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The Towson Journal of International Affairs is accepting submissions for publication. The submission criteria are as follows:

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

For more than a year the world has seemingly revolved around the global pandemic, which even now, shows no signs of abating. From one perspective, this situation is novel. The world seems irrevocably changed. From another, this is merely cyclical. This is not the first pandemic and it is not even shocking that the terrifying engine of geopolitics has churned on in spite of it. This journal issue is at once: timely and reflective of the times. Edition 1 of Volume LV was assembled by a staff that wore masks every week; in it the issue of China looms large and new ground is broken on the issue of Statelessness.

In his article: *The Stirring Giant: China's Strategic Interests and Geopolitical Fault Lines*, Dwight Myvett Jr challenges prevailing conceptions of Chinese behavior and strategic objectives. He disputes the primacy of Taiwan in determining Asian hegemony, arguing that the key to Asia is instead the First Island Chain. He views this misidentification as being potentially deadly. If Taiwan does not throw control of Asia to China, it is not the issue over which to make a last stand, triggering what may be a war to end all wars.

Taryn Painter addresses an emerging issue in *Framing Statelessness: Influences of the Human-Interest Media Frame on Public Attitudes Towards Statelessness in the United States*. Over 200,000 individuals are stranded in the United States with no route to citizenship and no legal means of returning to their state of origin. With research on this issue being scarce, Taryn Painter has begun filling an academic void. She identifies how American attitudes toward statelessness change when anchored in a human-interest framework, paving the way for further study and awareness.

In his article: *Chinese Investment in Africa: The Realities of Development and the Global Context*, Eric Ports calls attention to the prevailing Western narrative that China is, everywhere, up to no good. In clear prose, the Western track record in Africa is contrasted with China's, revealing an uncomfortable hypocrisy and tension. He argues that China's relationship with Africa is one of mutual benefit that makes a very sharp contrast with what the continent has experienced from Western powers so far.

Lastly, I would like to thank what has been an immensely talented staff, as well as Dr. Joseph Clark, whose expert guidance allowed those talents to flourish. We are proud to present No. 1 of Volume LV to you all.

Sincerely,
Dwight Myvett Jr.
Editor-in-Chief
December 12, 2021

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Now in its 21st year, the *Brown journal of World AEEa,irs* is a student run publication featuring original works by policy makers, world leaders and prominent academics.

The Stirring Giant: China's Strategic Interests and Geopolitical Fault Lines

Dwight Myvett Jr.*

Abstract: *This research seeks to evaluate China's major strategic interests and how their geopolitical contexts could possibly result in war. It identifies a realist bent to both American and Chinese behavior that is driving the two toward increased security competition. It features considerations of Taiwan, the South China Sea, Island Chain Strategy and the Belt and Road Initiative, while also delineating the nuances of China's strategic approach in Asia.*

Keywords: *China, Taiwan, Asia, Belt and Road Initiative, First Island Chain, Second Island Chain, South China Sea, Security Competition, Hegemony, Regional Hegemony*

Introduction

The anarchism of the international system drives security competition. This is no less true today than it was three thousand years ago. The actors change but the patterns do not – as shown now by a growing US-China rivalry. The pursuit of hegemony – that is, power to such an extent that a state is able to dominate all the others in the system¹ – creates power asymmetries with consequences for global peace.

Nothing threatens to result in war more than a power nearing hegemon status. Hitler, Wilhelm II, and Napoleon are all recent examples that brought their states to the brink of hegemony, destabilizing Europe in the process. China now looks poised to achieve that same distinction and with it a capacity for regional dominance. Ever intolerant of emerging rivals, the US now wrestles with the question of how to slow or stop China but formulates questionable policies in doing so.

* Dwight Myvett Jr. holds a B.S. of Political Science from Towson University and works as a consultant in DC. He served as Editor-in-Chief of the Towson Journal of International Affairs from August – December 2021.

¹ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014), 40.

Asia is headed toward unbalanced multipolarity. Russia is already a great power, and it would not take much for Japan and India to join its company.² Other minor Asian powers are nervous about China's rise and cooperate with the US, whose presence in the region is significant. The question is whether or not this is enough. Failure to balance correctly will result in China's emergence as hegemon. But a misstep, given Asia's multipolarity and China's sensitive fault lines, could just as easily tip the region into war.

This research acknowledges the offensively realist bent of Chinese behavior and its drive toward regional hegemony (that often takes place amongst rhetoric proclaiming the opposite). But more importantly, it outlines China's specific strategic interests and the way it pursues them. China is not Napoleonic France, Wilhelmine Germany nor Nazi Germany whose strategies were all so classically Western. If the US does not take the time to understand what exactly China wants, as well as how it has and will go about achieving those objectives, the outcome could be both a premature and unwinnable war.

China's Resurgence in Context

The desire for hegemony is universal, given the anarchic nature of the international system, but this impulse is colored by state history and geography, which can indicate clues as to specific state behavior. China has enjoyed a very long history in which it occupied the zenith of global power several times. It has survived pandemics, economic crashes, invasions, conquest, and all other such threats that a state must face. And through it all China has flourished, at varying times, culturally and politically. Pride naturally emerged from this apparent superiority and the so-called "cradle of civilization" mentored, mediated, and dominated nearby Asian

² Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 398.

powers. To some extent, it is possible China views its recent resurgence as a return to a historical norm.³ But that return is not without bitterness.

China's Century of Humiliation began in 1839 with its defeat in the First Opium War and is usually taken to have ended with the Second World War in 1945. In that time, China was torn piecemeal. Backward and technologically behind, it lost nearly every conflict that it fought and was forced into the notorious Unequal Treaties. These usually entailed massive reparation payments and the concession of territories. Foreign powers made excursions into the country or dominated its ports for economic gain while China continually spiraled. One of the most infamous episodes of this century was the Nanjing Massacre that left 40,000 to 300,000 people dead. All of this was a hard pill to swallow for a prideful state possessing such a stellar historical record, but swallow it China did, eschewing its pride for pragmatic reforms. Now, China displays a desire for international power coupled with a deep suspicion of Western powers, chief among them, the United States.⁴ All states seek hegemony, but China's particular reasons for doing so, right now, are emotionally and historically charged.

What, then, does China's return look like? First and foremost, it is geographic. China is looking to reintegrate disputed territories and lost possessions with the mainland. Some of these territories and disputes inspire a fight-instinct powered by intense nationalism. Others, China has turned a blind-eye to, viewing them as not worth fighting over—yet. Second, is China's basic security problem. China has a very long border that could become vulnerable to both local and foreign adversaries. Its nearby seas and waterways present a similar problem, with many foreign powers cruising through them regularly.⁵ Becoming whole enables China to better hedge its

³ Michael D. Swaine and Ashley J. Tellis, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy* (Rand, 2000), 3.

⁴ Swaine & Tellis, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy*, 3-4

⁵ Swaine & Tellis, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy*, 9-10

security problem. Hence, China's objectives revolve generally around winning its territorial disputes, becoming preponderant and ultimately supplanting the US as a producer of security in Asia.⁶

Hegemon of an Unbalanced Multipolarity

China, like all states, aspires to hegemony as means of achieving maximum security. With global hegemony being an impossibility, it is likely to settle for the next best thing: regional hegemony.⁷ Dominance over Asia is attractive for a few reasons. First, the region is rich in natural resources. A large number of Asian economies benefit from mining precious metals, rocks and minerals; oil and natural gas abound everywhere from the Arab peninsula to the bottom of the South China Sea; Asia's waterways enable major maritime trade; and the region is rich in biodiversity.⁸ China, as recognized by much of the West and globe already occupies territory primed to exploit the aforementioned. A major cause of strain, however, are Chinese claims on contested waters and territories. China desires to widen its access to Asian natural resources and becomes more likely to achieve this as its relative power increases.

Secondly, Asia is growing in international relevance to such an extent that it may become the sort of focal point that Europe once was. Increasingly, it seems that there is an "Asian Century" on the horizon.⁹ One half of this phenomenon is economic. China and India continue to grow at breakneck speed, Japan is a mainstay in terms of GDP, Indonesia and South Korea tend to rank in the top fifteen, encouraging trends can be found in Singapore, and one could argue even in Vietnam. Furthermore, China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is fostering greater

⁶ Swaine & Tellis, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy*, 19-20

⁷ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 41.

⁸ National Geographic Society, "Asia: Resources," National Geographic Society, October 9, 2012, <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/asia-resources/>.

⁹ John Reed and Valentina Romei, "The Asian Century Is Set to Begin," Financial Times (Financial Times, March 26, 2019), <https://www.ft.com/content/520cb6f6-2958-11e9-a5ab-ff8ef2b976c7>.

economic interdependence and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank has over a hundred members.

The other component increasing the likelihood of an “Asian Century” is raw and potential power. While a far cry from challenging the United States, the People’s Liberation Army is still a formidable force. Beyond China, however, we find that Asia is home to several great and potential-great powers. Russia surely qualifies as one and Japan is only a nuclear weapon away from that same distinction. India, if managed right, could also elevate to this level. It is no wonder that China would like to be preponderant. Asia is resource-rich and swathed in deadly rivals.

Asia is decidedly Multipolar then. There are several great and potential-great powers in the region. More critically, Asia is likely to become an *unbalanced* multipolarity— if it isn’t already— given the growing gap between China and the other powers there. This does not bode well for future peace and stability as Multipolarity is far less stable than Bipolarity. Mearsheimer indicates that Bipolar systems have a lower risk of miscalculation and a greater likelihood of even power distribution.¹⁰ Multipolarities, by contrast, crank up the opportunities for miscalculation and other such mistakes by virtue of more variables needing to be accounted for.¹¹

Multipolar systems, as stated, tend to be less stable but a key distinction must be made. Balanced Multipolarities – systems in which all the great powers are more or less equal— can enjoy lengthy periods of peace because no potential hegemon is present. But the great powers are likely to shift the burden of containment when a security threat does emerge and may resist

¹⁰ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 346

¹¹ Karl W. Deutsch and J. David Singer, *Multipolar Power Systems and International Stability* (New Haven: Yale University, Political Science Research Library, 1964), 392

forming a balancing coalition.¹² Balanced Multipolarities, as a result, run the risk of buck-passing themselves into imbalance. Europe's response to Nazi Germany's prewar expansion is a good example of this.

Modern Asia is not the balanced Multipolarity that preceded the Second World War in Europe. It is Multipolar and unbalanced, China's stature as a potential hegemon is what makes it so.¹³ Since China's emergence has been gradual, unlike that of Napoleonic France and Nazi Germany, there should not be a sleepy and time-consuming shift from buck-passing to coalition balancing. Many great and minor powers are already on alert regarding China's rise, and the US is already something of a coalition leader. The problem is that unbalanced Multipolarities are the most war-prone of all combinations. With China pulling away, the other great and minor powers will fear for their survival and sovereignty. The United States will grow especially anxious as it watches the rise of a peer competitor boasting a larger population and faster growing economy.

History shows that regional hegemons do everything they can to prevent the rise of another.¹⁴ The question is not whether the US will try to contain China, but rather, how. Adding the unbalanced Multipolarity of Asia to the mix means the US will be playing a dangerous game in which the instances for a potential war are high— not just between the US and China, but between the many other dyads existing there too.

Strategic Orientation

Given Asia's unbalanced Multipolarity, one may be tempted to view China as an overwhelming aggressor in the same mold as Nazi Germany or Napoleonic France. But China's strategic posture is calculative, resulting in an unusual restraint.¹⁵ Geopolitical events are

¹² Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 268

¹³ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 399

¹⁴ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 141

¹⁵ Swaine & Tellis, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy*, 113

weighed pragmatically against a policy of avoiding unnecessary conflicts; China avoids foreign entanglements like the plague; and China seems to only take on an aggressive posture over Taiwan and territories it believes are its own. Why this is so, and why China has settled on a calculative, rather than an assertive or cooperative orientation, is the subject of this section.

First to consider is that there is a fundamental, philosophical difference between the US and China when it comes to strategy. Patience, discernment, restraint and pragmatism are not words that could be used to describe US strategy and foreign policy. Instead, there is emphasis on speed, force, coercion and violence to force capitulation as quickly as possible. In a sense, the United States is playing Western chess. The goal is to capture the opposing king in as few moves as possible. China, by contrast, is playing Go or Wei Qi; “a game in which the slow and patient building up of assets leads to victory.”¹⁶ One looks for swift victory, the other plays a long game. One is direct and offensive, the other is diffusive and bent on waiting for advantage.

Since the end of the Cold War, China’s focus has been on economic reform. Recognizing that conflict can be counterproductive for a power on the rise, it has resolved to avoid open security competition. Militaristic responses to security threats and challenges are usually avoided or are muted compared to other similar powers of today and yesterday.¹⁷ This would naturally also mean a refusal to become entangled in adventures abroad. US meandering in the Middle East, for example, is deeply appalling to Chinese leadership. They are unable to grasp the rationale behind continuing to waste both lives and resources in what are essentially unwinnable conflicts. What is more, China correctly estimates that these interventions serve more of an ideological than national interest, a sentiment that clashes with China’s pragmatic bent.¹⁸ It is

¹⁶ Kishore Mahbubani, *Has China Won?: The Chinese Challenge to American Primacy* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2020).

¹⁷ Swaine & Tellis, *Interpreting China’s Grand Strategy*, 112

¹⁸ Mahbubani, *Has China Won?*, 90

interesting that the US accuses China of expansionism and wanting to export ideology, when it is the United States that has been prolifically involved in both. Mischaracterization of China may win certain politicians domestic approval, but in the long run this will create an international situation in which shadows are confused for roaring monsters.

It is in China's interest to prevent or at least soften US containment efforts. Any posturing that indicates a sudden or aggressive run at hegemony is likely to activate more assertive containment policies on part of the US and Asian powers fearful of China. An aggressive and expansionist China would see its progress quickly ruined or at least greatly slowed.¹⁹ Van Stephen Evera, professor of Political Science at MIT, provides the following aphorism: "States fight when they think they will prevail, when they think the advantage will lie with the side moving first, when they believe their relative power is in decline, when they assume that resource cumulativity is high, and, most important, when they believe that conquest is easy."²⁰ There is no reason for China to currently fight a war and China does not want to. China is far better off delaying big conflicts until its relative power has neared or overtaken the US'.

But none of this is to say that China is a supplicant. It must be remembered that if China ever commits to a military response, the West and Asia will find itself fighting an enemy that guarantees *at least* mutual destruction. The implications of a war with China will be more closely evaluated later, but at the outset it is obvious that China cannot be invaded or made to submit by military means outside the deployment of nuclear weapons. Reckless talk of defeating or

¹⁹ Swaine & Tellis, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy*, 115

²⁰ Van Stephen Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 255

stopping China indicates a lack of sobriety regarding the Asian situation and a downplaying of China's capabilities.

Specific Strategic Interests

A whitepaper from the State Council Information Office outlined China's national defense aims. They are: "to deter and resist aggression; to safeguard national political security [...]; to oppose and contain 'Taiwan independence;' to crack down on proponents of separatist movements [...]; to safeguard national sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and security; to safeguard China's maritime rights and interests; [...] to safeguard China's overseas interests; and to support the sustainable development of the country."²¹ The key phrases here are "national sovereignty" and "territorial integrity." China's strategic interests tend to be categorized into one or the other. The issue is that the waters and territories that China claims by virtue of sovereignty are disputed.²²

The purpose of this and the elapsing sections is not to outline in detail all of China's stakes and interests, but to focus on those with the greatest potential for war or resource accumulation. As such, the focus will be on the reintegration of Taiwan; pushing the US beyond the First and Second Island Chains; dominating the South China Sea in general; and hedging containment through economic initiatives.

The Taiwan Issue

No issue stirs Chinese fury more than the problem of Taiwan. Observing outsiders are quick to sympathize with the small democracy in constant resistance to the monolithic and

²¹ "China's National Defense in the New Era," Xinhua (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, July 2019), http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-07/24/c_138253389.htm.

²² Pia Krishnankutty, "Not Just US, India - China Is Involved in 17 Other Territorial Disputes in Asia," ThePrint, July 15, 2020, <https://theprint.in/theprint-essential/not-just-india-tibet-china-has-17-territorial-disputes-with-its-neighbours-on-land-sea/461115/>.

authoritarian China. China's insistence on Taiwanese submission can appear fanatical and even unhinged, especially considering China's recent methods.²³ But China's reason for taking such a hardline policy is historical, harkening back to the Century of Humiliation.

China's loss in the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) resulted in the Treaty of Shimonoseki. The treaty was harsh. Besides the massive indemnity, it ceded the Pescadores Islands and Liaodong peninsula; made Korea (originally a Chinese tributary) into a Japanese protectorate; and most importantly, gave all of Taiwan to Japan.²⁴ Being defeated in war and then exploited by a power that China considered a "younger brother" was mortifying. Subsequent leaders vowed to undo this humiliation.

That goal was achieved with the defeat of Japan in World War II. By 1949, however, the legitimate Republic of China was suffering defeat after defeat at the hands of the communist PRC. Mao's forces eventually pushed Chiang Kai-shek, the ROC leader, off the mainland. He continued his rule in Taiwan as Mao propped up his regime in China.²⁵ Herein lies the sensitivity regarding Taiwan. In the first half of the 20th century Taiwan was taken from China by force. A foreign power ruled over and exploited it while continually inflicting embarrassments on the mainland. When Taiwan did finally return to the mainland, the communist revolution was in full swing, looking to depose the corrupt and ineffective ROC. When the People's Republic of China finally succeeded, the ROC retreated to Taiwan and ruled there, making it difficult for the mainland to reintegrate it.²⁶ An invasion across the strait back in the 1940s and 50s was

²³ Mike Yeo, "China Sends Largest Group of Military Aircraft in Single Day near Taiwan," Defense News (Defense News, June 16, 2021), <https://www.defensenews.com/air/2021/06/16/china-sends-largest-group-of-military-aircraft-in-single-day-near-taiwan/>.

²⁴ John Keay, *China: A History* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2009), 489

²⁵ Keay, *China: A History*, 515

²⁶ Keay, *China: A History*, 12

unrealistic. Taiwan was largely left alone and flourished, as a result, into an impressive and independent democracy.

Taiwan is the final remnant of a humiliating century.²⁷ This is the reason it inspires nationalistic furor. Any provocation or action geared towards decisively ensuring Taiwan's independence will be interpreted as a revival of foreign interference. Weakness over real or perceived territories risks disorder in the populace and removals in leadership.²⁸ Thus, Taiwan stands as one of very few exceptions to Chinese pragmatism. China *will* fight over Taiwan, against any power, even if it does not feel ready to. Chinese leadership feels compelled to:

China resolutely opposes any attempts or actions to split the country and any foreign interference to this end. China must be and will be reunited. China has the firm resolve and the ability to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and will never allow the secession of any part of its territory by anyone, any organization or any political party by any means at any time. We make no promise to renounce the use of force, and reserve the option of taking all necessary measures. This is by no means targeted at our compatriots in Taiwan, but at the interference of external forces and the very small number of "Taiwan independence" separatists and their activities. The PLA will resolutely defeat anyone attempting to separate Taiwan from China and safeguard national unity at all costs.²⁹

Ideology aside, there are practical and strategic reasons for taking up this policy. In the Korean War, the United States launched a counterattack from the island and its strait. Observers

²⁷ Mahbubani, *Has China Won?*, 95

²⁸ Mahbubani, *Has China Won?*, 22

²⁹ "China's National Defense in the New Era," Xinhua (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, July 2019), http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-07/24/c_138253389.htm.

quickly realized that Taiwan could be used as a bridgehead for an equally devastating attack on the mainland.³⁰ Fear of this particular problem has waned with the advent of nuclear weapons, but the defensive notion that an island near the mainland should not be hostile—or on good terms with powers that are potentially hostile—remains. A short history of US relations with states in the Caribbean reveals a similar sentiment. In fact, it is becoming increasingly popular to frame modern Chinese policy as a variant of the Monroe Doctrine.³¹

Despite being a small island, Taiwan occupies critical geography. It straddles east and southeast Asia providing a base of operations and swing-point into both. While fear of Taiwan serving as an offensive bridgehead into China have diminished, it still remains that China could make offensive use of it, for example, into the Koreas. Taiwan furthermore provides access to maritime shipping lanes critical to global trade and forms part of the so-called First Island Chain; a larger, geographic conception that forms something like a barrier to China's sphere of influence.³² Taiwan is a critical piece in the long-term scheme of Chinese hegemony. This fact is largely recognized. Confusion resides in the question of whether the US should resort to arms in preserving Taiwanese independence. To answer this, we must grasp the larger, strategic picture.

