NOMAD

past and future

Publication Information

Editorial Team

Editor's Note

The (second) coming of the Nomad Journal began over a hot-dog outside the Humanities building. Dr. Lio Basilone, a strikingly Italian gentlemen, mentioned that several passionate Global Studies students had previously created a hub for high-quality coursework. From then began the arduous process of figuring out how to bring the project back to life. What you now read is the result of that effort: a renewed platform to showcase creativity, rigor, and insight.

Nomad Journal is a place for discourse, where thoughtful people apply critical analysis of global issues. Not all works are by Global Studies students. This is because we consider the Global Studies "way" to be more a mindset than a strict discipline. It is from this basis that the following, cross-faculty works have been selected.

The theme for this edition is "past and future": as precedent establishes the present, imagination charts the future. Submissions range from the relationship between social equality and environmental protection to the symbolism of the Olive Tree for the Palestinian people.

We hope these works provide a sense of inspiration and optimism in a, frankly, hostile global environment. We give special our thanks to all authors, contributors, editors, and lecturers involved.

Oliver Meade, on behalf of the Nomad Editorial Team.

Table of Contents

<div align="center">

جذور المقاومة
Roots of Resistance
Reem Mahmoud Safar

</div>

" لو يذكر الزيتون غارسهُ .. لصار الزيت دمع". – محمود درويش – شاعر فلسطيني.
"If the olive trees knew the hands that planted them, their oil would become tears"
Mahmoud Darwish - Palestinian Poet.

The Olive Tree - Al-Shajarat Al-Zaytoun - شجرة الزيتون - a seemingly simple plant, possesses a historical, political, and cultural significance for Palestinians, as the plant represents identity and resistance against Israeli settler colonialism and oppression. Indigenous to Palestine and transmitted through generations, this plant can be an essential agricultural resource and an integral symbol of persistence and survival. Here, I will delve into how olive trees are emblematic of a cultural and physical marker of the Palestinian struggle and identity, holding both an individual and collective meaning while relating this to my positionality as a Palestinian. Through a global studies approach, I will also use an indigeneity framework to concisely examine the indigenous struggle against forces of colonialism in the Palestinian context and illustrate how its relevance corresponds both locally and globally in the ongoing struggle against oppression and colonialism.

The relationship between displacement, war, and colonialism has influenced societies for centuries and presently, disrupting people's connection to their heritage and land. Israel's occupation of Palestine and domination of Palestinians has elevated this phenomenon, with colonialism and war forcing the displacement of Palestinians from their homes since the birth of the State of Israel in 1948, and Israel's ongoing genocidal war on Palestinians in Gaza, with over 62,709 people killed, including 17,492 children (Al Jazeera, 2023), and the number continues to increase every single day.

The story of my grandparents is only one of the many stories of the forced displacement of '48 Palestinians, leaving behind their native homeland or risking extermination if they remained in their village. This dispossession has resulted in the continuance of three family generations in the Palestinian diaspora, where I have no right of return to occupied Palestine as a native Palestinian, but as a tourist with a foreign passport within my own homeland.

Applying an indigenous framework to approach this issue is necessary and crucial. As O'Sullivan (2023) states, the production or imagination of Indigenous vulnerability or dysfunction strengthens the colonial project (p.43). O'Sullivan emphasizes how the interrelations among human rights and dignity, culture, policy, and the freedom to live by principles personally meaningful is core to the tensions between the State's colonial ambitions and Indigenous affirmations to self-determination (p.62). Addressing the

Palestinian struggle through an indigenous framework stresses that resistance of the indigenous population is not just a rebuttal to violence but a proactive assertion of sovereignty, community, and cultural identity.

By uplifting these assertions, we challenge colonial ambition's and ally for global solidarity with the struggles faced by Indigenous communities and acknowledge that the path to self-determination is a shared path, reverberating from Palestine to other colonised communities. Article 7.1 of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states that - "Indigenous individuals have the rights to life, physical and mental integrity, liberty and security of person" (p.9). In the case of the Palestinian struggle, the State of Israel utterly has no respect or regard for international law. The State of Israel continues to violate the Palestinian people of their basic human rights and their right to live in dignity. As horrifically reiterated through the ongoing genocide of Palestinians in Gaza, Israel does not even value human life.

