related to U.S. interventionism.

China's diplomatic model in the Western Hemisphere is primarily focused on "making business, not war," while Russia seeks to "make friends and

undermine the United States.”⁴⁵ The fact that China has reduced its investment in Venezuela gave Rosneft the opportunity to secure an increased number of energy deals in exchange for loans. By becoming Venezuela’s economic lifeline, Russia has solidified its influence over the country’s energy markets in a way that China has not.

U.S. AND RUSSIAN RELATIONS OVER VENEZUELA

Nicolás Maduro’s continued use of anti-U.S. sentiment – for example when blaming the United States for the economic chaos in Venezuela – serves to further Russian efforts to frame the United States as an aggressor.⁴⁶ Venezuela remains a profound foreign policy challenge for the United States, as the humanitarian crisis within the country has led to increased migrant flows and spread of anti-American sentiment in the region. U.S. policy towards Latin America has largely focused on development and counter-narcotics, with little attention paid to building trust within countries that fear U.S. regional interventionism. The focus of the Bush Administration on the War on Terror and the Obama Administration’s emphasis on Asia overshadowed the need for increased U.S. attention in the region, at a time when Russian and Chinese investments were increasing.

Tit-for-tat diplomacy in Latin America by Russia is payback for U.S. interventions in Russia’s traditional spheres of influence, such as the former Soviet states including Georgia and Ukraine.⁴⁷ As Julia Gurganus explains, “Moscow may view its gains in Central and South America as payback for what it has viewed as U.S. interference in Russia’s backyard.”⁴⁸ While Russia will not go to war over Venezuela, its increased presence in the region seeks to frustrate U.S. diplomatic efforts. For example, Putin’s support of the Maduro regime directly counters the United States’ recognition of Juan Guaidó as the legitimate president of Venezuela. Russia even went as far as sending in aids to increase the protection of Maduro.⁴⁹ As such, Russia’s involvement in Venezuela feeds into a strategy of creating a multipolar world, with the hope of reducing the scope of U.S. influence in countries like Venezuela.⁵⁰

Russia’s entrenchment in Venezuela also forces the United States to engage with Russia, which helps Putin bolster Russia’s reputation as a global power.⁵¹ This is not unique to Venezuela: Russia has inserted itself into some of the biggest humanitarian disasters of the 21st century. The conflict in Syria is another example of Russian intervention in a conflict of strategic importance to the United States and its allies. Russia’s involvement in conflicts pertinent to U.S. interests provides it with increased leverage in talks with the West on other issues of strategic importance, such as Ukraine. Venezuela continues to constitute a unique opportunity for Russia to undermine U.S. policy influence in the region while also waging hybrid war in the Western Hemisphere.

RUSSIAN HYBRID WARFARE

Putin is using the increased economic dependence of Venezuela on Russian financing to wage hybrid warfare against the United States. Russian military thinkers see the nature of war changing into “long contactless actions against the enemy [as]... the main means of achieving combat and operational goals.”⁵² Part of this contactless strategy manifests itself in disinformation campaigns against the United States and democratic principles. Russia does not desire to confront the United States with hard power in Venezuela, but rather to use hybrid warfare techniques to exploit historical tensions, discourage democracy, and ultimately achieve its strategic objectives.

Hybrid warfare is increasingly reaching South America in the form of propaganda and information operations, with Venezuela serving as the base of operations. In 2014, General John Kelly commented that Russia’s new military presence in Latin America was greater than anything the United States had seen in the past three decades.⁵³ Russian Television (RT) and Sputnik “Mundo” have an active presence in Venezuela through their Spanish-speaking platforms.⁵⁴ Russia’s propaganda strategy in Latin America “erode[s] confidence in western institutions such as democracy and free trade, as well as western-dominated sources of information.”⁵⁵ Indeed, one study found that Latin Americans’ confidence in democracy declined from sixty-one to fifty-three percent in 2017.⁵⁶ Russian propaganda seeks to strengthen these sentiments by exploiting historical suspicion of the United States. Not unlike Putin, Maduro uses national media outlets such as Telesur, to control the narrative about the causes of the Venezuelan crisis, in a way that promotes anti-U.S. sentiment.⁵⁷ News coverage concerning the Maduro Administration is solely positive, and journalists use anti-capitalist narratives as a means of propaganda. Russian media expansion in Latin America and support of anti-capitalist news stations are part of Putin’s strategy to continue waging contactless war on the global stage.

POLICY OPTIONS FOR REDUCING RUSSIA'S INTERFERENCE

Russia’s expanding influence in Venezuela’s energy sector is part of a larger multi-dimensional strategy to challenge U.S. hegemony and gain a physical foothold in Latin America. Russia’s political influence and economic interests in Venezuela and efforts to undermine the United States have led to the current stalemate between President Maduro and Juan Guaidó. Russia’s increased ability to exploit U.S. policy failures suggests that the Trump Administration needs to reconsider its current policy towards Latin America. The lack of focus

on Latin America combined with the Venezuelan economic crisis have given Putin a strategic position to gain more power in the region, while undermining the hope for democracy in Venezuela.

