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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

We are proud to present to you the Fall 2019 edition of the Towson University Journal of International Affairs. This issue contains three noteworthy articles that are both timely and thought-provoking. The authors have employed their unique perspectives, theoretical backgrounds, and regional expertise to address a wide array of complex problems in world politics. Their analyses come from diverse corners of academia and the international relations community, including our own Towson University. It is our pleasure to publish these insightful contributions to the international relations literature.

First, in “Evaluating a Potential US Intervention in Ukraine,” Jake Loewner, a Towson University and University of Maryland alum currently working as a researcher on the Global Terrorism Database at the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), evaluates America’s foreign policy options in the ongoing Ukraine conflict. Citing America’s interests in restoring Ukrainian sovereignty as a point of departure, Loewner discusses three foreign policy options that are likely being considered by the United States government. Drawing on his technical knowledge of the separatist’s military capabilities and a comprehensive history of ethnic relations in Eastern Europe, Loewner concludes that a small, focused counterinsurgency force would be the policy response best suited to achieve America’s desired outcome in the conflict. The article serves as a valuable example of the way international relations theory can inform practical policy responses.

Second, Finn Hasson, another recent Towson graduate, examines the role of language as a critical factor in the construction of the Lithuanian national identity in his article, “Ethnolinguistic Nationalism in Lithuania.” In this piece, Hasson challenges dominant narratives regarding the Lithuanian nationalist movement, which overlook the influence of the Lithuanian language and focus instead (and misleading, in Hasson’s judgment) on social and political factors. To counter these traditional assumptions of the Lithuanian national identity, the author develops a rich constructivist framework before analyzing in-depth the role of language within the Lithuanian nationalist movement, including discussions of shared mythology and revolutionary rhetoric. Overall, Hasson relates to the reader the power of language to overcome geographic and political obstacles to unite a nation of people under a shared identity.

Third, Noah Beall, a current Towson University undergraduate student majoring in International Studies, discusses counterterrorism policy in Southeast Asia in his article, “Terrorism in ASEAN: Noninterference vs. Security.” Beall provides a sophisticated discussion of the security implications of transnational terror operations in the region, outlining how weapons transfers and the movements of terrorist militants rarely respect state boundaries, therefore requiring a strong, multilateral response. ASEAN, the region’s premier intergovernmental organization, is well suited to do so, save for its deeply ingrained norms of non-interference and absolute sovereignty among its member states. Beall thus argues

that to effectively combat terrorism in Southeast Asia, ASEAN must embrace deeper multilateral ties on regional security issues and soften its non-interference policies. The study provides valuable insight into IGO counterterrorism policy and invites future studies of similar challenges faced by policymakers in Europe and Latin and America

The interdisciplinary nature of international relations promises to bring comprehensive insights to the most pressing topics in the international system. It is therefore our mission to provide a platform for dedicated writers to engage in a scholarly discourse that accords with disciplinary norms and standards. The articles in this volume have exceeded these standards and are sure to educate the policymaker, the scholar, and the student on these critical areas of the world. We, the editors of the Towson Journal of International Affairs, are pleased to present this Fall 2019 issue, and we hope that readers find these articles useful in their academic pursuits.

Sincerely,
Alyssa Lennon and
Joseph Niehaus, Editor-
in-Chief, Editor-in-Chief
Team Leader

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Evaluating a US Potential Intervention in Ukraine

Jake Loewner*

Abstract: *Since the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, the long-simmering conflict in eastern Ukraine has attracted relatively little attention from Western media. The impeachment inquiry into President Trump has shed new light on the country but coverage of the insurgency in the Donbass region remains obscure. Nevertheless, the conflict continues despite multiple ceasefire agreements and sanctions placed on Russia by the United States and its European allies. Ukraine represents the front line of Russian expansion into Western Europe. The United States therefore has a strategic interest in maintaining the sovereignty of Ukraine. This piece examines the strength of the various actors in the conflict and their motivations for joining the fight. Based on that assessment, the work then evaluates potential strategies of intervention should the United States choose to engage more directly in the conflict. The analysis concludes that a narrow special operations force focusing on counterterrorism operations in support of the Ukrainian government is the most practical intervention strategy available to US policymakers.*

Introduction

Ukraine has recently been thrust back into the Western news cycle because of its connection to the impeachment investigation involving President Donald Trump. This has drawn attention back into a country where a low-intensity conflict between the Ukrainian regime and Russian-backed separatists has been simmering for five years. Ukraine represents the front line of Russian expansion into Western Europe and, therefore, the conflict has far-reaching implications for strategic security in Europe. The United States and its allies have significant geopolitical interests in the outcome of the conflict. To date, US involvement in Ukraine has been limited and largely ineffective. It is therefore important for policymakers to evaluate potential options to increase US involvement in the conflict, including military intervention. To contribute to that policy discussion, this work identifies three types of intervention options available to the United States: an air campaign, a full-scale ground intervention, and a more limited special operations deployment. While each of these options carries risks and could be implemented to varying degrees of success, this analysis finds that the special operations intervention is the most likely of the three to achieve US objectives.

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To properly evaluate potential US interventions, it is first necessary to put the Ukraine conflict into context. In November 2013, Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich cancelled an agreement that would have brought Ukraine closer to the European Union (EU). Yanukovich instead pivoted toward Russia, which had offered a large economic aid package with comparatively fewer conditions than the EU. This provided the impetus for the Euromaidan protests which began peacefully but became violent as the Ukrainian regime cracked down on

demonstrators.¹ Shortly thereafter, Yanukovich fled to Russia and the rebel movement installed an interim government. Elections were then held, ushering in a new Western-leaning president, Petro Poroshenko.²

During the revolution, Russia sent military personnel into Crimea, ostensibly to protect Russians living there.³ In mid-March 2014, Russia annexed Crimea after holding a secession referendum in the peninsula that was widely viewed as illegitimate and a violation of international law. After witnessing the events in Crimea, pro-Russian separatists in Eastern Ukraine's Donbass region began to take up arms. Many were angered by the ouster of Yanukovich and the election of Poroshenko; they opposed Ukraine's trajectory toward the West. Russia supported these separatists by providing them with arms, mercenaries, and troops. It should be noted that Russia denies formally deploying its military to the region, preferring to label its personnel as "volunteers," colloquially known as "little green men". In this way, the conflict in Ukraine is multifaceted. In one sense, it is a civil conflict between the government of Ukraine and a secessionist rebel movement. In another sense, it is a low-intensity interstate war between Kiev and Moscow.⁴

It should be noted that this work acknowledges the strong support that Russia provides to the rebels and the enormous control that Moscow holds over individual rebel groups. Nevertheless, this analysis centers on the civil conflict aspect of the situation. Moreover, while the Russian intervention in Crimea and its subsequent annexation of the peninsula are significant and have relevance for this conflict, the primary focus of this analysis will be the ongoing separatist insurgency in the Donbass region.

Problem Identification

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine has been a country torn between East and West. The western part of the country would prefer that Ukraine reorient itself toward Western Europe and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). They also view EU membership as an opportunity to expand markets. Many in eastern Ukraine, however, are ethnically Russian and therefore feel a close affinity for their neighbors to the east. The Donbass region also trades heavily with Russia, further cementing the bond between them. The basis for this fault line lies deep in Ukrainian history. In contrast to modern western Ukraine, which belonged to the state of Kievan Rus', in medieval times, modern eastern Ukraine was ruled by nomadic tribes.⁵ Moreover, during the Russo-Polish war of the mid-1600s, eastern Ukraine fell under Russian imperial control far earlier than western Ukraine.⁶ This history, while ancient, indicates that eastern Ukrainian affinity for Russia runs deeper than Soviet and post-Soviet ties.

Ukraine's modern history continues to highlight this East-West divide. The Orange Revolution pitted pro-Western Viktor Yushchenko against pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovich in

¹ Terrence P. Hopmann, "Introduction," in *Understanding the 'Hybrid' Conflicts in Ukraine*, ed. Terrence P. Hopmann (Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies: 2017), 2.

² N.A., "Ukraine crisis: Timeline," *BBC News*, November 13, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26248275>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Hopmann, "Introduction," 2.

⁵ Serhy Yekelchuk, *The Conflict in Ukraine: What Everyone Needs to Know*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 141.

⁶ Paul Kubicek, *The History of Ukraine*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), 41.

the 2004 presidential elections. Pro-Western demonstrators took to the streets after Yanukovych declared victory in an election marred by allegations of fraud and corruption. The Supreme Court ordered a new runoff election in December 2004 in which Yushchenko was legitimately elected.⁷ Over the next five years, support for Yushchenko deteriorated and in 2010, Yanukovych won the presidency by a narrow margin, setting the stage for the Euromaidan revolution that would spark the current conflict.

Beyond the history of the conflict, it is important to identify the key actors. There are two primary actors, the Ukrainian government and the pro-Russia separatists, and several secondary actors, including Russia, the United States, and the EU. As a whole, the Ukrainian government is relatively weak. Analysts agree that Ukraine on its own lacks the capacity to defeat the Russian-backed separatists and maintain sovereignty over the Donbass region.⁸ Moreover, following the Euromaidan revolution, the Ukrainian armed forces were poorly trained, led, and equipped. As a result, Ukraine relied heavily on an amalgamation of pro-Western militias which had armed themselves during the revolution.⁹ Ukraine has been relatively successful at integrating these militias into the Ukrainian National Guard, but still faces challenges of corruption and tax evasion that hinder its ability to collect revenue to fund the war effort.¹⁰ In addition, Ukraine's new president, Volodymyr Zelensky, is a comedian and political novice. This presents significant challenges as Vladimir Putin may test the newcomer by ramping up aggression in eastern Ukraine. Some fear that Zelensky will capitulate to Russia. Indeed, five months after he assumed office, he signed the Steinmeier Formula, a plan brokered by Germany and France that creates a roadmap to end the war by granting significant autonomy to the Donbass region.¹¹ However, upon signing the agreement, Zelensky faced an immediate rebuke from thousands of Ukrainian citizens who took to the streets to protest. Furthermore, Zelensky's party does not hold the supermajority in parliament necessary to enact the constitutional reforms to carry out the agreement.¹² Other scholars also note that both sides have red lines that they will not negotiate on, so the new administration is unlikely to result in an end to the war.¹³ These facts indicate that while Zelensky himself may be more amenable to compromise, hardliners in Ukraine will present obstacles to any diplomatic settlement unless the status quo on the battlefield changes. Moreover, the Ukrainian parliament's recent vote to constitutionally mandate that Ukraine take steps toward EU and NATO integration further complicates the process and ties Zelensky's hands.¹⁴

⁷ Stepan Andriyovich Kryzhanivsky and Andrij Makuch, "Ukraine," (Encyclopedia Britannica, April 10, 2019), <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ukraine/The-Orange-Revolution-and-the-Yushchenko-presidency>.

⁸ Mark Brass, "Military Options and Outcomes," in *Understanding the 'Hybrid' Conflicts in Ukraine*, ed. Terrence P. Hopmann, (Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies: 2017), 13.

⁹ Dan Peleschuk, "Your American Tax Dollars Just Sent 300 US Paratroopers to Train Ukrainian Soldiers," *Global Post*. April 20, 2015,. <https://www.pri.org/stories/your-american-tax-dollars-just-sent-300-us-paratroopers-train-ukrainian-soldiers>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Justin Lynch, "Zelensky Flounders in Bid to End Ukraine's War," *Foreign Policy*, . October 11, 2019,. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/10/11/zelensky-pushes-peace-deal-ukraine-war-russia-donbass-steinmeier-formula/>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Setan Karlo Rajic, "Ukraine's New President and Russian Relations,," *Australian Strategic Policy Institute*,. May 2, 2019,. <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/ukraines-new-president-and-russian-relations/>.

¹⁴ N.A., "Ukraine's Parliament Votes to Support NATO, EU Aspirations," *US News*, February 7, 2019,. <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2019-02-07/ukraines-parliament-votes-to-support-nato-eu-aspirations>.

The pro-Russian separatists are the other primary actor in the conflict. Within the broader separatist movement, there are two main groups, the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and the Luhansk People's Republic (LPR). These groups cooperate with one another and are unified in their desire to secede from Ukraine. The rebel groups by themselves are relatively weak actors; they rely primarily on support from Russia for arms, funds, personnel, and direction.¹⁵ If Russia stopped supporting the rebels, the Ukrainian government may have the capacity to overtake them with little to no outside assistance, evidenced by the gains that the government made in the summer of 2014.¹⁶ Internally, the DPR and LPR are fragmented. The LPR has experienced various coup attempts throughout the group's existence, most notably in November of 2017 when Igor Plotnisky, the head of the LPR, was removed by a Moscow-backed coup.¹⁷ The DPR has not fared much better as the leader of that group was assassinated on August 31, 2018. While it remains unclear who exactly carried out the assassination, a leading theory is that it was carried out by a deputy within the DPR.¹⁸ In November 2018, the two groups held elections sponsored by Russia to return an air of unity and legitimacy to the groups.¹⁹ However, the internal rivalries within these groups suggest that they will remain fragmented.

Russia is the most involved and arguably most important of the secondary actors. Vladimir Putin has several interests in the conflict. Geopolitically, Russia seeks to expand its power and reassert its relevance in its near abroad. In addition, Russia does have a legitimate interest in securing ethnic Russians that it perceives to be in danger from Ukrainian nationalists. Furthermore, Putin has a political incentive to drum up Russian nationalism by expanding Russian power and opposing Western – particularly NATO – encroachment.²⁰ Furthermore, while its economy has slowed in recent years, Russia still retains significant military prowess. As such, Russia has the ability to continue supplying arms and personnel to the rebel groups almost indefinitely. Russia also maintains the capacity to escalate the conflict by sending additional troops and weapons into Donbass. Because of its proximity to the conflict, Russia could carry out any escalation rapidly.

The EU and the United States have similar interests in the region. Both want to see an end to the conflict, preferably one where Russia retreats and Ukraine's territorial sovereignty is restored. Both parties are opposed in principle to Russia's violations of international law and norms. In addition, the EU has an economic interest in bringing Ukraine into its fold and also maintaining access to Russian natural gas. These interests have led prominent EU members, such as France and Germany, to push for a negotiated settlement to the conflict. Both countries were integral in the signing of the Minsk agreements. These two agreements are ceasefires signed by the Ukrainian government, the rebels, and Russia. The agreements stipulate the withdrawal of heavy weaponry from the front lines. They are meant to separate actors from the conflict zones

¹⁵ Vladimir Socor, "Change at the Top Exposes the Politics of Donetsk-Luhansk 'People's Republics,'" *The Ukrainian Weekly*, September 21, 2018, <http://www.ukrweekly.com/uwwp/change-at-the-top-exposes-the-politics-of-donetsk-luhansk-peoples-republics/>.

¹⁶ Brass, "Military Options2017," 13.

¹⁷ Oliver Carroll, "Ukraine: Luhansk Coup Attempt Continues as Rival Militias Square Off Against Each Other.," *The Independent*, November 22, 2017, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/luhansk-coup-ukraine-russia-igor-kornet-igor-plotnitsky-military-operations-training-exercise-a8068656.html>.