Israel's violent inception in 1948 and its ensuing colonisation from 1967 reflect the success of the Zionist project's settler colonial aspiration's in Palestine (Dana & Jarbawi, 2017, p.197). However, the spirited presence of Palestinian-ness in the region, resistance to the colonial regime, and their profound devotion to their rights are all major barriers to the "Zionist dream" ultimate fulfilment (Dana & Jarbawi, 2017, p.197). The Palestinian's steadfastness, despite Israel's persistent colonial domination and power, presents that this project will stay incomplete and hindered, which could lead to the demise of its future (Dana & Jarbawi, 2017, p.197).

Ayyash (2020) contests the arguments regarding international law and peace processes, dubiously assuming that the Israeli State is intent on the establishment of a Palestinian state following the 1967 borders. However, the State's true ambitions have showcased this is not the case; among those are the policy of construction of the apartheid wall, annexation of East Jerusalem, Gaza's siege, Israel's imprisonment of Palestinian political prisoners, regression of the Palestinian economy, Palestinian's ordinary lives made impossible and intolerable by the constant checkpoints and occupation, discriminatory policies, home demolitions, and the continuous issuance of Israeli permits to expand and build more illegal settlements (Ayyash, 2020).

The interconnected phenomena of displacement, war, and colonialism are central to the local and global relevance of Israel's occupation of Palestine. The forced displacement of Palestinians ensuing from the 1948 Nakba - النكبة (the catastrophe) is not a historical event frozen in time; but still an ongoing method of Israel's settler-colonial ambitions to systematically expel Indigenous Palestinians from their homeland. The Nakba marks the outset of violence inherent in Israel's settler-colonial project - through displacement, dispossession, extermination of Palestinian identity, presence and sovereignty. From home demolitions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank, to forced evictions in Palestinian neighbourhoods like Silwan and Sheikh Jarrah, to the military siege and

repeated deadly assaults on Gaza. It is evident in plain sight that Israel continues to execute policies intended to fracture Palestinian society and uproot Palestinians from their native ancestral land. Settler violence, administrative detention, revocation of residency rights, denial of building permits, the apartheid wall and even the appropriation of Palestinian food and culture - these are not all isolated strategies but a reflection of a wider objective to physically dispossess Palestinians and to exterminate Palestinian-ness, their history, culture, and claims to self-determination. The Nakba is a structure of the present - persisting in defining the lives and futures of Palestinians within Palestine and across the diaspora.

The State of Israel with its apartheid policies aims to ethnically cleanse Palestinian identity and presence from the region. It is a local measure of colonial conquest and manifests into larger global forces of colonialism that historically have targeted Indigenous communities around the world. For example, Palestinians and South Africans share a struggle opposed to apartheid and colonialism, and both are representative of a wider global force of colonial oppression and racial segregation. South Africa's apartheid system, distinguished by its oppression of Black South Africans and institutionalised racial segregation, reflects the Israeli occupation's apartheid that Palestinians have confronted until now. In both cases, the colonial powers sought to overpower indigenous people through political, legal, and military frameworks intended to subjugate them.

The olive tree, Palestine's native plant, has risen as a physical marker of this global phenomenon, symbolising Palestinian identity, resistance, and resilience to Israel's settler colonialism and oppression. Braverman (2009) discusses how the olive tree's physical features, including its durability, longevity, and steadfastness, symbolise the Palestinian struggle for independence and against Israel's occupation (p.10). In addition to its high cultural acclimation, the olive tree (along with figs) holds great religious reverence as **Shajarat Al -Mubarakah - شجرة أل مباركة** (The Blessed Trees) - blessed in the Holy Quran by God (Wang, 2024). Olive trees have been used by Palestinians to reinforce their territorial claims, as cited in Braverman (2023) these assertions are foregrounded in **Sumud - صمود** (steadfastness) following the 1967 war, it first rose among Palestinians as a political tactic of resistance, resulting from their experiences under occupation (Nassar & Heacock, 1990:28) (p.8).