Congress should reduce and/or eliminate sanctions on Russian energy companies. The strategy to counter Russian aggression with sanctions has done little to stop Putin's increased belligerence around the world. Sanctions in combination with Putin's low approval ratings, have only strengthened his narrative of victimization.⁵⁸ In addition, sanctions have hurt Western energy companies that have exploration agreements with Russia. Former Ambassador Daniel Fried stated that coercive policies under the Congress-approved Counter America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATAS) would hurt American interests and have potentially damaging consequences.⁵⁹ European energy companies have also lobbied heavily against new sanctions, which demonstrates rising tension between the United States and Europe with regards to the Russian question.⁶⁰

Relieving Russia of economic sanctions is not a sign of weakness, but rather a strategic shift in policy. Russian public opinion of the United States has fallen to an all-time low, which demonstrates that sanctions are hurting the Russian people and the United States' reputation abroad.⁶¹ The unfavorable view of the United States is helping fuel Putin's belligerence. The United States may be trying to protect its energy interests at home, but this will ultimately result in greater security threats abroad.

The United States can reduce Russian aggression through sanctions relief, which will benefit U.S. companies that seek to pursue energy exploration projects with Russian companies. Russia's energy expansion abroad was a result of Western economic sanctions threatening the country's long-term oil projects that require the financial investment, management, and technology of international companies.⁶² However, U.S. sanctions have not slowed down Russia's domestic production, but rather made Russia replace long-term domestic projects with aggressive foreign expansion.⁶³ Despite the United States' attempt to isolate Russia, the latter's energy companies have found countries that are willing to work with them to continue producing oil, gas, and renewable energy.⁶⁴ Removing coercive policies against Russian energy companies will shift Putin's attention away from expansion in countries like Venezuela, and back to domestic Russian energy production projects, since the expansion occurred primarily in response to U.S. sanctions.

The United States' current policy toward Russia is only creating a more aggressive adversary. It is not facilitating bilateral, diplomatic engagement to solve pressing issues, such as the crisis in Syria, Ukraine, and now Venezuela.⁶⁵ While the fear of Russian aggression is well founded, policymakers must consider the danger of fueling anti-American sentiment and generating a more aggressive adversary in the Western Hemisphere. Russia's increasing support of

Maduro, in opposition to the U.S. endorsement of Juan Guaidó, demonstrates that the United States will have to not only resolve a humanitarian crisis, but also confront a Russian-backed regime in its own hemisphere. Sanction relief could be the first step in countering Russian aggression and energy expansion in Venezuela. In the long term, it could facilitate a dialogue concerning a peaceful resolution of the crisis.

CONCLUSION

Over the last decade, Russia has expanded its policy of energy diplomacy to Venezuela as part of a long-term strategy to counter the United States in its own hemisphere. Russia's actions in Venezuela are payback for the United States' actions in Georgia and Ukraine. Russia's energy expansion into Venezuela must be understood within the broader framework of Putin's geopolitical strategy, which involves developing close ties with countries in areas of U.S. influence. Policymakers must consider a strategic shift in policy to engage Russia diplomatically and use the possibility of sanctions relief to find a peaceful solution to Venezuela's crisis.

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Iran and UAE in Yemen:

Regional and Global Ambitions

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ABSTRACT

This article highlights the actions and goals of two major actors in Yemen: Iran and the United Arab Emirates. Framed within the context of the Yemeni Civil War, both states have used the fog of war to further their own regional and global interests. Moreover, some of their interests—and the strategies through which they seek to achieve them—contradict the United States’ goals in Yemen, the region, and the international stage. As such, if the United States wishes to strengthen its credibility in the Persian Gulf, it needs to critically reevaluate its strategy in the region and pay more attention to the behavior of its allies.

INTRODUCTION

The narrow lens of the United States’ foreign policy in the Persian Gulf is evident when examining the civil war in Yemen. Currently, the United States is involved in the conflict through its support for the Saudi Arabia-led coalition against the Houthi rebels. While this approach allows the United States to maintain influence, monitor interests, and limit its physical engagement, it also allows other actors to easily implement policies that contradict the U.S. foreign policy goals.

Both Iran and the United Arab Emirates are involved in the civil war, but their behavior suggests motives that transcend the conflict. As part of the Saudi-led coalition, the UAE has committed a significant number of ground troops to the conflict. Though indirectly benefiting from the U.S. support for Saudi

Arabia, the UAE has used the conflict to further its own regional ambitions. Iran, which is backing the Houthi rebels, seeks to achieve its objectives without becoming entangled in the conflict, similar to the United States. Both states use the fog of war to advance their respective hidden agendas and attempt to profit from the United States' indirect engagement in the Yemeni Civil War.

This article begins by examining the actions of the UAE and Iran in Yemen. It then explains how these actions relate to their global and/or regional ambitions and run counter to broader U.S. interests. The article ends by presenting policy recommendations for reframing the U.S. strategy in the region. The prescriptions assume that the U.S. engagement in the Persian Gulf will remain similar to present levels.

IRAN

The civil war in Yemen is an example of Iran strategically positioning itself in another proxy conflict against its regional rival Saudi Arabia – within the context of Iran's regional ambitions and strategies. Iran has sponsored groups like Hizballah and Hamas against Israel, Shia paramilitaries against the United States in Iraq, and has used proxies to bolster the Assad regime throughout the civil war in Syria. Through this strategy, Iran imposes military pressure on its rivals without becoming directly involved, reducing the risk of a direct military conflict. Iran remains in the background, supporting tactics that disrupt U.S., Israeli, or Saudi strategy and bog down rivals in low-intensity but long-term military engagements.