¹⁸ Socor, 2018 "Change at the Top."

¹⁹ Katarina Kertysova, "November Elections in Eastern Ukraine Unlikely to Bring Major Change.," *Global Security Review*, November 10, 2018, <https://globalsecurityreview.com/november-elections-donetsk-luhansk-ukraine-unlikely-change-russia/>.

²⁰ Brass, "Military Options2017," 10.

to reduce civilian casualties.²¹ These agreements have been widely violated and now serve mainly as a tool for each side to accuse the other of violations.²²

For its part, the United States seeks to avoid a broader conflict with Russia which could, in a worst-case scenario, lead to nuclear war. For these reasons, the United States has been reluctant to provide anything but diplomatic, economic, and defensive support to Ukraine. Though the United States has powerful military capabilities with which to support the Ukrainian government, Russia's presence has thus far largely deterred it from providing significant military aid to Ukraine.

Critical Factors

Having outlined the historical context and key actors in the conflict, it is worth examining the critical factors that help explain why war broke out and why individuals and other actors joined the fight. The United States, should it choose to intervene in Ukraine, must be aware of these factors and incorporate methods to counter them into its strategy. At the end of the Cold War, despite the deep connection and ethnic ties between eastern Ukraine and Russia, analysts did not predict that Russia would invade Ukraine on ethnic grounds. In 1993, Barry Posen argued that, from an ethnic security dilemma perspective, three factors diminished the likelihood of conflict between the two states. First, Ukraine's nuclear weapons provided a deterrent effect; second, each side perceived the other's identity as benign; and third, Ukraine's ethnic Russians were largely homogenized close to the border rather than spread out in pockets throughout the country.²³

By 1994, the first and arguably most important factor, Ukraine's nuclear arsenal, was removed. A balance of nuclear power was thereby replaced by the Budapest Memorandum, a piece of paper which guaranteed the sovereignty of Ukraine's 1994 borders. The memorandum, despite having the weight of international law, had a significantly less powerful deterrent effect for Russia. More recently, as Euromaidan revolutionaries clamored for a pivot toward the west, ethnic Russians living in eastern Ukraine – and Russians living across the border – likely began to perceive Ukrainian nationalists less as a benign force and more as a threat to their safety and prosperity. Finally, Posen argues that the relative geographic homogeneity of ethnic Russians and their proximity to the border would deter Ukraine from committing violence against the ethnic Russians within its borders. Posen's analysis is correct from Ukraine's perspective, but these factors may have increased the likelihood that ethnic Russians would rebel because they calculated that Russia would intervene on their behalf. Indeed, when Russia annexed Crimea partly under the guise of protecting ethnic Russians living there, it showed the rebels and their supporters in Donbass that Russia was willing to intervene. In this way, Russia created a moral hazard that lowered the threshold of rebellion for pro-Russian separatists in Donbass.²⁴

Furthermore, while ethnicity clearly played a role in Russia's decision to intervene in Donbass, it is less clear that ethnicity played a pivotal role in each individual's decision of

²¹ Hopmann, "Introduction 2017," 3.

²² John E. Herbst, "Russia, Not Ukraine Is Serial Violator of Ceasefire Agreement," *The Atlantic Council*, June 21, 2017, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/russia-not-ukraine-is-serial-violator-of-ceasefire-agreement>.

²³ Barry Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," *Survival*, 35, no. 1 (1993): 12.

²⁴ Alan J. Kuperman, "The Moral Hazard of Humanitarian Intervention: Lessons from the Balkans," *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (March 2008).

whether or not to join the fight. In an analysis of survey data from Luhansk before the war, Michael Gentile notes that “Ukraine’s fault line does not run on ethnic or religious lines per se... instead it largely separates two plates that host partially irreconcilable geopolitical narratives.”²⁵ Indeed, large portions of both ethnic Ukrainians and ethnic Russians living in Luhansk opposed integration with the EU and NATO. Ethnic Ukrainians were slightly more accepting of a reorientation toward the West, though the percentage was marginal.²⁶ It appears that, like the Baathists in Iraq, the decision to rebel in eastern Ukraine was influenced by a sudden loss of economic and political power. When the Euromaidan revolution removed Russian-backed Yanukovich, pro-Russian individuals in eastern Ukraine who supported Yanukovich felt threatened socially and economically. This increased their willingness to join the separatist movement. Gentile’s survey data indicates that the economically disadvantaged in Luhansk were already more supportive of Russia in 2013 before the Euromaidan revolution.²⁷ The revolution likely galvanized these opinions and influenced the rebels to take up arms. If the United States were to intervene, it would be important to understand that some rebels joined the movement because of economic and political motivations. This has significant implications if the United States were to conduct counterinsurgency in the region as it could attempt to “buy off” economically motivated rebels.

Russia’s support for rebels in Donbass highlights another critical factor that influenced individuals in the region to fight. Roger Petersen has devised a framework to analyze the factors that create movement among individuals along the spectrum of rebellion.²⁸ Petersen’s spectrum ranges from -3, joining the regime’s military force to +3, joining an active insurgent or rebel group; a zero on the spectrum represents neutrality.²⁹ Petersen notes that a major factor that motivates an individual to move along the positive side of the spectrum is the individual’s risk threshold. The concept of “safety in numbers” holds that an individual’s risk threshold decreases as more and more people join the movement.³⁰ When Russia’s little green men began appearing in Donbass, they lowered the risk threshold of those who may have not otherwise joined the rebellion.

Petersen also theorizes that different groups will have higher or lower thresholds to rebel. For example, youth groups or social-patriotic groups likely have a lower threshold to rebel than economic groups.³¹ It is difficult to know the exact makeup of different communities within the Donbass region because such data are difficult to obtain through English-language open source materials. Nevertheless, Gentile’s 2013 survey of geopolitical attitudes in Luhansk does indicate that only 20.9 percent of residents favored orientation toward the West, either through EU or NATO membership. The remaining 79.1 percent either favored no movement toward the EU or NATO (43.3 percent) or did not know the best course for Ukraine to take (35.8 percent).³² This indicates that many civilians in the area were either leaning toward Russia or neutral when the

²⁵ Michael Gentile, “West Oriented in the East-oriented Donbas: a Political nStratigraphy of Geopolitical Identity in Luhansk, Ukraine,,” *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 31,1 no.3 (2015):. 205.

²⁶ Gentile, “West Oriented2015,” 211.

²⁷ Gentile, “West Oriented,” Ibid. 213.

²⁸ Roger Petersen, *Resistance and Rebellion: Lessons from Eastern Europe* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

²⁹ Peterson, *Resistance*, Ibid. 8-9.

³⁰ Peterson, *Resistance*, Ibid. 23.

³¹ Peterson, *Resistance*, Ibid. 48-49.

³² Gentile, “West Oriented2015,” 211. 1

conflict began. This helps to explain why many people shifted into rebellion once it became clear that Russia would support the separatist movement. With that said, the Ukrainian government's weak capacity to quell the uprising also likely lowered the risk threshold for individuals who chose to join the rebellion.

Furthermore, Russian propaganda likely played an important role in an individual's decision to rebel. Petersen notes that strong communities help incite and sustain rebellion by "producing accessible information, reducing communication costs, and facilitating recruitment."³³ While the communities in Donbass seemed to have relatively strong connections before the rebellion broke out, Russian misinformation no doubt helped unite and rally these communities to action.³⁴ The Russian propaganda apparatus thereby bolstered and complimented the existing community connections among those willing to rebel in Donbass. If the United States chooses to intervene, it must be aware of Russia's significant ability to produce propaganda and should take steps to counter or mitigate Moscow's misinformation apparatus.

Another critical factor in the conflict is the potential for spoilers within the DPR and LPR if new negotiations are opened between the parties. Both the Ukrainian government and the separatists have violated the Minsk ceasefire arrangements, though the rebels have violated the ceasefire with much higher frequency and intensity than the Ukrainian government.³⁵ There is reason to believe that the rebels would also have incentives to spoil any future ceasefire. As discussed above, both the DPR and LPR are fragmented. The elections held in November 2018 sought to give legitimacy to Moscow's appointed leadership and show unity among the ranks.³⁶ Even so, divisions remain. Moreover, Wendy Pearlman notes that the leaders of groups who negotiate traditionally have the most to gain from those negotiations, whether it be to consolidate power or to gain concessions from other parties.³⁷ However, secondary leaders of the DPR and LPR might have more to gain by continuing to fight. This internal fragmentation, displayed by the coup attempts and assassinations, might prove difficult to manage if the conflict ends in a negotiated settlement. For this reason, it will be difficult for these groups to make credible promises in negotiations.³⁸ Even if a new settlement is agreed to by the leaders of both people's republics, it is unclear if all of their cadres would fall in line to uphold the agreement. Russia does exert a considerable amount of control over the groups, but one could easily imagine a situation where Russia would allow spoilers to continue to engage in conflict in order to prolong the fight or to obtain more concessions from Ukraine or the international community.

Relatedly, the fractionalization of the DPR and LPR highlights a potential area of weakness in their ability to successfully leverage Russian support in the long term. Paul Staniland argues that rebel groups are much more likely to make effective use of a sponsor's resources if they are built upon strong pre-existing social networks.³⁹ While the rebel groups are

³³ Petersen, *Resistance* 2001, 15-16.

³⁴ Jill Dougherty, "Everyone Lies: The Ukraine Conflict and Russia's Mmedia Transformation," *Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics, and Public Policy*, Discussion Paper series #D-88, July 2014, <https://shorensteincenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/d88-dougherty.pdf>.

³⁵ Herbst, "Russia, Not Ukraine." 2017

³⁶ Kertysova, "November Elections." 2018

³⁷ Wendy Pearlman, "Spoiling Inside and Out: Internal Political Contestation and the Middle East Peace Process," *International Security* 33, no. 3 (2009): 85

³⁸ Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham, "Actor Fragmentation and Conflict Processes," *Project on Middle East Political Science*, August 2013, <https://pomeps.org/2014/02/12/actor-fragmentation-and-conflict-processes/>.

³⁹ Paul Staniland, "Organizing Insurgency: Networks, Resources and Rebellion in South Asia," *International Security*. 37, no. 1, (July 2012): 142.

united by their Russian ethnicity and their separatist ideology, it does not appear that they are making use of such strong, pre-existing social networks. They have formed quasi government structures, but evidence suggests that some lower-level separatist leaders are motivated primarily by personal economic and political gain rather than fealty to an overarching structure.⁴⁰ The separatists in Donbass had strong enough community connections to instigate rebellion with Russian help, but it is unclear that these connections are strong enough to endure. While the DPR and LPR have made good use of Russian resources to date, this is largely because of the direct involvement and strong supervision of Russian personnel, even if these troops are not formally deployed. For instance, after the assassination of Alexander Zakharchenko, the head of the DPR, Zakharchenko's deputy immediately assumed power. However, Russia hastily intervened and ordered the DPR's parliament to install a new leader, Denis Pushilin, who then fired five ministers.⁴¹ This was widely seen as Moscow cleaning house in the DPR. For now, Russia is exerting clear control over the leadership of the people's republics. If this direct influence wanes, however, it is unlikely that the DPR or the LPR are built upon a strong enough social foundation to maintain effective use of Russia's resources. This is one area that the United States could exploit if it is able to strike a deal with Russia that would limit its overt influence over the rebel groups.

Conceptualizing and Measuring Success

The primary goal for any US intervention is to avoid an escalation with Russia, its premier nuclear-armed rival. The United States has several interests in Ukraine. These include strategic alignment against Russia, reinforcing NATO relevance, stemming refugee flows into the rest of Europe, and upholding international law and norms. None of these interests, however, is worth risking a larger war against Russia. Of course, any US intervention in Ukraine would sour US-Russian relations. But there is, at least in theory, a middle ground that the United States can strike that will increase the costs of the war for Russia to the point where it no longer sees value in continuing to support the rebel cause.

A second goal of a US intervention is a return of Ukrainian territory to the status quo antebellum. This would advance the US interest of maintaining the sovereignty of Ukraine and upholding international law. The success of this goal could be achieved either through a negotiated settlement or through a total victory of the Ukrainian government. The former is more realistic and less costly than the latter.⁴² The success of a negotiated settlement would be measured by the terms of the agreement. The most important factor is the restoration of the full Donbass region to Ukrainian control. The success of the agreement would also be measured by the number of ceasefire violations. The Minsk agreements are viewed primarily as failures because violations are rampant and are met with impunity. A new negotiated settlement would likely need a third-party guarantor to enforce it and raise the costs of violation for either side.⁴³

⁴⁰ Mansur Mirovalev, "Russia-Backed Separatists in Ukraine in Disarray Amid Fighting and Violence," *Los Angeles Times*, October 1, 2018, <https://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-ukraine-separatists-20181001-story.html>.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Brass, "Military Options Brass, 2017," 13.

⁴³ Barbara F. Walter, "The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement," *International Organization* 51, no. 3 (July 1997).

The third primary goal of a US intervention would be to dissuade Putin from future attempts to expand Russia's territory and influence into Europe. This was part of the rationale given by the Obama administration when it first placed sanctions on Russia after the annexation of Crimea.⁴⁴ Putin's actions in Ukraine are a clear violation of international law and, because of nearby NATO countries, the United States has a significant interest in containing Russian aggression in the region. Success of this goal would be measured by Russia withdrawing its troops from Donbass and refraining from further territorial advances either in Ukraine or other countries, such as Moldova or Georgia. International commitments from Russia to refrain from further action in the region would be welcome, but as Putin has made clear, Russia has few qualms with disregarding international law. Therefore, Russia's actions, or more specifically the lack thereof, would be the primary indicator of success for this goal.

It is important to note that the United States need not enter into the theater with the goal of defeating the insurgency. Rather, the primary strategy should be to raise the costs for the rebels and for Russia in order to bring about a negotiated settlement that maintains the territorial sovereignty of Ukraine. The presence of US troops in Donbass should raise the risk for Russia. Like the United States, Russia clearly does not want a broader hot conflict with its Cold War rival. Therefore, Russia is unlikely to order an unprovoked attack on US personnel. The presence of US troops raises the stakes for Vladimir Putin and, if successful, would drive him to the negotiating table, this time with a real commitment to de-escalation. An intermediate indicator of success in this area would be if Russia was pressured into formally deploying uniformed troops rather than "volunteers." This would make it easier for US and Ukrainian personnel to distinguish between Russian soldiers and separatists.

Furthermore, while some US policymakers may be tempted to pursue a strategy that results in the partition of Ukraine, this would be an ineffective strategy and would only achieve the first of the three US goals. One flaw of this strategy is that the Donbass region is not homogenous. The Luhansk survey data outlined above highlight that there are a fairly significant number of Ukrainians living in the region that support Ukraine's reorientation toward the West.⁴⁵ These people would likely be treated as second-class citizens or worse under a partitioned Donbass. Indeed, according to Sambanis, ethnic partition does not significantly decrease the potential for lower-level residual ethnic violence.⁴⁶ Moreover, ethnic Russians and pro-Russian Ukrainians still maintain a significant presence throughout the rest of the country other than within the far-West.⁴⁷ Partition would therefore not solve the broader problem of the east-west division within Ukraine. Moreover, partition would be viewed as a success by Russia. This would do little to dissuade Putin from taking further action on behalf of ethnic Russians living in Ukraine or other former Soviet territories, such as Georgia or Moldova.