The First and Second Island Chains

Strategic conceptions of a First and Second Island Chain have caused some in the West to detect a zone of exclusion policy.³³ This would-be “Monroe Doctrine” would see China trying to eject foreign powers from the South and East China sea like the US did in the waters of Central

³⁰ Keay, *China: A History*, 519-520

³¹ Steven F Jackson, “Does China Have a Monroe Doctrine? Evidence for Regional Exclusion,” *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 10, no. 4 (2016): pp. 64-89.

³² Joseph Bosco, “Taiwan and Strategic Security,” *The Diplomat*, May 15, 2015, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/05/taiwan-and-strategic-security/>.

³³ Jackson, *Does China Have a Monroe Doctrine?*, 78

and South America. The comparison of contemporary Chinese policy with the Monroe Doctrine of the United States is not a pedantic fit. But Chinese posture and behavior in this context does fit the tenets of Offensive Realism. Rising hegemonies seek to eject foreign powers from their sphere of influence while established ones seek to stir up trouble in the ascendant power's backyard.

The First Island Chain begins at the Kuril Islands, extending through the Japanese archipelago, Ryukyu Islands, Taiwan, northern Philippines, and island of Borneo. The Second Island Chain is further out, beginning off the east coast of Japan. From there it snakes through Guam and all the way down to the Moluccan Islands.³⁴ These chains, while associated with physical islands, require great maritime power to control and influence.

Chinese strategy in this area is simple: The goal is to push the United States out of the First and eventually Second Island Chain. With the achievement of this, China will replace the US as the security provider of the region. Other Asian states will be forced to reassess their policies and levels of cooperation with China. Ejecting the US from the Island Chains, in short, is China's best shot at achieving regional hegemony. Anxiety over the problem of Taiwan is tied to the question of how it affects influence over the said Island Chains.

The South China Sea

The South China Sea is a mainstay in Asian headlines. This ocean is critical with implications for "ownership, demarcation, rights of passage and access to resources."³⁵ Rival claims here are multiple and intense: China and Vietnam dispute ownership over the Paracel Islands. China, Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam dispute the Spratly

³⁴ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 373-374

³⁵ Donald K. Emmerson for The Diplomat, "Why Does China Want to Control the South China Sea?," – The Diplomat (for The Diplomat, May 24, 2016), <https://thediplomat.com/2016/05/why-does-china-want-to-control-the-south-china-sea/>.

Islands.³⁶ Multiple parties—chief among them China, Vietnam and the Philippines—are building artificial islands for varying purposes, but China is unique in being the first to outfit these with military equipment.³⁷ The increasing militarization of the South China Sea would seem to indicate a more assertive China in the coming years, which has the US and its allies on high alert.

Much of the South China Sea's importance is economic. Trillions of dollars in commercial goods pass through the sea annually, representing sizable chunks of GDP for varying countries. A disruption there could be disastrous. The Strait of Malacca in particular, connects the Pacific Ocean, Indian Ocean and South China Sea, making it a potential chokepoint.³⁸ All beneficiaries of trade in this region want to see continued freedom of navigation. The battle, instead, is over sovereignty of competing claims. Any claim on a physical territory there implies possession of nearby waters as well. In those waters there may be 14 trillion barrels of natural gas and 16 to 33 billion barrels of oil.³⁹ In the South China Sea, economic interests combine with claims of sovereignty. The sea's resources are as badly wanted as formal recognition of claims.

Ultimately the issue of the South China Sea ties into the Island Chain issue, for where China seeks to push the US out, the US seeks to remain and be preponderant. Both states make use of an "Island Chain Strategy," just in reverse. What will ultimately determine who dominates the South China Sea is whether the US is pushed beyond the Island Chain(s) or not. The minor powers in Asia so fearful of China are consumers of US security. So long as the US is there, and

³⁶ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 375

³⁷ William Johnson, "Everything You Need to Know about the South China SEA Conflict - in under Five Minutes," Reuters (Thomson Reuters, May 11, 2016), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-johnson-china-idUSKBN0OQ03620150610>.

³⁸ "How Much Trade Transits the South China Sea?," ChinaPower Project, January 25, 2021, <https://chinapower.csis.org/much-trade-transits-south-china-sea/>.

³⁹ Ethen Kim Lieser, "How Much Oil and Gas Is Contained in the South China Sea?," The National Interest (The Center for the National Interest, February 22, 2021), <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/how-much-oil-and-gas-contained-south-china-sea-178587>.

so long as the US makes good on its promise to defend these powers, claims in the South China Sea will remain up for debate. The risk lies in US hesitation or failure. If the claims of smaller Asian powers are overwhelmed and their territories taken, the US will suffer reputational damage. China need not erupt into open and aggressive security competition with the United States then. It needs only to create difficult situations that leave the US questioning if it should resort to arms are not. Taiwan is one such example. Minor acts of aggression against impotent powers in the South China Sea are another. China's goal here is to slowly shift the balance of power and status quo in Asia, not fight an all-out war to achieve hegemony *now*.

Hedging Containment Through Economic Initiatives

China is busily connecting itself to the entire globe through economic projects. The standout among these is the infamous Belt and Road Initiative. The BRI is essentially a trade and infrastructure project designed to proliferate growth by connecting the economies, cultures, and technologies of states.⁴⁰ It currently includes at least 139 countries, stretching across Asia, Europe and into South America. In many ways, the BRI is a refashioning of the ancient Silk Road and the sea routes once followed through the Indo-Pacific. Three land and two sea routes currently comprise it, dimly resembling an economic flow of movement found on ancient maps.⁴¹

The idea behind the BRI today sounds remarkably liberal. It fixates on sustainable development aiming to interconnect all economies regardless of religious and political differences. Indeed, it has offered infrastructure, trade and loan opportunities to both affluent *and* developing states that were spurned and exploited by the west in the past. All of this has resulted

⁴⁰Yose Rizal Damuri et al., "Belt and Road Initiative: An Overview," *Perceptions and Readiness of Indonesia Towards the Belt and Road Initiative: Understanding Local Perspectives, Capacity, and Governance*, Report. Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 2019, 4

⁴¹ Damuri, et. Al., *Belt and Road Initiative*, 5

in ferocious accusations of sino-centrism on part of the US. The United States seems convinced that the BRI is a shifty mechanism through which to increase global reliance on China, and thereby its chances for hegemony. That the US levels these accusations without seeing an eerie image of itself is either ironic or outright disingenuous. Regardless, Europe has joined in on these criticisms of China and the BRI but has also, curiously, joined it.⁴²

In practical terms, the BRI does lend aid to China's goal of becoming preponderant in Asia. The generation of new infrastructure and modes of connectivity will force Asian states to turn ever steadily toward China, even as they tender a preference for the US.⁴³ More critically, the BRI addresses the Malacca Dilemma. As mentioned earlier, any blockage of the Strait of Malacca would threaten to strangle Chinese imports and exports, resulting in serious economic damage in the mid to long-term.⁴⁴ It is a real possibility that the US or some other adversary would consider blocking it. Overland infrastructure and alternative sea routes, then, would serve to counter this threat, creating new economic and military options in case of the strait being blocked. The EU, meanwhile, is decisively open to connectivity with Asia, hoping to court more Chinese investments. While the EU pretends that this is all in the name of the "rules based international order," China recognizes that this engagement will eventually grant it some leverage in Europe.⁴⁵ Last to consider are the struggling, unstable states of Africa, the Middle East and South America that are contemptuous of the US, distrustful of Western democracy, and

⁴² Chris Devonshire-Ellis, "European Union Member States Who Joined China's Belt and Road Initiative Are Seeing Their Exports Rise Faster by Nearly 5% More than Those Who Have Not," Silk Road Briefing, November 20, 2020, <https://www.silkroadbriefing.com/news/2020/11/20/european-union-member-states-who-joined-chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-are-seeing-their-exports-rise-faster-by-nearly-5-more-than-those-who-have-not/>.

⁴³ Terry Mobley, "The Belt and Road Initiative: Insights from China's Backyard," *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 13, no. 3 (2019): pp. 52-72.

⁴⁴ Mobley, *The Belt and Road Initiative*, 54

⁴⁵ Erik Brattberg and Etienne Soula, "Europe's Emerging Approach to China's Belt and Road Initiative," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 19, 2018, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/10/19/europe-s-emerging-approach-to-china-s-belt-and-road-initiative-pub-77536>.

eager for means of rising without capitulating to Western demands. These powers tender an obvious preference for China over the US and stand the most to gain from the Belt and Road Initiative.

All of this reveals the BRI to be yet another expression of China's pragmatism and calculative posture. China displays a flexibility that cares not for internal government type, whereas the US has opposed states or restricted aid to them on the basis of how democratic they are. China's own lack of democracy and willingness to engage non-democratic states has resulted in many moral polemics but its economic appeal is apparently universal. Not even democratic states are passing up the opportunity to benefit from the BRI.

One can anticipate, given the basic nature of US thinking and strategy, banal attempts at pressuring allies to sever their ties with China in the future. The US will probably not recognize the wane in its own global influence and will continually assume that the states of the world will adjust their policies to align with US preferences. There will be calls to limit business with China, to reject its investments and seek out alternatives.⁴⁶ But the states of the world will not be able to afford this. The BRI is China's strongest move thus far in hedging containment efforts that will absolutely intensify in the future. Its connectivity with the world will mean it *cannot* be isolated, and in many instances the states that once gave fealty to the United States will not *want* to break with China, as doing so would entail many political, economic, and military risks. One could easily imagine a US-Asia coalition in which half or most of the members are entrenched and dependent on the BRI, resulting in defections, hesitation or buck-passing. The BRI, in short, is a coalition-neutralizer that threatens to render the US alone in facing China.

⁴⁶ Mercy A. Kuo, "Blue Dot Network: The Belt and Road Alternative," – The Diplomat (for The Diplomat, April 7, 2020), <https://thediplomat.com/2020/04/blue-dot-network-the-belt-and-road-alternative/>.

On The Soundness of Resorting To Arms In Taiwan

In Western eyes, the hourglass of Taiwanese Independence appears to be nearing the last grain. Speculation of a Chinese Invasion abound with varying time frames. Some believe an invasion is imminent, others point to the year 2049 (The Centennial anniversary of the PRC).⁴⁷ Regardless, fear is palpable. American policymakers, thinkers and writers seem to be swept up in a frenzy. They correctly estimate China's hair's breadth proximity to regional hegemony, but consistently misidentify the issue that will nudge China over the line.⁴⁸ The reintegration of Taiwan – as an island, as a territory–will *not* ascend China to hegemon status.

The frenzy over Taiwan is couched in either one of two beliefs: (1) That Taiwan as a territory is the final piece preventing an unstoppable torrent of Chinese expansionism; (2) that Taiwan's importance lies in the influence it yields over the First Island Chain.⁴⁹ Regarding the former, who would agree that all this time China has only been the total value of Taiwan's armaments and GDP away from regional hegemony? The more realistic standpoint is the latter. Confusion and ambiguity lie in the question of whether Taiwan throws control of the Island Chain. If an invasion of Taiwan means "it's all over," as Nikki Haley asserts, the implication is that the United States must make a desperate effort to physically defend Taiwan. If, instead, Taiwan represents a tilt in the balance of power, we can consider the situation more thoughtfully. There is no doubt that Taiwan would give China a lift—morally and materially—but the see-saw of Asian dominance would still lean heavily in the US' favor because the addition of Taiwanese armaments is not enough to eject it from the region.

⁴⁷ Graham Allison, "What Xi Jinping Wants," *The Atlantic* (Atlantic Media Company, May 31, 2017), <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/05/what-china-wants/528561/>.

⁴⁸ Scott Wong, "Nikki Haley Warns Republicans on China: 'If They Take Taiwan, It's All over'," *The Hill* (The Hill, June 16, 2021), <https://thehill.com/homenews/house/558834-nikki-haley-warns-republicans-on-china-if-they-take-taiwan-its-all-over>.

⁴⁹ Loren Thompson, "Why Taiwan Has Become The 'Geographical Pivot of History' in the Pacific Age," *Forbes* (Forbes Magazine, September 29, 2020), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/lorenthompson/2020/09/29/why-taiwan-has-become-the-geographical-pivot-of-history-in-the-pacific-age/?sh=5d396a751921>.

It is the US' presence and freedom of naval movement in Asia, specifically throughout the Island Chains—not Taiwan as an island—that is the final restraint on Chinese ambitions. The reintegration of Taiwan does not suddenly impede the US' freedom of movement, it simply increases the opportunities for naval confrontation—that were always bound to increase because the US is interfering in a foreign region. It must be thoroughly understood that competition between hegemony in the modern era risks escalation up to nuclear fallout. It does not make sense to take this risk over Taiwan if it does not decisively throw influence in the region. Instead, the focus should be on the Island Chain Strategy and containing China within it, whose secondary benefit would be an increase to Taiwan's security anyway.

Policy Recommendations

The overarching problem here is that despite its great presence in the region, the US has no consolidated policy. Obama's "Pivot to Asia" established a good framework but failed in execution.⁵⁰ Trump launched a trade war that hurt the US more than China and that also failed to contain it.⁵¹ The Biden administration has no China policy.⁵² This tendency to badly execute, form bad policy, or no policy – combined with the yellow peril that American elites seem bent on cultivating – is a powder keg. When no plan or a bad plan meets with fearful anticipation, it results in two things: a confused wait-and-see approach and a desperate overreaction when something finally does happen. Herein lies the great risk of war. On its current trajectory, US policy in Asia will remain nonexistent or vague, prompting it to over-respond if an invasion does

⁵⁰ Victor Cha, "The Unfinished Legacy of Obama's Pivot to Asia," *Foreign Policy*, September 6, 2016, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/09/06/the-unfinished-legacy-of-obamas-pivot-to-asia/>.

⁵¹ Ryan Hass and Abraham Denmark, "More Pain than Gain: How the US-China Trade War Hurt America," *Brookings* (Brookings, August 25, 2020), <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/08/07/more-pain-than-gain-how-the-us-china-trade-war-hurt-america/>.

⁵² Russell Flannery, "Seven Months in, Biden Uncertainty on China Policy Is Hurting American Business," *Forbes* (*Forbes Magazine*, August 22, 2021), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/russellflannery/2021/08/21/seven-months-in-biden-uncertainty-on-china-policy-is-hurting-american-business/?sh=3a9dee922418>.

occur. China, powered by a national-historical trauma, is very likely to fight back despite the risks, causing the situation to spiral out of control. Remembering that Asia is multipolar allows one to consider that all events there have a reverberating effect and impact the other dyads in unpredictable ways. Nuclear fallout is the worst possible outcome. An entire regional war is less severe than that, but still a credible risk.

From here on, the United States must be remarkably proactive. It must do its work ahead of time and focus on tangible implementation. This begins with a general policy of "practical deterrence." To that end, the US should create a NATO-like organization in Asia. Member states should include *all* states fearful of China that have an interest in containing it. Ideological considerations should be eschewed, and the US should emulate China's pragmatism. An example of this would be setting aside distaste for Prime Minister Modi of India and his domestic policies for the sake of enlisting a potential great power. All member states should have clearly defined roles, their communications integrated, and weapons systems interlinked (as is the case in NATO). Finally, this organization should begin militarizing the Island Chains. This helps Taiwan more than anything else.

To begin with, Taiwan benefits from US ambiguity on the question of Taiwanese statehood. The lack of a commitment means China must always guess if the US will directly aid the island. This also means that so long as the US maintains that ambiguity and restrains the impulse to directly interfere, it can justify militarization on non-Taiwanese grounds. With the creation of a NATO-like organization, more missiles in the Island Chain, and with China having to guess at US intentions, the potential costs of invading Taiwan will skyrocket. This can never 100 percent dissuade China from invading Taiwan but the aforementioned policy recommendations would buy a lot of time and improve Taiwan's chances. If implemented soon

enough, the US can get defense commitments out of Asian powers before they are entrenched in the BRI, decreasing the likelihood of buck-passing later.

Conclusion

The US has correctly identified China's core interests. They are indeed Taiwan, control of the Island Chains, dominance in the South China Sea and execution of the BRI. The United States has completely misidentified, however, which of those is most critical in enabling or preventing Chinese hegemony. The current fervor over Taiwan has its origin in a complex melting pot of biases and historical interpretations. These impede the ability of the US to accurately view Asia and fire up Chinese nationalism to a boiling point.

If the US is determined to play the world's police officer into perpetuity, it must cultivate an ability to read international situations accurately. A conflict risking escalation up to nuclear fallout over Taiwan is nonsensical if Taiwan's importance does not extend beyond its symbolism as a democracy. Taiwan should always be considered in terms of its relation to the Island Chain, for it is the Island Chain issue that will slow or facilitate China's march to hegemony. But this march can only be slowed, not stopped. It is the reality of great power politics that hegemony is unsustainable. Great powers *must* come and go. Perhaps the United States will suddenly lurch into well-thought and proactive action. Perhaps the United States will suddenly build a beautifully efficient coalition that is effective to a staggering degree. This only delays an eventuality.

The United States has both allies and options that can go a long way (if utilized correctly) in slowing down China's ascension. But the US must not fall into the trap of acting emotionally over Taiwan or convince itself that it can *stop* China, even through sensible policy. As the US attempts to contain China it must plan for a world in which China is a great and non-democratic

power. That is the reality at hand. A lot of lofty idealism and pre-assumptions about the world will shatter in this process, but seeing things as they are is the prerequisite to state survival, now and into the future.