The Palestinian people express a unique relationship with olive trees, as our ancestors have for so long. Throughout our lives - as young as we can remember, we have been taught to treat olive trees with respect, love, and gentleness, not just as a source of livelihood but as symbols of perseverance and endurance. The significance of the olive tree to a Palestinian transcends mere substance, such as whether one has even seen the plant in real life; it is part of the very life force that runs beneath our skin and pulses in the beat of **Naseem Al-Watan - نسيم الوطن (the breeze of the motherland)**.

In Braverman (2009), one Palestinian farmer expresses - "you don't give it anything, and it gives you everything in return" (p.8). Palestinians love olive trees as their own children - "the olives are my life, my soul. My olives are like my children" (p.8). There is a profound identification between the body of the Palestinian and the material olive tree (p.8). These Palestinian testimonies, rich with affection and poignancy for the olive tree is embody the spirit of a moving Arabic proverb that goes **"they planted, and we ate, and we planted, so they can eat" - "هم زرعوا فأكلنا و زرعنا فأكلوا "**. A reciprocity between two souls.

For us, where the blood of the Palestinian has been spilt, an olive tree appears to be sprouting; it stands for the Palestinian, as a silent witness to the calamitous events in Palestine and to what has been eliminated, and no longer remains (Braverman, 2009, p.13), (Hawari, 2020, p.89). The emblem of the olive tree can be construed as both tragic and empowering. On the one hand, it offers us hope and embodies our enduring spirit - it signifies a root to **Ardinah - أرضنا (our land)** that we are tightly bound to. On the other hand, our olive trees conjure the loss of more than physical territorial land. However, it denotes the colonists' attempted annihilation of identity, community, and culture. The tree's presence challenges us to examine the prolonged outcomes of brutal colonisation and occupation. The sprout of the olive tree cannot undo the trauma but illuminates the memory imprinted in the land, the ongoing resistance and again, **Sumud - (steadfastness)**.

The olive tree, its groves, and branches, is prominently depicted in Palestinian literary and artistic works, whether produced in Palestine or reverberated throughout the diaspora. Throughout many years, the plant has been articulated as an emblem by authors and artists, symbolising the ties Palestinians have to their motherland (Sharkawi, 2019, p.6). Olive trees are a powerful symbol in demonstrations, protests, and political and global discourse. Its beautiful yet poignant imagery echoes strongly with the Palestinian diaspora, telling the stories of displacement, stirring feelings of nostalgia, yearning to return, and resistance to elimination. The olive tree encompasses our fight against colonialism, the struggle for sovereignty, and the endurance of a population who reject being uprooted from their roots.

Despite all the hardships, as Karkar (2010) explains, the customs and celebrations that align with the weeks of the olive harvest unite Palestinian communities and constitute evidence of their land ownership, which can only solely be eradicated by the utter destruction of Palestinian society (p.51). This is what the Israeli State continues to do - through more insidious and brutal ways (p.51). The Israeli State and the illegal settlers endow the olive tree with immense power against their occupation and carry out indirect and direct acts of sabotaging, uprooting, and prohibiting Palestinians from accessing their olive trees (Wang, 2024). As Hedroug (2023) discusses, the vandalization and calculated attacks on the olive trees rise during the harvest season, which violently ends the livelihood of Palestinian families, where frequently, the trees are burnt in front of them. These attacks are described as "*ideologically motivated and primarily designated to take*

over land but also to intimidate and terrorise Palestinians" by the United Nations (Al-Tahnan, 2021).

Israel uproots the olive trees as they hinder the route of "security walls" and the development of infrastructure necessary for the illegal settlements. Sewerage, telecommunication networks, industrial estates, Israeli military barracks, and more are built in place of the uprooted trees, leading to substantial loss of the environment. The consequences are detrimental to the well-being of Palestinian communities and the natural environment; as Hedroug (2023) points out, the uprooting results in aesthetic degradation, vegetation loss, and a rise in food insecurity. Palestinian livelihood is catastrophically diminished; in the occupied territories, Palestinian presence is oppressed, as Israeli courts have yet to serve environmental justice to the Palestinian community (Hedrough, 2023).