In Yemen, Iran provides financial and material support to the Houthi rebels in their fight against the Saudi coalition-backed Hadi government. Iran's support has prolonged the conflict, exacerbated the related humanitarian crisis, and endorsed the Houthis' violations of international humanitarian laws.¹ Furthermore, Iran's material aid allows the Houthis to maintain a steady missile campaign into Saudi Arabia and, as some disputed claims suggest, the UAE.

However, it is possible that Iran is not necessarily seeking a decisive victory for Houthis in Yemen. Rather, it may be intentionally exacerbating yet another drain on U.S. and Saudi resources, military capabilities, and political capital.² By supporting the group, Iran not only has a proxy on Saudi Arabia's southern border. Iran's involvement in itself drives the Saudis and their regional allies, as well as the United States, to deepen their engagement in the conflict and expend significant economic and military resources to eliminate Iranian influence. As one component of a broader Iranian destabilization strategy, the United States must recognize that the continuation of the civil war is of Iran's advantage.

Recognizing Iran's broader strategy further demands that the United States should expect Iran to use the same strategy in other conflict environments.

While testifying at a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on the U.S. policy in Yemen, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs at the Department of Defense, Robert S. Karem, stated that Iran has “exploited” the chaotic situation in the country as a “test bed” for destabilization operations.³ This phrasing suggests that, given the opportunity, Iran will attempt to use this strategy again. It is important to note that Iran’s modus operandi does not involve creating the instability but rather capitalizing on pre-existing and/or nascent conflicts for its own political ends.

In the Persian Gulf, Iraq is a suitable example of how Iran’s strategy is predicated on opportunity. The fragile balance between U.S. and Iranian influence in the country is complicated by internal instability produced by the Islamic State in the West and the Kurdish regional government in the East.⁴ Concerns surrounding the Iran-backed Shia paramilitary groups, known as Popular Mobilization Units, continue to emerge, even as political elements the group came in second in Iraq’s most recent elections.⁵

However, the United States must be mindful that Iran thrives on instability and utilizes chaos to its advantage, suggesting that directly engaging with these proxies will have negative repercussions for the United States in the region and generate conflict in the domestic political sphere. Iran’s ability to capitalize on instability and prolong its disruptive symptoms can provoke the United States to become entangled in an increasingly deteriorating situation. The United States’ determination to intervene is actually increased by Iranian involvement, rather than understood as a signal to focus all energies on re-stabilization.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The UAE is pursuing multiple objectives in Yemen that affect the United States at regional and global levels. These include its counterterrorism operations against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), cultivation of a sphere of influence in southern Yemen and the Horn of Africa, and use of economic restrictions to inhibit Oman’s neutrality in the region. The Emiratis’ commitment to the Saudi coalition provides them justification for stationing ground troops in Yemen and provides them a forward platform for achieving other regional ambitions.

Though the UAE is primarily involved in operations against the Houthi rebels in Yemen, it has also reclaimed villages and territory from AQAP forces. The civil war adds another layer of complexity as AQAP is also fighting the Houthis. However, the nature of UAE’s operations against AQAP and its lenient approach towards the fighters have raised significant concerns.⁶ Multiple reports have stated that Emirati soldiers have avoided open conflict with AQAP, for example by allowing them to leave contested areas with their weapons and loot.⁷ Furthermore, AQAP deserters have been recruited by Emirati forces and

have been used to encourage their former peers to do the same.⁸ Apart from reducing casualties, maintaining control over strategic positions in Yemen is one of the primary reasons that the UAE is avoiding direct conflict with AQAP when possible. In at least one instance, the UAE and AQAP were forced to passively respect each other's strategic positions in order to defeat the common enemy.⁹ Despite these complexities, an ally's leniency towards AQAP should not be acceptable to the United States

The second component of the Emirati strategy concerns its development of southern Yemen as a foothold from which it can further expand its sphere of influence into the Horn of Africa. By preserving the infrastructure and port access, the UAE can maintain a forward presence in Yemen and has the opportunity to foster friendly relations with the country leadership to cement its influence in the region.

The UAE's presence in the Horn of Africa has mutually benefited the UAE and elites in Eritrea and Somaliland, both politically and economically. The UAE has provided at least \$3 billion in economic aid to Ethiopia and has military installations in both Eritrea and Somaliland.¹⁰ In addition, in 2018, the UAE helped start the dialogue that led to the recent rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea.¹¹ While these developments are critical to the Emirati role in the region and its operations in Yemen, they also signal the UAE's desire to protect its food imports from the Horn of Africa.¹²

To reframe this information in the context of Yemen, the UAE's ambitions go beyond ending the civil war and defeating Houthis and AQAP. It is likely that the UAE will want to remain in Yemen even after a resolution to the conflict to ensure its interests in the Horn of Africa.