All three US goals, avoiding a broader conflict with Russia, restoring Ukraine's territory, and preventing further Russian encroachment, will prove difficult, if not unrealistic. If the United States wishes to pursue these goals through a military intervention, it will have to tread carefully.

⁴⁴ Rachel Gosnell, "The Obama Administration and the Crimea Crisis," *University of Maryland Public Policy Review*, 2, no. 1 (May 2018): 61.

⁴⁵ Gentile, "West Oriented," 2015, 211.

⁴⁶ Nicholas Sambanis, "Partition as a Solution to Ethnic War: An Empirical Critique of the Theoretical Literature," *World Politics*, 52, no. 4 (2000): 474.

⁴⁷ David R. Marples, "Ethnic and Social Composition of Ukraine's Regions and Voting Patterns," *E-International Relations*, March 10, 2015, . <https://www.e-ir.info/2015/03/10/ethnic-and-social-composition-of-ukraines-regions-and-voting-patterns/>.

Though Russia also wants to avoid a broader war, it may view any US troop presence near its border as a threat worthy of escalation. Furthermore, returning the Donbass region to Ukraine leaves it with much of the same problem it had before the conflict: a country deeply divided. Kiev would need to invest heavily in the reintegration of former separatists and their supporters into Ukrainian society. Finally, Russia's interests in maintaining influence in its near abroad are widespread, and it is unclear just how much US intervention in Ukraine would change Putin's future calculus when deciding whether or not to spark and support pro-Russian rebellions in the region.

Assessing Current and Potential US Strategy

This section will evaluate the strategy and the success of what the United States has done thus far in Ukraine. It will also assess potential intervention strategies for achieving the goals outlined above. This analysis concludes that if the United States were to intervene, it should do so with a relatively limited number of special operations troops supported by a small quick reaction force. The total number of troops should not exceed 10,000. However, given the potential risks and consequences of an intervention, the United States should approach any intervention with caution.

Former and Current US Strategy

Immediately following the Russian annexation of Crimea and intervention in Donbass, the United States, along with its European allies, imposed sanctions on Russia. These sanctions were targeted at high-level Putin associates and had two express objectives: first, punishing Putin's administration for its violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and second, dissuading Putin from attempting to take more territory in Ukraine.⁴⁸ This aligns directly with the third goal and indirectly with the second goal described above. The sanctions have been somewhat successful in their goal of weakening the Russian economy, though it is difficult to separate out the effect of sanctions from the broader stagnation of the Russian economy due to the reduction of global oil prices.⁴⁹ There is still debate among scholars and policymakers over whether sanctions have achieved their goals. Some contend that the sanctions have dissuaded Russia from taking even further action in Ukraine and have reduced the Russian public's support for Putin's actions.⁵⁰ Others cite Russia's continued presence in Ukraine, its use of a nerve agent in an attempted assassination in the United Kingdom, and its disruption in the 2016 US elections as evidence that Russia is undeterred by the threat of sanctions.⁵¹ At best, the sanctions receive a passing grade on dissuading Putin from further Ukrainian aggression, but they have failed to persuade Putin to cease intervention in Ukraine and therefore they have not achieved the US objective of restoring Ukraine's territory.

The United States also initially provided Ukraine with non-lethal aid and then sent a small training contingent to western Ukraine.⁵² In an additional show of force and support for Ukraine, the United States took part in a multinational military exercise in Ukraine days before a

⁴⁸ Gosnell, "Obama Administration," 2018, 62-63.

⁴⁹ Gosnell, "Obama Administration," Ibid. 68.

⁵⁰ Nigel Gould-Davies, "Sanctions on Russia Are Working," *Foreign Affairs*, August 22, 2018, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/2018-08-22/sanctions-russia-are-working>.

⁵¹ Andrew Chatzky, "Have Sanctions on Russia Changed Putin's Calculus?" *Council on Foreign Relations*, May 2, 2019, <https://www.cfr.org/article/have-sanctions-russia-changed-putins-calculus>.

⁵² Peleschuk, "American Tax Dollars," 2015.

similar Russian military exercise in the region.⁵³ While the aid and training were no doubt helpful to Ukraine, it is not clear that this was designed to achieve any broader US objective other than avoiding the collapse of Kiev if the rebels were to advance. Without US arms or personnel, a total victory for Ukraine would be highly unlikely. With that said, the United States was able to provide this aid without causing Russia to escalate the conflict. While Putin expressed disapproval of US trainers and non-military aid, it did not cause him to significantly increase aggression in Donbass. This suggests that Russia, while wary of American action in the region, will allow some limited intervention without resorting to military escalation.

Under President Trump, the United States has stepped up military aid to Ukraine, including anti-tank weapons.⁵⁴ The United States is also considering supplying naval weapons to Ukraine to help it respond to incidents such as Russia's incursion on Ukrainian naval vessels in the Kerch Strait in November of 2018.⁵⁵ This approach aligns slightly more with US goals as it gives Ukraine the ability to make advances in Donbass if what is left of the Minsk ceasefire breaks down.⁵⁶ This would give Ukraine a better opportunity to secure its own territory without a US intervention. It is therefore in support of the United States' second goal of restoring Ukrainian territory. Nonetheless, Ukraine's ability to win the war on its own remains doubtful because Russia has a near endless capacity to supply more personnel and weapons to the theater to counter any Ukrainian advances. Unless the United States joins the conflict more directly to provide a counterbalance to Russia, the power asymmetry between Russia and Ukraine will remain.

Potential US Strategies

There are several intervention options available to US policymakers that better serve US objectives compared to current policy. These options include an air campaign, a full-scale intervention, and a limited special operations intervention. As will be discussed, the full-scale intervention could take the form of either a peace enforcement operation or a counterinsurgency operation. It should also be noted that any of these strategies could be carried out multilaterally, or unilaterally by the United States. Because of Russia's assured veto on the UN Security Council, if the United States leads multilaterally, it will almost certainly do so as a NATO operation or as a "coalition of the willing." In either case, however, the United States would likely bear the brunt of the military operation.

Potentially the most politically attractive option is to initiate a bombing campaign similar to the one used in Kosovo. An aerial intervention would be considerably less dangerous for US personnel than a ground invasion. Moreover, the US could use Ukrainian or nearby NATO airbases to launch operations, reducing the need to place aircraft carriers in an area dominated by the Russian Navy. If the United States could establish air dominance, it could easily provide cover for Ukrainian forces on the ground to advance into Donbass and beat back the rebels to either secure victory or drive them to the negotiating table. This would clearly service the United States' second goal of restoring Ukrainian territory. Underneath these rosy hypotheticals, however, lies the unfortunate truth that a US air campaign would be ineffective and would likely

⁵³ Ryan Browne, "US Troops Take Part in Ukrainian Military Exercise Before Russian War Game," *CNN*, September 11, 2017, . <https://www.cnn.com/2017/09/11/politics/us-troops-ukraine-nato/index.html>.

⁵⁴ Ted Galen Carpenter, "Washington Quietly Increases Lethal Weapons to Ukraine." *Cato Institute*, September 10, 2018, . <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/washington-quietly-increases-lethal-weapons-ukraine>.

⁵⁵ Rebecca Kheel, "US Considering Providing More Weapons for Ukraine, General Says," *The Hill*, March 5, 2019, . <https://thehill.com/policy/defense/432659-general-us-considering-more-weapons-for-ukraine>.

⁵⁶ Brass, "Military Options," 2017, 13.

incite Russian escalation with little payoff. Russia has supplied the rebels with significant air defenses that have shot down several Ukrainian Air Force jets since the start of the conflict. In addition, either the Russian military or pro-Russian rebels infamously used Russian equipment to shoot down Malaysian Airlines flight 17 in July 2014. This is significant because the airliner was flying at high altitude, indicating that the rebels or their Russian sponsors would be able to defend against a high-altitude bombing campaign like the one carried out by NATO in Kosovo. Moreover, in Kosovo, NATO also targeted critical nodes in Belgrade to increase the cost of the war for Serbia.⁵⁷ It would be impossible for the United States to carry out such bombings in Russia, even against supply lines into Donbass, without seriously escalating the conflict with Russia. As such, a purely aerial intervention is not likely to achieve success and carries an unacceptable risk of violating the primary goal of avoiding a broader conflict with Russia.

Another strategy the United States could adopt would be to send in a full-scale intervention of ground troops. These troops could either be used as a peace enforcement contingent to enforce the Minsk agreements or to conduct counterinsurgency operations. With regard to peace enforcement, monitors have been deployed to the conflict zone since fighting broke out. In 2014, the Operation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) deployed an unarmed Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to observe and deescalate the conflict.⁵⁸ By not arming the monitors, the OSCE sought to increase legitimacy and impartiality as the monitors would not engage on behalf of either side. The decision was also prerequisite condition put forth by Russia before it approved the mission. By not arming the SMM, however, the OSCE limited any power that the monitors would have had to deescalate the violence. This has also made the mission vulnerable to attacks and harassment.

The United States should avoid this impartial approach. Given the United States' past support of the Ukrainian government and its denunciation of Russian aggression, any force the United States sends to Ukraine cannot be seen as impartial, even if it is truly there to enforce peace. Richard Betts argues that impartial interventions prolong wars and erode the long-term legitimacy of peacekeeping operations.⁵⁹ In this vein, the United States could enforce the Minsk agreements by providing overwhelming support to the Ukrainian government such that any attempt by the rebels to violate the agreement would be met with significant force. The presence of US forces would increase the costs to both the separatists and their Russian backers. When the costs to these actors outweigh the benefits of continuing the conflict, additional negotiations could take place that would help the United States achieve its goal of restoring Ukraine's territory. The United States could then remain in the region as a committed third-party guarantor to oversee and enforce the terms of the agreement.⁶⁰ The strong US show of force would likely deter Russia from future aggression in the region, thereby achieving the United States' third objective.

Alternatively, the United States could use a full-scale ground intervention to conduct counterinsurgency operations. Survey data indicate that prior to the war, there were pockets of individuals who maintained pro-Western sentiments. The survey notes that these people were largely younger, more educated, more socio-economically advantaged, and lived closer to city centers. Surely some of these individuals have fled or been killed in the years of fighting that

⁵⁷ Barry Posen, "The War for Kosovo: Serbia's Political-Military Strategy," *International Security* 24, no. 4 (2000).

⁵⁸ Hopmann, "Introduction2017," 3.

⁵⁹ Richard Betts, "The Delusion of Impartial Intervention," *Foreign Affairs*, 1994, .
<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/libya/2011-03-19/delusion-impartial-intervention>.

⁶⁰ Walter, "Critical Barrier."1997.

have passed, but some likely remain. If US forces can find and protect these individuals who hold pro-regime values, they may be able to win back some of the “hearts and minds” in Donbass. US troops could thereby leverage civilians living in the region who are at a zero on Petersen’s continuum of rebellion and pull them into -1 or -2 in support of the regime as US counterinsurgency forces did in Iraq during the surge.⁶¹

It should also be noted that many of the United States’ most recent interventions involved either regime change or support of anti-regime rebels. This includes Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, and Kosovo to name a few. If the United States were to intervene in Ukraine it would be on behalf of the government against a hybrid insurgency. This presents unique challenges but also opportunities in that the United States will not be responsible for rebuilding government and democracy from scratch. The government in Kiev is far from perfect but Ukraine does have a semi-functioning democracy and moderately strong civic and social institutions. This means that the United States will not have to build the government from the ground up as was the case in Iraq and Afghanistan. Therefore, counterinsurgency operations might have a better chance of success.

With that said, if the United States were to engage in an intervention with ground forces, it is important to understand the personnel resources that would be required to achieve its objectives. To effectively conduct stability operations in eastern Ukraine where there is an active insurgency, the United States would need at least 10 troops per 1,000 residents.⁶² Exact population numbers for the Donbass regions are not currently known. The last official Ukrainian government census was carried out in 2001 and indicates that close to 7.4 million people lived in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts. A New York Times estimate put the combined population of the region just prior to the war at roughly 4.5 million.⁶³ It is unknown how many people have fled the region and how many Russian “volunteers” have come across the border to take their place, but a conservative estimate is that roughly two-thirds of the population still resides in the separatist-controlled region. That would mean that close to 3 million people still live in the area, some of whom are in active rebellion. If the United States adheres to Quinlivan’s recommended force estimate of 10 troops per 1,000 residents, it would require close to 30,000 troops. Given current US troop commitments, a deployment of that size is not outside the realm of possibility, but it is highly unlikely that the president could achieve, let alone sustain, domestic support for such a large deployment.

Moreover, deploying 30,000 US troops to the Russian border, even for an ostensible peace enforcement operation, would almost certainly cause Russia to escalate the conflict. This would again violate the first and most critical US objective. A key aspect of potential Russian escalation in this scenario is that Russia can deploy forces much faster than the United States can, even with access to NATO bases throughout Europe. Russia’s capacity for rapid escalation must give US policymakers cause for concern before deploying a large contingent of US forces. If Russia sends more troops into Ukraine to counter US forces, the United States will have to either withdraw or deploy more troops to the theater. This will invoke a classic security dilemma between Russia and the United States that, given the proximity between the two forces in Eastern Ukraine, is likely to erupt into a more widespread conflict.

⁶¹ Roger Petersen and Jonathan Lindsay, “Varieties of Counterinsurgency: A Case Study of Iraq, 2003-2009,” in CIWAG Symposium, Naval War College (Center for Irregular Warfare/Armed Groups 2011).

⁶² J.T. Quinlivan, “Force Requirements in Stability Operations,” *Parameters* 25 (1995): 63.

⁶³ Andrew Kramer, “Ukraine to Freeze Payments in Separatist Areas,” *New York Times*, November 5, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/06/world/europe/ukraine-to-freeze-payments-in-separatist-areas.html?_r=0

A third option available to US policymakers is to send a limited special operations force that would act in support of the Ukrainian government and go after high-value separatist targets. Scholars have argued that the United States should take a similar approach to Afghanistan. They contend that the United States has the ability to conduct counterterrorism operations from Kabul at a significantly lower cost and troop level than what it takes to occupy the country. The authors argue for a smaller contingency of special operations of troops supported by a relatively small quick reaction force.⁶⁴ This model could be applied to Ukraine. The total number of troops required to carry out this intervention would be roughly 8,000-10,000— a third of the forces required to carry out a broader counterinsurgency campaign. US special forces could be based in Kiev and even potentially have forward operating positions in cities like Mariupol that are close to the front line but still under government control. This limited intervention approach would also likely have broader support among the American public as opposed to a large-scale deployment of US troops.