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Framing Statelessness: Influences of the Human-Interest Media Frame on Public Attitudes Towards Statelessness in the United States

Taryn L. Painter *

Abstract: *Though Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to a nationality, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that up to ten million people around the world live without a formally recognized nationality. They are stateless and hold no legal nationality to any state in the world. Despite the United States' jus soli citizenship laws, an estimated 218,000 stateless people are present within the US and unable to adjust their legal status or return to their country of origin due to their stateless status. Statelessness studies are slowly growing, yet there is little public knowledge of stateless persons in comparison to other displaced groups in the United States. There are even fewer studies conducted on American public opinion of stateless persons. This survey study aims to understand general perceptions and attitudes towards stateless persons present in the United States and observe if interacting with human interest framed stimuli results in a change of attitudes towards stateless persons.*

Keywords: Statelessness, Non-citizen, Nationality, Citizenship, United States, Immigration, Public Opinion, Human Interest Frame

Introduction

A stateless person is defined internationally as a “person who is not considered to be a national by any State under the operation of its law.”¹ The United Nations High Commissioner

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¹ *Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons*, New York, 28 September 1954, *United Nations Treaty Series*, vol. 360, p.117., available from treaties. https://treaties.un.org/doc/Treaties/1960/06/19600606%2001-49%20AM/Ch_V_3p.pdf.

for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that up to ten million people across the globe are classified as stateless.² Despite these historical estimates, statelessness is a widely misunderstood and understudied phenomenon at the global, national, and local levels, particularly within the United States. As the United States does not account for stateless individuals through censuses or other government databases, the UNHCR has no official data on the number of stateless persons within the country. However, estimates of the total number of stateless persons in the US range from 4,000 to 218,000.³

The US promotes an end to statelessness abroad through diplomacy and the UNHCR, yet statelessness itself is a marginalized topic within the country. The United States is not a signatory to the 1954 or 1961 Statelessness Conventions, does not provide a definition of statelessness under domestic law, and operates under the belief that the state's laws, "do not contribute to the issue of statelessness," despite the various loopholes in its immigration laws that permit for continued statelessness.⁴ Stateless persons within the United States are therefore left with few legal safeguards and are subject to repeated and prolonged detention and experience barriers to accessing or obtaining identification documents, finding employment, and accessing other government services.

Though the US government displayed brief interest in resolving domestic cases of statelessness in the early 2010s, congressional efforts stalled and few reports were made within

² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "Better statistics to help end statelessness," *UNHCR / Blogs*, January 21, 2020, <https://www.unhcr.org/blogs/better-statistics-to-help-end-statelessness/>.

³ UNHCR, "Citizens of Nowhere: Solutions for the Stateless in the U.S.," *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, December 2012, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/about-us/background/56fbfcea4/citizens-of-nowhere-solutions-for-the-stateless-in-the-us.html>; Donald Kerwin, Daniela Alulema, Michael Nicholson, and Robert Warren, "Statelessness in the United States: A Study to Estimate and Profile the US Stateless Population," *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 8(2), June 2020: 150-213, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2331502420907028>.

⁴ Eric P. Schwartz, "Recognizing Statelessness," *HuffPost*, September 8, 2011, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/recognizing-statelessness_b_954084.

popular American-based news sources on the progress of the federal government's efforts to resolve statelessness.⁵ Additional media coverage on Congress' intentions to resolve statelessness may have contributed to the passing of the Refugee Protection Act of 2013, as media has the ability to both reinforce and inform the political agenda.⁶ Studies have shown the impact that the media's framing has on individuals' attitudes towards refugees and irregular migrants, yet there are no such studies conducted on stateless persons, nor any studies that document the general attitude towards stateless persons in the United States.

As migration-related issues have become increasingly contentious within American politics, it is important to determine how the general American public views stateless persons who arrive in the United States through the country's immigration system. Determining how the American public views stateless persons and what communication methods result in further understanding of statelessness will be the first step in properly addressing and combatting cases of statelessness. To determine what these views are, the current study is an initial attempt to map the attitudes of Americans towards stateless people in the United States and observe if a change in response occurs across certain demographics after engaging with the human interest-framed stimuli.

A snowball sampling survey was distributed across a two-week period, asking participants to report their demographic information and record their opinions related to a series of multiple closed-choice answered questions on statelessness in the United States. Participants were also offered the opportunity to leave additional questions or comments on statelessness at

⁵ David Baluarte, "Protecting Stateless Refugees in the United States," *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 26(2), Spring/Summer 2020, <https://scholarlycommons.law.wlu.edu/wlufac/633/> (Accessed 7/26/21); Congress.gov., "S.645. Refugee Protection Act of 2013", March 21, 2013, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/senate-bill/645/text#toc-ID4076884e91f84b2dab095a051a54d75>.

⁶ Rianne Dekker and Peter Scholten, "Framing the Immigration Policy Agenda: A Qualitative Comparative Analysis of Media Effects on Dutch Immigration Policies," *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 22(2), April 2017: 202-22, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161216688323>.

the conclusion of the survey for thematic qualitative analysis. The quantitative results of this study demonstrate a correlation between change in response with regards to the removal of stateless persons in the United States and a person's ideological leaning and prior knowledge of statelessness. There is also a correlation between a person's racial identity and political ideological identity and their change in response relating to certain rights and privileges that stateless people are entitled to (right to vote and no rights). The thematic analysis of participants' comments yielded two general themes— legality and responsibility— that corroborate some of the patterns described in the quantitative analysis. The study concludes with final notes, conclusions, and recommendations for further research on statelessness in the United States.

Statelessness in the United States: Overview and Background

Philosopher and political theorist Hannah Arendt described nationality as the 'right to have rights' in her 1951 publication, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Though human rights are inherent and afforded to each person on the basis of their status as a human, only the state could guarantee and protect such rights. To Arendt, that meant one had to be "not only a human, but a citizen of a nation-state" in order to access political, social, and economic rights (Gessen, 2018).⁷ Based on Arendt's writings and experience, the legal relationship between the state and an individual is essential in order to access to basic freedoms. Without a recognized legal status or citizenship, the stateless are unable to access a variety of other human rights— including the right to free movement, the right to own property, the right to education, the right to marry and establish a family, and the right to identity— thereby demonstrating nationality as an enabling right.⁸

⁷ Masha Gessen, "The Right to Have Rights and the Plight of the Stateless," *The New Yorker*, May 3, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/the-right-to-have-rights-and-the-plight-of-the-stateless>.

⁸ United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, December 10, 1948, <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights>.

Arendt's observation on the importance of citizenship is solidified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Article 15 states that "everyone has the right to nationality" and that "no one should be arbitrarily deprived of [their] nationality nor denied the right to change [their] nationality."⁹ Nevertheless, the UN estimates that up to ten million people exist without this right recognized and are stateless.¹⁰ The 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons defines a stateless person as "someone who is not considered a national (citizen) by any country under the operations of its laws," meaning that they do not have a legally recognized status to any country in the world.¹¹ A person can become stateless for a number of reasons, such as state dissolution, conflicts in nationality law (*jus soli* and *jus sanguinis*), discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, or gender, and administrative obstacles.¹² Despite the acuteness and universality of statelessness, the issue is often overshadowed by larger displacement and migration crises.

The UNHCR asserts that statelessness exists in every country in the world, including the United States. Statelessness, however, is less pronounced within the United States due to the country's *jus soli* laws. The Fourteenth Amendment of the US Constitution proves to be significant in counteracting statelessness, as it affirms that "all persons born [...] in the United States [...] are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside" (Art 14, §1). The Fourteenth Amendment prevents generational statelessness from occurring, but statelessness can still occur in instances where *jus soli* births are not reported, as in the case of Alecia

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ UNHCR, "Global Trends Report: 2019," United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, June 18, 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/statistics/unhcrstats/5ee200e37/unhcr-global-trends-2019.html>; Petra Nahmias, "Better statistics to help end statelessness," *UNHCR* January 21, 2020, <https://www.unhcr.org/blogs/better-statistics-to-help-end-statelessness/>.

¹¹ UN, *Convention Related to the Status of Stateless Persons*, 1954: 3.

¹² United Stateless, "Causes of Statelessness," *United Stateless*, <https://www.unitedstateless.org/causes>.

Pennington, a woman born in Texas whose parents did not register her birth with US government offices.¹³

More commonly, statelessness occurs within the US due to gaps in the country's immigration and nationality laws. The Immigration and Nationality Act does not define statelessness, does not provide an administrative process to determine if a person is stateless, nor illuminate a pathway to citizenship for stateless persons solely based on the fact that they are without a nationality.¹⁴ As the United States is not a signatory to the 1954 or 1961 Statelessness Conventions, the country is not legally bound by international law to provide stateless persons with any protections.¹⁵ Stateless migrants can only obtain a protected legal status if they are granted refugee or temporary protective status, but the standards for proving a 'well-founded fear of persecution' based on one's stateless status or loss of one's citizenship are difficult to reach within the US court system.¹⁶ If refugee status is denied, stateless individuals are often placed under deportation orders, as they are present in the country without legal authorization. However, as no country will claim them as a national, stateless persons are undeportable and can remain in prolonged detention or mandatory ICE supervision orders.

¹³ Abby Ohlheiser, "How a teenager's viral campaign to prove her citizenship is inspiring a new Texas bill," *The Washington Post*, March 12, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2015/03/12/how-a-teenagers-viral-campaign-to-prove-her-citizenship-is-inspiring-a-new-texas-bill/>.

¹⁴ Maryellen Fullerton, "The Intersection of Statelessness and Refugee Protection in US Asylum Policy," *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (2018): 144-164, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/233150241400200301>.

¹⁵ David Baluarte, "Life after Limbo: Stateless Persons in the United States and the Role of International Protection in Achieving a Legal Solution," *Georgetown Immigration Law Journal*, 29(3) (2015): 351-389. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2796321.

¹⁶ Jasmine Pope, "The Stateless: Millions of People Forgotten and Left Without Adequate Immigration Assistance: Where does the United States fit into the Plight of the Stateless?" *University of Baltimore Journal of International Law*, 6(1) (2018): 112-146.

https://scholarworks.law.ubalt.edu/ubjil/vol6/iss1/6?utm_source=scholarworks.law.ubalt.edu%2Fubjil%2Fvol6%2Fiss1%2F6&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages (Accessed 6/14/21); UNHCR, Washington, D.C. "Stateless in the United States: Searching for Citizenship," October 10, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1LO78hivXZ8&t=272s>.

The presence of stateless people in the US has been demonstrated by the UNHCR in its 2012 “Citizens of Nowhere” report. The agency obtained data from the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and discovered that 628 stateless people applied for asylum, with, “23 denied and 359 [with] no final decision reached on their application [and] placed in final removal proceedings” from fiscal years 2005 to 2010.¹⁷ Additional information gathered from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) demonstrated that stateless people were also detained, placed under supervision, or placed under orders of deportation to an undesignated country by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) between 2009 and 2011.¹⁸

Despite data provided by the USCIS and DHS, the federal government does not have an official number relating to the number of stateless persons residing in the country. Researchers have estimated that there may be 11 to 12 million undocumented persons within the United States, yet it is uncertain how many of these persons who are undocumented may also be stateless.¹⁹ The statistics provided by the US government to UNHCR in 2012 are likely not representative of the true stateless population in the United States, as such numbers only represent those stateless people that have made contact with the government. It is hypothesized that many stateless people within the US, “remain underground and hidden” for fear of detention or deportation and therefore would not appear in the records held by DHS, the Department of Justice (DOJ), or the Department of State.²⁰

¹⁷ UNHCR, “Citizens of Nowhere,” 2012: 22.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁹ Pew Research Center, “On Immigration Policy, Partisan Difference but Also Some Common Ground” *Pew Research Center*. August 25, 2016, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2016/08/25/on-immigration-policy-partisan-differences-but-also-some-common-ground/>; Elaine Kamarick and Christine Stenglein, “How many undocumented immigrants are in the United States and who are they?” *Policy 2020 Brookings*. November 12, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/policy2020/votervital/how-many-undocumented-immigrants-are-in-the-united-states-and-who-are-they/>.

²⁰ UNHCR, “Citizens of Nowhere,” 2012: 22.

Officials from government and nonprofit entities have extrapolated from the 2012 UNHCR report and have proposed that the US is home to approximately 4,000 stateless people.²¹ However, a 2020 report from the New York City NGO, Center for Migration Studies (CMS), suggests that up to 218,000 people within the United States are either stateless or at risk of becoming stateless, based on a holistic analysis of the American Community Survey.²² Of the estimated 218,000 stateless or potentially stateless, CMS suggests that a majority have protected refugee status, signifying that they have legal status and are on a pathway to American citizenship. At the same time, nearly forty percent of the projected 218,000 stateless population were unaccounted for in the Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System (WRAPS), signaling that they may be legally unrecognized by the country and lack a legal process to assist them in obtaining a legal status.²³ However, as the United States government has never undertaken an official study to document the stateless population through censuses or other statistical means, neither estimate put forth by the UNHCR or the CMS may be correct or accurate.

²¹ *Testimony of the Honorable Dan Glickman, Before the Senate Committee on the Judiciary*, 111th Cong., 3 (2010) (statement of Dan Glickman, President of Refugees International) https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/glickman_testimony_05_19_101.pdf.

²² Donald Kerwin, Daniela Alulema, Michael Nicholson, and Robert Warren, "Statelessness in the United States: A Study to Estimate and Profile the US Stateless Population," *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 8(2), June 2020: 150-213, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2331502420907028>.

The American Community Survey (ACS) "is an ongoing survey that provides vital information on a yearly basis about the United States and its people. Information from the survey generates data that help determine how more than \$675 billion in federal and state funds are distributed each year. From 2017 to 2020, the New York City-based research organization Center for Migration Studies (CMS) partnered together with national organization, United Stateless, to conduct a research project to map out and describe the US' stateless or potentially stateless population. CMS based their final results on information from the 2018 American Community Survey from the US Census Bureau and data from the US Department of State Worldwide Refugee Admission Processing System (WRAPS), a database that tracks domestic admission for refugee resettlement. For more information on the ACS, please see: <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/about.html>. For more information on the CMS' methodology, please see: <https://cmsny.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/StatelessnessReportFinal.pdf>.

²³ David Baluarte, "Protecting Stateless Refugees in the United States," 2020: 3-4.

In 2011, the United States demonstrated a brief interest in resolving statelessness domestically when former Secretary of State Hilary Clinton stated in a 2011 UNHCR speech that the US Department of State would collaborate with Congress in the coming years to draft legislation addressing the country's own stateless population.²⁴ The Senate introduced the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act and the Refugee Protection Act during the 113th session of Congress—both of which included a provision on stateless persons—yet neither measure successfully passed both the House and Senate.²⁵ The United States has not reengaged in legislative or executive efforts to resolve domestic cases of statelessness since the early 2010s. Though the UNHCR initiated the global #IBelong campaign to eradicate all cases of statelessness by 2024, the United States has not committed itself to any of the ten proposed Global Action Plans despite having recorded cases of statelessness within its territory.²⁶ Rather, the United States has devoted itself to eradicating statelessness abroad by encouraging states to end nationality policies that discriminate on the basis of sex.²⁷

Though statelessness in the early 2010s became somewhat of a salient issue amongst federal officials, it failed to gain such traction amongst mass media feeds. David Baluarte, a Professor of Law at Washington and Lee College and legal expert on statelessness, noted that the, “proposed incorporation of statelessness protection into US immigration law has been underreported, and its potential as a humanitarian remedy that would mitigate bureaucratic

²⁴ Hillary Rodham Clinton, US Department of State, “Remarks at the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Ministerial on the 60th Anniversary of the Refugee Convention.” *US Department of State*. December 7, 2011, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2011/12/178406.htm>.

²⁵ Congress.gov, “Refugee Protection Act of 2013,” 2013; Congress.gov, “S.744 - Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act,” April 16, 2013, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/senate-bill/744>.

²⁶ UNHCR, “High-Level Segment on Statelessness: Results and Highlights,” *Refworld*, May 2020, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5ec3e91b4.html>.

²⁷ US Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, “Statelessness,” n.d., <https://www.state.gov/other-policy-issues/statelessness/>; *Ibid*.

inefficiency has been underappreciated.”²⁸ When statelessness *is* mentioned within the media, stateless people are often conflated or confused with other migrant groups, resulting in further marginalization and misunderstanding of statelessness, its intractability, and its lack of legal solutions within the US. United Stateless, a national organization advocating for the rights of stateless people in the US, experiences similar challenges relating to a lack of media coverage and awareness of statelessness.²⁹ The relative silence from American media publications on statelessness prevents further political or social action on behalf of the US’ stateless population.

The lack of federal data and public awareness on statelessness, along with a legislative lull in seeking a resolution for statelessness, showcases the imperativeness of conducting media research on Americans’ attitudes towards stateless individuals and statelessness more broadly. Media and news reportings are not only an important source of information on policy issues, but informative of *how* policy issues are perceived by the public and *what* issues the public views as an important topic for policymakers to address.³⁰ Therefore, how the media presents or frames statelessness to the general public is of great importance, as it can push legislators towards reform or further restrict the stateless to a life in the shadows.

Framing and the Human Interest Frame

Journalists and news reporters can influence the way that the audience interprets issues by emphasizing certain pieces of information over others to increase understanding and reduce

²⁸ Baluarte, “Life after Limbo,” 2015: 353.

²⁹ Polly J. Price, “Stateless in the United States: Current Reality and a Future Prediction,” *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law*, 46(443) (2013): 443-514. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2154470# (Accessed 6/11/21); Nicola McQuiston, “Why has the human rights issue of statelessness not garnered wider public attention in the United States?: A comparative analysis of the cases of statelessness and sex trafficking in the United States since 1990,” Master’s thesis, University College of London, 2019: 16; United Stateless, “About Us,” *United Stateless*, n.d., <https://www.unitedstateless.org/organization>.

³⁰ Dekker and Scholten, “Framing the Immigration Policy Agenda,” 2017.

issue complexity.³¹ This phenomenon is also known as issue *framing*, which refers to the way that a person orients their view around a certain topic based upon negative and positive considerations that they make in relation to the issue or event.³² In communicative issue framing, journalists and news sources present information in a way that achieves one of two things. First, it resonates with an individual's pre-existing cognitive structures in order to assist them in processing new information. Second, the proposed information adjusts the weight that an individual assigns to one competing consideration over another, resulting in a frame shift.³³ Consequently, the way that information is framed in communications matters as it affects the outlooks of their audience on what an issue is and how it can be resolved.

A common frame utilized in immigration reporting is human interest framing. The human interest frame resembles episodic framing—the utilization of case studies or event-specific storytelling—but instead focuses on human exemplars to explain or portray a concept.³⁴ The definition for what constitutes a human interest frame is fluid and constantly evolving amongst scholars, but there are two definitions of interest to the current study. Boukes et al. defines human interest framing more generally by comparing its similarities to that of episodic framing; to Boukes et al., human interest framing describes a broader issue by portraying one or more persons with direct or personal experience on a particular issue who serve as models of that

³¹ Robert M. Enton, "Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm." *Journal of Communication*, 43(4) (1993): 51–58, doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x.

³² Dennis Chong and James Druckman, "Framing theory," *Annual Review of Political Science* (10) (2007): 105-106, doi: 10.1146/annurev.polisci.10.072805.103054.

³³ Dietram Scheufele and David Tewksbury, "Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models." *Journal of Communication*, 57 (2007): 9-20 <https://fbaum.unc.edu/teaching/articles/J-Communication-2007-1.pdf> (Accessed 6/6/21); Chong and Druckman, "Framing Theory," 2007.

³⁴ Mark Boukes, "Episodic and Thematic Framing Effects on the Attribution of Responsibility: The Effects of Personalized and Contextualized News on Perceptions of Individual and Political Responsibility for Causing the Economic Crisis." *International Journal of International Press/Politics*, 26(1) (2021).

topic.³⁵ Human interest framing can bring a sentimental view to the presentation of an issue, rouse public interest in marginalized issues not frequently experienced by the majority population, and permit viewing audiences to comprehend issues more easily.³⁶

A more immigrant-specific human interest frame is expressed by Dekker and Scholten, who described the human interest frame as a frame that displays a favorable attitude towards migrants, depicting them as victims or persons in need of assistance by the receiving state.³⁷ But, rather than exemplars describing the issue as explained by the former definition, it is elite, outside news forces that inform and word the topic. For purposes of this study, the term ‘human-interest framing’ will incorporate aspects from both definitions and refer to stories told from the perspective of the affected individual intended to generate a more favorable attitude from the viewing audience.