The UAE has also used its presence in Yemen to impose military pressure on Oman, in conjunction with economic efforts to constrain Oman's traditional, diplomatic neutrality. As a historic mediator between Persian Gulf states, Oman could play a key role in de-escalating the conflict, which might prevent the UAE from furthering its goals in Yemen and stymying its growing sphere of influence. Oman's geographical, political, and tribal ties to Yemen, as well as its known track record of enabling mediation between states, suggest that it may be the only Gulf Cooperation Council state to successfully bring all participants in the Yemeni Civil War to the negotiating table.¹³ However, Oman also has a strong relationship with Iran, and stands accused by Saudi Arabia and the UAE of allowing Iranian arms and resources to travel across its border into Yemen.¹⁴

The UAE has used its position in Yemen to augment a strategy that actively hinders the Oman's neutrality. The UAE has expanded its ground presence near the Yemen-Oman border and in southern Yemeni ports, thereby strengthening its military posture against Oman. At the same time, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have collaborated together to weaken Oman's economy—by allegedly

delaying business and investment deals and increased bureaucratic transaction costs on trade and border crossings. Moreover, the UAE is heavily investing in Oman's Batinah coast and the Musandam Peninsula, suggesting an intent to "strategically encircle" the country and reduce its economic independence.¹⁵ Through economic and military means, UAE may successfully disrupt the Oman's historical commitment to neutrality and eliminate a potential broker of peace.

IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. POLICY

While both Iran and the UAE are participating in the ongoing conflict in Yemen, neither appears to be fully committed to ending it. Both benefit from the war and, more broadly, the instability that stems from it. Iran is implementing a well-rehearsed strategy to weaken the Saudis and their allies - including the United States - by perpetuating the conflict. Likewise, the UAE is using the civil war and the pretense of the global war on terror to expand its influence in Yemen and the Horn of Africa, as well as to put political pressure on Oman, reducing its ability to resolve the civil war or mediate with Iran.

In a broader sense, the United States must reconsider its alliance with Saudi Arabia, which assumes that it will serve as a U.S. foreign policy proxy in the region. The Saudi-led coalition is only prolonging the conflict and damaging the United States' regional and global reputation. In Yemen, the alliance has associated the United States with a humanitarian crisis and countless human rights violations, all in the name of countering Iranian influence. Moreover, the determination of the United States to oppose Iran in the region creates further complications, as it galvanizes Saudi Arabia in its actions, perpetuates military competition, and prohibits peace in the region.

The United States must use its status in the region -- as a formidable power independent of Saudi Arabia -- to enforce the rules of diplomacy and hold all sides accountable. As such, the United States should advocate for Houthi representation in any political settlement in Yemen. While some will view this strategy as supporting the Iranian agenda in Yemen, in actuality it will reduce Iran's influence over the Houthis, and through increasing the prospects of peace, deny Iran space for political warfare against Saudi Arabia and the United States.

In a similar vein, the United States must ensure the neutrality of Oman as it faces hostility from Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Oman's historic position as an intermediary has played a crucial role in U.S. foreign policy before, such as when Oman facilitated the dialogue that led to the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran. Furthermore, the United States may benefit from the state's neutrality in the future, as it is essentially an institution of conflict resolution in the Persian Gulf. The United States must use its close

ties with the Saudis and the Emiratis to stop them from targeting Oman and use its own economic and military might to shore up Oman's resilience against external pressure.

Regardless of when the civil war ends, the United States must immediately clamp down on the UAE's leniency towards members of AQAP. At the very least, the United States must advocate for the UAE to confiscate the arms of retreating AQAP militias, reducing their ability to commit violent acts in the future. The United States should launch a full investigation into the practices of Emirati counterterrorism operations to determine whether their efforts are actually centered on eliminating the threat or if they are prioritizing UAE interests. If the investigation reveals the latter as the truth, it is another reason for the United States to cut funding and support for coalition operations.

In conclusion, the United States must support efforts to deescalate the conflict in Yemen, which will reduce Iran and the UAE's abilities to capitalize on the instability in the country. This means supporting the United Nations-brokered Stockholm Agreement reached on December 13, 2018 and advocating for further dialogue between all parties.¹⁶ In perpetuating the conflict, the United States only creates more room for Iran and the UAE to develop their interests under the cover of war.

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Space Power and Trajectory of U.S. Influence in Space

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ABSTRACT

The United States has utilized the space domain to enhance national security and to improve national prestige. However, a growing number of governmental and commercial participants in the space domain are creating complications and increasing risks such as collisions with space objects or debris. This trend pressures the United States to find ways to protect and preserve its valuable assets in space. It is, therefore, necessary for the U.S. to acquire capabilities to manage and control the space domain. Historically, control of a domain was pursued through military capabilities such as sea, air, or land powers; however, space power is yet an undefined concept. This article explores the historical development of space technologies in the context of national security, how we should approach the undefined concept of space power, and the policies the U.S. should pursue to advance its interests in space.

INTRODUCTION

Recent announcements by the United States government have pushed forward long-stalled conceptual discussions on space power. The Trump administration's 2017 National Security Strategy made it clear that the U.S. "considers unfettered access to and freedom to operate in space to be a vital interest."¹ The U.S. Missile Defense Review released in January 2019 reveals a growing interest by the Department of Defense to deploy space-based interceptors in the future.²

President Trump's fourth space policy directive (SPD-4), issued in February 2019, cements the desire to create a "space force" to oversee U.S. military space activities.³ While these developments signal the U.S.' increasing defensive and offensive capabilities in space, they don't provide us with a definitive space force doctrine or stance on space power itself. Policy makers, military officials, and scholars are left to their own tools to define the concept of space power, and answer questions such as: What is space power? Is space power akin to air, ground, and sea powers? How should the U.S. act in this sector in the future? This article reviews these discussions on the nature of space power and analyzes how the U.S. should handle its security objectives in space.