If US forces committed to only targeting separatist leaders and avoided confrontation with Russian soldiers wherever possible, Russia might allow this intervention without significant escalation beyond words of discontent by Putin and the Russian foreign ministry. This intervention would thereby achieve the first US objective. As discussed above, this type of intervention might have the added benefit of forcing Russia to formally deploy troops with Russian uniforms to distinguish them from rebels. Moreover, US special forces operations against the rebels, combined with additional weapons and training for the Ukrainian government, has at least a moderate chance of defeating the insurgency over time and restoring Donbass to Ukraine. This may fail if Russia decides to escalate the conflict, as a small contingent of special operations troops will not be equipped to partake in an interstate war between Ukraine and Russia. Nevertheless, it is doubtful that Russia has a strong enough interest in Donbass to wage a more intense war over it. Furthermore, deploying US troops, even a small contingent, will likely still be enough to show Russia that the United States is resolved to oppose Russian violations of sovereignty and international law. This may dissuade Russia from carrying out continued aggression in Ukraine and the broader region, thereby achieving the third US objective.

The above analysis indicates that, of the three options outlined, the special operations intervention is the most likely to achieve the goals of the United States. With that said, US policymakers should still carefully weigh the potential risks of intervention against the benefits and the strategic interests of the United States. Even in the special operations scenario, the success of the intervention is uncertain, and the risk of Russian escalation prevails. This analysis is not an endorsement of intervention, but rather an assessment of the options available to policymakers.

Conclusion

The actions that the United States has taken since Ukrainian conflict began in 2014 have only partially been in line with their broader strategic objectives. This is reasonable, given the overriding concern of avoiding escalation with Russia. Nevertheless, it is important for US policymakers to consider potential interventions and evaluate them based on their political and military feasibility as well as their likelihood to achieve success. This is true of all potential interventions. In particular, the United States should consider the limitations of airpower. A rebel

⁶⁴ Joshua Rovner and Austin Long, “““Dominos on the Durand Line?”” Overcoming Strategic Myths in Afghanistan and Pakistan,” *CATO Policy Analysis*, No. 92 (2011): 8.

group or a state that has access to moderate air-defense capabilities will severely hinder US airpower. Furthermore, this analysis highlights the potential pitfalls of a full-scale ground intervention, both in terms of winning domestic support and also in terms of escalating the conflict. The United States should only conduct full-scale interventions when it has clearly defined interests, achievable goals, and sustainable domestic support.

The conflict in Ukraine also has broader implications for NATO. If a US intervention successfully restores Ukraine's territory, it is likely that Ukraine would take steps to become a member of NATO. This might create tension within the organization as new members must be invited on the basis of consensus among all existing members. Some countries might be unwilling to allow Ukraine into the alliance for fear of provoking Russia. If, on the other hand, Ukraine does eventually gain NATO membership, this will certainly draw ire from Russia. Such an arrangement positions an implicitly rival security organization on Russia's doorstep. Russia would likely perceive this both as a security threat and as an insult to its national pride. This might lead Russia to attempt to more covertly incite insurrection in eastern Ukraine to further test the will of the alliance.

The conflict in Ukraine also has several implications for other conflicts around the world. For example, in 2014, both the United States and Russia stepped up their interventions in Syria. Some believed that the United States needed to take a firmer stance in Ukraine to dissuade Russia from fully throwing its weight behind the Assad regime. The Obama administration seemed to follow the logic that it was better not to rile Putin to maintain stable relations with Russia to coordinate actions against the Islamic State. It remains uncertain how integrated these two conflicts are. Both Russia and the United States have discrete interests and motivations for the actions they are taking in Syria and Ukraine. It is therefore not clear that escalation in one country would immediately cause escalation in the other. With that said, however, any US intervention in Ukraine, regardless of whether it leads to military escalation with Russia, will undoubtedly further strain US-Russian relations. There are a host of other global issues that affect the interests of both countries, including climate change, potentially negotiating a new arms control treaty with China, and possibly reconfiguring the Iran nuclear deal. If the United States intervenes in Ukraine, any progress that the United States and Russia might make on these issues will be severely hindered. US policymakers should also consider these implications before deciding to intervene in the conflict.

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Ethnolinguistic Nationalism in Lithuania

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Abstract: *This work considers the role of language in the Lithuanian nationalist movement from the mid-nineteenth century until the creation of the Republic of Lithuania in 1919. It first considers the nature of nationalism as a concept, the construction of national identity, the symbolic role of language in identity construction, and how national identity is operationalized in determining foreign policy choice. It then applies the outlined theories of nationalism to the words and actions of Dr. Jonas Basanavičius, the man widely considered the most influential figure of the Lithuanian national movement. This is done through textual analysis of excerpts from his most influential publication, the Lithuanian-language nationalist periodical Aušra, and his numerous comments on his writings and the Lithuanian national movement. This study proposes that Basanavičius's proposal of language as the defining characteristic of the Lithuanian nation permitted Lithuanian nationalists to succeed in establishing an independent state because language was a uniquely malleable variable that allowed Lithuanians to compete against numerically superior, better historically positioned opposition in the fight for an autonomous national homeland.*

Keywords: nationalism, ethnolinguistic nationalism, Lithuanian nationalism

Introduction

Midway through the nineteenth century, the political landscape of Eastern Europe was in the slow beginnings of a region-wide disturbance. Local intellectuals and political actors, chafing under the assimilationist policies of the Russian Empire, sought ways of finding and asserting independence. The process of independence began slowly, restricted by repressive Russian laws. As opposition coalesced, discussions of independence and opposition gradually shifted from the privacy of upper-class salons to public streets and squares. As is the case with many revolutions that develop over the span of decades, the face of the movements and their espoused aims evolved with each successive generation's leadership and challenges.

The process of challenging Russian rule occurred in a number of ways. New newspapers and publishing groups provided a forum for nascent nationalist literature and gave opposition figures the opportunity to spread anti-Russian rhetoric to a wide audience. Historians and writers revisited their countries' histories and reinterpreted historical facts to create and support new nationalist narratives. Initially, due to a ban on printing in local languages, these discussions used Russian. Activists first challenged for the right to publish in languages other than Russian, then later fought to include local languages in early education. As the communities of Eastern Europe became linguistically separate, the direction of the independence discourse changed; the revolutionaries who established the first independent modern Lithuanian state in the twentieth century conceived of their community and language in terms fundamentally different from those of their progenitors. No longer did non-Russian Eastern European groups desire greater autonomy within the existing framework, but rather sought a new, independent system.

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The opposition movements that began in earnest in the early nineteenth century would see the dissolution of the Russian Empire and led to the foundation of national identities that exist to this day. In analyzing this period, scholars frequently focus on predominantly political and social concerns. Language, if discussed at all, is often presented as an epiphenomenon of cultural changes driven by political movements and concerns. This, however, undervalues the symbolic value of language in the construction of group identity. Indeed, language is, in many ways, the most malleable symbolic driver of nationalist movements.

This work employs a constructivist approach to analyze the role of language in the Lithuanian nationalist movement of the second half of the nineteenth century until the establishment of the Republic of Lithuania in 1918. It focuses specifically on the work of “the father of the Lithuanian nation,” Jonas Basanavičius, and the nationalist periodical he wrote and edited, *Aušra*, during the period of Russia’s press ban against the Lithuanian language. Basanavičius and *Aušra* have been chosen as areas of particular focus because Basanavičius was involved in every step of the Lithuanian independence process, from negotiating the nature of the national identity itself to negotiating for the creation of an independent state.

It is important to note that I am not suggesting that language is the single dominant driver of national movements; rather, I am asserting that language has a more complex role in influencing group identity than it has previously been granted in the scholarship of nationalism and that it played a unique role in Lithuania’s development from a disjointed minority nationality into a modern state. It is also important to note that, in the context of nationalism, the idea of the language’s uniqueness can be real or perceived, for if an actor perceives that their language is unique and assigns their speech group a unique perspective and then acts on that assumption, whether the initial perception was accurate or not does not influence the actor’s course of action. Considering language in this way opens a new avenue through which scholars can understand the growth of ethnolinguistic sentiment in multilingual areas and how that sentiment is operationalized politically.

Theoretical Framework for Nationalism Analysis Identity, Defined and Operationalized

As this study analyzes the effects of language in the creation of national identity and how the results of that process affects foreign policy choice, it is first necessary to define how “identity” is framed. Consistent with Ted Hopf’s definition in *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities and Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 & 1999*, identity at its most basic level can best be understood as a form of cognitive shortcut for processing new information.¹ Through defining the Self, an individual is able to better assimilate new information in a meaningfully bounded rational framework with the individual’s value structure as the central point of reference. The values at the center of this framework are negotiated at both the individual and societal levels—the expressions of individual identity shape the creation and recreation of discourse and a social cognitive structure, while the individual’s identity is simultaneously “constrained, shaped, and empowered by the very social products [it has] a hand in creating.”²

¹ Ted Hopf, *International Politics: Identities and Foreign Policies, Moscow; 1959 & 1999*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2002), 2.

² Hopf, *International Politics*, 2.

The mutual exchange between the individual and the larger society in creating discourse and establishing social cognitive structure make the study of identity relevant to understanding a state's (or group's, in the case of Lithuanian nationalist leaders before statehood was achieved) foreign policy choices. Hopf argues that states' positions in the international arena are influenced heavily by domestic politics and cannot be separated from the domestic process of negotiating group identity and establishing a social cognitive structure. This process of defining the Self within the state will inevitably color the state's determination of what traits could be perceived as either threatening or positive in the Other, which could take the form of any other state, group, or organization independent of the Self.

In Hopf's own words, "an individual's identity acts like an axis of interpretation, implying that she will find in the external world what is relevant to [her] identity."³ Additionally, the tendency to find in the external world that which is meaningful to the existing internal identity structures is not necessarily a conscientious decision, but the result of the inherent human desire to maintain order and predictability. This can be as true of states as of individuals, as states will change their perceptions of their neighbors by measuring their neighbors' actions through the paradigm of their own identity.

As the Self on a national level is the result of a web of individual identities interacting, it is best understood as a movement through flux rather than as a fixed, immutable entity. As the Self incorporates new information and is faced with new realities posed by a changing group of Others, it revisits and recreates the discourses that shaped its initial understanding of the relationship with the Other to accommodate the changed situation. In this way, states' identities can change and develop in a manner similar to those of the individuals who compose them.

Of the factors that influence the creation and negotiation of national identity, Hopf asserts that language plays a central role. Language, working in a manner parallel to that of identity, serves as a cognitive tool that provides conceptual categories through which external stimuli can be situated in an intersubjective reality; importantly, Hopf argues that "there is no knowledge of the "real" world outside of [the] categories" supplied by the confluence of identity and language.⁴ This should not be understood as a philosophical position denying the existence of objective reality, but as a statement that an individual cannot step outside of their own identity structure to perceive an entirely objective reality. Similarly, an individual's expression of the objective is limited to the tools provided to them by their linguistic capacities.

Hopf's analysis shows that as the Self incorporates new information into its identity discourse, it will situate Others along a continuum of therapy to nihilation.⁵ At one end of the continuum, an Other in a state of therapy with the Self is judged to be in accordance with the Self's core values and vision for the future; an example of this would be the relationship between the US and the UK—while each state perceives the other as an Other, neither perceives the other as an adversary. On the other end of the continuum, an Other in a state of nihilation in relation to the Self is judged to be incompatible with the Self's values and vision for the future; an example of this would be the adversarial relationship between the US and North Korea, as both states perceive the other to be an existential threat not just physically, but ideologically as well.

As language is one of many variables that resulted in Lithuanian nationalists ultimately pushing to leave the Russian Empire entirely, its impacts ought to be understood as part of a

³ Hopf, *International Politics*, 5.

⁴ Hopf, *International Politics*, 6.

⁵ Hopf, *International Politics*, 8.

greater net of influences rather than in an isolated manner. In an attempt to accomplish this, I focus on whether a greater focus on language as a unifying national element pushed the Lithuanian community closer to a point of nihilation or therapy in regard to their relationship with the Russian Empire, consistent with Hopf's definitions of identity, therapy, and nihilation.

The Nation's Origins

As this study concerns the formation of national identity, it is first necessary to define what is meant by "nation." In his 1983 seminal work *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Benedict Anderson described the nation as a political community that is simultaneously imagined, inherently limited and sovereign.

The nation is imagined in that it is impossible for all of the members of even a small nation to know (or even heard of) every other fellow-member, yet each member has determined that they share a communal, "horizontal comradeship" felt with equal measure toward all their fellow-members.⁶ Gellner describes the phenomenon of national identity by saying that "Nationalism is not the awakening of nation to self-consciousness: it *invents* nations where they do not exist."⁷ It would be simplistic, however, to reduce invention to fabrication and thus implicitly suggest an inherent falsity to national narratives. Indeed, as Anderson argues, "all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined" in that the members of the community must develop a sense of communal Self through which fellow-members whom they do not know personally may be measured.⁸ The fact of the community being imagined, then, does not cheapen the emotional bonds of the individual to the abstraction of the nation or to their fellow-members.

Anderson argues that the nation is limited in that every nation has a set of finite boundaries (not just territorial, but cultural as well) that separate the Self from the Other.⁹ Additionally, nationalists do not attempt to expand membership in their nation to the entirety of mankind, as would be the case with religious fundamentalists; rather, the nation's boundaries are established and acknowledged by the members of the community. Finally, the nation is sovereign in that its members hold no entity's legal authority as superordinate to that of the nation. Anderson traces the origin of this sovereignty to the separation of church from state in the Enlightenment—as the state's laws were no longer measured by clergy as being adequately or inadequately representative of religious dictates, there became no higher power than that vested in the nation.

The concept of nation is also based in a fundamentally different understanding of the social manifestation of time than the forms of political identity that preceded it. The Church's understanding of time formerly centered on the concept of simultaneity—the conception of past and future existing simultaneously (on the level of consciousness) in an instantaneous present.¹⁰ In this sense, the community, understood primarily through its religious affiliation, existed in a defined moment between past and future. This conception changed over time, however, to an understanding of time as transverse rather than simultaneous. The practical implication of this

⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, [Kindle Cloud Reader version], 1983, 5.

⁷ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

⁹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

¹⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 24.

was the situation of the nation as a solid sociological entity either moving up or down history, therefore losing much of the immutability inherent in the previous religious conception. With the loss of simultaneity comes an insecurity in the nation's process along the timeline of history, which provides an effective method of inspiring commitment to the nation and participation in it—time does not exist in a stasis, so the nation's members must be committed to advancing the nation towards its zenith.

Central to this change is the cultural and intellectual influence of humanism. As Auerbach explained the changes in Europeans' perceptions of their relation to time and the past, "With the first dawn of humanism, there began to be a sense that the events of classical history and legend and also those of the Bible were not separated from the present simply by an extent of time but also by *completely different conditions of life*. Humanism with its program of renewal of antique forms of life and expression creates a historical perspective in depth such as no previous epoch known to us has possessed: the humanists see antiquity in historical depth, and, against that background, the dark epochs of the intervening Middle Ages...[This made impossible the] re-establishing [of] the autarchic life natural to antique culture or the historical naiveté of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries."¹¹

The separation Auerbach describes not only effected post-humanist perceptions of time, but permitted the construction of the imagined past vital to the development of national identity. When the past is conceptualized as having an ethereal

Anderson suggests that these factors, while central to any national movement, were uniquely effective in the nationalisms that reshaped the European political landscape between 1820-1920 in that the recent history of the French Revolution and the revolutionary movements of the American colonies provided a model that allowed European nationalists a great degree of clarity in defining their objectives from the outset of their movements. In Anderson's words, "The 'nation' thus became something capable of being consciously aspired to from early on, rather than a slowly sharpening frame of vision."¹²

Anderson's description of the nation is particularly applicable to this study in that its position of the nation's invented nature (keeping in mind that "invented" in this context does not necessarily connote a cynical falsity) provides an analytical basis from which the process of the Lithuanian nation coming to define itself can be understood.