Framing and Statelessness

Statelessness receives very little individual framing within US media. Nicola McQuiston of United Stateless suggests that the lack of individual framing on statelessness in the US is due to Americans’ tendency to confuse or conflate stateless persons with refugees and undocumented migrants. Additionally, McQuiston notes that most reports on statelessness are presented episodically, which leads viewers to see the issue more negatively and as less of a societal problem.³⁸ However, other scholars believe that episodic framing may lead to positive outlooks on statelessness. Rahman argues that statelessness globally is predominantly viewed through

³⁵ Mark Boukes, Hajo G. Boomgaarden, Marjolein Moorman, and Claes H. de Vreese “Political News with a Personal Touch: How Human Interest Framing Indirectly Affects Policy Attitudes.” *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 2015, Vol. 92(1): 121–141. DOI: 10.1177/1077699014558554.

³⁶ T. U. Figenschou, and Thorbjørnsrud, K. 2015. “Faces of an invisible population: Human interest framing of irregular immigration news in the United States, France, and Norway.” *American Behavioral Scientist*, 59(7) (2015), 783–801. doi:10.1177/000276421557325; Boukes et al., “Political News with a Personal Touch,; 2015.

³⁷ Dekker and Scholten, “Framing the Immigration Policy Agenda,” 2017.

³⁸ McQuiston, “Why has the human rights issue of statelessness not garnered wider public attention in the United States?,” 2019: 16-17.

political and legal frames which inhibits “empathy, feeling, and visualization” and therefore fails to spur society into action.³⁹ Artistic representations are one such way that the viewer can be connected to the human experience of statelessness and experience a frame shift, yet experts show that storytelling is also an effective method of increasing feelings of empathy on a wide variety of topics.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, these are hypothetical considerations as to why statelessness has not received more framing and how certain frames lead viewers to act or think in one way or another. Few studies have been conducted to confirm how and which frames influence viewers’ perceptions of stateless people and how to best resolve cases of statelessness— particularly in the US context.

As there are few statelessness and media studies, the existing literature on media framing related to irregular migrants and refugees will be used to inform the current research on statelessness within the US. Reviewing media studies that pertain to refugees is applicable to the current study, as statelessness is often found within the different migratory groups that exist within the United States and there is frequent conflation of stateless persons with other displaced populations.⁴¹ Most studies completed on immigration within the media focus on one of two general areas: how the media portrays the issue of immigration and how such portrayals affect the observing audience. The effects of media on the immigration debate are significant, as news publications and media sites exercise a vast amount of control in agenda-setting and issue composition.⁴² Considering that most Americans do not have personal interactions with

³⁹ Rahman, “Humanising Statelessness through an Artistic Approach,” 2020: 273-284.

⁴⁰ Erica L. Rosenthal, Adam A. Rogers, Emily Peterson, Erica Watson-Currie, and Heesung Shin. 2020. “Change the Narrative, Change the World: How Immigrant Representation on Television Moves Audiences to Action.” *Define American*, September, <https://download.defineamerican.com/2020/09/Change-the-Narrative-Change-the-World.pdf>.

⁴¹ Baluarte, “Life After Limbo,” 2015: 372.

⁴² B.Akdenizli, E. J. Dionne, M. Kaplan, T. Rosenstiel, and R. Suro. “Democracy in the age of new media: A report on the media and the immigration debate,” Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution and the University of

immigrants and conflate migrant groups, news and media sources act as the conduit of information on immigration topics and therefore hold a considerable amount of power over how audiences perceive and think about migrant groups.⁴³

Framing of Migrant Groups

Studies demonstrate that communicative issue framing impacts the way that the public views migration.⁴⁴ Threat, conflict, and political frames tend to result in more negative and dehumanizing views of migrants, thereby justifying negative treatment and exclusionary policies towards migrant groups.⁴⁵ Bos et al. likewise demonstrated that negatively framed stories have a negative impact on support for immigration policies.⁴⁶ Conversely, studies on the influence of human interest frames on migration and other related fields have generally demonstrated or hypothesized positive outcomes with participating audiences. Parrott et al. demonstrated that visual human interest frames evoke positive emotional responses, such as empathy and compassion, towards refugees and, “predicted decreased perceptions of threat and more positive attitudes toward policy aimed at aiding immigrants and refugees in resettling in the United States.”⁴⁷ The results from Parrott et al.’s study is in concurrence with other scholars who postulated that human interest framed stories result in feelings of community or solidarity and

Southern California Annenberg School for Communication, 2008, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/0925_immigration_dionne.pdf; Scott Parrott, Jennifer Hoewe, Minghui Fan, and Keith Huffman, “Portrayals of Immigrants and Refugees in U.S. News Media: Visual Framing and its Effect on Emotions and Attitudes,” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 63(4) (Dec. 2019): 677-697.

⁴³ Victoria Esses, Stelian Mediannu, and Andrea Lawson, “Uncertainty, Threat, and the Role of the Media in Promoting the Dehumanization of Immigrants and Refugees,” *Journal of Social Issues* 69(3) (2013): 518-56 (Accessed 6/22/21); Sophie Lecheler, Jorg Matthes, and Hajo Boomgaarden, “Setting the Agenda for Research on Media and Migration:: State-of-the-Art and Directions for Future Research,” *Mass Communication and Society*, 22(6) (2019): 691-707.

⁴⁴ Lecheler et al., “Setting the Agenda for Research,” 2019.

⁴⁵ Esses et al., “Uncertainty, Threat, and the Role of the Media,” 2013.

⁴⁶ Linda Bos, Sophie Lecheler, Moniek Mewafi, and Rens Vliegenhart, “It’s the frame that matters: Immigrant integration and media framing effects in the Netherlands,” *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 55(2016): 97-108.

⁴⁷ Parrott et al., “Portrayals of Immigrants and Refugees in US News Media,” 2019.

that the general public is more accepting of individual immigrants as opposed to certain categories of immigrants.⁴⁸ Consequently, the frame that media and news reports deploy when discussing immigration-related issues influences the way that audiences perceive migrant groups.

Additionally, human interest frames may influence the way that individuals attribute fault or blame for an issue. News pieces that contained human interest framing resulted in a larger number of people attributing responsibility for societal issues to governments and a larger belief that governments should provide necessary resources to resolve such issues.⁴⁹ However, Aalberg and Beyer noted in their study that the effects of human interest framing may be compromised, or mediated, through a series of factors.⁵⁰ These factors can include an individual's personal values, knowledge on the topic, and available information, but also their political interest, individual political views, and societal culture.⁵¹ As a result, Aalberg and Beyer hypothesized that the use of human interest frames amongst reports of irregular migration result in diverging outcomes for the two majority political ideological camps in the United States.⁵²

Significance, Implications, and Purpose of Study

As statelessness studies have largely been overlooked within contemporary American society, it is important to gauge the general climate surrounding stateless individuals, particularly

⁴⁸ Roberta Piazza and Louann Haarman, "Toward a definition and classification of human interest narratives in television war reporting," *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43 (2011): 1540-1549; Toril Aalberg, Shanto Iyengar, and Solomon Messing, "Who is a 'deserving' immigrant? An experimental study of Norwegian attitudes," *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 35 (2012): 97-116.

⁴⁹ Boukes et al., "Political News with a Personal Touch," 2015; Boukes, "Episodic and Thematic Framing Effects on the Attribution of Responsibility," 2012; Aalberg and Beyer, "Human Interest Framing of Irregular Immigration: An Empirical Study of Public Preferences for Personalized News Stories in the United States, France, and Norway," *American Behavioral Scientist* 59(7) (2015): 858-875.

⁵⁰ Aalberg and Beyer, "Human Interest Framing of Irregular Immigration," 2015.

⁵¹ Chong and Druckman, "Framing theory," 2006; Nael Jebril, Claes H. de Vreese, Arjen van Dalen, and Erik Albaek, "The Effects of Human Interest and Conflict News Frames on the Dynamics of Political Knowledge Gains: Evidence from a Cross National Study," *Scandinavian Political Studies* 36(3) (2013): 201-226; Aalberg and Beyer, "Human Interest Framing of Irregular Immigration," 2015.

⁵² Aalberg and Beyer, "Human Interest Framing of Irregular Immigration," 2015.

in a time when migration—a category to which statelessness is commonly linked—is in contentious debate.⁵³ If Americans tend to differentiate the stateless from other disputed migrant groups, such as those who enter the country undocumented,⁵⁴ it may be easier to introduce and pass legislation to assist stateless persons within the US. Particularly important for this study is the emphasis on human interest framed reporting. As statelessness has disappeared from the American policy agenda in the last decade, determining how and which media frame elicits greater understanding of and sympathy with the stateless may inform human rights activists and stateless people about how to remobilize political and media campaigns for nationality reform. Furthermore, by observing how Americans respond to human interest framed stories of statelessness, human rights advocates such as United Stateless may be able to tailor their communications campaigns to particular interest groups and demographics. For instance, should certain respondents be unresponsive to human interest stories and not demonstrate a change in attitudes, a separate communications approach focusing on the economic effects of statelessness may lead to more fruitful results for persons of a particular demographic or interest group.

More generally, the discussion of statelessness in the US is of paramount importance as it relates to the US' human rights record and capability as a global leader. While the US encourages other UN member-states to reform their nationality laws to prevent statelessness, the US' inaction on its own domestic cases of statelessness places the country's commitment to human rights into question— an undesirable look for a state seeking the consolidation of human rights elsewhere around the world. If the United States wishes to represent itself as an exemplar

⁵³ Claire Felter, Danielle Renwick, and Amelia Cheatham, "The US Immigration Debate," *Council on Foreign Relations*, August 31, 2021, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-immigration-debate-0>.

⁵⁴ The term 'undocumented migrant' in the United States is used to refer to all foreigners who enter or remain in the United States without prior authorization from the federal government. By virtue of their lack of nationality and identification documents, all stateless persons in the US are undocumented. However, all persons who fall under the category of undocumented are not necessarily stateless, as some may hold a legally recognizable nationality and may be accepted for deportation to their country of origin.

human rights defender desiring an expansion of human rights globally, it would align its domestic and foreign policies to avoid an equivocal approach to statelessness.

As little is known about general attitudes towards statelessness within the United States, the present study seeks to take a “snapshot” of attitudes across a broad target audience in regards to statelessness through snowball sampling (see Methodology). The present research aims to investigate four primary research questions. First, does exposure to human interest frames in relation to statelessness result in a change in response to what rights participants believe stateless people are entitled to within the United States? Second, does exposure to the human interest frame on statelessness result in a change in response relating to how individuals assign blame for ongoing cases of statelessness and responsibility for the resolution of statelessness? Third, does exposure to human interest framed media result in a change in response to respondents’ attitudes on the presence of stateless persons in the United States? And finally, is there a relationship between change in response and certain demographic groupings?

H₀ : There is no significant change in participants’ responses relating to what rights stateless persons are entitled to in the United States.

H₁ : There is a significant change in participants’ assignment of blame for ongoing cases of statelessness in the United States.

H₀ : There is no significant change in participants’ assignment of responsibility for the resolution of statelessness in the United States.

H₁ : There is a significant change in participants’ responses relating to the assignment of responsibility for the resolution of statelessness in the United States.

H₀ : There is no significant change in participants’ assignment of responsibility for ongoing cases of statelessness in the United States.

H₁ : There is a significant change in participants’ assignment of responsibility for ongoing cases of statelessness in the United States.

Methodology

Survey Overview

To study how human interest framed media influences Americans' attitudes on statelessness, the primary investigator (PI) created a voluntary online survey questionnaire (Appendix I) on Google Forms. All responses submitted were recorded from Google Forms onto a separate Excel spreadsheet and saved to an external flash drive. The survey was open to participants for approximately three weeks, from July 21 to August 15 2021. The survey included several sections for participants to consider. First, participants were instructed to read through the informed consent and complete the acknowledgment at the bottom of their screen. Then, participants filled out a brief demographic questionnaire, which gathered their age, race, gender, highest level of education completed, and whether or not they had heard of the term statelessness prior to the start of the survey. Next, participants were directed to read through a brief list of definitions to differentiate between the different migrant groups (i.e. refugee, asylum-seeker, undocumented migrant, and stateless person) and confirm that they have carefully read through all entries.

Following the definitions, participants were asked four qualitative questions to gauge where they assigned responsibility for continuing cases of statelessness in the US, where they assigned responsibility for resolving cases of statelessness in the US, what social and political rights they believed stateless people were entitled to, and their general attitudes towards stateless people present in the US. The questions within this section were closed-answer questions in order to gather quantitative data to discern patterns and correlations amongst participants and their beliefs.

The next two sections had participants read through two human interest pieces relating to statelessness in the US: the first, an article from the *Washington Post*, and the second, a

transcript from a YouTube interview. After each media stimuli that the participant interacted with, they were asked one content question to ensure adequate comprehension. Following the stimuli sections, participants were asked to answer the same four questions that they were asked immediately prior to interacting with the article and transcript to observe if there is any measurable change between respondents' answers before and after exposure to human interest framed media. Participants were also encouraged to leave comments, questions, or opinions on the survey and stateless people in a fourth open-ended question proposed at the conclusion of the survey. The information that participants contribute to the open-ended question will give qualitative insight into statelessness. All questions asked on the survey were optional for participants, meaning that some questions could be left unanswered.

Participant Recruitment

Participants for the survey were selected through snowball or chain-referral sampling. Snowball sampling is a convenient non-probability sampling technique, meaning that not every member in a particular group has an equal chance of selection. Rather, researchers identify an initial set of contacts to participate in the study, then identify or refer other persons within their personal or professional networks for the study. Due to the networking nature of snowball sampling, this particular method of dispersal and recruitment is often criticized for its limitations on generalizability, representativeness, and validity and for the data's results to become easily distorted (i.e. all female respondents, all one racial category, etc.).⁵⁵ However, several scholars have suggested that snowball sampling is particularly useful when conducting research on marginalized populations or issues as participants are referred or recruited by trusted

⁵⁵ C. Parker, S. Scott, A Geddes, "Snowball sampling," *SAGE Research Methods Foundations*, 2019. http://eprints.glos.ac.uk/6781/1/6781%20Parker%20and%20Scott%20%282019%29%20Snowball%20Sampling_Per%20reviewed%20pre-copy%20edited%20version.pdf.

acquaintances. Additionally, the use of snowball sampling online can increase representativeness and sample size, as participants can be instructed to reach out to persons both online and offline.⁵⁶ As a convenience sampling method, snowball sampling will be useful in capturing a “snapshot” of people throughout the country and their attitudes towards statelessness.

Survey Dispersal

The PI identified an initial population to take the survey and asked initial respondents to refer others within their own personal and professional networks to partake in the study. The survey was disseminated through various channels, including the PI’s personal and professional circles through LinkedIn, FaceBook, and Twitter. To ensure that the survey was being dispersed to a diverse pool of participants, the PI contacted various politically-oriented groups on the campus of Towson University, including College Republicans, College Democrats, and Turning Point USA. The PI also searched the University campus organizations webpage (Involved @ TU) to observe if there were any active Libertarian or Green Party organizations, but such organizations were either inactive or non-existent. A contact in the Towson University Political Science department agreed to disperse the survey link on the Political Science Department’s public Twitter page so that all followers of differing backgrounds would be exposed to the survey. All participants were encouraged to repost or reshare the link to the survey with their own personal and professional circles in order to gather data from a wider pool of participants beyond the PI’s initial contacts.

Participant Pool

By the conclusion of the study, 246 participants submitted responses. However, some responses were removed from the final study report. The survey included two “checkpoint”

⁵⁶ F. Baltar and I. Brunet, “Social research 2.0: virtual snowball sampling method using Facebook.” *Internet Research*, 22(1) (2012): 57-74. doi: 10.1108/10662241211199960.

content-based questions after each of the two articles that participants were instructed to read. The checkpoint questions were utilized to ensure that participants thoroughly read through the articles and followed survey instructions. If a participant answered both questions incorrectly, their answer was subsequently removed from the final data set. Participants who answered both or one of the checkpoint questions correctly had their responses retained and featured in the final data set. In total, three participants answered both questions incorrectly and had their responses removed from the final data set. Twenty-six participants answered one question incorrectly, but remained in the final data set. The PI also removed three additional responses from the final data set, as they contained verbatim comments and demographic information from previous responses. In total, 241 responses were retained for final data analysis. Of those 241 responses, fifty participants wrote additional comments for qualitative analysis.

The 241 responses accepted for final data analysis represent a wide array of demographics, particularly within education levels. Education-wise, no categorical grouping represented a simple majority; the educational grouping with the highest level of respondents were those with “some undergraduate schooling,” composing approximately 29.9 percent of respondents. Respondents with Bachelor’s degrees composed the second largest educational grouping at 25.3 percent, then those with Master’s degrees (17.0 percent), high school diploma or GED (11.6 percent), and a Juris Doctorate or Doctorate’s degree (9.5 percent). The remaining participants were those with some graduate school experience (3.3 percent), an Associate’s or vocational degree (2.5 percent), less than high school education (0.04 percent), and those who did not want to specify or did not know their highest level of completed education (0.04 percent).

Respondents’ political leanings were also varied, with no political ideological leaning taking the simple majority. However, survey respondents were generally more liberal, with 44.0

percent identifying as “liberal” and 22.0 percent identifying as “lean liberal.” Conversely, 6.2 percent of respondents self-identified as “conservative” while an additional 9.5 percent identified as “lean conservative.” Those identifying as politically moderate composed 17.8 percent of respondents, while 0.04 percent of respondents selected no answer.

Age range, racial and ethnic identity, and gender identity were somewhat diverse, with some categories taking a clear or indisputable simple majority. In regards to age range, persons aged 18-34 composed a majority of respondents at 59.3 percent. As the age option category rose, the number of respondents for that category decreased, as 18.3 percent of persons identified as 34-49, 14.1 percent as 50-64, 7.9 percent as 65 years or older, and 0.04 percent declining to furnish such information. In regards to gender identity, women comprised 62.7 percent of respondents in comparison to men who only totaled 32.0 percent. Approximately 4.2 percent of respondents identified as non-binary, while 0.04 percent preferred not to answer and another 0.04 percent did not leave a response at all. In terms of the racial and ethnic makeup of respondents, approximately 80.8 percent of respondents identified as white. The remainder of respondents identified as Black (7.9 percent), Asian (5.4 percent), Pacific Islander (0.04 percent), Middle Eastern (2.1 percent), Hispanic or Latinx (7.5 percent), or Other (0.08 percent). No respondents identified themselves as Indigenous or Native. Respondents also reported if they were bi- or multi-racial. Almost 2.1 percent of respondents noted that they were two or more races or ethnicities, but not all persons who selected more than one race or ethnicity also selected the two or more races option. These respondents who did not mark themselves as bi- or multi-racial were counted separately by the PI and composed approximately 5.0 percent of respondents. About 2.1 percent of respondents declined to offer information on their racial or ethnic identity, while 0.04 percent declined to submit an answer for this section.

Most interesting to this study is respondents' answers in regards to whether or not they had heard of statelessness prior to the survey. Though the "yes" option has a simple majority at 51.9 percent, approximately 48.1 percent of respondents selected "no." Only 0.08 percent of respondents declined to answer this question. The near even split between respondents who have and have not heard of statelessness prior to the survey corroborates the statements made by McQuiston, who studied the lack of development of statelessness as a human rights issue in the United States.⁵⁷ These percentages corroborate much of the conversation within and amongst the stateless community on the lack of public awareness of statelessness.