RECENT U.S. EMPLOYMENT OF SPACE CAPABILITY IN MILITARY

Development of space capabilities has been a part of the U.S.' strategic planning since the Eisenhower administration. The primary national security purpose for using space technologies was to conduct surveillance on a potential adversary: these systems were used to gather information from space and transmit them to ground, and had an important role in strategic planning during the Cold War. For example, the Corona, Gambit, and Hexagon satellite series were developed for photo-reconnaissance. The space-based, infrared Missile Defense Alarm System (MiDAS) and its successor, the Defense Support Program (DSP), satellites were developed to "provide high confidence warning of a Soviet nuclear attack...as early as possible."⁴

Later, the Global Positioning System (GPS) and communication satellites gained more importance in strategic planning as well as real-time military operations. During Operation Desert Storm in 1991, communication satellite systems provided command and control networks between frontline troops and commanders, while GPS networks eased troop movement across the desert.⁵ Thereafter, space systems were acknowledged as a crucial component for enhancement of U.S. terrestrial military operations.

Today, space systems have become increasingly important to the U.S. in achieving national security goals. Many aspects of military strategy, such as early warning, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, positioning, navigation and timing, communications, and command and control are now dependent on space systems. As such, it is important to understand how better they relate to the concept of space power.

COMPARISON OF SPACE POWER WITH OTHER MILITARY POWERS

For years, space systems have been deployed in military strategic planning as well as in real-time combat, yet there is no concrete definition or theory of space power. Some argue that it is too soon to theorize about space power, citing that Alfred Thayer Mahan and Carl von Clausewitz developed their respective theories on sea and land power only after several thousand years of human experience in these domains.⁶ Others suggest the difficulty of theorizing space power stems from the peculiar physical condition of outer space, as well as the fundamentally unique capabilities of space systems compared to conventional military powers. Scott Pace, current Executive Secretary of the National Space Council, states that “[s]pace-based forces lack widely accepted military doctrine, which is not the case for land, sea, and air forces. Part of the challenge is that space systems do not directly represent ‘hard’ or traditional military capabilities. Rather, space systems enable these capabilities.”⁷

The following section attempts to analyze the contemporary military aspects of space power by comparing space power with other military powers, including sea power, air power, and cyber power. To make a clear comparison, each military power is examined at three mission levels: domain control, enforcement, and application.

SEA POWER AND SPACE POWER

Sea power is often used to gain maritime control, which involves ensuring a nation’s free access to high seas and deny adversaries’ access to the littoral zone.⁸ As an instrument of military operations, sea power provides an important force enforcement capacity that enables transport of military troops, logistics, and communication channels for land warfare much faster and more easily than relying on land transport. Sea power is also used in force application, for instance, through guiding precision munitions.⁹ From a defensive perspective, the force application capability of sea power is used to protect the territory against invasion from the ocean.

AIR POWER AND SPACE POWER

Similar to the concept of sea power, one of the goals of air power is to achieve air control (or air supremacy) to protect a nation’s airspace and deny adversaries’ access to airspace, if necessary.¹⁰ A force enforcement aspect of air power is that aircrafts can transport troops and logistics faster than sea or land transportation. A force application capacity

of air-power is that it can “[shoot] down enemy fighters in air-to-air combat, [attack] enemy air bases and [suppress] enemy air defenses.”¹¹ Moreover, as Benjamin Lambeth suggests, “airpower now does most of the actual killing before launching any land invasion.”¹² These force enforcement and application aspects of air power are vital for military operations.

Moreover, air power has become indispensable for enabling command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (C4ISR) capabilities during pre-conflict and conflict phases.¹³ It is often difficult to build communication infrastructure at the frontlines but aircraft act as communication hubs that allow soldiers to communicate and coordinate with commanders. In addition, given their high-altitude capabilities, air power is less concerned with line-of-sight restrictions compared to land or sea powers.¹⁴

CYBER POWER AND SPACE POWER

Unlike sea or airspace, controlling cyberspace is difficult because it does not consist of a physical domain; rather, it is conceptually unlimited and reproductive.¹⁵ Instead of considering cyberspace as a controllable domain, cyber power can be analyzed in the context of assuring one’s access to “open and closed networks”¹⁶ and to protect said networks from adversaries. Cyber power cannot transfer tangibles in its own right, but can be used as a tool to transfer and manage information for “military administration, personnel management, medical care, and logistics.”¹⁷ Importantly, most C4ISR operations are implemented via cyberspace; in other words, cyber power is integrated into all military operations.¹⁸ Cyber power also has a force application capacity. It can destroy or degrade adversaries’ military equipment, facilities, or communication networks by attacking their cyber networks.¹⁹

RESULTS OF THE COMPARISON

Each form of military power has a force application capacity. By contrast, only space power lacks force application capacity. While we have seen maritime and air warfare, and experienced cyber-attacks, the same could not be said for space: “no nation has tried to seize or mount destructive attacks against the operational satellites of another.”²⁰ A space-based missile defense system could enhance force application capabilities of space power, but the technology does not yet exist. Without technological advancement, it is unlikely for space-to-space battle to occur in the future.