Ethnonationalism

In the introduction to his collection of essays on ethnonationalism, Walker Connor quoted British statesman Sir Ernest Barker on the origins of the modern nation in the consciousness of the community:

"The self-consciousness of nations is a product of the nineteenth century. This is a matter of the first importance. Nations were already there; they had indeed been there for centuries. But it is not the things which are simply 'there' that matter in human life. What really and finally matters is the thing which is apprehended as an idea, and, as an idea, is vested with emotion until it becomes a cause and a spring of action. In the world of action

¹¹ Auerbach as cited in Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 25-27.

¹² Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 69.

apprehended ideas are alone electrical; and a nation must be an idea as well as a fact before it can become a dynamic force.”¹³

Barker thus describes the nation as an entity that is not essentially determinative, but that is primarily concerned with the self-identification of a people with the image of a group’s past, present, and future. This is relevant in understanding, in Conner’s words, that “political self-expression was a necessary concomitant of cultural consciousness.”¹⁴ In this, Conner suggests that the political will of a people coming to define themselves as a nation is necessarily and intrinsically linked to that people’s sense of cultural being—nationalism is, in this way, the political manifestation of a cultural sense of being.

Traditionally, much scholarship criticized the role of culturally felt history as irrational and therefore not worth considering.¹⁵ Conner refutes this supposition by drawing a distinction between the *nonrational* and the *irrational*—while the irrational actively opposes logic, the nonrational is in no way concerned with the logic of its positions. Conner proposes that nationalism is better understood as a nonrational philosophy than an irrational one; while national actors and members of the nationalist community create imagined histories that are not necessarily reflective of historical fact, they do so to appeal to nonrational motivations rather than to try to fit their country’s history into a rational historical narrative that justifies their political ends. Conner explains this further when he criticizes “the intellectual’s discomfort with the nonrational” as ignoring “the vital distinction between fact and perceptions of fact” by engaging in an uncompromising “search for quantifiable and therefore tangible explanations” of every political movement.¹⁶

To better understand the areas that Conner feels are often overlooked in traditional political science scholarship, Conner suggests the importance of studying forms representative of “deep-felt passions” rather than purely academic sources; these would include poetry and other forms of creative writing, extending to speeches, pamphlets, programs, and other forms of what is often dismissed as nationalist propaganda.¹⁷ Conner notes that it is not important whether the authors of these documents truly believed in the authenticity of what they were espousing; rather, it was important that through their materials, their audiences felt a visceral connection to an imagined past that brought an intangible mass instinct to the point of political activism.

Making an imagined historical antecedent be felt powerfully enough to inspire the masses of the nation to action is a process. Conner describes the early part of this process as the “prenation”—in this stage, the core tenets by which the nation defines itself is in the process of construction and is highly malleable.¹⁸ There is little or no real political power in the prenation, as it exists mostly in the ideological realm and is most frequently constrained to the realm of the intellectuals who propose and develop it as a concept. If the ideals that the nationalist leaders propose find fertile ground in the mass of the population they include in their definition of the nation, then the group begins to move to the classification of “nation,” which Conner

¹³ Baker as cited in Walker Conner, *Ethnonationalism: The quest for understanding* [Kinder Cloud Reader version], 1994, 4.

¹⁴ Conner, *Ethnonationalism*, 5.

¹⁵ Conner, *Ethnonationalism*, 75-76.

¹⁶ Conner, *Ethnonationalism*, 76.

¹⁷ Conner, *Ethnonationalism*, 76.

¹⁸ Conner, *Ethnonationalism*, 79.

understands as the national consciousness which has attained political power or legitimacy. By making this distinction, Conner creates a space for understanding the reshaping of historical narratives that is so common in nationalist movements. Early nationalist literature, like that of Jonas Basanavicius (which is discussed in greater depth later in this article), ought to be understood as crucial to the definition of the prenation rather than as the cynical twisting of historical fact to support purely political ends.

The process of a prenation becoming a nation depends on the advocates of the prenation's ability to successfully express the prenation's potentiality to develop meaningful political power. On a practical level, and particularly applicable to the discussion of the development of nationalism in Lithuania and the value of the language in that development, Conner also posits that the presence of a definable geographic "homeland" greatly strengthens the connection of the individual to the imagined community;¹⁹ while it is not absolutely necessary that the community have a territory to be a nation with political power (the Jewish community, for example, lacked an internationally recognized territorial component before the establishment of the state of Israel, but nonetheless exerted political influence as a religious nation), the homeland provides a convenient scaffolding about which the more ethereal characteristics of community can be constructed and supported in the prenational stage.

Which characteristics leaders of a homeland prenation consider essential to their group varies situationally, but are, by the nature of the nation, invariably exclusive of populations that may be in the homeland territory but do not fit the prenation's criteria for membership in the as yet realized nation. In general, individuals of ethnonational minorities "manifest substantially less affection toward the state than do members of the dominant group."²⁰ While Conner here specifically refers to minorities within an already established state, the same potential tension can be extended to the nation and prenation. The characteristics the national leaders choose as essential have tremendous power to either accommodate or alienate, depending on each individual in the territory's connection to them. In light of this, language can be considered one of the characteristics most readily lent to accommodating a great number in that the act of speaking a language does not require the adoption of any set of ideals and languages can be learned, therefore allowing the individual to join the majority structure. This was true in the case of Lithuania, where the language played a crucial role in expanding the reach of the nation.

The Role of Printed Language in the Prenation and Nation

In addition to providing a theoretical framework for understanding the origins of national identity and its operational qualities, Anderson also describes the processes through which this identity is first proposed, later propagated, and finally accepted as unequivocal truth. On a practical level, the printing press (propaganda and literature, more broadly) has proven to be the most influential medium for transmitting national sentiment.²¹ Anderson specifically references the Protestant Reformation as a clear example of the influence of print material. Before print-capitalism and greater literacy enabled a wider portion of the population access to literary materials, the Catholic Church was able to consistently defeat any opposition as a result of its centuries-old lines of communication and established hierarchies that enabled quick and

¹⁹ Conner, *Ethnonationalism*, 78.

²⁰ Conner, *Ethnonationalism*, 81.

²¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 47.

coordinated response to often disjointed, languid opposition. It was not a coincidence that Martin Luther's 1517 challenge to Papal authority (coming shortly after the invention of the printing press) proved to be the first broadly successful movement, as Luther's theses "had been seen in every part of the country within 15 days" of their original posting to Wittenberg's chapel door.²²

In this form of proto-nationalism (understanding religious affiliation as a form of nation), Luther and the Protestant thinkers who followed him unwittingly created a model for future nationalist leaders to follow. Their insistence on publication in the vernacular and distribution to the common man introduced previously marginalized or non-aligned populations to the political equation and thus upset traditional power dynamics, obligating the landholding elite to compete with ideas from the lower classes in ways they had never before had to consider. Concurrent with the sudden increase in power of the printing press, the vernacular language began to be put under greater scrutiny as a shift began to occur away from the conception of language as either a simple local attribute or a mechanism of the state. The example of the Protestant Reformation showed that language could be presented as a core element of group identity: what made Protestants Protestant was that they could read the Bible themselves, and what enabled them to read the Bible themselves was access to material in their vernacular languages.²³

Even in attempting to counter the influence of Protestant publications with publications of their own, the Catholic Church and its aligned nobility contributed to the development of the printed vernacular language as a vehicle for political transformation. Indeed, at the beginning of the printing process, dialects in all European states were innumerable and often unintelligible; in France, for example, it would not be realistic to assume that a speaker of Île-de-France French would understand a speaker from Normandie, or vice versa. As demand for printed material increased, however, the need for a standardized common tongue that would permit distribution of literature to all corners of a country with equal effect rose in kind. Over the course of years of Protestant writings and Catholic rebuttals across the borders of the European kingdoms, a gradual literacy base was being developed in a form of language that was formerly unheard of—a vernacular that was at once at use among the common man and the nobility, and suddenly worthy of appearing in print and being considered as having inherent worth for expressing political concerns.²⁴

As discussed by Conner, the import of the seemingly insignificant propaganda pamphlets that are now recognized as the standard fare of any nationalist movement is truly consequential. Anderson's analysis of the consequences of the Protestant Reformation support Conner's criticism of traditional scholarship as being overly dismissive of propagandist documents—concerning nationalist literature, it is not necessarily what is being said that is of primary importance, but in the way it is being said and to whom. In the case of vernacular languages, the very act of using the language in publication serves as a political statement. The core change that permitted a shift in the perception of language was what Anderson termed "the primordial fatality of *particular* languages and their association with *particular* territorial units"—in other words, the truth language of the Church, considered in its time to have universal significance, was replaced in favor of a significantly more localized form of linguistic identity.²⁵ The

²² Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 41.

²³ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 44.

²⁴ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 41-47.

²⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 45.

vernacular's elevation to the point of being considered appropriate for use when dealing with holy texts marked a fundamental change in the vernacular's perceived prestige.

The Success of Ethnolinguistic Nationalism in Lithuania

As previously discussed, a central theme of nationalist movements is the communal recollection of an imagined past. It is through the elucidation of murky historical patrimony that a nation comes to define itself in its contemporary context; therefore, in examining the development of the nationalism of a particular group, it is first necessary to understand the past from which the group perceived its actions to have arisen.

In the case of Lithuania, the romantic historical past is embodied in the medieval Grand Duchy and the early modern Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. For the Lithuanian nationalists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, these entities came to symbolize the autonomy and self-determination that they felt they were denied as subjects of the Russian Empire, and while they did not seek to recreate the organization (they were fearful of falling under the dominance of the more widely prestigious Poles), both the Grand Duchy and the Commonwealth provided material for the construction of an imagined past.

While there were a number of nationalist writers and publications in the latter half of the nineteenth century, in this section I focus on the work of Dr. Jonas Basanavičius, specifically his early publications in the nationalist journal *Aušra*. I have chosen to analyze Basanavičius and *Aušra* specifically because of the universal acknowledgment of the centrality of both Basanavičius and *Aušra* to the history of the Lithuanian nation.²⁶ Basanavičius is known variably as “the father of Lithuania’s national rebirth” and the “father of the Lithuanian nation,” as he was the first Lithuanian nationalist author to gain a widespread readership. He became the most influential contributor to the discussion of Lithuanian national identity by the time the movement gained a wide following toward the end of the nineteenth century, and *Aušra* was the most widely-distributed publication in Lithuanian during the time of the Lithuanian press ban.

This chapter’s primary focus is not to state the historical facts of the territory that now constitutes the state of Lithuania, but to explain which historical characteristics nationalist leaders found to be valuable to pursuing a nationalist agenda, why those factors were particularly appealing, and how nationalist leaders leveraged those factors for political gain. For the sake of simplicity, I refer to the collection of tribes that inhabited the territory in question during the medieval period as “Lithuanian tribes” to avoid the repetitious “tribes that inhabited the territory of what would become the Lithuanian state,” but these tribes were in no way unified for the majority of their history.

Special attention is paid to language, as this study considers language the most malleable and ultimately influential of the variables that went into forging the national identity that eventually led to the successful establishment of autonomous Lithuanian rule of Vilnius and its environs.

“Lithuania,” from Antiquity through the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth

²⁶ Jonas Puzinas, “Dr. Jonas Basanavičius: Founder,” *Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences* 23(3), 1977, http://www.lituanus.org/1977/77_3_01.htm.

Archaeologists know little of the populations that inhabited the territory that is now Lithuania before the mid-12th century. Most mention of the Lithuanian tribes from this period comes in the form of records from their neighbors (the Danes and Ruthenians in particular), who frequently raided them and demanded tribute from them. There is also mention of Lithuanian territories as having paid tribute to the Kievan Rus in the tenth and eleventh centuries, but no specific characterizations of the people who inhabited these territories exists.²⁷

There is little concrete information, then, to identify the characteristics of the groups that inhabited Lithuanian territory before conversion of the Lithuanian leadership to Christianity; considering this, the nationalists of the nineteenth century made little reference to this period in their later writings, electing to refer to the pre-Christian Lithuanian tribes merely as “the ancients.” The gaps in the historical record, however, begin to be filled in at the time of the coronation of King Mindaugas, who succeeded in uniting the numerous Lithuanian tribes to become the first Grand Duke of Lithuania.

King Mindaugas’s rule provided an ideal beginning point for the construction of a national myth for a variety of reasons. First, Mindaugas was the first Grand Duke of Lithuania—in other words, he was the first to unite the disparate Baltic tribes of the region into one political entity, creating cohesion where there were before few uniting characteristics. Secondly, Mindaugas was Christian and had received official support and recognition from Pope Innocent IV upon his coronation in 1253. In return, Mindaugas and the united Lithuanian tribes participated in a series of crusades against the Tatars. While these campaigns were not militarily significant, they were culturally significant in that they proved Lithuanian commitment to membership in the Christian, Western world (this was particularly strongly felt by Jonas Basanavičius, who is discussed at greater length later). The positive relationship between the Lithuanian tribes and Christendom, however, was short-lived, as the murder of Mindaugas by rival pagan warlords resulted in the almost immediate dissolution of the political unity he brought. Following Mindaugas, the Lithuanian tribes resumed being a fractious group for the next century until they were united by Grand Duke Jogaila in the mid-fourteenth century.²⁸

Although Jogaila was not a Christian at birth, he quickly realized the value of conversion when faced with the possibility of having to face strong crusading armies and having to contend with opposition from the Teutonic knights. Jogaila accomplished the transition into the Christian world through marriage into the Polish royal family.²⁹ With the marriage of Grand Duke Jogaila to Polish princess Jadwiga at Krewo in 1385, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland were united for the first time. Having attained a greater degree of stability through alliance with Poland, Lithuanian leaders could dedicate more time toward legislation and edicts; it is in this period that the precedence of a Lithuanian language as a tool of governance was born.³⁰ Chancery Slavonic was used not only by the common people, but also in the Grand

²⁷ Audrone Bliujenie and Florin Curta, “Exotic lands, quixotic friends: Eastern Lithuania and the Carpathian Basin in late antiquity and the early middle ages (AD c. 380 to c. 620),” *Medieval Archaeology*, 55, 2011, 32.

²⁸ Darius Baronas, “The encounter between forest Lithuanians and steppe Tatars in the time of Mindaugas,” *Lithuanian Historical Studies*, 2006, 8.

²⁹ Timothy Snyder, *The reconstruction of nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999*, Yale University Press, 2003, 19-25.

³⁰ Aliaksei Kazharski, “Belarus’ entry into international society: Between a small nation-state and big narratives,” *Memories of Empire and Entry into International Society*, 2017, 16-19.