Some portions of the sample demographics are representative of the greater population present within the US. For instance, the racial and ethnic demographics of respondents is overrepresented by white identifying participants. While 80 percent of survey respondents identified as white,⁵⁸ data from the 2020 US Census estimates that 60.1 percent of persons are white alone.⁵⁹ Similarly, a majority of survey respondents identified as a woman (62.7 percent) while 50.8 percent of "female persons" are present in the United States.⁶⁰ Though there may be some overrepresentation of some demographic groups, other portions are representative of the greater US population. As a result, generalizability from this study may be slightly impaired.

Methodological Overview: Quantitative Data

The unit of analysis for this study and paper is at the individual level. The PI examines how interaction with human-interest framed stimuli (an article from the *Washington Post* and a

⁵⁷ McQuiston, "Why has the human rights issue of statelessness not garnered wider public attention in the United States?," 2019.

⁵⁸ This number includes those who selected another racial or ethnic option in addition to white (i.e. white and Latinx, white and Black, etc.)

⁵⁹ United States Census Bureau, "QuickFacts." *United States Census Bureau, 2020*, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045219>.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

transcript from a video interview) influences respondents' attitudes towards stateless persons in the United States. The PI also observes how certain demographic characteristics, such as political identity, racial identity, education level, and prior knowledge of statelessness influence participants' perceptions of stateless people prior to and directly after interacting with the stimuli. By observing all variables at an individual level of analysis, the PI seeks to observe if and how human interest-framed stories result in a change of attitudes towards stateless persons. The analysis will employ a cross-sectional experimental design so that the relationship of all variables may be viewed at once. Utilizing a cross-sectional experimental design may give greater insight into the present national opinion surrounding stateless people in the United States.

The collected quantitative data was analyzed through SPSS. First, a descriptive statistics frequency test was utilized to determine the demographic characteristics of all respondents (Appendix II). Then, cross tabulations were used to determine if there was a significant pattern amongst certain demographics and change in attitudes. Kendall's tau-b is utilized for bivariate analysis as the dependent variable is measured at the ordinal level with scale measurements, while all independent variables are ordinal or dichotomous. To conduct the analysis, the PI calculated the numerical difference between each respondent's pre-stimuli and post-stimuli responses and used the resulting answer as the dependent (Y) variable to compare against four independent (X) variables. The independent variables selected for analysis included highest level of education completed, if respondents identified as white, political ideological leaning, and whether or not participants had prior knowledge of statelessness (see Appendix I for an explanation of how variables were measured and coded in SPSS).

Bivariate Analysis: Discussion

The bivariate analyses overall demonstrates that the four tested independent variables (highest level of education, identifying as white, political leaning, and prior knowledge of statelessness) do not have a statistically significant relationship on change in response to questions relating to the presence of stateless persons, the assignment of responsibility to the continuation of statelessness, the assignment of responsibility for the resolution of statelessness, and the assignment of certain rights and privileges that stateless persons are entitled to in the United States. In other words, most survey respondents did not demonstrate a change in response. Though individuals across each of these demographic categories may have had a change in response between the pre- and post-media questionnaires, the Kendall's tau-b and p values highlight that most changes in responses were statistically insignificant with weak correlations.

Though most analyses yielded statistically insignificant results, there were a handful of results that showed a statistically significant correlation. When discussing removal from the United States, there was a statistically significant relationship between change in response relating to the removal of stateless persons from the US and a respondent's political leaning and prior knowledge of statelessness. As the independent variables of political leaning (1 = Liberal, 2 = Lean Liberal, 3 = Moderate, 4 = Lean Conservative, 5 = Conservative) and prior unfamiliarity with statelessness (1 = Yes, 2 = No) both increase, the dependent variable of change in response decreased by 1, 2, or even 3 points on five-point Likert scale. In other words, the more conservative a respondent is, the more likely they were to have a change in response *after* reading the articles, moving from "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" towards "Neutral, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree" (see Figure 1). As there is a slight divide between which political ideologies experienced a change in response, these results align with the conclusions met by Aalberg and

Beyer, who hypothesized that human interest framed reports on irregular migration would result in a split between the two major political parties in the United States.⁶¹

Likewise, the more unfamiliar a person was with the issue of statelessness (1 = Yes, 2 = No), the more likely they were to have a change in response after interacting with stimuli, moving from “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” towards “Neutral,” “Disagree,” or “Strongly Disagree” (see Figure 2). This suggests that interaction with human interest framed media does result in a change in attitudes towards stateless people being removed from the United States.

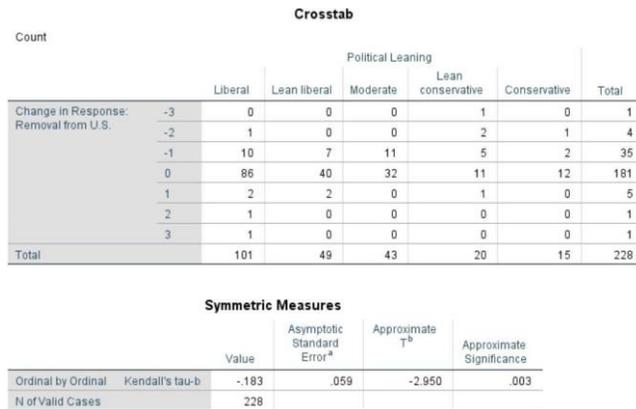
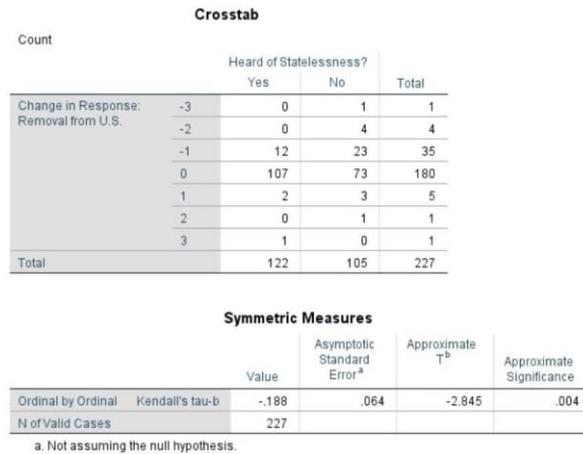


Figure 1: Political leaning and change in response rates relating to a stateless person’s removal from the US The more conservative a respondent was, the more likely they were to experience a change in attitudes towards stateless persons after interacting with human interest framed stories and change their answers from “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” to “Neutral,” “Disagree,” or “Strongly Disagree.”



⁶¹ Aalberg and Beyer, “Human Interest Framing of Irregular Immigration,” 2015.

Figure 2: Prior knowledge of statelessness and change in response rates relating to a stateless person's removal from the US Respondents who did not know what statelessness was prior to the start of the survey were more likely to experience a change in attitudes towards stateless persons after interacting with human interest framed stimuli and change their answers from "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" towards "Neutral," "Disagree," or "Strongly Disagree."

Similarly, when presented with the question of what rights and privileges stateless persons should be entitled to in the United States, there was a statistically significant relationship between change in response pertaining to two different rights: the right to vote and no rights at all. The presence of whiteness (1 = Yes, 2 = No) correlates with a positive change in response in granting stateless persons the right to vote (see Figure 3). Similarly, as unfamiliarity with statelessness increased (1 = Yes, 2 = No), respondents' change in response also increased, meaning that participants were more likely to agree that stateless people were deserving of the right to vote after reading human interest framed media (see Figure 4). Additionally, as respondents' political leanings increased along the liberal-conservative spectrum (1 = Liberal, 2 = Lean Liberal, 3 = Moderate, 4 = Lean Conservative, 5 = Conservative) they were more likely to have a negative or decreasing change in attitudes towards stateless persons being deserving of no rights. All of these variable pairings support the hypothesis that interaction with human framed interest media results in a change in attitudes towards stateless people.

Change in Response: Voting * White

Count

Crosstab

		White		Total
		Yes	No	
Change in Response:	0	182	46	228
Voting	1	12	0	12
Total		194	46	240

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymptotic Standard Error ^a	Approximate T ^b	Approximate Significance
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	-.112	.018	-3.363	.001
N of Valid Cases		240			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Figure 3: Race (white or non-white) and change in response relating to whether or not stateless persons should be granted the right to vote. A respondent who identified as white was more likely to have a change in response after reading the human interest framed stories of statelessness and agree that stateless people should have the right to vote.

Change in Response: Voting * Heard of Statelessness?

Crosstab

Count

	Heard of Statelessness?		Total
	Yes	No	
Change in Response: Voting	0	122	105
	1	2	10
Total	124	115	239

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymptotic Standard Error ^a	Approximate T ^b	Approximate Significance
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	.162	.054	2.476	.013
N of Valid Cases		239			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Figure 4: Prior knowledge of statelessness and change in response relating to whether or not stateless persons should be granted the right to vote. Respondents who were unfamiliar with statelessness prior to the start of the survey were more likely to show a change in response after reading the human interest framed articles and agree that stateless people should have the right to vote.

Change in Response: No Rights * Political Leaning

Crosstab

Count

	Political Leaning					Total
	Liberal	Lean liberal	Moderate	Lean conservative	Conservative	
Change in Response: No Rights	-1	1	1	2	2	2
	0	103	51	41	21	13
	1	2	1	0	0	0
Total	106	53	43	23	15	240

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymptotic Standard Error ^a	Approximate T ^b	Approximate Significance
Ordinal by Ordinal	Kendall's tau-b	-.164	.053	-2.454	.014
N of Valid Cases		240			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Figure 5: Political leaning and change in response relating to whether or not stateless persons should be granted any basic rights in the United States. A respondent who identified as white was more likely to have a change in response after reading the human interest framed stories of statelessness and changed their response to agree that stateless people are entitled to at least one right provided on the survey.

While only five total analyses demonstrated that change in response was significant across certain independent variables and area issues, it should be highlighted that many variable pairings had a *p* value just *slightly* larger than 0.05. The crosstabs comparing prior knowledge of statelessness and change in attitudes towards stateless persons having the right to start and own a

business, for instance, had a p value of 0.064. Had the total valid sample size been slightly larger, the relationship between certain X and Y variables may have been statistically significant.

Another factor that may have contributed to the large number of weak correlations is the small sample size. Multiple scholars emphasize the importance of a minimum sample size that accurately represents a given population, yet there is conflict in determining the minimum sample size for a study.⁶² For this particular project, the population size sampled was the larger general American population (330 million people), yet only 241 individuals submitted a valid response form. Clearly, this survey does not meet the minimum sample size requirement expected by most researchers, which in turn may have impacted the strength of the statistical results. As explained in the Survey Sample (see above), some demographics were overrepresented in this survey while others were underrepresented, which may have led to skewed results.

Another consideration for future iterations of this project is the survey layout itself. Though Google Forms is the most accessible online platform and does not require a subscription for access, the multiple response questions sometimes resulted in respondents selecting more than one answer, despite instructions to only select one option. When respondents accidentally selected more than one answer (for instance, accidentally clicking both “agree” and “disagree” when asked their opinion on stateless people remaining in the US with a pathway to citizenship during the pre-test), the respondent’s answer was coded as missing in SPSS. A respondent’s double clicking of answers impacted the change in response variable too, as SPSS could not compute pre- and post-test scores with the missing value. In the future, a different survey tool

⁶² Samar Rahi, Fera Alnaser, and Ghani Mazuri, “Designing Survey Research: Recommendation for Questionnaire Development, Calculating Sample Size, and Selecting Research Paradigms,” 37th International Scientific Conference on Economic and Social Development: “Socio Economic Problems of Sustainable Development,” Baku, Azerbaijan, February 14-15, 2019.

may have to be used to ensure that respondents cannot select multiple responses when not instructed to do so.

If similar survey studies are to be conducted on attitudes towards statelessness, a larger sample size would be recommended. Or, future researchers should seek to recruit, survey, and interview respondents of a particular demographic—such as all conservatives or all persons unfamiliar with statelessness—to determine how particular demographic groupings view statelessness. Similarly, it may be useful for future researchers to closely consider to the wording and specificity of questions; multiple respondents remarked that “country of origin” should have been used in place of “other foreign countries,” which in turn may have resulted in different answers for both pre- and post-questionnaires (see Appendix I). Additionally, future research could take into account the impact of other frames, such as conflict frames, and observe if respondents have a greater change in response rate than that which was presented with human-interest framed stimuli.

The bivariate quantitative analysis addressed the question of whether or not human interest framed media resulted in a change in response across respondents. Though most respondents did not have a change in response and answered both the pre- and post-media questionnaires similarly, the above results demonstrate that human-interest framed media can influence certain demographics to view certain topics (i.e., presence of stateless people in the United States and the assigning of particular rights) about stateless people sympathetically.

Methodological Overview and Discussion: Qualitative Data

To complement the quantitative data, participants were given the option to leave additional comments, questions, or feedback pertaining to the survey or the topic of statelessness at the conclusion of the post-media questionnaire. Of the 241 valid responses, sixty-four

contained comments from respondents. However, some of these comments were removed from the final quantitative analysis as they contained personally identifiable information (PII) or consisted of simply “not applicable (N/A)” or “no” statements, indicating that the respondent did not have any additional comments to leave on the survey. After these responses were removed, there were a total of fifty-two comments available for analysis.

To analyze respondents’ comments, the PI conducted thematic quantitative analysis, which, as described by Nowell et al., “is a method for identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing, and reporting themes within a data set.”⁶³ The comments submitted by survey participants underwent a rigorous course of analysis, beginning with initial intake, coding, reviewing and defining of themes, and production of the final presentation, as discussed in Nowell et al. and Braun and Clark.⁶⁴ Though respondents were able to submit comments freely, deductive coding methods—where themes and codes were created based on existing concepts or ideas—were utilized during this portion of analysis. Comments were also analyzed latently, where the coding and themes report subtextual or contextual meanings.⁶⁵ The PI first conducted all thematic analysis individually, then referred to a faculty project advisor for discussion. Analysis of participants’ comments yielded two main themes: legality and responsibility.

Legality

The first theme frequently present across participant responses was legality. Respondents often invoked words and phrases such as “documentation,” “citizenship,” “rules and protocols,” “law,” and “illegally” when discussing statelessness. All comments beneath the theme of legality

⁶³ Lorelli Norwell, Jill Norris, Deborah White, and Nancy Moules, “Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria,” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1) (2017): 1-13.

⁶⁴ Norwell et al., “Thematic Analysis,” 2017; Virginia Braun and Victoria Clark, “Using thematic analysis in psychology,” *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2) (2006): 77-101 (Accessed 8/19/21).

⁶⁵ Braun and Clark, “Using thematic analysis in psychology,” 2006.

concur that regulations are needed within the United States immigration system; no comment explicitly denies this need for an organized immigration process. However, some comments acknowledge that there are legal regulations or blockades that either disregard statelessness as an issue within the US' immigration system or prevent movement (whether said movement be into or out of the country). Other comments imply that a legal process for stateless persons outside of asylum already *does* exist under current US law.

Participant 30 not only acknowledged how the human-interest framed stories shifted their opinion on responsibility, but highlighted the lack of legal pathways for stateless persons to seek a resolution to their case. “When looking at the topic you think ‘Oh, it’s their fault the[y’re] sta[te]less,’ but after reading the articles I realized the system is set up against them,” wrote the participant. “Even when trying to become a citizen, it’s so many roadblocks.” Participants 37 and 11 voiced similar comments: “This topic feels like it is something not thought about or addressed enough in government today. There should be way more solutions to these issues than there are,” wrote one. “I think if people want to li[v]e in the US or somewhere else then we should have a process to assist them to get somewhere,” wrote another. Such comments convey the sentiment that more should be done on behalf of the United States government to facilitate a solution for statelessness. It is interesting to note that the latter two participants hint that legal processes should involve not only the US government, but foreign entities—most likely a stateless person’s country of origin.

Concurrently, other respondents left comments that implied a legal process already existed within the United States to either place stateless persons on a pathway to American citizenship or repatriate them to a foreign country when asylum is denied. “I understand why people want to come to the USA, but there are rules and protocols to follow,” stated Participant

22. “Other countries do not allow just anyone showing up on their doorstep, so why is the USA expected to be any different?” Participant 23 wrote that “[t]he paths to citizenship are absurd. We need to shorten the time and path it takes to become a citizen,” implying that a pathway to citizenship exists for stateless persons. “As long as people pay taxes, I have no problem with work permission and access to tax paid programs, but current laws need to be followed until new laws can be created to fix current issues.”

Other participants similarly commented on the legality of crossing the United States border irregularly. Participant 34 commented on the different pathways that a stateless person could arrive to the United States to file an asylum claim: “It is one thing to apply for a US visa and come to the US legally, it is another, to simp[ly] gain access by walking across the border. I believe that an individual who comes legally on a visa, would have a better claim regarding his or her statelessness in a US immigration court.” Participant 16 commented, “I believe everyone should emigrate following the rules of the US. These [stateless] persons decided to leave their country of birth no matter which reason. I would personally not put my family in jeopardy and possible deportation; would apply legally.” Participant 2 commented on the lack of documentation. Though the respondent did not specify what type of documentation, it is implied that they are referring to both the lack of personal documentation (i.e. valid passports) and lack of documentation of their presence with the US government: “It is my thought that a country is set to protect its own citizens, how can they do this if the people they let into the country have no documentation. They can be anyone including terrorists/drug smugglers/human traffickers/etc.”

All of the above comments question the legality of irregular migration and assume that there is an alternative for stateless persons (“would apply legally”) or a current law that exists to regulate their status (“the paths to citizenship are absurd, but current law needs to be followed

until new laws can be created”). All comments also imply wrongdoing or a violated statute, as invoked by the repeated phrase “follow the rules.” However, neither of the stateless persons featured in the survey vignettes violated US law—nor is there a pathway for them to be either sent home or integrated into US society. The stateless person featured in the first article entered the US on a visa and applied for asylum, which was later rejected. The stateless person featured in the second article entered the US seeking asylum, which is permitted regardless of a person’s legal status as protected under US law.⁶⁶

Both asylum claims were denied, which then initiated final removal proceedings. But, as both stateless persons arrived in the United States with Soviet-era passports with no USSR successor state claiming them as a national, they could not be deported. They remain in the United States, with no administrative pathway to regularize their status, as there is no domestic definition of statelessness or a method for determining if someone is stateless. Though both are present in the US unauthorized—which is a civil violation, not a crime—their stateless status prevents them from receiving the penalty of deportation.⁶⁷

The repeated mentioning of legality related to statelessness is interesting, as statelessness by definition alludes to a person having no legal status at all, either in the United States or abroad. Though there are punishments for entering and remaining in the United States unauthorized, stateless persons are unable to adjust their status to either leave or integrate into society through the current US legal system. The comments relating to the legality of entry and presence of stateless persons showcase the complexity of legal systems and the loopholes that prevent statelessness from being fully resolved in the United States.

⁶⁶ Congress.gov. "S.643 - 96th Congress (1979-1980): Refugee Act of 1979." March 17, 1980. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/96th-congress/senate-bill/643>.

⁶⁷ Dan Clark, “Is living as an undocumented immigrant in the US a crime?,” *PolitiFact*, December 1, 2017, <https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2017/dec/02/kathy-sheehan/being-undocumented-immigrant-us-not-crime/>.

Responsibility

Discussion of who or what entity is responsible for the continuation and resolution of statelessness was a main area of investigation throughout the multiple, closed-answered choice section of the survey. Fourteen respondents submitted additional comments that contained language related to the theme of assignment of responsibility. Within this general theme of responsibility, two general sub-themes also emerged: collective and individual.