The merciless massacre of our olive trees by the Israeli government forces and the illegal settlers is an intentional act of cultural destruction, a violation of our heritage, and an act of vile aggression against our **hawiyah - هوية (identity)**. With each olive tree that is slaughtered, a community's linkage is ravaged, and a family legacy is cleaved. In response, Palestinians have transformed the planting of olive trees into a non-violent form of resistance, where caring for the olive groves is a method of asserting and reclaiming our presence on our land; with each tree uprooted, another tree sprouts in its place, just like our everlasting generational endurance.

Through my positionality as a Palestinian, the olive tree is more than a crucial agricultural product. It embodies our history, resistance, resilience, and identity amid displacement, war, and colonialism. This essay has provided insight into how olive trees set out as local physical and cultural marker of Palestinian resistance and resilience. Through indigeneity, this relationship underlies the right of Palestinians to claim their right to self-determination and persistence against Israeli-settler colonialism, similar to indigenous populations around the world. The global interplays of resistance, colonialism, and displacement are exemplified in the Palestinian struggle, or as we call it in Arabic, Al-**Qadiyah Al-Filistiniyah - القضية الفلسطينية (The Palestinian cause)**. Through the resilience of the olive tree, Palestinians persist in their refusal to be uprooted from their roots, with the hope that one day, our narrative of identity and resistance will conclude in restoration, freedom, and dignity.

Palestine's olive trees are the guardians of time.

Appendix

Symbolism of the olive branch in protests

In this image that I captured in November 2023, during a Pro-Palestinian demonstration in Sydney, Australia, protesting Israel's genocidal war on Gaza, a Palestinian man holds an olive branch overhead. This olive branch is profoundly embedded in Palestinian identity, resistance and the everlasting connection to the native land. It has become a popular symbol during protests and rallies.

This olive branch represents more than a call for peace and justice, but an emblem of defiance and steadfastness amid oppression.

A home away from home, we all spread across the world - the branch symbolises a root back to home - Filisteen - فلسطين (Palestine).

The Olive Tree Hugger - "I hugged the olive tree…I'd have raised the tree like my child."

In 2005, following an attack on an olive tree by Israeli settlers, a Palestinian woman - Mohfodah Shtayyeh, was photographed hugging the tree. An iconic image of the struggles Palestinians face daily in the Occupied West Bank. This symbolises the poignant bond between Palestinians and their olive trees; the Palestinian and the olive tree are one entity.

(Source: Al Jazeera, 2023).

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Who Gets to Shape the Future – And Who Gets Left Behind?

Lillian Huang

Every era carries its own sorrow, and for the people of Taiwan, the four centuries of continuous colonization by foreign powers seem unable to erase the spell-like mark of being colonized. From the Dutch period to the Japanese colonial era, and then to the arrival of the Republic of China government in Taiwan, it is not difficult to see that modern Taiwan has already undergone a transition toward democracy and justice. Compared to the colonial past, Taiwan today nevertheless faces the problem of unresolved sovereignty. This paper will use postcolonial theory to explore the bottleneck Taiwan has encountered under the Republic of China government, and to explain, through *United Nations Resolution 2758*, why Taiwan continues to be excluded from the international community. Thus, under the current condition of intensifying U.S.–China power struggles, how can Taiwan move toward independence and self-determination?

After Japan's unconditional surrender in World War II, it renounced its colony of Taiwan: "...all the territories Japan has stolen from the Chinese, such as Manchuria, Formosa, and the Pescadores, shall be restored to the Republic of China." (*Cairo Communiqué*, 1943). Although the Cairo Declaration mentioned that Formosa (today's Taiwan) and the Pescadores should be returned to China, this was in fact a highly controversial statement, and the *Cairo Declaration* itself had no legal binding force. The phrase "stolen from the Chinese, such as Formosa" in the document distorted real history, because as early as 1895 Taiwan had already been "permanently ceded to Japan" by the defeated Qing dynasty. This means that Taiwan had since then no longer been part of China. However, with Japan's defeat at the end of World War II, Taiwan's sovereignty question was not formally resolved by the *Cairo Declaration*, who exactly had legitimate possession of it? According to Article 2(b) of the *San Francisco Peace Treaty*: "Japan renounces all right, title and claim to Formosa and the Pescadores." Yet, to whom Taiwan's sovereignty should be transferred remains an unsolved puzzle.