Duchy's royal court, churches, and in all royal edicts. Ironically, the language that Lithuanian nationalists would later claim to be the antecedent to modern Lithuanian was, in reality, a dialect of Ruthenian, and an unimportant one at that—despite later nationalist attempts to characterize Chancery Slavonic as important to the fabric of the Grand Duchy, it was in reality quietly replaced by Polish by the mid-fifteenth century in the royal court. By the time the Lublin Union established the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1569, no official government documents were still written in Chancery Slavonic or translated to Chancery Slavonic. The period of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth itself contained little material for exploitation by nineteenth century Lithuanian nationalists, as Lithuanian culture was largely subsumed by the more prestigious Polish language and tradition. It wasn't until the final partitioning of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1795 that the question of a Lithuanian language reemerged on a regional level, as Russian competed with Polish as the language of administration and institutions.³¹

Regardless of the reality of the Grand Duchy's history or Chancery Slavonic's importance, the very existence of the kingdom provided Lithuanian nationalist leaders with the necessary material to construct a narrative of national continuity through antiquity and the middle ages. Certainly, Jonas Basanavičius later seized on this history and joined it to the modern Lithuanian language to foment nationalist sentiment against the Russian Empire.

Characteristics of Lithuanian Territory during Russian Rule

From the time of Russia's participation in the Third Partition of Poland in 1795 until 1863, Russian Imperial rule could be described as lenient by most imperial standards.³² To control the large number of ethnicities and religious identities under Russian authority, the Russian Empire was not initially inclined to attempt enforcing religious homogeneity. While Orthodoxy was certainly preferred, there were no punishments imposed on citizens who were not Orthodox. This was most evident in the presence of large Islamic populations in the Lower Volga region and the tolerance of Lutheranism in the Baltic region. In both of these cases, the Imperial government neither discriminated against nor actively attempted to convert the local populations.

Additionally, the Russian Empire was frequently willing to grant conquered populations a fair degree of freedom in determining local governance; there was a semi-autonomous Catholic Polish Kingdom in areas of present-day Lithuania, Belarus, and Right Bank Ukraine, for example.³³ Initially, then, the Russian Empire was content with maintaining a hands-off style in regards to its possessions abroad.

This stance changed abruptly with the January Uprising of 1863 (Trumpa, 1963). As a large number of participants in the revolution were of Lithuanian origin (and particularly because many of those who had participated in the attempted revolution had served in the imperial army and had previously been considered loyal subjects), Russian authorities immediately looked to curtail the privileges of minority ethnic groups within the Empire to diminish the likelihood of

³¹ Tadeusz Kamusella, "Germanization, Polonization, and Russification in the partitioned lands of Poland-Lithuania," *Nationalities Papers*, 41(5), 2013, 817.

³² Serhiy Bilen'kyi, *Romantic nationalism in Eastern Europe: Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian political imaginations*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012, 8.

³³ Bilen'kyi, *Romantic nationalism*, 5.

revolt or communication between potential collaborators. To target Lithuanians, the Russian government decreed that any printing in the Lithuanian language would be forbidden indefinitely, effectively banning the publication of any nationalist material.³⁴ The relatively sudden change of the Russian government from acting with respect for local languages, religions, and traditions caused a rift between the imperial government and its subjects that would be exploited by nationalist authors deliberately breaking the press ban.

Territorially, most of modern-day Lithuania was not composed by a majority population of Lithuanians. Where Lithuanians did reside was mostly sparsely populated tracts of forested land on the western fringes of the territory along the banks of the Baltic Sea. This fact heavily influenced Lithuanian nationalism and national history: primarily, it rendered any claim to the two major urban centers toward which Lithuanian nationalists aspired, Kaunas and Vilnius, nearly impossible to claim based on population. Ethnic Lithuanians did not compose even a plurality of the population of Vilnius in 1897, well into the first publication and dissemination of Jonas Basanavičius's first works and *Aušra*'s initial period of distribution.³⁵

In addition to the challenge posed by the ethnic composition of the territory in question, Lithuanian nationalists also had to contend with the existing political structure imposed by the Russian Empire. The Russian Empire had initially intended to reduce tension in the highly diverse territory by separating the ethnicities present into separate governorates—notably, the predominately Lithuanian Kovna Governorate's territory did not include Vilnius or any of its environs, and was restricted to the sparsely populated territory in the northern and western stretches of the country. Even the accession of Kaunas as the capital of the Kovna Governorate did not come without opposition from Poles, who formed a sizable minority in the surrounding area and a plurality in the territory to the immediate south.³⁶

The challenges of population and political reality meant that constructing a nationalist narrative based on the claim of a numerically superior population to their inhabited territory untenable. As such, Basanavičius had to focus on less tangible measurements around which a distinctly Lithuanian claim could be organized. In addressing this, language presented a unique opportunity—by establishing the language as the core of Lithuanian identity and presenting Vilnius as the ideal seat of that linguistic community, Lithuanian nationalists were able to negate the importance of population in establishing a claim to Vilnius and Kaunas as rightfully Lithuanian, as there was a sizable minority of Lithuanian speakers in both cities.³⁷

It also helped Lithuanian nationalists that their minority status made the more sizable populations vying for control of the territory, such as the Poles, initially discount the possibility of a legitimate Lithuanian competition. Indeed, the lack of Lithuanian ethnic presence in all of the territory's major urban centers made it hard to conceive of an organized political movement, and few Polish and Russian leaders considered the possibility of unrest or organization in the hinterlands of the north and west reaching Vilnius or Kaunas. This gave Basanavičius and his colleagues a degree of anonymity with which to plan and organize that most nationalist movements do not enjoy: while publishing in Lithuanian was banned and Russian authorities kept tight control of urban areas, little attention was paid to the portions of territory in which Basanavičius was planting the seeds of a Lithuanian nationalism that would come to pose a

³⁴ V. Trumpa, "The 1863 revolt in Lithuania," *Lituanus*, 9(4), 1963, 10.

³⁵ Snyder, *The reconstruction of nations*, 71.

³⁶ Snyder, *The reconstruction of nations*, 71.

³⁷ Jonas Basanavičius, "Aušra, 1," *Aušra*, 1883, 12.

legitimate challenge to Polish and Russian control of Vilnius by the first decade of the twentieth century.

Challenges to Russian Rule and Construction of National Identity Basanavičius's Characterization of the Lithuanian Nation

Of all those who played a part in the construction of Lithuanian national identity, there was no more influential than Dr. Jonas Basanavičius. The depth of his impact on the Lithuanian nation was best expressed by Jonas Puzinas on the fiftieth anniversary of Basanavičius's passing in 1927: "his work was so all-encompassing that it would be impossible to thoroughly cover all aspects of his productive life. It was Basanavičius who rekindled the consciousness of the Lithuanian nation, founded the first truly Lithuanian-language newspaper, *Aušra*, [and] ardently fought for the freedom of his homeland."³⁸

Basanavičius was born in the rural hamlet of Ozkabalai in Vilkaviskis County on 22 November 1852, miles from the border of the present-day Kaliningrad Oblast in Lithuania's southwest corner. After completing a primary education in Lithuania, he travelled to Moscow to enroll in Moscow University's Faculty of History and Philology in 1873 before transferring to the Faculty of Medicine in 1874. This was Basanavičius's first experience of the Russian Empire in a context separate from that of his home county—in his time in Moscow, he met with like-minded Lithuanian students who felt equally out of place in the Russian capital. Together, they began practicing publishing techniques and discussing the effects of the Lithuanian press ban. It was during this stage that Basanavičius began to prioritize the Lithuanian language as a central element of Lithuanian nationalism, although he initially did little to put this sentiment into action, as he passed most of the next two decades travelling through the western portions of the Russian Empire in his professional capacity as a hospital administrator.³⁹

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the region in which Basanavičius spent his childhood was dotted with remnants from the relatively unknown Baltic cultures of antiquity. Basanavičius grew to develop an ideology of connection to the ancient culture he felt the mounds represented and saw the Lithuanians of his day as the mound builders' ethnic progeny. Reflecting on his childhood and its influence on the development of his nationalist ideology, Basanavičius, stated:

"Together with tales about the crusaders [of Mindaugas's era], the mounds held a fascination for me since my earliest days. Close to Ozkabalai, in the fields of Piliakalniai village stands a beautiful mound. Since my youth I had begun paying visits to this large and very beautiful mound, which brooding in an area of untold beauty and peacefulness, stands on the shore of Aista river. In my youth one heard tales of bewitched beautiful maidens imprisoned in the mound; the mound itself was supposedly piled up with hats and baskets...I later became acquainted with the Pajevonis mound, later yet with the Kaupiškis mound, near the Prussian border, and with the mounds at Rudamina, Lakynai, and others. On these hills, I can confidently assert, my Lithuanian consciousness was confirmed."⁴⁰

³⁸ Puzinas, "Dr. Jonas Basanavičius," 1.

³⁹ Puzinas, "Dr. Jonas Basanavičius," 5.

⁴⁰ Basanavičius as cited in Puzinas, "Dr. Jonas Basanavičius," 6.

This connection grew through his young adulthood, inspiring him to begin collecting and recording Lithuanian peasant folklore while pursuing his primary education in the nearby urban center of Marijampole. Given the absence of concrete historical evidence, Basanavičius sought to reconstruct the identities of the ancient “Lithuanians” (what existed in the region was really a connection of tribes that were only connected inasmuch as they were all Baltic and pagan; any unifying nomenclature would suggest a cooperation and mutual recognition that cannot be proven) by exploring the folkloric tradition of the peasantry, where he thought the core of the nation was most purely represented.

In 1882, a unique opportunity presented Basanavičius with the first real opportunity to disseminate his vision for a Lithuanian nation. A new posting in Prague, where there was no ban on writing in the Lithuanian language, allowed him to begin working on what would eventually be published as the first edition of *Aušra* the following year. Basanavičius spent 1882 writing and editing *Aušra*, including a mixture of nationalist essays and a collection of Lithuanian folklore and poetry, the first time many of the stories were written down. Using social connections he had developed during his education, Basanavičius succeeded in having *Aušra* published in Germany before being smuggled into Lithuania by a group that would become known as the “knygnesiai”—the book smugglers.⁴¹

In accomplishing the feat of “rekindling” the Lithuanian nation’s consciousness, Basanavičius recognized the impressive power of the Lithuanian language as a unifying force, and the sophisticated web of book smugglers allowed Basanavičius to spread his message through the territory of Lithuania quickly. The first edition of *Aušra* included an enumerated list of the aspirations of the Lithuanian nation:

- “1. Through the ages our nation had undergone such derision and subjugation, that one can only marvel that it is still in existence today.
2. In the olden days Lithuanians inhabited an area twice its present size; today Lithuania is but a shadow of the ancient state.
3. Today, enlightened men familiar with our life and its tribulations, unanimously state that those neighbors under whose yoke our people live are determined that we, if not today then in a year or two, would become Germans or Slavs.
4. But we are people as good as our neighbors, and we desire to enjoy all the rights endowed to all mankind, just as our neighbors seek them for themselves.
5. Among these rights, the first one would be for Lithuanians in Lithuania to receive their learning and education in Lithuanian schools.
6. Today, we clearly see that foreign-language schools usually turn Lithuanians into foreigners.
7. We ourselves must concern ourselves with contemporary matters.
8. That which we are not offered by the schools, we must supply ourselves.
9. Our primary concern will be to inform other Lithuanians about the events of ancient times and the works of our honorable ancestors, whose works and whose love of our beloved homeland we have forgotten—we ourselves do not now which parents’ children and grandchildren we are.

⁴¹ A.E. Senn, “Tsarist authorities and Lithuanian book-smuggling,” *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 11(4), 1980, 334-340.

10. If every good son respects his parents, and the parents of his parents, then we too, Lithuanians of today, should follow the good example set by the sons of ancient Lithuania.
11. Therefore, we must first know their ancient lifestyle, their nature, their ancient beliefs—their works, their concerns, their cares.
12. Understanding their lives, we will better understand them, and having understood them, we will understand ourselves.”⁴²

Basanavičius’s list is significant for a number of reasons. First of all, it is a clear statement of the nationalists’ intention to establish Lithuania as a separate nation, even if that goal is not yet translated explicitly into a demand for independent governance. This is apparent from the narrative of dispossession presented in the first item of the list and the characterization of the Lithuanian people as a group who have been illegitimately dispossessed of their rightful, historical territory. In addition to this, Basanavičius suggests an element of miracle in the nation’s survival during the era of its “derision and subjugation.” This lends an aspect of religious legitimacy to the national narrative. The Lithuanian people survived the attempts to dispossess and efface them because, according to Basanavičius, they were meant to survive—the cause of their independence was legitimate and pure, and they are justified in seeking the restoration of what historically had always been theirs. In this way, Basanavičius played on one of the elements Anderson identified as central to the role of the nation in identity formation: the nation as sovereign, imbued with an almost religious reverence and sanctity.

Secondly, Basanavičius identifies a crucial Other to be used as a foil to the Lithuanian identity in the form of “Germans and Slavs.” As the territory Lithuanian nationalists asserted to be theirs was in reality a highly ethnically and linguistically diverse region, Basanavičius and his colleagues recognized the importance of creating a measure of differentiating Lithuanians from their neighbors to such a degree as to justify arguing for political separation. The use of Germans and Slavs as opponents of the Lithuanian nation also reinforced the narrative of dispossession and created a sense of urgency through the threat of encirclement—according to this perception, the fragile, downtrodden Lithuanian nation faced existential threats from all directions, as the Germans tried to claim their ancestral homeland from the west, the Poles from the south, and the Russians from the east. As Hopf outlined in his analysis of Soviet national identity in the mid-20th century, this construction of the Other is vital to the establishment of a stable sense of Self.⁴³

Basanavičius legitimizes his claims of Lithuanian exceptionalism by grounding them in an imagined historical past beginning in antiquity. As previously discussed, the actual historical record is not particularly revelatory of the characteristics of the populations that inhabited the territory that is now occupied by the Lithuanian state—indeed, Basanavičius himself never explicitly defined what the “ancient” Lithuanian society that he felt the modern community ought to aspire actually looked like or did. Here, Conner’s work is valuable in assessing how Basanavičius’s argument proved so influential despite its almost complete lack of historical precedent. For those who identified as Lithuanian nationalists already, the suggestion of continuity with an imagined past (regardless of how contrived or tenuous that connection may be) justified their beliefs in the uniqueness of their community and its right to political expression. For those Lithuanians whom the nationalists sought to convince to join the

⁴² Basanavičius, “Aušra, 1,” 3-7.

⁴³ Hopf, *International Politics*, 7.

nationalist cause, the situating of Basanavičius's struggle for recognition as the most recent development on a national timeline spanning from the Lithuanian tribes' imagined glories through the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth lent an air of legitimacy to the campaign for political autonomy. The historical veracity of Basanavičius's interpretation was irrelevant; the nonrational appeal of the narrative was sufficient to inspire action.⁴⁴

From items three through six of the list, Basanavičius explicitly links the survival of the Lithuanian language to the survival of the nation and asserts that attempts to educate Lithuanian children in a language other than Lithuanian constitutes a deliberate attempt to divorce them from their true Lithuanian identity. The very act of not being raised in speaking Lithuanian constituted a threat of turning the future generation of Lithuanians into Germans or Slavs, and fundamental human rights demand that Lithuanians have the opportunity to teach their own youth in schools of their design.