Collective responsibility is used to describe those comments that insist that the burden of responsibility and/or care rests not with a single party, but multiple. Some respondents believed that responsibility for the resolution of statelessness did not solely rest with the United States. Respondent 12 stated that, “Stateless people should be helped from the broader international community, not just the US government.” Participant 31 commented similarly, stating that “it should be the US gov[ernment’s] job to negotiate and communicate with the person’s country of origin,” while Participant 50 wrote that the “US and foreign governments should work together to solve the problem.” These three participants view statelessness as a global burden that requires action from multiple actors, which may or may not include states and intergovernmental organizations such as the UNHCR.

Conversely, some respondents urged that responsibility was not shared, but rather individual and fell upon the shoulders of one singular actor. However, which actor respondents stated were responsible for statelessness in the US varied from person to person. Some thought that responsibility for the causation, continuation, and care for stateless persons in the United States rested with other governments. Participant 10 wrote that “[t]he responsibility of statelessness rests with the original country of origin or whatever successor country exists (in the case of former Soviet states or similar situations). It is not the job of the United States to be the

savior of everyone experiencing hardship, statelessness included.” Comments such as this suggest that US policy should not be adjusted for stateless persons present in the United States, as the United States was not the entity that initially denied citizenship to stateless persons.

Other respondents placed responsibility for the situation of statelessness on stateless persons themselves. Recall Respondent 16: “These [stateless] persons decided to leave their country of birth no matter which reason. I would personally not put my family in jeopardy and possible deportation.” To this respondent, statelessness is the culminating consequences of a series of individual actions that is not the responsibility of the United States or any other third party to resolve.

Other participants commented that their opinion on who is responsible for causing statelessness changed between the start and end of the survey. Participant 37 wrote that “[a]fter reading the vignettes provided, my answer shifted in one way, putting the responsibility of statelessness on the US Government. Previously I had said it was the other countries’ governments’ responsibilities (believing it was conditions there that made individuals seek something better in the US). I now believe that regardless of the reason these individuals entered this country, it is the US’ policies on immigration that creates the statelessness of so many people.” As stated earlier in the section, Participant 30 stated that they “realized the system is set up against them [stateless persons]” and that “it’s so many roadblocks” to achieving American citizenship or a legal status. Such comments corroborate the discussion of the quantitative analysis, which stated that although significant changes in opinion on the assigning of responsibility for statelessness were not present, individual changes in response were observable.

Further Discussion

The comments from respondents demonstrate that further education and research on statelessness in the United States is needed. Discussion on the legality of statelessness in the context of the US immigration system is necessary for enhanced and deepened discussion of statelessness in the United States. The comments made in regards to stateless persons were created in reference to two stories of stateless persons from the former USSR. It is important to note that there are stateless persons in the US from all areas across the globe, including Eritrea, Myanmar, and Jordan, and that comments presented here for this particular study may not be applicable to all cases of statelessness in the United States. Similar studies in the future may wish to use stories from stateless persons who were not former citizens of the Soviet Union.

Conclusion and Future Research

Ten million stateless persons exist around the globe today, an unknown fraction of whom reside within the United States. While previous studies have focused on American attitudes towards refugees and other irregular migrants, few, if any, studies have focused on attitudes towards the stateless. This study sought to ameliorate the knowledge gap on the US' stateless population and understand general opinions towards stateless persons through a qualitative and quantitative survey and observe if interaction with human-interest framed stimuli resulted in a change in response or attitudes across a significant number of respondents in particular demographic grouping based on education, race, political ideological leaning, and prior knowledge of statelessness.

Overall, only five dependent and independent variable pairings demonstrated statistically significant correlations. As respondent's political leanings increased along a five-point scale from most liberal to most conservative, respondents' post-questionnaire response on the removal of stateless persons from the US decreased by 1, 2, or even 3 Likert scale points. Similarly, as

respondents' prior familiarity with statelessness increased along a dichotomous scale, respondents' change in response on the removal of stateless persons from the US also decreased. Statistically significant relationships were observed between change in response on what rights stateless people should be afforded and their racial identity, political ideological leaning, or their prior familiarity with statelessness. Participants identifying as white and participants who were unfamiliar with statelessness prior to the start of the survey both had a positive change of response when asked if stateless persons should be granted the right to vote. Additionally, as respondents' political identification increased along a five-point Likert scale, they were more likely to have a negative or decreasing change of response when asked if stateless persons deserve no rights. These five variable pairings demonstrate that interaction with human-interest framed stimuli does result in a change in response or attitudes towards stateless people in the United States.

The qualitative analysis continued discussion of the questions proposed to participants during the pre- and post-surveys. Most participants who chose to leave additional comments wrote of the legality of entry, removal, and presence of stateless persons in the US, or spoke of the assigning of responsibility for continuation and resolution of statelessness. While there is diversity of opinion amongst comments left by respondents, it is evident that future discussion and education on the stateless and how to best resolve their plight is needed in academic, legal, and political circles.

Future research may include running specialized focus groups, follow-up interviews, or another anonymous survey with a target population in order to further develop ideas on how particular demographic groups view stateless persons in the United States. For instance, locating conservative or conservative-leaning individuals and creating a survey that further investigates

their change in opinion and *why* their answer changed in pre- and post-questionnaires may be of interest and help broaden communication campaigns on statelessness to particular interest groups.

This study is not only a first step towards a better understanding of statelessness in the US and how everyday Americans view stateless people, but a first step towards the total eradication of statelessness in the United States. However, there is still much work to be done on behalf of the US if it is to resolve its domestic cases of statelessness. Statelessness remains vastly underreported, misunderstood, and invisible amongst the general populace and the US government. Renewed efforts to educate on statelessness domestically may be possible with targeted communications and education campaigns, which, as this study demonstrates, may be reached by utilizing a human-interest media frame amongst certain demographics. With increased reporting, discussions, and education, the United States may finally be able to overcome its inertia on statelessness and offer a pathway to citizenship for its citizens of nowhere.

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APPENDIX I — Survey Questions and SPSS Codes**Demographics****Age?***Ordinal*

- 18-34 SPSS Code: 1
- 35-49 SPSS Code: 2
- 50-64 SPSS Code: 3
- 65 and older SPSS Code: 4
- Prefer not to answer SPSS Code: 5

Gender?*Nominal*

- Woman SPSS Code: 1
- Man SPSS Code: 2
- Non-binary SPSS Code: 3
- Other SPSS Code: 4
- Prefer not to answer SPSS Code: 5

Race/ethnicity? (select all that apply)*Dichotomous ordinal*

- White SPSS Code: 1, 0
- Black SPSS Code: 1, 0
- Asian SPSS Code: 1, 0
- Pacific Islander SPSS Code: 1, 0
- Middle Eastern SPSS Code: 1, 0
- Indigenous SPSS Code: 1, 0
- Hispanic/Latinix SPSS Code: 1, 0
- Two or more races/ethnicities SPSS Code: 1, 0
- Selected more than one race/ethnicity, but did not select two+ option SPSS Code: 1, 0
- Other SPSS Code: 1, 0

Highest level of education?*Ordinal*

- Less than high school SPSS Code: 1
- High school diploma or GED SPSS Code: 2

- Associate's Degree/Vocational School SPSS Code: 3
- Some undergraduate SPSS Code: 4
- Bachelor's degree SPSS Code: 5
- Master's degree SPSS Code: 6
- Some graduate school SPSS Code: 7
- J.D. or Doctorate's SPSS Code: 8
- Unknown/do not want to specify SPSS Code: 9

What best describes your political ideological leaning?

Ordinal

- Liberal SPSS Code: 1
- Lean liberal SPSS Code: 2
- Moderate SPSS Code: 3
- Lean conservative SPSS Code: 4
- Conservative SPSS Code: 5

Have you heard of the term “statelessness” prior to the commencement of this survey?

Dichotomous ordinal

- Yes SPSS Code = 1
- No SPSS Code = 2

Pre-Stimuli Questionnaire

What are your current views on stateless people? (one response required per statement)

Ordinal

They should be required to leave the US

They should be allowed to remain in the US, but not allowed to apply for US citizenship.

They should be allowed to stay in the US and to eventually apply for citizenship.

- Strongly agree SPSS Code: 1
- Agree SPSS Code: 2
- Neutral SPSS Code: 3
- Disagree SPSS Code: 4
- Strongly disagree SPSS Code: 5

Which statement comes closest to your current views?*Nominal*

- The US government is responsible for continuing cases of statelessness.
 - SPSS Code: 1
- Other foreign governments are responsible for continuing cases of statelessness.
 - SPSS Code 2
- Individuals themselves are responsible for continuing cases of statelessness.
 - SPSS Code: 3

Which statement comes closest to your current views?*Nominal*

- The US government should provide a solution (i.e. legislation, executive order) to stateless persons currently in the United States.
 - SPSS Code: 1
- Other foreign governments should provide a solution (i.e. legislation, executive order) to stateless persons currently in the United States.
 - SPSS Code: 2
- Stateless persons themselves should find a solution to their statelessness.
 - SPSS Code: 3

In your opinion, stateless people residing in the United States are entitled to which of the following rights (check all that you feel apply):*Dichotomous ordinal*

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| ● Basic freedoms (free speech, religion, etc.) | SPSS Code: 1, 0 |
| ● Right to vote | SPSS Code: 1, 0 |
| ● Ability to work | SPSS Code: 1, 0 |
| ● Government healthcare programs | SPSS Code: 1, 0 |
| ● K-12 education | SPSS Code: 1, 0 |
| ● Access to scholarships/federal financial aid for higher education | SPSS Code: 1, 0 |
| ● Welfare | SPSS Code: 1, 0 |
| ● Affordable housing | SPSS Code: 1, 0 |
| ● Government ID documents | SPSS Code: 1, 0 |
| ● Ability to start and own a business | SPSS Code: 1, 0 |
| ● None of the above | SPSS Code: 1, 0 |

Post-Stimuli Questionnaire

What are your current views on stateless people? (one response for each statement)*Ordinal*

They should be required to leave the US

They should be allowed to remain in the US, but not allowed to apply for US citizenship.

They should be allowed to stay in the US and to eventually apply for citizenship.

- Strongly agree SPSS Code: 1
- Agree SPSS Code: 2
- Neutral SPSS Code: 3
- Disagree SPSS Code: 4
- Strongly disagree SPSS Code: 5

Which statement comes closest to your current views?*Nominal*

- The US government is responsible for continuing cases of statelessness.
 - SPSS Code: 1
- Other foreign governments are responsible for continuing cases of statelessness.
 - SPSS Code: 2
- Individuals themselves are responsible for continuing cases of statelessness.
 - SPSS Code: 3

Which statement comes closest to your current views?*Nominal*

- The US government should provide a solution (i.e. legislation, executive order) to stateless persons currently in the United States.
 - SPSS Code: 1
- Other foreign governments should provide a solution (i.e. legislation, executive order) to stateless persons currently in the United States.
 - SPSS Code: 2
- Stateless persons themselves should find a solution to their statelessness.
 - SPSS Code: 3

In your opinion, stateless people residing in the United States are entitled to which of the following rights (check all that you feel apply):

Dichotomous ordinal

- Basic freedoms (free speech, religion, etc.) SPSS Code: 1, 0
- Right to vote SPSS Code: 1, 0
- Ability to work SPSS Code: 1, 0
- Government healthcare programs SPSS Code: 1, 0
- K-12 education SPSS Code: 1, 0
- Access to scholarships/federal financial aid for higher education SPSS Code: 1, 0
- Welfare SPSS Code: 1, 0
- Affordable housing SPSS Code: 1, 0
- Government ID documents SPSS Code: 1, 0
- Ability to start and own a business SPSS Code: 1, 0
- None of the above

Do you have any comments or feedback on the survey or on the topic of statelessness?

Qualitative variables

APPENDIX II — DEMOGRAPHIC FREQUENCY TABLES

Gender Identity

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Woman	151	62.7	62.9	62.9
	Man	77	32.0	32.1	95.0
	Non-binary	11	4.6	4.6	99.6
	Prefer not to answer	1	.4	.4	100.0
	Total	240	99.6	100.0	
Missing	-99	1	.4		
Total		241	100.0		

Political Leaning

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Liberal	106	44.0	44.2	44.2
	Lean liberal	53	22.0	22.1	66.3
	Moderate	43	17.8	17.9	84.2
	Lean conservative	23	9.5	9.6	93.8
	Conservative	15	6.2	6.3	100.0
	Total	240	99.6	100.0	
Missing	-99	1	.4		
Total		241	100.0		

Age Range

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-34	143	59.3	59.3	59.3
	35-49	44	18.3	18.3	77.6
	50-64	34	14.1	14.1	91.7
	65 and older	19	7.9	7.9	99.6
	Prefer not to answer	1	.4	.4	100.0
Total		241	100.0	100.0	

Heard of Statelessness?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid	Yes	124	51.5	51.9	51.9	59.3
	No	115	47.7	48.1	100.0	77.6
	Total	239	99.2	100.0		91.7
Missing	-99	2	.8			99.6
Total		241	100.0			100.0

Heard of Statelessness?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	124	51.5	51.9	51.9
	No	115	47.7	48.1	100.0
	Total	239	99.2	100.0	
Missing	-99	2	.8		
Total		241	100.0		

Highest Level of Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than high school	1	.4	.4	.4
	High school diploma or GED	28	11.6	11.6	12.0
	Associate's degree or vocational school	6	2.5	2.5	14.5
	Some undergraduate	72	29.9	29.9	44.4
	Bachelor's degree	61	25.3	25.3	69.7
	Master's degree	41	17.0	17.0	86.7
	Some graduate school	8	3.3	3.3	90.0
	J.D. or Doctorate's Degree	23	9.5	9.5	99.6
	Unknown or do not want to specify	1	.4	.4	100.0
Total		241	100.0	100.0	

White

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	194	80.5	80.8	80.8
	No	46	19.1	19.2	100.0
	Total	240	99.6	100.0	
Missing	-99	1	.4		
Total		241	100.0		

Black

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	19	7.9	7.9	7.9
	No	221	91.7	92.1	100.0
	Total	240	99.6	100.0	
Missing	-99	1	.4		
Total		241	100.0		

Asian

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	13	5.4	5.4	5.4
	No	227	94.2	94.6	100.0
	Total	240	99.6	100.0	
Missing	-99	1	.4		
Total		241	100.0		

Pacific Islander

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	1	.4	.4	.4
	No	239	99.2	99.6	100.0
	Total	240	99.6	100.0	
Missing	-99	1	.4		
Total		241	100.0		

Middle Eastern

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	5	2.1	2.1	2.1
	No	235	97.5	97.9	100.0
	Total	240	99.6	100.0	
Missing	-99	1	.4		
Total		241	100.0		

Indigenous

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	240	99.6	100.0	100.0
Missing	-99	1	.4		
Total		241	100.0		

Hispanic/Latinx

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	18	7.5	7.5	7.5
	No	222	92.1	92.5	100.0
	Total	240	99.6	100.0	
Missing	-99	1	.4		
Total		241	100.0		

Two or more

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	5	2.1	2.1	2.1
	No	235	97.5	97.9	100.0
	Total	240	99.6	100.0	
Missing	-99	1	.4		
Total		241	100.0		

Two or more races, but did not specify

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	12	5.0	5.0	5.0
	No	228	94.6	95.0	100.0
	Total	240	99.6	100.0	
Missing	-99	1	.4		
Total		241	100.0		

Prefer not to answer

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	5	2.1	2.1	2.1
	No	235	97.5	97.9	100.0
	Total	240	99.6	100.0	
Missing	-99	1	.4		
Total		241	100.0		

Other

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	2	.8	.8	.8
	No	238	98.8	99.2	100.0
	Total	240	99.6	100.0	
Missing	-99	1	.4		
Total		241	100.0		

APPENDIX III — Survey Open-Ended Responses

Note: These comments have been randomly assigned to a participant number and do not appear in any particular order. Brackets indicate that the text has been edited by the PI for grammar, spelling, and/or punctuation purposes.

Participant 1: Some of these are conditional. No one should be denied health care, education, and welfare programs. However, everyone here, regardless of citizenship status, should be able to work and pay state, local and federal taxes. If everyone living in the US were to be given a (much easier than it is currently) pathway to citizenship and/or given an opportunity to pay taxes, then every single program that app[lies] to US citizens should apply to them.

Participant 2: Immigration into the US among stateless people would be different if they had any documentation. It is my thought that a country is set to protect its own citizens, how can they do this if the people they let into the country have no documentation. They can be anyone including terrorists/drug smugglers/human traffickers/etc.

Participant 3: Very informative! I learned a lot in a very short amount of time

Participant 4: Cool

Participant 5: Great job!

Participant 6: I believe that the view of the stateless and of immigrants in general in the United States is far too extreme. It truly often baffles me just how many people in this country truly hate people just coming to this country for better lives. To me, it should be so easy for somebody to move to a new place and apply for and gain citizenship. Immigration views is definitely now one of the biggest factors in terms of who I would vote for, as I think the current administration is woefully inept in this field.

Participant 7: On the topic of stateless people (and all non citizens) I feel like they should have the right to vote in local elections but not federal elections. College Park, Maryland is one example of that.

Participant 8: I support the right to vote for stateless people who have resided in the US for a year.

Participant 9: I think stateless individuals should be given a path to citizenship, then granted the right to vote.

Participant 10: The responsibility of statelessness rests with the original country of origin or whatever successor country exists (in the case of former Soviet states or similar situations). It is not the job of the United States to be the savior of everyone experiencing hardship, statelessness included.

Participant 11: I think if people want to li[v]e in the US or somewhere else then we should have a process to assist them to get somewhere.

Participant 12: Stateless people should be helped from the broader international community, not just the US government.

Participant 13: No but thanks for great info and stories!

Participant 14: The font size for the readings should be larger.

Participant 15: I did not check "right to vote", but that's because of my belief that the government should recognize their statelessness and provide a path to citizenship first. Once a citizen, then they could vote, of course.

Participant 16: Yes , as a grandchild of an immigra[nt] whose family waited years before they could be reunited, I believe Everyone should emigrate following the rules of the US. These [stateless] persons decided to leave their country of birth no matter which reason. I would personally not put my family in jeopardy and possible deportation; would apply legally. Thank you for the opportunity to express my opinion.

Participant 17: I am appalled at the situations these individuals are in—where the US wants them out but they have nowhere to go. I was unaware of these sorts of cases as I have only heard/read about Central and South American refugees in the media.

Participant 18: Wow - what a hard situation to be in - STATELESSNESS...

Participant 19: Stateless happens in all countries. And those countries should be responsible of their population. Specially those that have made a home in said country.

Participant 20: Your choices should include both US and country of origin as being responsible

Participant 21: Great job!

Participant 22: I understand why people want to come to the USA, but there are rules and protocols to follow. Other countries do not allow just anyone showing up on their doorstep, so why is the USA expected to be any different?

Participant 23: The paths to citizenship are absurd. We need to shorten the time and path it takes to become a citizen. As long as people pay taxes I have no problem with work permission and access to tax paid programs but current laws need to be followed until new laws can be created to fix current issues.

Participant 24: It's absolutely ridiculous and inhumane how we cannot provide basic human rights to stateless people nor recognize their existence just because they don't have the proper documentation. It's an elitist and biased system that the world has, but it's even more cruel and crooked in America.

Participant 25: I decided not to answer the "political beliefs" (liberal - conservative) spectrum of ideologies because my personal ideology wasn't described. In saying so, the idea of statelessness derives out of the idea of the state itself. We often forget that the problems we are dealing with now, such as statelessness itself, are solvable. We must first be willing to question the authorities of statehood and nationhood (in the first place) to eradicate the colonial ideations that have led people into the limbo status of statelessness. (Just my thoughts).