When the Nationalist government came to Taiwan, Taiwanese women were continuously reconstructed and disciplined under successive regimes. The Republic of China regime came from China, and at that time Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek led large numbers of troops to militarily control the entire island. Yet because of the failure of the Chinese Civil War, the Kuomintang retreated to Taiwan, and the truth is that their occupation was never formally and legally approved by the international community. Taiwan was a subaltern, just as Spivak states in her *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988, p.271): "Although the history of Europe as subject is narrated by law, political economy, and ideology, the subaltern is not heard." Taiwan too was in such a position: mentioned in the *San Francisco Treaty* yet

never granted the right to self-determination over its own sovereignty. In this world order defined by who possesses the most nuclear weapons and military power, the first atomic bomb a century ago became the first warning of American hegemony: innocent Japanese, and even Taiwanese people who were Japanese subjects under colonial rule, suffered in the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The arrival of the Republic of China meant that the Taiwanese people once again faced an authoritarian government. The February 28 Incident and the subsequent *White Terror*, along with 38 years of *martial law* (from 1949 to 1987), deprived Taiwan of freedom of assembly, free speech, and press rights. Thus, once again Taiwan failed under a hegemonic regime, and could not protect its own freedom. Just like when the Qing dynasty permanently ceded Taiwan to Japan, Taiwan had no sovereignty or dignity.

In 1987, with the lifting of *martial law*, Taiwan formally bid farewell to authoritarian rule. This was an important milestone in Taiwan's long transition toward democracy. In fact, as early as 1986, the Democratic Progressive Party, today's ruling *Democratic Progressive Party*—had already secretly been established, opening Taiwan's first experience of party alternation, leading the people toward democracy and away from the Kuomintang's authoritarianism. Yet Taiwan once again encountered the knowledge hegemony of the People's Republic of China. China distorted *Resolution 2758* and backed by its massive economic power, further suppressed Taiwan's current international status. Thus, although Taiwan possesses its own territory, territorial sea, airspace, and military, an entire national system, it is still excluded from the United Nations. According to *Resolution 2758*, the document only stated the lawful rights of the People's Republic of China in the UN. It never mentioned to whom Taiwan's sovereignty should belong. Yet in 2023, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning, at an international public occasion, once again used *Resolution 2758* to falsely claim that Taiwan is part of China's territory. She repeatedly said in routine press conferences: "Resolution 2758 of the UN General Assembly politically, legally and procedurally settled once and for all the issue of China's representation in the UN, including that of Taiwan… it makes clear that there is only one seat representing China at the UN." But the reality is that *Resolution 2758* never mentioned a single word about Taiwan's sovereignty. The Chinese government pulled Taiwan's sovereignty issue into its own national narrative, causing Taiwan, which had just embarked on democracy, to again face authoritarian persecution. It is precisely this kind of colonial narrative that continues to follow Taiwan.

As Taiwan's influence in the semiconductor system grows, it has increasingly become a pawn in the U.S.–China confrontation. *Discourse power* is established by the two great powers, the United States and China, just as poststructuralist Michel Foucault argued. In Discipline and Punish he wrote: "power and knowledge directly imply one another" (Foucault, 1975/1995, p. 27). In other words, people's understanding of reality is not objective, but constructed through discourse and power. Thus, from America's current international legal language one can see that it is shifting the terminology about Taiwan belonging to China, while at the same time maintaining *strategic ambiguity* to preserve

its interests. On one hand, the U.S. needs Taiwan's *TSMC*; on the other, it cannot formally declare that Taiwan is an independent country. They still employ the "*One China Principle*" to compress Taiwan's international space. As a result, the Taiwanese people's right of self-determination is often ignored. Democratic transition under U.S.–China confrontation, becomes a tragic elegy. Death is entrusted to Taiwan, and one by one like apricot leaves, they fall on autumn nights in Taiwan's soil. All of this means that Taiwan as a state is fated always to sing the saddest "lament" in the cold winds of late winter, unable to be free, unable to be autonomous, always forced to live under discourses woven by others.