While space power generally does not have the function to attack adversaries yet, it has strong force enforcement capabilities. Well-equipped space systems can enhance C4ISR capabilities even less hindered by distance

or topography than fighter jets. While space power currently cannot transport troops or logistical equipment, it can enhance these military operations by providing “geodesy, weather, communications, navigations, early warning and attack assessment, and surveillance and reconnaissance” services.²¹ As Watts observes, “[f]or the United States, the military value of orbital systems rests almost exclusively in force enhancement rather than force application.”²²

Overall, the attributes of all military powers are similar because they are used to assure freedom of access to the respective domains while prohibiting action by adversaries. This attempt to control a domain is similar to what the U.S. is attempting to achieve in space. The U.S. Space Command’s *Long Range Plan: Implementing USSPACECOM Vision for 2020* defines “space control” as “the ability to assure access to space, freedom of operations within the space medium, and an ability to deny others the use of space, if required.”²³ The U.S. National Security Space Strategy states that “access to these [space system] capabilities must be assured” in order to execute the National Space Policy.²⁴

TABLE 1: COMPARISON OF MILITARY POWERS BY MISSION LEVELS

MILITARY POWERS	MISSION LEVELS		
	CONTROL OF DOMAIN	FORCE ENHANCEMENT	FORCE APPLICATION
SEA POWER	- Assure free access and denial to adversary, if necessary	- Transport of goods, logistics and troops	- Physical force: Precision strikes - Sea-to-sea battle
AIR POWER	- Assure free access and denial to adversary, if necessary	- Transport of goods, logistics and troops - Relay of information: C4ISR	- Physical force: precision strikes - Air-to-air battle
CYBER POWER	- Non-controllable domain - Assure access to “open and close network” and protect these networks from adversaries	- No transport of goods - Relay of information: C4ISR	- Non-physical force: degrade, damage adversaries’ electronic devices
SPACE POWER	- Assure free access and denial to adversary, if necessary	- No transport of goods - Relay of information: C4ISR including geodesy, weather, navigations, early warning and attack assessment services	- Non-physical force: degrade, damage adversaries’ electronic devices - Physical force: not yet achieved, but eventually Anti-satellite weapons (ASAT) or space-based Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD).

IMPORTANCE OF SPACE POWER AND ITS LIKELY TRAJECTORY

Space systems play a significant role in achieving military objectives and national security goals. The Trump administration’s National Security Strategy released in December 2017 re that the United States “considers unfettered access to and freedom to operate in space to be a vital interest” and will “preserve

peace through strength by rebuilding our military” including strengthening space capabilities.²⁵ General John E. Hyten, commander of the U.S. Strategic Command, suggests that without space assets, “you go back to World War II... or industrial age warfare.”²⁶ However, high dependence and increased demands on space systems also accentuates the vulnerabilities of U.S. space systems, which remain susceptible to hostile actors’ denial-, disruption- or destruction-oriented actions. For example, U.S. assets are not protected against anti-satellite (ASAT) weapon attacks. Koplow suggests that “prolonged interruption of satellite services could now have grave consequences.”²⁷ How should the United States deal with this vulnerability?

The United States is the largest investor in space systems across the civil, commercial, and military sectors. According to a report from Euroconsult, the U.S. government’s expenditure on space programs in 2016 was approximately \$35 billion, which accounted for about 58 percent of global government expenditures on space systems.²⁸ Although it is difficult to separate military expenditures from aggregate spending as space systems are inherently dual-use, this large expenditure gap -- seven times the combined spending of Russia, China, Japan, and the European Union -- illustrates how critical space systems are to the United States. This *status quo* also implies why the United States is keen to protect its space assets.

THE 3CS: IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. SPACE POWER

The U.S. has been taking measures to mitigate risks from two perspectives: as a user of the space environment and as a seeker of space dominance. As a user of space environment, the U.S. concerns center around the so-called 3Cs: the Congested, Contested, and Competitive nature of the space domain. The 2010 National Space Policy²⁹ and the 2018 Space Policy Directive-3³⁰ address the challenges posed by 3Cs and urge responsible actions from each country to prevent mishaps and protect the space environment.

As a seeker of space dominance, the U.S. considers superiority in the space domain vital for defending America. From a national security perspective, various scholars have suggested that U.S. military operations would dramatically decrease in efficiency if space systems were degraded or disabled: “the U.S. military is not currently superior to its potential adversaries because it has stronger soldiers, bigger guns, or more tanks. Rather, it has the upper hand because it can better understand what is taking place in the midst of conflict, what its own forces are doing, and what those of an enemy are doing amidst the ‘fog of war’ using space systems.”³¹ Space systems are being increasingly relied upon by the military, and this trend will continue.³²