Participant 26: Repeated questions taken out or altered? Maybe have the option to type in responses in addition to just the given answers. (Optional but not necessary).

Participant 27: I didn't realize statelessness was such a problem! As for the question regarding what rights we feel stateless people should have, I think that as human beings they should have all of those rights, but I am also of the opinion that they really should just get to become citizens of the U.S which would grant them those rights. Maybe I [mis]understood the question because it is a little confusing, but I think that the focus should be to let them be citizens and thereby receiving the rights of a citizen[,] not making legislation to give them rights as non citizens because I think that would be smarter for our country in the long run.

Participant 28: Why were both examples about Armenia? There are many other stateless peoples...

Participant 29: Thanks for the education. Very informative. And sad.

Participant 30: When looking at the topic you think "Oh, it's their fault the[y're] sta[te]less" but after reading the articles I realized the system is set up against them. Even when trying to become a citizen, it's so many roadblocks.

Participant 31: It's so odd how a country that was founded on embracing people who are/were out of place can be so intolerant toward stateless people. It should be the US Gov's job to negotiate & communicate with the person's country of origin (of course by this I mean that the US should, for example, communicate with Ukraine or whichever former Soviet states a person belongs (belonged) to).

Participant 32: We are all human beings from the same origins- on this planet all people are related. All people should be accepted and have inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit for happiness. The Declaration of Independence should be a global document against the tyranny of those who would deny anyone those inalienable rights. Counting on your generation to build the new system and ditch the failed one we are enduring today.

Participant 33: It is hard to imagine that "Statelessness" accounts for almost 4% of the population.

Participant 34: I feel as though your question was vague. You should have asked "What are your current views on stateless people that have entered the US legally? And secondly, "What are your current views on stateless people that have entered the US illegally?" I believe if you asked these 2 questions my responses would have been different. It is one thing to apply for a US visa and come to US legally, it is another, to simp[ly] gain access by walking across the border. I believe that an individual who comes legally on a visa, would have a better claim regarding his or her statelessness in a US immigration court.

Participant 35: There's an old saying: "Hard cases make for bad law." It seems, based on the anecdotes that you're using, that you're looking to see if difficult, almost intractable, situations might cause folks to change their minds regarding the larger question. These are awful stories. But to take individual situations, and try to come up with macro-level policy solutions to the larger issue, is a classic example of faulty legal reasoning.

Participant 36: In these type[s] of situations I believe the US should offer asylum. It's the many illegal people who are here for reasons other th[a]n fear of death and use our resources that need to be deported and apply for citizenship legally. As did my own family

Participant 37: After reading the vignettes provided, my answer shifted in one way, putting the responsibility of statelessness on the US Government. Previously I had said it was the other countries' governments responsibilities (believing it was conditions there that made individuals seek something better in the US). I now believe that regardless of the reason these individuals entered this country, it is the US' policies on immigration that creates the statelessness of so many people.

Participant 38: Stateless persons should have the right to seek a path to citizenship in the US free from the fear of deportation, within a reasonable timeframe and decided in a court of law on an individual basis, which is not included in this survey.

Participant 39: I had a pause on the 2nd question "double barrel" wording about "staying in the US but not being able to apply for citizenship (meant "yes to stay" and "no, they should be able to apply" but wasn't sure how to note that; this is why the pre-test was "neutral" for that question).

Participant 40: I want to clarify that I hate the United States and that I am an anarchist. But I do not believe that people should be turned away from wherever they call their home as long as they aren't displacing someone else. and there's plenty of room here on the land "possessed" by the United States. I hope that all stateless people are able to find somewhere to safely call home, and continue a connection with their culture. Should they decide to call the land that is known as the United States home, I hope this brings them comfort.

Participant 41: I am well aware [of] this issue through my work with Palestinians over the years.

Participant 42: This topic feels like it is something not thought about or addressed enough in government today. There should be way more solutions to these issues than there are. (P.S. this was a good survey).

Participant 43: The US should absolutely provide full rights to stateless people and give them a clear, easy path to citizenship. It is embarrassing that the richest nation in the world cannot extend democratic freedoms to people in need.

Participant 44: Because of [the] dissolution of [their] origin state these individuals should have been granted asylum.

Participant 45: Survey was well done, presented well. The term "welfare" may have been chosen intentionally for a reason, but I may have answered the questions differently if specific support programs were listed instead.

Participant 46: Because circumstances differ regarding how people became stateless and how they ended up in the US, there may be differences in the proper solutions. Also, regarding government identification documents, some may be appropriate while others, such as those that would enable stateless people to register to vote, may not be.

Participant 47: I feel for those people!

Participant 48: The last question, asked twice, was vague. The first time I thought you meant which of these is presently the case, the second time I thought it meant which of these do you think should be the case

Participant 49: Great articles

Participant 50: Both U.S Government and foreign governments should work together to solve this problem.

Participant 51: My opinion didn't change over the course of the survey, though it looks like it was created with the intention to change peoples' opinions. I think all the rights listed are basic freedoms and civil liberties and regardless of where an individual was born, they should have these rights.

Participant 52: Children should be treated better than adults

Chinese Investment in Africa: The Realities of Development and the Global Context

Eric Ports*

***Abstract:** This manuscript explores the narratives surrounding Chinese investment in Africa and the common narratives surrounding this topic. It looks at forms of investment, specific development projects, the concerns surrounding these projects, and the opinions of Africans who see the effects of this investment. This analysis shows that Chinese investment in Africa is one large part of China's goals for the 21st century by becoming a world power that leads by mutual prosperity.*

***Keywords:** China, Africa, Development, Foreign Direct Investment, Belt and Road Initiative, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Clean Energy, Infrastructure*

Introduction

In recent years, Chinese foreign direct investment gained immense attention from outside observers. As China has gained geopolitical influence, its government has put more focus on strengthening its diplomatic relations. One of the ways in which China attained its ever-growing influence has been through investment in other countries, most notably in the developing world. The impact of this can be seen best in Africa, where the Chinese government and Chinese companies have put a great amount of effort and resources into projects across the continent, with nearly two trillion dollars being invested since 2005.¹ Many observers such as Jean-Marc F. Blanchard, an International and Area Studies professor at East China Normal University, pointed to these projects as examples of some sort of neo-imperialism, whereby China is expanding into

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¹ Elliot Smith, "The US-China trade rivalry is underway in Africa, and Washington is playing catch-up," *CNBC*, October 9, 2019, <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/10/09/the-us-china-trade-rivalry-is-underway-in-africa.html>.

these countries for their labor and resources.² Others like Theo Neethling, a professor at University of the Free State, claim that these investments are proof that China is attempting to bring African countries into their sphere of influence, making them reliant on China, and turning them against the West.³

Both of these claims are part of a growing fear of China's rise to prominence and the possibility that they will overtake the US as the world's foremost superpower. Instead of using these biased perspectives to view this topic, an objective analysis is necessary. To accomplish this, one must look at the types of development being done in African countries, how people in these countries feel about Chinese investment, and how this trend fits into China's overall goals for this century. By analyzing each of these factors, it becomes evident that Western narratives are incorrect, and the means by which China is expanding its influence is a successful and mutually beneficial model that China plans to continue as they come to parity with the United States.

This piece seeks to show that the common discourse that paints China as domineering, exploitative, and untrustworthy is incorrect, as is made evident by several cases of Chinese investment across the African continent. These cases show a different relationship, by which China is aiding African countries in strengthening and advancing their economies and providing a better quality of life for their citizens by tackling key problems they have historically faced—such as a lack of or low-quality infrastructure and not having electricity. In fact, the Chinese investment model shows how they can work to fix these problems in shorter time spans, with

² Jean-Marc F. Blanchard, "Revisiting the Resurrected Debate About Chinese Neocolonialism," *The Diplomat*, February 8, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/02/revisiting-the-resurrected-debate-about-chinese-neocolonialism/>.

³ Theo Neethling, "What the Djibouti military base tells us about China's growing role in Africa," *The Conversation*, August 1, 2017, <https://theconversation.com/what-the-djibouti-military-base-tells-us-about-chinas-growing-role-in-africa-81783>.

less expenses, and a quality on par with more developed countries. The dominant narratives surrounding China's role in the world—especially its relationship with Africa—do not portray any of these things, simply seeking to condemn China on false premises born from fear. In order to critique these narratives and show the truth behind Chinese investment in Africa, the critiques themselves must be further explained.

Claims Made about Chinese Investment in Africa

In order to understand the importance of the narratives surrounding this trend, a closer look at how this topic is discussed in the West must be explored. The dominant Western narrative surrounding Chinese investment in Africa is that these investments, projects, and loans are a form of “soft power” which China is using to manipulate African nations. The idea is that as China has become powerful, it has reached outwards, seeking to build a sphere of influence. In this lens, this gives China an avenue through which it can acquire cheap resources and labor, allowing it further growth domestically and exerting its power abroad.⁴ This view is heavily influenced by the way the United States grew its power off of China's back. After the PRC and the US reopened relations in the 1970s, much of US production was shifted to China because of its relatively cheap resources and labor force.⁵ While American companies chose to deindustrialize their country in order to save money, it is not true that every aspiring world power needs to exploit the resources of other countries. In the case of China, its investment and dealings with less-developed countries shows a more benevolent and fair relationship than China's critics claim.

⁴ Mark Akpaninyie, “China's ‘Debt Diplomacy’ Is a Misnomer. Call It ‘Crony Diplomacy’ .,” *The Diplomat*, March 12, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/03/chinas-debt-diplomacy-is-a-misnomer-call-it-crony-diplomacy/>.

⁵ Kenneth Rapoza, “Why American Companies Choose China Over Everyone Else,” *Forbes*, September 3, 2019, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kenrapoza/2019/09/03/why-american-companies-choose-china-over-everyone-else/?sh=789cdb4871de>.

The other main argument is that China is seeking a network of nations so reliant on it that they would come to China's defense in the event of a war with the United States, a war which much of the American media, and many in the US government, pose as an inevitability.⁶ This view is especially vulturous because of its inherently conflict-centric worldview. It eschews the idea that nations can engage in friendly relations and actions without selfish and greedy motives. It benefits Western media to create headlines about the looming threat of war between America and the bogeyman image of China that they have manufactured. The American government can coalesce its allies, provide more funding to its military-industrial complex, and justify its military presence abroad by propping up this image that the media forwards. By describing Chinese development of developing countries as colonialism, the US is simultaneously able to condemn China further, while justifying America's own reluctance and inability to help develop poorer countries to its citizens and the world. The war-based narrative and the view that helping other countries is a malevolent act should thus be laid to rest, as these perspectives only harm the chances of peace between America and China and do nothing to help countries that have a dire need for funding and development.

The motivation behind these anti-China narratives is clear: the West, especially the United States, fears losing its centuries long dominance over the world. This is worsened by the fact that such loss of dominance is being caused by a nation they imperialized and exploited: cutting the nation apart, holding cities and territory as part of their empires, and exploiting the people and land for all they could bear. This period—the “Century of Humiliation”—is the foundation upon which China's pursuits should be understood. Despite China's stated goals, the West persists in pushing the narrative that China cannot be trusted, and that it must logically be

⁶ Michael T. Klare, “Is a War With China Inevitable?,” *The Nation*, July 15, 2021, <https://www.thenation.com/article/politics/is-a-war-with-china-inevitable/>.

on the warpath, seeking to establish its dominance and usher in a world order with China and its ideology at the center.

This view of the world shows the egotism that lies at the heart of how the West views countries outside of its sphere. From this perspective, if a non-Western nation has the capability to expand its influence, it typically reached that position through morally reprehensible means. If it provides aid or tries to improve relations with other countries, it must be doing it for nefarious reasons. This can be contrasted with how Western countries view themselves in relation to lesser-developed countries, where investments, loans, and projects are seen simply as business, a mutual exchange by which both sides give and receive benefits. Many times, Western countries view such transactions as altruism—sharing their wealth with countries that are less fortunate out of moral obligation—while ignoring that they often were the direct cause of that nation’s destitution. This dominant view is not just a falsehood, but a danger, as it perpetuates the idea that so long as any Western nation remains true to the values of “democracy” and “freedom” with which they characterize themselves, then any exchange will always be done for the right reasons. If the reasons are just, then these nations can overlook the often predatory and exploitative methods they use against lesser-developed states.

These narratives run rampant in the field of international relations, especially the view that China’s actions abroad are gearing itself up to be in a position for war with the United States. The lead proponent of offensive realism, John Mearsheimer, has been outspoken in his belief that China’s rise is itself a sign that war is on the way unless the US maintains its military presence in regions surrounding China and becomes more confrontational in preventing China’s influence from growing further.⁷ This offensive realist position works off of the presumption that

⁷ John J. Mearsheimer, “The Inevitable Rivalry: America, China, and the Tragedy of Great-Power Politics,” *Foreign Affairs* 100, no. 6 (2021): 48-58.

China's military is the main vehicle through which its diplomacy is driven, and that the influence and gains it makes are used to further aid its military capabilities.

This view is dangerous in its own right because it suggests that American policy should be to act even more aggressive and more invasive than it already has by maintaining a military presence in the regions around China, further provoking an aggressive response. If the presumption is to be believed that China's recent diplomatic strategy can be defined as aggressive and assertive, then a similar response from the US would do nothing but worsen the situation. But this presumption is already faulty if one looks at China's actions in Africa. China's diplomacy and investments in African countries show softer methods to gaining influence, rather than the militaristic and underhanded methods that theorists such as Mearsheimer assume is the dominant method by which China is expanding its international reach. As this piece will demonstrate, China's primary diplomatic methodology is fundamentally economical and resource-based, with diplomatic influence being gained through actions that benefit nations it engages with, making these countries more likely to deal with China and building a relationship of cooperation.

The views that China is engaging in "neo-colonialism" or that it is trying to create allies in order to prepare for a war with the United States are the primary arguments levied against China's foreign investments. These arguments must be recognized, both in substance and in meaning, for any objective analysis of Chinese investment in Africa to be done. An objective analysis of this topic shows a successful model for development that other world powers can utilize to help alleviate the burden that many lesser-developed states deal with at a time when international cooperation is most needed. In order to combat the existential threat that climate change poses, the effects of which has already begun to be felt across the Global South, and

create a better world in the future, the responsibility lies on world powers to emulate this successful development model that prioritizes human need over profit or political dominance.

Forms of Chinese Development in Africa

The main forms in which Chinese development have taken place in Africa are through transportation infrastructure and energy development. Although these are not the only ways in which China invests in African countries, they make up 66 percent of the overall amount of investment, and this is a very intentional act.⁸ Infrastructure development acts as the primary source of further development, as a strong infrastructure system is necessary for other forms of development projects to take effect. Energy investment is important for similar reasons, increasing Africa's power supply will allow other forms of investment to be of more utility, especially digitally based service jobs. A deeper look into each of these main sectors further demonstrates the overall goals of Chinese development in Africa and what its long-term plan is for its relationship with African countries.

Infrastructure projects are heavily connected to China's Belt and Road Initiative, an undertaking by which China hopes to more closely connect the world, mainly Asia, Africa, and Europe through trade and sponsor economic development.⁹ By investing in African transportation infrastructure, China is hoping to build a framework on which trade will grow in these countries, which will in turn bring more development in other sectors. This strategy is based on the Chinese saying: "if you want to become rich, build roads first."¹⁰ As a result of the Belt and Road Initiative, several African countries have seen the construction of roads, railways,

⁸ Mariama Sow, "Figures of the week, China's investment in Africa," *The Brookings Institution*, September 6, 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2018/09/06/figures-of-the-week-chinese-investment-in-africa/>.

⁹ Caroline Freund and Michele Ruta, "Belt and Road Initiative," *World Bank*, March 29, 2018, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/regional-integration/brief/belt-and-road-initiative>.

¹⁰ "China is a true all-weather friend to Africa," *Global Times*, July 21, 2020, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202007/1195194.shtml>.

and ports. For example, Uganda was able to build the Entebbe-Kampala Expressway, the first expressway ever built domestically, which connected its capital with the country's largest airport and features the longest bridge in East Africa.¹¹ Although it may not seem like a large advancement to those in more developed countries, the fact that it was not until 2018 that Uganda had an expressway is telling of the disparity between much of Africa and more developed countries. The expressway was mostly funded by loans to the Ugandan government by a state-owned Chinese bank and built by a Chinese construction firm.¹² This shows both the direct involvement of the Chinese government in projects such as this one and demonstrates that China's method is not just throwing money at its projects but taking a much more hands-on approach.

The building of roads has proven to be a successful endeavor, but the focus on roads pales in comparison to the focus on railways. Railways have received more attention due to the superior amount of both goods and passengers that can be transported at a single time as well as faster travel speeds, both of which play directly into the desired efficiency of trade of the Belt and Road Initiative. One of the landmark advances in respect to railway investments is the fully electric Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway, a 466 mile long line that stretches from the Ethiopian capital to the port city of Djibouti.¹³ This railway is an example of the trade benefits that are desired with the Belt and Road Initiative, as its creation significantly shortened the amount of time it takes to transport Ethiopian goods to a major port, shortening what would be a three day road trip to about twelve hours.¹⁴ Given that the Ethiopian capital is located far inland, a great

¹¹ Paul Ampurire, "Museveni, China's Wang Yang Commission Uganda's First Ever Expressway," *SoftPower News*, June 16, 2018, <https://www.softpower.ug/museveni-chinas-wang-yang-commission-ugandas-first-ever-expressway/>.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ "Ethiopia-Djibouti electric railway line opens," *BBC News*, October 5, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-37562177>.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

deal of effort had previously been spent transporting goods between Addis Ababa and the Red Sea. With this railway, a major hub of East African commerce was able to be connected in a much more efficient manner to the Red Sea and Indian Ocean trading hubs.

Another major railway that China funded and constructed is the Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway, which spans from the Kenyan capital of Nairobi to the country's second largest city, Mombasa. This railroad acts as a means for goods and passengers to travel the nearly 360-mile journey between Kenya's two largest cities and is planned to be a part of a larger network of rail-lines to span across East Africa.¹⁵ This new rail shortened what was a 12-hour rail trip on the previous line to about four and a half hours, with tickets priced lower than the usual nine hour bus ride.¹⁶ Similar to the Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway, this railway acts as a means for goods to enter and exit the interior of the country at much quicker rates than were previously capable. Given that this railway gives increased attention to passenger transportation, it provides a quality-of-life benefit to Kenyan citizens as well.

One of the important factors in the topic of these infrastructure projects is the actual control of the infrastructure and the jobs created by building and maintaining these projects. Although these projects are owned by the respective governments of the countries where they are built, the standard practice in Chinese projects is that Chinese firms build and operate them for five to six years, slowly rolling over jobs and operation to the host country as new employees and administrators are trained. In many cases, the actual construction of these projects is done by Chinese companies that hire citizens of that country to do the work, using resources purchased from that country, both of which provide a boost to that nation's economy. In the case of the

¹⁵ "Kenya opens Nairobi-Mombasa Madaraka Express railway," *BBC News*, May 31, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-40092600>.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Entebbe-Kampala Expressway, over 2,000 Ugandan workers were hired by the China Communications Construction Company, a majority state-owned company, to plan and physically build the highway.¹⁷ In the case of the Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway, the China Rail Engineering Corporation and the China Railway Group both built and have a six year contract to manage the railway, after which a joint company formed by the governments of Ethiopia and Djibouti will take complete control of the line.¹⁸

Additionally, the Chinese companies involved provide training to the incoming Ethiopian workers that will take control when the contract ends.¹⁹ Finally, in the case of the Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway, the China Communications Construction Company hired around 25,000 Kenyan workers, training 2,700 of them for more technical jobs, and even creating a training center for future railroad operators and technicians.²⁰ Similar to these other projects, this railway is being gradually filled with Kenyan workers in all job sectors, and control of the railway will be fully in the hands of Kenya in 2022.²¹ As is evident from these three major projects, it is not a priority for Chinese firms to maintain a permanent hold over them and keep a presence in these countries. Instead, China is making sure that its initial investments are successful while helping prepare these countries to sustain them on their own.