The explicit linking of the nation to the Lithuanian language is also important in that the language is the single concrete detail describing the modern character of the Lithuanian nation presented in *Aušra*. At this point, as the census information showed, there was very little reason to believe that those who identified as ethnic Lithuanians had any legitimate claim to the territory by measure of population.⁴⁵ Moreover, the Lithuanian populations that could be identified were frequently spread wide distances apart and not unified in any meaningful way. Defining membership in the nation linguistically allowed Lithuanian nationalists to bridge geographic gaps between otherwise isolated communities through a claim to linguistic brotherhood. Basanavičius also successfully integrated previously diverse speech communities and varying dialects by writing in a standardized Lithuanian language, the first of its kind. Formerly, there were three distinct dialects grouped under the umbrella of "Lithuanian"—Aukštaitijan, Samogitian, and Samogallian, along with a number of minority dialects spoken in the German-controlled Lithuania Minor.⁴⁶

Aušra's publication and distribution bridged the gaps between these communities by presenting the Lithuanian speech community as unified, despite the reality of its diversity territorially and linguistically. Basanavičius also deftly avoids causing dissent within the Lithuanian community by not giving preference to any single dialect over another—indeed, his construction of a unified Lithuanian language included syntactic elements of the majority Aukštaitijan and Samogitian dialects while preserving the more antiquated lexicon of the dialect spoken in Lithuania minor.⁴⁷ In this way, Basanavičius's writing was closest syntactically to the majority of his readership, while simultaneously offering the opportunity to link the modern creation of a common Lithuanian tongue to an imagined historical past by preserving the older lexicon.

Initially, this strategy was intended to secure Lithuanian nationalists a position in the growing contest for possession, both socially and politically, of Vilnius as a capital for the desired autonomous state. Certainly, there was a legitimate case to be made for small farming communities in isolated provinces to be considered Lithuanian ethnic strongholds; however, ethnic Lithuanians as a percentage of overall population diminished rapidly within cities. As Snyder noted in his discussion of how Lithuanian nationalists came to control Vilnius, "for half a

⁴⁴ Conner, *Imagined Communities*, 75.

⁴⁵ Snyder, *The reconstruction of nations*, 78.

⁴⁶ Snyder, *The reconstruction of nations*, 51.

⁴⁷ Arnoldas Piročkinas, "Jonas Jablonskis—naujų žodžių kūrėjas," *Verba Magistri*, 2000, 2-12.

millennium before [Lithuania's Independence Act], Lithuanian was neither the language of power in Vilnius nor the language spoken by most of its inhabitants...the language spoken in a third of its homes was Yiddish; the language of its streets, churches, and schools was Polish; and the language of its countryside was Belarusian."⁴⁸

The remedy to the reality of trying to organize a numerically inferior population diffused through a wide section of territory was the application of a uniquely malleable principle of linguistic identity. Notably, in none of his writings does Basanavičius go so far as to say that the Lithuanian language is relevant to identity only if an individual grows up speaking it or speaks it as a primary quotidian language—because the language itself is presented as a vessel of national meaning, anyone in the region with the capacity to learn the language has the possibility to be considered a member of the Lithuanian community. Again, Snyder remarks that for Basanavičius and his compatriots, “people in and around Vilnius who seemed to be Poles or Belarusians were Lithuanians who happened to speak Polish or Belarusian. In the right circumstances, ethnographic Lithuania could expand.”⁴⁹ Compared to the national identities against which the Lithuanian nationalists were competing, namely Polish and Belarusian national activists, the Lithuanian model was by far the most flexible and applicable through a wide range of situations.

Through the lens of group identity, Basanavičius also engages in meaningful myth making through the essentialist characterization of the Lithuanian language and his linking it to the medieval and ancient past. In reality, “Lithuanian” was not a single language, but the umbrella term for what was at the time of Basanavičius's birth a wide collection of dialects, not all of which were mutually intelligible.⁵⁰ In fact, the development of a standardized form of Lithuanian was the work of nationalist sympathizer Jonas Jablonskis. In outlining a standard form of Lithuanian, Jablonskis deliberately chose to combine the Western Aukštaitian dialect (spoken in the southwest portion of the country, the same dialect spoken by Basanavičius) with elements of Prussian Lithuanian specifically because each of the two dialects had maintained more archaic phonetic patterns.

Establishing a deliberately archaic-sounding form of the Lithuanian language and framing that language as a link between the Lithuanian community of the nineteenth century and the imagined glories of Lithuania's antiquity proved a highly successful, mobile ideology—within twenty years of *Aušra's* first publication, the Lithuanian community had been sufficiently organized to inspire the Great Seimas of 1905, which eventually led to Lithuanian nationalists voting to pass the Act of Independence from the Russian Empire in 1918.⁵¹ “When we have turned into dust, if the Lithuanian language stands strong, if through our toils the Lithuanian spirit is restored, then even in these graves we will rest easier, happier.”⁵²

Conclusion

From the time of *Aušra's* first publication in 1883 to the beginning of the twentieth century, there were few major developments in Lithuanian nationalism. In general, *Aušra's*

⁴⁸ Snyder, *The reconstruction of nations*, 22.

⁴⁹ Snyder, *The reconstruction of nations*, 52.

⁵⁰ Piročkinas, “Jonas Jablonskis,” 2.

⁵¹ Algis Krupavičius, “Lithuania,” *The Palgrave Handbook of Social Democracy in the European Union*, 2013, 488.

⁵² Basanavičius as cited in Puzinas, “Jonas Jablonskis,” 5.

readership grew slowly but consistently and succeeded in fomenting a desire for Lithuanian political representation. Throughout this time, Basanavičius spent most of his time writing and editing the periodical while organizing salons to discuss issues of Lithuanian identity and to organize plans for exercising opposition to Russian rule.⁵³

By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, Basanavičius's consistent efforts had grown the political presence of the Lithuanian community significantly. He was elected by other members of the Lithuanian community to serve as chair of the Great Seimas, a congress of Lithuanian nationalist leaders intended to discuss how to achieve autonomous rule and ensure control of Vilnius as a future capital of an independent Lithuanian state. While the first Seimas did not produce any significant legislative results, it was the first meeting of Lithuanian nationalists in an official setting and the first time they had brought their intentions into the public sphere.⁵⁴

Additionally, the growing unity of the Lithuanian community forced the Russian Empire to abandon the press ban a year before the Seimas in 1904 out of fear of inciting an uprising of the sort that occurred in 1863. In this way, Basanavičius's writing succeeded not only in creating a Lithuanian identity that appealed to a wide enough audience to inspire participation in its success, but also successfully opposed Russian Imperial policy that would curtail the growth of that nation. Following the revocation of the press ban, Basanavičius was joined by a number of other authors in printing consistently about the need for an independent Lithuanian state. Having consolidated the conceptualization of the nation, the Lithuanian nationalists succeeded in operationalizing that identity to exert political influence despite the fact that they remained vastly outnumbered by the "Germans and Slavs" Basanavičius warned about in the early 1880s. Ultimately, Basanavičius's work in building the concept of the Lithuanian nation led to the final establishment of the independent Republic of Lithuania in 1918, the first sovereign, independent Lithuanian state.

In the time before Jonas Basanavičius's contribution to the Lithuanian national movement, the Lithuanian community was a small, spread out group. On the surface, the Lithuanians were the weakest ethnic entity in the Baltic region in the mid-nineteenth century—they were outnumbered, they were surrounded by more powerful, numerous, and influential cultures, and they lacked a unifying national narrative around which they could organize and exert political influence.

To use Hopf's language, they had plenty of Others, but they had not constructed a national Self. The contribution of this self was Basanavičius's major contribution to the Lithuanian nationalist movement: he was the only writer to recognize the unifying power of a common language and to have the foresight to shape membership in the community in a broad enough way to permit the group the chance to expand its membership and overcome the geographic barriers that it faced.

⁵³ Synder, *The reconstruction of nations*, 52.

⁵⁴ Krupavičius, "Lithuania," 489.

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Terrorism and ASEAN: Noninterference vs Security

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Abstract: *The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is perhaps one of, if not the strongest free trade regime outside of the European Union (EU). However, unlike the EU, ASEAN's member states cover areas that are much less developed and much harder to govern. Many ASEAN states deal with issues of political instability and unrest that creates opportunities for terrorist groups. These groups include ISIS affiliates that receive support in the form of men, material, and finances from criminal activity and sympathetic populations in other ASEAN member states and have committed attacks such as the 2002 Bali bombing that killed around 200 people. Due to the transnational nature of the movement of fighters, funds, and arms the appropriate response that is needed is one that is multilateral and makes use of the ASEAN structure. However, the fundamental structure of ASEAN is based on a policy on non-interference, and many of the solutions needed to address terrorism in the region will demand the surrendering of some aspects of member states' sovereignty. Any multilateral approach to solve these issues would heavily conflict with the "ASEAN Way" principle of non-interference, yet only multilateral action can effectively combat terrorism in the region.*

"The ASEAN way" and Terrorism

The Association of South East Asian Nations or ASEAN is perhaps the largest free trade regime outside the European Union. Founded in 1967, its ten member states have a wide range of levels of development and forms of government and they all have distinctly different religions, ethnic groups, and languages. The ten states Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Myanmar, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Brunei all have had to overcome each other's differences to work together for the greater development of themselves and Southeast Asia (SEA) as a whole. They have done this through their strategy of "noninterference." This policy of noninterference is the unofficial policy of ASEAN that commits all member states to the strict recognition and respecting of member state sovereignty. The principle is present from the founding of ASEAN, with the 1967 Bangkok Declaration (which is considered the founding document of ASEAN) emphasizing the equality of member states and the necessary respect for the UN Charter to promote regional stability and security. This was followed by both the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) Declaration in 1971 and the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Co-operation which both reaffirmed the equality of member states and stressed the importance of the noninterference in ASEAN affairs by foreign powers. These declarations formed what is called the "ASEAN Way," which is a collection of principles that ASEAN members agree to follow on a nonbinding but normative basis.¹ The principle of noninterference in each other's affairs has been one of the most controversial principles, and it has led to the sidestepping of issues among member states for what is perceived as greater benefit for all called "constructive engagement." The use of constructive engagement to preserve noninterference has been seen by many as a failure and has often done more harm than good to ASEAN member states. The quintessential example of this failure is the membership of Myanmar in the late

¹ Robin Ramcharan, "ASEAN and Non-interference: a Principle Maintained." *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 22, no. 2 (2000): 65.

1990s. Myanmar at the time was under great pressure from the West due to its myriad of human rights abuses, it also had its security forces cross the border frequently into Thailand to chase rebels, violating Thai sovereignty. Thailand and ASEAN hoped that by allowing Myanmar into ASEAN that they could use constructive engagement to change the situation. This failed miserably, with human rights abuses continuing and with Thai territorial sovereignty continually breached after joining ASEAN.²

The principle of noninterference has proved a roadblock to more issues than just human rights, with terrorism in ASEAN becoming one of the greatest challenges for the ASEAN as an institution. Terrorism has always been an issue in SEA, with rebel groups, separatist forces, and during the cold war communist guerillas threatening the security of the region. However, the nature of terrorism in SEA changed fundamentally after the September 11th terrorist attacks on the United States. Al Qaeda had called for a global jihad against the West and used its international networks to globalize activities that had once been limited to regional conflicts. The global climate changed rapidly, and noninterference came under great strain. Suddenly, the United States began to sign extradition and cooperative anti-terror agreements with states all over the globe to help combat global terrorism. Counter terrorism cooperation and extraterritorial jurisdiction issues fundamentally challenged the concept of the ASEAN Way. Mutual assistance treaties signed by some states allowed foreign entities to get involved in local law enforcement operations and extradite citizens for trial in a foreign state. ASEAN as an organization and many ASEAN states steered clear from signing these treaties with the United States, with the notable exception of the Philippines, who joined US-led antiterror initiatives that even included US troop deployments.³ However, staying out of US led initiatives did not protect ASEAN states from radical Islamic groups who still saw the governments of many ASEAN states as puppet governments of the West. Terrorism activity increased in scale and frequency, and it wasn't long after 9/11 that ASEAN states soon began to feel the effects of global terrorism themselves.⁴ In October 2002, a terrorist group in Indonesia with ties to Al-Qaida detonated a bomb in Bali that killed approximately 200 people.⁵ The way ASEAN states have responded to this terrorist attack and subsequent attacks and threats by similar groups has come in conflict with the ASEAN Way, and has ultimately led to an ineffective counter terrorism response.

Terrorist Activity

To fully understand ASEAN issues with counter terrorism, a brief overview of terrorism in ASEAN states is needed. In ASEAN states, the groups that have operated as terrorist organizations primarily have come from low income Muslim majority areas. One of the most famous groups is Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). JI is based in Indonesia, and it was responsible for the 2002 attack as well as having links to the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. This group once operated in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Malaysia, but after its main benefactor Al-Qaida began to weaken, it constricted its operations to just Indonesia in 2009. JI is now believed to

² Ibid, 66-67.

³ Senia Febrica, "Securing the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas from Maritime Terrorism: A Troublesome Cooperation?" *Perspectives on Terrorism* 8, no. 3 (2014): 68

⁴ Arabinda Acharya, *Whither Southeast Asia Terrorism?* (Hackensack, New Jersey: Imperial College Press, 2015), 18.

⁵ U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, *Terrorism in Southeast Asia*, by Bruce Vaughn, Emma Chanlett-Avery, Ben Dolven, Mark E. Manyin, and Larry A., RL34194 (2009), 2.

have been rolled into the rising Islamic State (IS) affiliate in SEA named Abu Sayyaf (ASG). The rise of IS in Syria rejuvenated Islamic terrorism in the Middle East and the world. JI and other groups that had been weakened converted into IS affiliate groups, taking advantage of the funding and technical knowledge that IS was able to provide.⁶ These IS affiliates have been able to achieve considerable success across many ASEAN states including Indonesia, Malaysia, and most prominently the Philippines.

In 2017, IS affiliate forces captured Marawi City in the Philippines, with Philippine defense forces only able to recapture the city after five months of brutal street combat. Despite some affiliate groups taking heavy casualties during the siege, other IS groups emerged from the siege relatively unscathed, and are still operating insurgency operations in the region. Part of the reason that these IS forces were able to capture the city was the transnational movement of fighters from Malaysia and Indonesia into the Philippines, augmenting the forces there with manpower, weapons, and funds that allowed them to overwhelm the local police forces.⁷ The environment that facilitates this trafficking is the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea, a tri-country area shared by Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. This area has been the subject of many border disputes among these three states as ownership of many of the islands is contested, thus creating a lawless environment where it is unknown which state has jurisdiction. This environment makes it easy to smuggle arms, fighters, and supplies to the Philippines, and provides a good hiding place for pirates and other criminal groups.⁸

The flow of arms to the Philippines and the rest of Southeast Asia originates primarily in Thailand, which is currently battling the National Revolutionary Front (BRN). The BRN is an Islamic ethnic Malay separatist movement in Southern Thailand that has been fighting against the central government. Despite their Malay ethnicity, their resistance movement has created great instability in Malaysia as well as Thailand. The group wages a brutal armed resistance movement against the Thai government, carrying out terrorist attacks and conducting raids on government installations to acquire arms and ammunition. A recent attack on a government checkpoint in November of 2019 left 15 dead and allowed the BNR to raid government weapons. The attack was the bloodiest in years and is a result of the BNR's resurgence in the region. However, the BNR itself is a local organization, it has rejected offers from international Islamic organizations to affiliate and has remained focused on its goals of either further autonomy or independence from Thailand.⁹ Despite their local goals, the BNR contributes greatly to terrorism in SEA, with the conflict creating space for other international minded groups. Arms steadily flow from the black markets supplying the BRN from Thailand to Malaysia, and from there through the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea to the Philippines and Indonesia. In 2017, the Royal Malaysian Police arrested individuals involved with an IS cell involved in these smuggling operations. These individuals, along with other independent gun runners, have supplied IS affiliated terrorist

⁶ "Jemaah Islamiyah (JI)," Counter Extremism Project, accessed November 15, 2019.