Postcolonial theorists argue that genuine liberation from authoritarianism is not simply a matter of regime change or party rotation but requires altering the existing structure of international discourse. Otherwise, Taiwan's existence will remain an unresolved remnant of World War II. From Japan's renunciation of its rule to the Republic of China lacking any formal international mandate, Taiwan has always been manipulated by others, at one time under Japan, then under China, and never truly becoming itself. The question of Taiwan's unresolved sovereignty not only reflects how the dominant international order excludes some nations, but also shows that wherever there is hegemony, the voices of those who long for freedom are easily ignored. The earth still turns, the international order remains chaotic, *knowledge hegemony* is still in the hands of great powers, yet the people of Taiwan continue to use writing, *soft-power diplomacy*, music, and poetry to tell the world: it is time for the Taiwanese themselves to resolve their own affairs.

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Beyond Deterrence: A Global Reflection on the Gendered Insecurity of Nuclear Weapons

Pengfei Rui

Introduction

Nuclear weapons are weapons of mass destruction. They are composed of radioactive materials such as uranium and plutonium (Cochran & Norris, 2018). The weapons are designed to produce an enormous explosion of energy that results from nuclear fission, nuclear fusion, or a combination of both (Cochran & Norris, 2018). On August 6th, 1945, during the Second World War, the world's first nuclear bomb was dropped in Hiroshima, Japan, and was followed three days later by a second, even bigger bomb in Nagasaki. These bombs essentially ended the Second World War, and since then, states have utilised nuclear weapons as a tool for security (Wilson, 2007). This essay will explain how this narrative, driven by the idea that nuclear weapons make our world more secure, is invalid and demonstrate how they make it less secure through their impacts and possibilities. This will be done by using two different theoretical frameworks. The opposing argument, "for" nuclear weapons, will be examined through a realist theoretical lens and contrasted with my "against" argument through a feminist lens. The essay will develop as follows: first, the realist perspective on nuclear weapons, why we need them, and how they supposedly make our world more secure will be explained. Second, the feminist perspective on the gendered discourses surrounding nuclear weapons and how gender and stereotypes are used to proliferate them will be explored. Lastly, the real-life impacts of nuclear weapons will be discussed, with a specific focus on women's experiences.

Realism

Regarding Realism and nuclear weapons, a huge focus is placed on the world's international system and how it is supposedly in an anarchical state because it has no overarching authority. This system is often described as a "self-help system" under which states constantly seek to increase their security by expanding their power (Waltz, 1981). Unfortunately, there are often clashes in this constant pursuit of power because states will do just about anything to gain security. The most prominent example is the paradox of the security dilemma; as one state builds its arsenal to become more secure, surrounding states become insecure and wary of why they are taking such actions, leading to the now insecure state stocking up. This cycle repeats until, eventually, conflict arises. Nuclear weapons solve this by creating a "roof" or limit for a state's power to reach (Krieger & Roth, 2007). This is because realists claim that once nuclear weapons are attained, the point of "absolute security" is reached, meaning there are no further actions states can take to grow their power, and feel safer (Krieger & Roth, 2007). Thus, because security can no longer be enhanced, they supposedly fall into a calm state, making them more mindful of their actions and less likely to make irrational and aggressive ones, which they would take if they feared their security was under threat. Therefore, according to realists, the likelihood of war and violence breaking out decreases (Krieger & Roth, 2007).