The 2001 Rumsfeld report concluded that the U.S. is not prepared to

defend its enormous dependence on satellites -- and it remains true today.³³ In dealing with the vulnerability, the United States' 2018 National Space Strategy explicitly states that the U.S. space system should enhance its resilience, defensibility, and ability to reconstitute and restore lost capacities in order to retain and harness the strength of U.S. national security.³⁴ Moving forward, Trump administration's approach, as elucidated in the SPD-4, is to consider space as a warfighting domain³⁵ and establish a separate Space Force.³⁶

In order to protect assets, pursuing innovative and stronger space power will remain of vital importance for the United States. Among other things, the impact of commercial activity in the space domain will grow in coming decades. An increasing number of private companies are planning to send thousands of micro-to-small satellites into the Low Earth Orbit – a huge leap from the current worldwide level of 1,800 operating satellites in the orbit.³⁷ However, from a national security standpoint, this trend will accelerate the concerns around 3Cs in the space environment and create more space debris if not coordinated with respective governments. Additionally, recent research suggests that commercial space companies are driving innovations in this sector and will increase the global market size from an estimated USD 350 billion a year to USD 1 trillion by the 2040's.³⁸ With these commercial trends in mind, the space domain will become an important economic sphere with commercial interests the United States military would need to protect.³⁹

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The United States should continuously pursue and improve its space power not only to ensure its access to space, but to deny access to malevolent space actors.⁴⁰ However, attempts to dominate space may end up fostering a harsher 3C space environment, which are already degrading the U.S.' ability to do so.⁴¹ When the space age began, only a few countries had the necessary technology to access space. Today, there are more than a dozen space-faring nations and more than fifty countries operating satellites. Globally, more commercial companies are finding business opportunities in or from space. An increasing number of participants in space means a higher presence of countries and commercial companies capable of conducting malevolent actions (e.g., jamming, cyberattacks and direct ASAT) targeted at U.S. space assets.⁴² To preserve the ability to access outer space, while denying access to malevolent actors in the 3Cs space environment, the U.S. should promote international cooperation, especially with regard to information sharing. As it currently possesses the greatest space power capacity, the U.S. government could take the lead in promoting international cooperation and encourage information sharing among major players in this domain. Streamlining domestic regulatory

frameworks for commercial space activities will make it easier for other countries and commercial players to find practical ways to cooperate with the U.S. Furthermore, international cooperation and regulation would also increase the grounds upon which U.S. and other top players could deny rogue elements' access to space. A limitation of this policy strategy would be the degree to which international cooperation is possible, especially given the limits of trusting foreign satellites in military operations.⁴³

Involvement of the commercial space sector is necessary to forge innovative solutions and develop advanced technologies in the space domain. However, heavy reliance on the commercial sector would be risky as profit-seeking commercial companies are driven by market factors and not necessarily national security concerns.⁴⁴ With this in mind, future studies should explore ways to balance the degree of international cooperation and domestic programs with public versus private interests.

As the National Space Strategy implies, robust international cooperation will be a catalyst for burden-sharing and create a cooperative environment to survive against threats. Freedom of access and the use of space can be pursued not only by seeking better national space-power capacity, but also by promoting international cooperation to offset vulnerabilities.⁴⁵

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The Rise and Fall of Peace on Earth

by Michael Mandelbaum

A Review by *Anne Armstrong*

Anne Armstrong is pursuing a M.A. in Security Policy Studies at the Elliott School of International Affairs with specializations in Transnational Security and Conflict Resolution. Her primary academic interests lie in study of transnational organized crime groups and the utility of development and resilience efforts to counter them. While in D.C., Anne has worked at Women's Action for New Directions and interned for the Office of Policy at the Department of Homeland Security. She received her B.A. from Johns Hopkins University in 2017.

According to scholar Michael Mandelbaum, the 25-year period between the end of the Cold War and 2014 was one of the most peaceful in history. Aside from smaller regional conflicts, the world saw a brief pause in global conflict between superpowers. Mandelbaum credits benevolent U.S. hegemony, the spread of democracy, and regional economic interdependence for sustaining this deep peace. In *The Rise and Fall of Peace on Earth*, Mandelbaum explains how the revisionist goals of Russia, China, and Iran in their respective regions caused this period of peace to come to an end. Neatly sorted into sections on Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East, Mandelbaum's latest book delves into the efforts by each of these autocracies to challenge the liberal world order in the face of their own economic uncertainty. Mandelbaum discusses the prospects for lasting peace in the book's final chapter, leaving the reader with some hope—albeit qualified—that another deep peace is possible.

Dr. Michael Mandelbaum is an academic with extensive foreign policy experience. Mandelbaum spent over two decades at the Council on Foreign Relations and is a prolific writer, having published sixteen books and countless articles on topics ranging from nuclear security, U.S.-Russia relations, and foreign policy in the Middle East. *The Rise and Fall of Peace on Earth* manages to take on an immensely dense period of history in reasonably concise 156 pages.

Early in the book, Mandelbaum outlines three critical forces that were fundamental for the maintenance of the post-Cold War peace. The acceptance of U.S. hegemony, establishment of economic interdependence, and spread of democracy, the author claims, were the pillars upon which the 25-year peace

rested. Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East all manifested these in some form during this period until three critical outliers—Russia, China, and Iran—challenged one or more of these forces, disrupting both the deep peace and balance of power in their respective region.