⁷ Michael Hart, "A Year After Marawi, What's Left of ISIS in the Philippines," *The Diplomat*, October 25, 2018.

⁸ Marguerite Borelli, "ASEAN Counter-terrorism Weaknesses," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 9, no. 9 (September 2017): 17.

⁹ Hannah Beech and Ryan Jirenuwat, "15 Killed in Southern Thailand in the Worst Violence in Years." *The New York Times*, November 6, 2019.

groups across the region with small arms and other supplies that have fueled conflict in the region.¹⁰

Indonesia also faces terrorist threats from separatist groups that are, just like those in the Philippines, transnational. The Free Aceh Movement and The Free Papua Movement (OPM) separatist groups both have used terrorism as a tool for their causes. These groups have targeted westerners, NGO workers, and Christian communities and police with terrorist acts. They were also responsible for a series of hotel bombings in 2009. Indonesian police have found that these groups are able to train their fighters in the Philippines and then get them across the Sulu-Sulawesi to Indonesia along with weapons and other support.¹¹ IS affiliate forces have also carried out attacks in Indonesia as well, including the attempted assassination of the Indonesian security minister in October of 2019. IS has allied with forces in the region and set up bases of operation on the myriad of difficult to patrol islands that make up Indonesia and their current strength and capabilities remain difficult to ascertain.¹²

International terrorism is also very present in Malaysia, which in 2016, IS made a priority for opening up and promoting recruitment. Between 2013 and 2019 the Malaysian security forces prevented at least 25 terrorist attacks before they could be committed. Despite the efforts of Malaysian security forces, the IS affiliate was still able to carry out an attack in Puchong with a grenade that wounded eight people. This attack was the first carried out by IS in Malaysia. Al Qaeda has been in Malaysia for longer, but its influence has been lost to IS affiliates and its international infrastructure crippled after the American success in Afghanistan. A major threat to the security in the country has been the large number of Malaysians leaving to fight for IS in Syria and Iraq. These fighters are returning to Malaysia after ISIS's defeat in Syria and have the knowledge and capability to carry out complex attacks.¹³ In early 2019, Malaysian authorities uncovered an IS cell that was planning a series of simultaneous bombings and assassinations during Ramadan. What made this plot unique was that only one member of cell was Malaysian while two others were Rohingya and one was Indonesian. The cell had small arms and IEDs that were smuggled in from Southern Thailand, and the direction was mostly foreign in nature. The attempted attacks are the first time that a group of mostly foreigners have planned terrorist attacks in Malaysia and demonstrates the regional trend to move towards transnational rather than local terrorism.¹⁴

The Challenging Nature of Terrorism in SEA

Terrorism in ASEAN states is both transnational and fed into by the internal instability of fellow ASEAN states. Many of the solutions needed to successfully combat terrorism in the region will therefore challenge the ASEAN Way of non-interference. This challenge is due to the now decades-old problem of how to differentiate terrorist groups from separatist and rebel groups, along with the continued regional instability in SEA driving the continued strength of terrorist and other violent groups. For example, the terrorist groups in the Philippines are also a

¹⁰ Austin Bodetti, "How the Thai Conflict Is Boosting Islamic State in Malaysia." *The Diplomat*, October 17, 2018.

¹¹ Febrica, "Securing the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas," 67

¹² Rodion Ebbighausen, "Southeast Asia in the Crosshairs of 'Islamic State'," *Deutsche Welle*, October 15, 2019.

¹³ Muhammad HaziqJani, "MALAYSIA," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 9, no. 1 (January2017): 18.

¹⁴ Amy Chew, "Islamic State 'Wolf Pack' in Malaysia Planned Wave of Terror Attacks, Police Say After Detaining Four Suspects in Sting Operation." *South China Morning Post*, May 13, 2019.

product of and caught up in the Philippine Civil War between the central government and the southern Muslim majority population. The Muslim majority southern islands want independence from the Christian majority northern islands, although recently the more moderate Islamic rebel groups have been in negotiations to settle for an autonomous region rather than full independence. This would technically put these terrorist groups in the purview of the domestic civil war, making any interference by ASEAN member states to assist or inhibit them a breach of Philippine sovereignty and the ASEAN policy of non-interference. Similarly, the arms that are fueling these terrorist groups are coming from Thailand's civil war, again making counter terrorism a challenge of ASEAN ideas of sovereignty. While these more moderate groups in both Thailand and the Philippines both are not labeled terrorist groups, their existence makes space for and fuels extremist terrorist groups that threaten the security of the entire region. For example, the conflict in Thailand has allowed Thai gunrunners to supply IS militant groups in Malaysia with weapons despite very strict Malaysian gun control laws. The growth of ISIS affiliated groups in Malaysia has also begun to spread back into Thailand, with a small IS branch opening up in the south in 2018.¹⁵

The issues with classification of rebels vs terrorists creates issues with enforcement in the region as well, especially in areas of disputed or unsure jurisdiction. In the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea, which is the direct line for terrorist funds and material to the Philippines, both the Filipino and Indonesian governments do not classify many of the actions of groups the same. Acts of terrorism to one are seen as maritime piracy and crime to another. For example, the Philippines labels all acts of piracy and maritime crime as terrorism, while Indonesia see these two types of actions as separate. Because this distinction is drawn, Indonesia states that in fact, there is no maritime terrorist threat to the region. And yet, activities such as piracy and smuggling are directly responsible for fueling conflict in the region. Here the ASEAN principles of non-interference get in the way of enforcement, as the Indonesian government makes the distinction carefully in order not to invite foreign intervention in their waters. However, this distinction prevents proper enforcement, and leaves gaps readily exploited by terrorist organizations.¹⁶

The political weakness of ASEAN states poses perhaps the largest problem to an effective counter terrorism response in its member states. Despite cooperation and agreements between countries, an ineffective bureaucracy and law enforcement will lead to a continuation of the same problems. The primary reason for the ineffectiveness of states in SEA dealing with terrorism is corruption that is institutional in nature. Corruption in many cases infects nations' armies, police, the customs administrations, and even the upper levels of government.¹⁷ Even if this corruption is limited to strictly criminal and non-terrorist activities, it still will create space for, fuel, and directly benefit terrorist organizations. These corrupt state officials and servants will often "misplace" military equipment, which finds its way into the hands of criminals and terrorists. In the case of Myanmar, the government has deals with many of the rebel groups to allow the illicit trade of opium, which has led to an explosion of illicit trafficking that has

¹⁵ Bodetti, "Islamic State in Malaysia."

¹⁶ Febrica, "Securing the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas", 67.

¹⁷ Ralf Emmers, "The threat of Transnational Crime in Southeast Asia: Drug Trafficking, Human Smuggling and Trafficking and Sea Piracy." *Revista UNISCI* no. 2 (2003): 1.

subsequently both made it easier to traffic fighters and arms for terrorist organizations as well as provided them profits.¹⁸

Bilateral and Limited Multilateral Action

So, what actions then have ASEAN states taken to tackle terrorism in the region? Most of the actions taken have been focused on bilateral or very limited multilateral agreements rather than through the ASEAN structure. For example, after the retaking of Marawi, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia all agreed, externally from the ASEAN framework, to conduct joint naval patrols and air reconnaissance over the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea.¹⁹ An argument can be made that, in this circumstance, going through the ASEAN structure was not needed, as the Sulu-Sulawesi Sea does not concern Thailand, Brunei, or any other ASEAN members. It is true that in some situations bilateral or limited multilateral agreements can be used to effectively counter terrorism in the region, especially since the ASEAN need for consensus building slows negotiations and does not allow for quick decisive decision making.²⁰ However, to effectively prevent the spread of terrorist activity in the region, the full cooperation of ASEAN states will be needed, and ASEAN as an organization needs to take more responsibility for preventing interstate activities that assist terrorist organizations, especially arms trafficking and other illicit activities.

In addition to bilateral relations with other ASEAN members, ASEAN states also have bilateral relations with the United States to help combat terrorism in the region. The United States has only increased its interest in suppressing terrorist activities in SEA over recent years and since 2001, has tried to work with states in the region to achieve this. The degree of bilateral cooperation can range from the more direct, such as the US military personnel and arms in the Philippines, or to more subtle such as Indonesian intelligence sharing. In the case of the Philippines, the United States has provided them with millions of U.S. Dollars (USD) in military equipment since 2002 until the present. The United States also sent 660 special forces troops (the deployment was classified as a “joint training exercise” to circumvent the Philippine’s laws against hosting foreign forces) to the Philippines in 2002, and in 2012 promised to transfer over two US naval vessels to the Philippines along with deploying jets and a coastal radar system.²¹ Indonesia, on the other hand, has cooperated with the United States in gathering intelligence on terrorist groups. In 2010, Indonesia concluded the U.S.-Indonesia Defence Framework Arrangement that seeks to increase cooperation on operational support and military supplies. From 2006 to 2008, the United States gave Indonesia 57 million USD to establish an Integrated Maritime Surveillance System (IMSS). The IMSS covers more than 1,205 kilometers of coastline in the Straits of Malacca and approximately 1,285 kilometers of coast line in the Sulawesi Sea, providing both the United States and Indonesia with data to identify and combat terrorism in the region.²²

Multilateral Action

¹⁸ Ibid, 44.

¹⁹ Bodetti, “How the Thai Conflict Is Boosting Islamic State in Malaysia.”

²⁰ Borelli, “ASEAN Counter-terrorism,” 15.

²¹ Febrica, “Securing the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas”, 67.

²² Ibid, 68.

Through the ASEAN structure the primary achievement on counter terrorism has been the 2007 ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism (ACCT), which was updated most recently in 2015. However, this treaty strictly follows the principles of the ASEAN Way, with multiple sections reiterating sovereignty and non-interference. Many of the articles propose solutions that have potential for successful implementation, but then undermine themselves with exceptions and loopholes. One such conflict is Article VII of the ACCT that states that member states may gain jurisdiction within each other if the criminal carries out an offence in or against that state.²³ This is a crucial step in fighting terror organizations, as it prevents terrorists from hiding in another ASEAN state in a population that may be sympathetic to them. However, the ACCT goes on to undermine Article VII in Article XIII, which allows states to not extradite suspected terrorists as long as they are put on trial for their crimes.²⁴ This clause can create situations in which a state or regional court may try a perpetrator leniently or in a manner deemed unfair to the other states. Scholars have pointed to the ACCT as an example of the failure of ASEAN to tackle larger regional issues beyond just economic ones. The entire convention is non-binding and fails to include articles that provide compensation or punishment for states failing to follow the convention, even if that failure harms a fellow ASEAN member state. The non-binding nature of the ACCT has led to sloppy implementation. For example, the regional counter-terrorism data sharing data base that was supposed to be implemented has so far been incomplete and lacking in funding.²⁵ Despite this ineffective implementation the agreement has borne fruit, testifying to the inherent benefit of the needed multilateral cooperation on this issue. The most prominent success was in 2011, when the ACCT information network was responsible for the capture of Umar Patek, a prominent leader in JI, in Pakistan.²⁶

Other than arms trafficking and extradition, a main component to the operations of terrorist groups is the way they secure funding. Terrorist groups like any army, police force, or militia relies on funds to feed, train, supply, and attract new recruits for their cause. In article VI of the ACCT, it states that signatories must “prevent those who finance, plan, facilitate, or commit terrorist acts from using their respective territories for those purposes against the other Parties and/or the citizens of the other Parties” and to “prevent and suppress the financing of terrorist acts”.²⁷ The way states are supposed to do this is not detailed, and much like the rest of the ACCT, there is much room for interpretation and no motive for states other than those directly affected by terrorist activities to take concrete actions. In addition to the ACCT, ASEAN has also used the East Asian Summit (EAS) to address this issue, releasing a joint statement with ASEAN and the members of the EAS to plan on addressing the issues of money laundering and funding of criminal organizations. While like the ACCT in that much of its language is vague, this Joint Statement does include some specifics courses of action. These include efforts to “continue to develop the capacity of and enhance cooperation among financial intelligence units (FIUs)” and “Encourage the continued and enhanced involvement of the private sector in disrupting and preventing money laundering and terrorism financing”.²⁸ Unfortunately, there is a

²³ “ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism,” signed January 13, 2007, 8.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁵ Borelli, “ASEAN Counter-terrorism,” 16.

²⁶ Febrica, “Securing the Sulu-Sulawesi Seas,” 74.

²⁷ “ASEAN Convention,” 6.

²⁸ “East Asia Summit Leaders’ Declaration on Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism,” signed November 14, 2017, 3.

lack of scholarly analysis on whether these provisions have been successfully implemented, but numbers collected before the agreement signed show extensive money transfers to terrorist groups in SEA from fellow ASEAN states. Online funding is one of their greatest sources of donation income, with an app in Indonesia before it was shut down that allowed people to donate money to IS affiliate groups through it. From the internet IS affiliates receive lots of money through small donations of only 100 to 1,000 USD with an estimated 763,000 USD received by Indonesian Jihadist cells in donations from 2014 to 2015. These donations are the greatest challenge for ASEAN in countering the funding of terrorist groups. The internet makes it virtually impossible to completely block these donations, as Bitcoin creates untraceable transactions without the need for banks, and Facebook and Twitter create platforms that reach millions of people all around the world. To block this funding would take a concerted effort from ASEAN, and integration of internet regulations that would be heavily controversial.²⁹

Conclusion

The ASEAN commitment to the ASEAN Way has prevented the organization from effectively fighting terrorism in SEA in the long term. Bilateral treaties and joint operations can assist with quick reactions to terrorist activities, but to fully address the issue, comprehensive legally binding agreements need to be put in place in ASEAN to limit the spillover of terrorism. This must be achieved by establishing and implementing concrete and binding regulations that prevent the transnational spread of arms and finances to terrorist groups. However, this idea fundamentally conflicts with the ASEAN principle of non-interference, as it leaves no room for states to change their minds and would require some form of outside intervention in the current armed conflicts in Thailand and the Philippines. Until ASEAN is willing to soften its stance on non-interference, counter terrorism activities will be hampered and the underlying environment that has spawned terrorism in the region will continue to hold ASEAN back.

²⁹ Resty Woro Yuniar, "Support for Islamic State? In Indonesia, There's an App for That," *This Week in Asia*, November 8, 2017.

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