¹⁷ “Ugandan youths get jobs, skills from Chinese companies,” *New China*, November 22, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-11/22/c_136772041.htm.

¹⁸ “Commissioning of the railway line between Djibouti and Ethiopia,” *Oxford Business Group*, November 27, 2017, https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/news/mise-en-service-de-la-ligne-de-chemin-de-fer-entre-djibouti-et-l%e2%80%99ethiopie?utm_source=Oxford%252520Business%252520Group&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=8927570_EU%252520-%252520Djibouti%252.

¹⁹ “Ethiopia-Djibouti electric railway line opens,” *BBC News*, October 5, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-37562177>.

²⁰ Hou Liqiang, “Chinese company helps build new railway in Kenya,” *China Daily*, September 20, 2015, http://africa.chinadaily.com.cn/africa/2015-09/20/content_21926960.htm.

²¹ Shem Oirere, “Kenya Railways to end SGR contract with Afristar,” *International Railway Journal*, March 12, 2021, <https://www.railjournal.com/africa/kenya-railways-to-end-sgr-contract-with-afristar/>.

With the construction of roads and railways, China is hoping to lay the groundwork that will put Africa on a fast-track to further development in other sectors. One main sector that China has focused on investing in past infrastructure development is energy production. Energy development has become a focus, similar to transport infrastructure, because of the relative lack of energy infrastructure in many African countries—as well as the role it plays in further economic sectors such as those in the service industry. Not surprisingly, this sector of investment also receives criticism from Western countries, with one of the main critiques being that this energy development is not sustainable enough and will only worsen the climate crisis.²² In order to judge the validity of this concern, an analysis must be made in regard to how China's energy development has played out in recent years as well as recent trends in its pursuit to combat climate change in its investment policy.

Mary Blankenship and Christina Golubski from the Brookings Institute have noted the large effort China has made towards developing the energy infrastructure throughout Africa, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, which they have shown constitutes 75 percent of the total population living without electricity worldwide.²³ One study by Luka Powanga and Irene Giner-Reichl describes how between 2010 to 2015, China alone accounted for 30 percent of all new power generation in sub-Saharan Africa after investing 13 billion USD.²⁴ While China has invested in energy development in Africa for decades, there has been a notable shift in scale since the Belt and Road Initiative was created. Projects such as the Isimba Hydroelectric Power

²² Jill van de Walle, "China's Empty Promises of Green Energy for Africa," *The Diplomat*, September 26, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/09/chinas-empty-promises-of-green-energy-for-africa/>.

²³ Mary Blankenship and Christina Golubski, "Figure of the week: Increasing access to electricity in sub-Saharan Africa," *The Brookings Institution*, June 18, 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2021/06/18/figure-of-the-week-increasing-access-to-electricity-in-sub-saharan-africa/#:~:text=Importantly%2C%20though%2C%20while%20the%20number,due%20to%20rapid%20population%20growth.>

²⁴ Luke Powanga and Irene Giner-Reichl, "China's Contribution to the African Power Sector: Policy Implications for African Countries," *Hindawi*, February 14, 2019, <https://www.hindawi.com/journals/jen/2019/7013594/>.

Station and Garissa Solar Power Station are more recent examples of this energy development in action. The Isimba Power Station, located in Uganda, was completed in 2019 and provides over 183 megawatts of power to the country.²⁵ The Garissia Solar Power Station, also built in 2019, provides about 50 megawatts of power to the northeastern part of Kenya.²⁶ These two examples are of particular relevance, being some of the last major energy projects to be completed before COVID-19 halted the construction of other projects. They are also noteworthy because they are examples of how the most recent large-scale projects are in fact geared towards green energy. Their construction marks an end to large scale energy production projects using fossil fuels, as has been signaled in other ways by the Chinese government.

A landmark shift in China's foreign energy investment came this year, when Xi Jinping committed to stop the construction of all coal-powered energy plants overseas.²⁷ While President Xi did not state when this measure was to take effect in his address to the United Nations, the confirmation of this initiative should be regarded as a fundamental progression in combating climate change and addressing the lack of green energy development in Africa. Although it is true that much of China's past energy investments use fossil fuels, a trend towards green energy is certainly noticeable in practice, and this affirmation from China's president should quell fears that it will continue moving in the direction of fossil fuels.

An additional piece to note is that Chinese investment in energy directly correlates to the receiving nation's environmental policies. In the case of Kenya, local laws mandate more green development which has guided the forms in which energy development has taken place, as is the

²⁵ Jean Marie Takoueu, "Uganda: CWE commissions 183.2 MW Isimba hydroelectric dam," *Afrik 21*, January 26, 2019, <https://www.afrik21.africa/en/uganda-cwe-commissions-183-2-mw-isimba-hydroelectric-dam/>.

²⁶ Xiang Bo, "Kenya launches Chinese-built 50MW solar power plant," *Xinhua*, December 14, 2019, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-12/14/c_138631253.htm.

²⁷ Robin Brant, "China pledges to stop building new coal energy plants abroad," *BBC*, September 22, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-58647481>.

case with the aforementioned solar plant.²⁸ As more African countries adopt green measures, the forms of energy development will follow suit and concerns over energy development worsening climate change will diminish.

“Debt-Trap Diplomacy” and African Perspectives

Often left out of these discussions are the people at the receiving end of this investment: the people and nations of Africa. Scholarship and media are keen to describe their own perspective of Chinese investment in Africa, often inserting moral arguments that posture that this relationship is harmful, all without accounting for the opinions of the people that are affected by these development projects. An analysis of how benevolent or malevolent Chinese foreign investment is should be rooted in the opinions of actual Africans. By looking at the common criticisms levied by Western countries against Chinese investment, and then the responses of actual Africans have made in regard to these criticisms, a much different picture becomes clear regarding the relationship between Africa and China.

Although China’s grand development projects have provided an immediate benefit to several African nations, many observers have claimed that this widespread development may be detrimental in the long term. Specifically, some have claimed that China is loaning to countries that it believes will not be able to pay them back, such as former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who additionally described this trend as a threat to America’s geostrategic position.²⁹ This is a legitimate fear, and it is worth proper analysis.

²⁸ Xiang Bo, “Kenya launches Chinese-built 50MW solar power plant,” *Xinhua*, December 14, 2019, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-12/14/c_138631253.htm.

²⁹ Nick Schifrin and Dan Sagalyn, “China’s massive Belt and Road initiative builds global infrastructure — and influence,” *PBS*, September 27, 2019, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/how-historic-belt-and-road-infrastructure-project-is-building-chinas-global-influence>.

The concept of “Debt-Trap Diplomacy” is not new in the conversation regarding Chinese loans to African nations. The common argument levied, as is done by the Indian strategist Brahma Chellaney who created the debt-trap term, is that Chinese lending to many countries often results in several countries defaulting on their loans, putting them at the whims of the Chinese government, which subsequently uses this opportunity to strengthen its global influence.³⁰ The evidence shows that this is not the case. The high rate of Chinese lending in Africa was forged by China’s historical record of debt forgiveness and leniency for many countries. One study by the Rhodium Group shows that debt forgiveness and renegotiation were common practices between China and African countries, although this study does acknowledge that this renegotiation process is open ended and does lend to the possibility that China will push for more geopolitical influence in specific countries.³¹ The researchers in this study note, however, that there is not sufficient evidence to show that this avenue has been taken in any large effect, and that the common conjecture regarding this option overestimates the power of this tool in making any fundamental impacts of the defaulting country such as influencing domestic or geopolitical policy.

Using this study as evidence, Dr. Darren Lim of the Australian National University has stated that the debt-trap narrative was intentionally publicized by the Trump administration to justify its condemnation of the Chinese government.³² Other scholars have commented on this notion, broadening the scope beyond the Trump administration to the entirety of US diplomacy towards China for the past decade. Dr. Deborah Bräutigam from Johns Hopkins University, who

³⁰ Mark Akpaninyie, “China’s ‘Debt Diplomacy’ Is a Misnomer. Call It ‘Crony Diplomacy’ .,” *The Diplomat*, March 12, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/03/chinas-debt-diplomacy-is-a-misnomer-call-it-crony-diplomacy/>.

³¹ Agatha Kratz, Allen Feng, and Logan Wright, “New Data on the “Debt Trap” Question,” *Rhodium Group*, April 29, 2019, <https://rhg.com/research/new-data-on-the-debt-trap-question/>.

³² Kirsty Needham, “Data doesn’t support Belt and Road debt trap claims,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, May 2, 2019, <https://www.smh.com.au/world/asia/data-doesn-t-support-belt-and-road-debt-trap-claims-20190502-p51jhx.html>.

has done extensive research on Chinese foreign investment, has said that the debt-trap criticism is the latest addition to a trend of American condemnation for Chinese foreign investment that is used solely to try to stifle China's growing prominence. She attributes the widespread nature of the debt-trap myth to "negativity bias," whereby humans are psychologically driven to assume the bad intentions of outside actors. Bräutigam says that, inadvertently or not, this negativity bias has been the basis of the West's view of China's relationship with African countries ever since it became a prominent topic in the realm of international affairs. From the exaggerated reports surrounding failures in development projects, which Bräutigam notes were small in scale but hyperbolized by Western media, to the modern debt-trap story that dominates headlines, there has rarely been any positive recognition of Chinese investments abroad by those that see China as a rival.³³

While it is technically true that China has the capability to influence its debtors' politics through the open-ended debt agreements, the evidence shows that it has not taken advantage of this. Rather, China seems to use this as an opportunity to bring nations closer to itself, which is further aided by the intermittent forgiveness of certain types of loans or interest-free loans.³⁴ Instead of being taken as gospel, the narrative of debt trap diplomacy should be seen as another weapon by which Western countries, particularly the United States, have successfully turned public perception against China and its actions abroad in order to combat its rising global influence.

³³ Deborah Bräutigam, "A critical look at Chinese 'debt-trap diplomacy': the rise of a meme," *Area Development and Policy* 5, no. 3 (2019): 1-14, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337816614_A_critical_look_at_Chinese_%27debt-trap_diplomacy%27_the_rise_of_a_meme.

³⁴ Giorgio Cafiero and Daniel Wagner, "The Geopolitics of Gay Rights in Uganda," *International Policy Digest*, March 6, 2014, <https://intpolicydigest.org/the-geopolitics-of-gay-rights-in-uganda/>.

Other pieces of evidence shed more light onto the form of Chinese investment that explain why they are the preferred lender for so many African countries. One study by Okoye Obiora Jude concluded that Chinese private investment in Africa was primarily resource seeking; however, it also concludes that this trend is not unique to Africa, and that this trend fits hand-in-hand with Chinese investment worldwide.³⁵ This article does not, however, focus on investment on behalf of the Chinese government. The findings of this study show one simple thing: Chinese private investment is similar to and follows the same motives as private investment coming from any other nation. Chinese private investment cannot be viewed, in the same vein to investment from the government, as any more malicious towards the receiving state than its counterparts and follows the same environmental and labor practices that companies from other states follow in accordance with local laws. Condemnation aimed at the practices of Chinese companies often follows a pattern that these companies abuse their workers and exploit Africa's resources. This criticism is another addition in the barrage of condemnations fired at China, but, as this study shows, Chinese companies operate just the same as companies from anywhere else.

This finding can be contrasted with how some African leaders feel about their Western lenders, who they feel are lending specifically for the purposes of resource exploitation and gaining political leverage over them.³⁶ The irony here is obvious: the same critiques the West often use against China to portray it as an exploitative and domineering force are the same words that many Africans, the very people the West claims to be looking out for, use to portray the West's style of diplomacy towards them. The "debt-trap" issue is certainly one of importance

³⁵ Okoye Obiora Jude. "Investing for Resources? Comparison of Chinese Outward Foreign Direct Investment in Africa with the Rest of the World." *Africa Insight* 49, no. 2 (September 2019): 16–31.

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=sih&AN=139910733&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

³⁶ Mehari Taddele Maru, "Why Africa loves China," *Al Jazeera*, January 6, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2019/1/6/why-africa-loves-china>.

and should not be glanced over, but as for African leaders, government officials, and citizens, this one particular fear does not overshadow the great improvements that have come about as a result of their relationship with China.

Favorability towards China can be seen in several African countries across the continent. Many African leaders and government officials have not only spoken positively of China's lending practices and development projects but show a general favorability towards dealing with China over other partners. Uganda is a prime example of this, as its president has stated that China has been the only foreign power that has shown the interest and ability needed to help Uganda complete projects that were seemingly impossible mere decades ago.³⁷ Likewise, the former president of Senegal Abdoulaye Wade noted his preference for Chinese investment, specifically because of the rapidity at which China was able to carry out plans and the benefits of having a lack of excessive oversight on the behalf of the Chinese government.³⁸

As for the citizens of African countries, studies consistently show that public perception of China is generally positive. In a 2020 study by Afrobarometer that surveyed citizens from 18 African countries, 59 percent of the respondents had positive views of China's influence in Africa, the highest opinion out of the nations and organizations that they were asked about.³⁹ The highest favorability rates could be seen in Kenya, Tanzania, Chad, Niger, Mali, Botswana, and Zambia, where favorability ranged from 71 percent and above. In South Africa, Mozambique, Angola, and Nigeria, favorability ranged from 51 percent to 70 percent. The lowest numbers, telling in their own right, are seen in Algeria, Morocco, and Egypt, where the lowest levels of

³⁷ Rodney Muhumuza, "As China builds up Africa, some in Uganda warn of trouble," *Associated Press*, October 24, 2019, <https://apnews.com/article/economy-uganda-financial-markets-global-trade-international-news-62ab13badad04dd7b38a69b69eac61d1>.

³⁸ Larry Hanauer and Lyle J. Morris, "Chinese Engagement in Africa: Drivers, Reactions, and Implications for U.S. Policy," *RAND Corporation* (2014): 57-58, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/10.7249/j.ctt6wq7ss.12.pdf>.

³⁹ Eric Olander, "China's surprisingly durable reputation in Africa," *The Africa Report*, September 11, 2020, <https://www.theafricareport.com/41380/chinas-surprisingly-durable-reputation-in-africa/>.

favorability were 31 percent to 40 percent.⁴⁰ The top factors that contributed to favorability in this study were infrastructure development and business development. Perhaps surprisingly for some, the highest negative factor attributed to China by those surveyed was not related to geopolitics or economics, but an image of Chinese imported goods as being low quality. This study makes it apparent that most people across Africa not only have a favorable position towards China, but when asked about what they like most in regard to China, infrastructure development is at the forefront. This shows how significant China's development projects have been in impacting the lives of ordinary people.

The Sino-African relationship is not perfect. Within Africa, there are those who cling to the debt-trap narrative and fear growing Chinese influence on the continent such as Ssemujju Ibrahim Nganda, a Ugandan opposition leader. He has pushed back against the Ugandan government's cooperation with China, fearing that Uganda will become a neo-colony.⁴¹ Additionally, many Africans hold negative views of Chinese immigrants, who they believe are taking their jobs.⁴² Emma Mawdsley of Cambridge University, however, notes that these negative perceptions largely come from the fact that Western media is still predominant in Africa over all other media outlets. Although this is significant, these grievances cannot be explained solely on the role that Western media plays.⁴³ Instead, it must also be acknowledged that mistrust will inherently exist between nations and China must put more of an effort into proving that the large role it has taken in Africa's affairs are well-intentioned and mutually beneficial.

⁴⁰ "Africans' perceptions about China: A sneak peek from 18 countries," *Afrobarometer*, September 3, 2020, https://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/africa-china_relations-3sept20.pdf.

⁴¹ Rodney Muhumuza, "As China builds up Africa, some in Uganda warn of trouble," *Associated Press*, October 24, 2019, <https://apnews.com/article/economy-uganda-financial-markets-global-trade-international-news-62ab13badad04dd7b38a69b69eac61d1>.

⁴² Hangwei Li and Jacqueline Muna Musiitwa Esq, "China in Africa's Looking Glass: Perceptions and Realities," *Rusi*, August 3, 2020, <https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/china-africas-looking-glass-perceptions-and-realities>.

⁴³ *Ibid*.

The Greater Picture and the “Chinese Century”

China’s massive investment effort into developing Africa has been a dominant subject in foreign policy circles for much of the past decade. The discourse surrounding this subject has been largely influenced by changing perceptions of China and its role in the world, seeing its influential role in Africa as a microcosm of a larger trend of nations aligning themselves with the Chinese economic sphere. When biases are put aside, it is clear that China has played an immense role in helping African nations’ development and integration further into the world economy.

It is true, though, that this subject coincides with the challenge China poses to American hegemony. This challenge is not inherently one of hostility or war, rather it is an existential challenge to America’s position at the top of the international hierarchy of economic, military, and political dominance over the world system. While this may appear to be a hostile situation to the United States, it can only be understood in the context of the threat that China feels the US poses to its sovereignty. Scholars like John Mearsheimer acknowledge that China sees the US as a threat to its sovereignty and growth but flip this to say that if this threat were eased, China would be much more aggressive, and the threat of war would be much higher as China reaches to usurp America as the world hegemon. China does not seek to dominate the United States, much less the world, but instead rise to a position where China no longer feels threatened by the US and is able to pursue prosperity without the United States posturing its military power for the sake of keeping China at bay. Many commentators like the renowned British journalist William Rees-Mogg have long referred to this century as “the Chinese Century,” in contrast to the previous century that was defined by America’s rise to hegemony.⁴⁴ The implications of a

⁴⁴ William Rees-Mogg, “This is the Chinese century,” *The Times*, January 3, 2005, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/this-is-the-chinese-century-3fbqb8qz7tk>.

Chinese Century are not known to many, but by looking at China's explicitly stated goals for the near future, its meaning becomes clear.

Xi Jinping and the CPC have vowed that by 2049, the centenary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and the near midway point of the 21st century, China will be a fully developed country, or a "great modern socialist country." The characteristics of this stage are that China will have a military, economy, and global reach on par with the United States for the purpose of creating a "shared future for mankind."⁴⁵ This shared future, according to the Communist Party of China (CPC), is one of mutual development and prosperity. As is evident in the case of Chinese investments across Africa, the methodology behind this path to development is sound, and has proven to lead to an increase in quality of life and economic improvement for the citizens of several African countries.

Regardless of how China's rivals view these aspirations and the ideological implications of these goals, the CPC firmly believes it is on track to meet these goals as planned, and its actions abroad show that it is trying to build the foundations of its image of a shared future with itself leading the way. If taking into account the evidence provided by China's development of Africa, this leadership would mean focusing on the needs of underdeveloped countries and integrating their economies with the rest of the world. While China has already been able to accomplish this in part, being on par with the US at the very least, is necessary for it to fully carry out this goal, seeing US hegemony as a hindrance. In part, this is because of the various demonizing claims the US has made about Chinese foreign investment which has been used to turn countries away from Chinese diplomacy. Time will tell if China is able to accomplish its goals and how the rest of the world will react to such a paradigm shift.

⁴⁵ Ivaylo Valchev, "China's 2049 plan a big challenge before the world," *South Asia Monitor*, April 11, 2021, <https://www.southasiamonitor.org/china-watch/chinas-2049-plan-big-challenge-world>.

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