Nuclear Weapons and Deterrence

Deterrence is said to have been the backbone of our world's security for the past decade or so (Pifer, 2015). Deterrence is one of Realism's core ideas surrounding nuclear weapons, and "seeks to create a situation in which the risks and costs of aggression far outweigh any gains or benefits that the aggressor might hope to achieve" (Pifer, 2015, p. 84). Nuclear weapons are great tools for achieving deterrence due to their immensely destructive abilities. However, deterrence can only be successful if everyone understands that their actions would have potentially catastrophic results (Pifer, 2015). In our multipolar world, we have numerous states, like the United States of America, North Korea, Russia and China, all of which want and work to be the most powerful. They have tried to one-up each other for decades through military expansion, development, and tactics. China's annual broadcast military parades are an exemplary display of this power and development. This power play has placed the world in a position of insecurity and potential violence, which, according to realist scholar Kenneth Waltz, proves how "power, after all, begs to be balanced" and demonstrates the importance of nuclear weapons for stability (Waltz, 2012, p. 3). This is because when spread around, they supposedly create "mutual nuclear deterrence" (Pifer, 2015). More commonly referred to as "mutually assured destruction", many associate it with the Cold War. Allegedly, nuclear weapons force states to think twice about their actions and push them to choose non-violent options, as they want to avoid actions that could lead to nuclear retaliation (Krieger & Roth, 2007). Realist scholar John Mearsheimer (1993) states that the West loves to vilify nuclear weapons. Many people believe them to be the primary source of state tensions. However, according to Mearsheimer (1993), this perspective stems from a simplistic and uneducated view of nuclear weapons and is ignorant of the good they have done in history. The Cold War is a prime example. During this time, the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, came to a head over ideological and political rivalries. The tension was tremendous, and many credit the fact that the war "did not go hot", as put by Holloway (2010), because of nuclear weapons and the fact that one another's capabilities equally and directly threatened the two states.

Nuclear Weapons and the Patriarchy

A significant reason why this knot of nuclear weapons for security is so challenging to untie is its links to the patriarchy (Acheson, 2021). The patriarchy is a system of male-dominated power. It creates an unequal hierarchy in which women are inferior to men. In our patriarchal world, men run the show in terms of government and military (Cohn, 1987). Unfortunately, this has meant that our world's inaccurate gender roles and ideals have become militarised and coded into our social, political and nuclear weapons policies (Acheson, 2021). The patriarchy has long utilised the gendered discourse of masculinity to legitimise its possession of nuclear weapons (Acheson, 2021). By equating masculinity with strength, courage, and protection on a global and political scale, they have curated a narrative allowing them to retain their nuclear arsenals (Acheson, 2021). To fully understand this, people must understand the crucial role gender plays within the

patriarchy. Gender refers to the socially constructed norms we are meant to conform to as men and women. However, it is far more complicated than a signifier of identity; it is also a power relationship that hierarchically props up hegemonic masculinity, those who fulfil its demands and demean femininity (Eschle, 2021). Gender and the patriarchy have heavily shaped the nuclear weapon world (Cohn, 1987). Nowadays, nuclear weapons are a political tool 2005). Possessing nuclear weapons is hugely important within the patriarchal world. For a country and leader to be seen as strong, genuine, and manly, they must possess these weapons. A clear example of this in action was India's testing of 5 nuclear devices in May 1998. When questioned about the test, their prime minister stated: "We had to prove that we are not eunuchs" (Cohn et al., 2005, p. 3). For so long, male leaders have used the term nuclear deterrence and both the masculine and protective stereotypes that come with it to justify their weapons. However, deterrence is an elaborate theory that talks about stabilising opposing sides through mutually assured destruction but often leaves out how human error and/or technical imperfection could bring everything crashing down (Cohn & Ruddick, 2004). Therefore, when people look closer at the situation of nuclear weapons, they can see how the patriarchy is preying on our world's gendered norms and discourses, and using them to work in its favour.

The system has propped up masculinity and quashed femininity by equating it to weakness and vulnerability (Butale, 2019). Supposed feminine ideas of diplomatic discussions and negotiations are the primary focus of patriarchal masculinity (Butale, 2019). Thus, when people look deeper into the politics surrounding disarmament, it has been effectively quelled because possessing nuclear weapons is the underlying weapon; it becomes clear that the situation is less focused on the security of states, but more so on a competition of "mines bigger than yours". Therefore, are these weapons here for our safety or just pawns in a political posturing contest? Think of North Korea's massive annual missile parades and tests, Trump's claim to "true" presidency after he bombed Syria, and Russia's constant threat of "catastrophic consequences" when it feels wronged or threatened by other states. Our world's ability to blow itself up does not make it safer. The dated realist discourse of nuclear weapons for security is dangerous because the weapons are not here for our safety. Their continued existence only creates heightened tension, insecurity, and fear (Cohn & Ruddick, 2004). Which one day will likely lead to catastrophic conflict?