Mandelbaum begins with the challenge to peace in Europe. In post-Cold War Europe, he argues, the former Soviet Union was averse to U.S. hegemony, economically isolated, and inexperienced with democratic governance. Mandelbaum points to the Clinton administration's exclusion of Russia from NATO's eastward expansion as a missed opportunity for bringing the former Soviet Union into the democratic fold and a critical factor for enabling the erosion of European peace. Paired with NATO expansion, the economic stagnation of Boris Yeltsin's tenure and his erratic nature fueled resentment among Russians, further alienating the country from democratic governance. Mandelbaum, however, overstates this connection, particularly because, as he himself points out, the country had little historical experience with critical democratic ideals that would set it up for success in the future. The failure of implementing democratic institutions and free market economics may have been more related to cultural and historical norms than Mandelbaum acknowledges.

The challenge to peace in East Asia, according to Mandelbaum, resulted from China's efforts to regain the primacy it enjoyed for much of history as one of the world's most ancient and powerful political communities. Mandelbaum rightly points out that any action to stunt China's economic successes in the post-Cold War era would have been politically and morally difficult—not to mention economically harmful to the global industries benefiting from them. His characterization of China's rapid growth elicits an important conclusion: Western democracies viewed China's economic expansion as an opportunity for democracy to develop. After all, according to a liberal theory of history, free markets produce democratic governance, and democracies very rarely fight each other. Mandelbaum qualifies this view, however, with an important caveat. China was not pursuing economic expansion in line with Western foreign policy ideals, but rather to regain its global status and avenge the defeats it suffered during and after its "century of humiliation" (pg. 56). China's actions over the past several decades, considered almost inconsequential to Western powers until relatively recently, were actually strategic actions taken to overturn the status quo. China leveraged its economic success and military buildup to challenge the status quo; China's growing presence in the South China Sea and its efforts to extend its sphere of influence through economic endeavors like the One Belt One Road initiative are key examples of this. Like Russia, Mandelbaum writes, China has taken steps to undermine Western—and particularly American—influence and increase its own power. As in Russia, Mandelbaum warns, China has increasingly shifted toward aggressive foreign

and military policies to counteract weakening popular support resulting from economic stagnation.

The final part of the triad challenging world peace, as Mandelbaum sees it, is Iran in the Middle East. Mandelbaum begins by clarifying that the challenge to peace in the Middle East differs slightly from Europe and Asia because its conflicts “arose independently of the Cold War and so outlived it” (pg. 97). In another difference from Europe and Asia, Mandelbaum correctly points out that the countries of the Middle East are primarily composed of distinct tribal and ethnic groups with borders invented by foreign powers. This fact precluded the region from developing true nation-states and, moreover, hindered the development of democracies among Arab nations. Combined with the absence of economic interdependence in the region, Mandelbaum concludes that the Middle East fundamentally lacks two of his three forces for peace. As for the end of the already shaky peace in the region, Mandelbaum writes that the weakening of the United States’ hegemonic presence alongside the deep-rooted revisionist goals of Iran were ultimately the causes. Mandelbaum asserts that, unlike Russia and China, Iran’s attachment to ideology allowed its leaders to care less about public support. Mandelbaum allows that Iran’s motives are deeply connected to its goals for Shia Islam and regional hegemony, but his discussion does not emphasize these cultural and ideological considerations enough.

However, the Middle East’s conflicts, unlike many in East Asia and Europe, have been fought by coalitions made up of multiple entities with distinct and often contradicting motives. Indeed, the United States itself has supported conflict parties with motives that directly contradict its democratic values. This reality suggests that the United States’ hegemonic presence was less firmly rooted than Mandelbaum seems to believe. He does point out the important fact that the United States’ support of these conflict parties often empowered Iran, directly or indirectly. Returning to his thesis, Mandelbaum argues that, like Russia and China in recent years, Iran has engaged in aggressive initiatives to extend its power in the region—particularly in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. Mandelbaum concludes, dismally but rightly, that envisioning the establishment of peace in this region is more difficult than in the other two.

While Mandelbaum is correct to not underestimate Iran and its ambitions in the Middle East, this section of the book seems least aligned with his premise of a 25-year peace. After all, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were both fought during this period and had immense costs in terms of human life. Mandelbaum does qualify his inclusion of the Middle East in his thesis, saying that the region was admittedly not as peaceful as the others, but that it still experienced “modest tranquility” (pg. 132).

In the final section of the book, Mandelbaum considers the return of the post-Cold War peace. His belief in the three forces of peace – the benevolent

U.S. hegemony, spread of democracy, and regional economic interdependence – is encouraging, yet it is difficult to imagine any of these three forces balancing in the three regions anytime soon. Nevertheless, Mandelbaum’s characterization of China, Russia, and Iran as revisionist autocracies that violate recent norms as they attempt geographical and ideological expansion is intriguing and appealing. His birds-eye view offers a comprehensive and deep look at the forces underpinning the world’s peaceful moments. *The Rise and Fall of Peace on Earth* invites discussion on the fundamental characteristics that are altering the current balance of power and forces the reader to reconsider the longevity of the liberal world order. In a time where the United States’ international role is being reassessed and global economics is evolving, each of these issues is worth considering for political scholars worldwide.

Michael Mandelbaum, *The Rise and Fall of Peace on Earth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), ISBN 978-0-1909-3593-1.