The Real Life Impacts of Detonation
The previous section talked about the gendered nature of nuclear weapons politics. This section will examine the detrimental real-life impacts of nuclear weapons when used, explicitly referring to the experiences of women who survived the bombs detonated in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 and women who lived through nuclear testing in the Pacific between 1946 and 1996. It is abruptly clear that nuclear weapons cause insurmountable damage, but what is less obvious is their disproportionate effect on women. Ionising radiation is the biggest issue. This radiation is emitted after the bombs explode and it harmfully affects both men and women; however, it does so in

disproportionate and differing ways (Butale, 2019). This has resulted in sex-specific impacts due to biology and gender-specific impacts due to society's socially constructed roles for men and women (Butale, 2019).

Biological Impacts

First are the biological impacts. Studies have found that the radiation disproportionally affects women and leads to an increased mortality and cancer risk when exposed (Dimmen, 2014). This is because women's bodies contain 50% more high-risk and sensitive body tissue and metabolism than men, making them more vulnerable to harmful effects (Butale, 2019). A clear example of this was that women in the affected areas of Japan developed or died from cancer almost twice as much as men (Dimmen, 2014). Furthermore, pregnant women exposed to high doses of this radiation risked foetal damage, including malformation, retardation, spontaneous abortions, and even stillbirths (Dimmen, 2014). Sadly, from those babies successfully born in Nagasaki and Hiroshima, females were found to have increased cancer rates (Dimmen, 2014). This depicts how nuclear weapons affect women disproportionately and generationally due to their biological makeup. This is an unalterable risk factor for women because they cannot change their anatomy. Thus, the impacts can only be avoided if nuclear weapons are not deployed. Therefore, in a world equipped with nuclear weapons, where women make up over 49.5% of the world population, almost half of our population is placed in a position of insecurity and heightened risk.

Gender-Based Impacts

Unfortunately, the impacts also move beyond the physical and social spheres. Women who survived nuclear detonation face extensive social stigma and discrimination. This is because the societal norms that label them child bearers and wives are affected by the radiation, which means they cannot function correctly in these roles (Dimmen, 2014). In Japan, "Hibakusha" was coined for survivors; It labelled both men and women as contaminated, and society treated survivors with fear and suspicion (Butale, 2019, p. 11). However, the term primarily affected women due to its linkage to societal roles. For example, it was used to legitimise marriage discrimination against women because their "contaminated blood" meant they could not fulfil their role of bearing healthy children (Butale, 2019). They were shamed for their reproductive inabilities and essentially exiled from Japanese society. Similar social exiles occurred in the Marshall Islands, where women could not fulfil their roles of marriage and motherhood (Dimmen, 2014). Therefore, in a world where women are already disadvantaged due to society's gender norms and face daily battles for fundamental rights, rules, and protection, the existence of nuclear weapons only poses a further threat. This is because if the weapons do not kill them directly, their impacts will exile them from society, consequently killing them in another sense.

The destruction caused by nuclear weapons and their radioactive fallout causes massive displacement of people in the affected areas (Dimmen, 2014). Displacement is a big issue

because it can cause numerous problems. While yes, it affects both men and women, it especially places women in a new position of vulnerability, which opens the door to sexual and gender-based violence (Dimmen, 2014). Women in the Marshall Islands speak of this, telling how they were rather barbarically stripped, intimately examined and hosed down in front of male relatives, counterparts and military personnel during their evacuation process (Dimmen, 2014). Moreover, displaced women are likely to have reduced access to adequate relocation assistance and be unable to exercise their rights to housing, land, and property (Butale, land is passed from mother to child, displacement has meant many women both then and now lost their rights to their land (Butale, rightful connection to their native language, homeland, and culture. This also had a flow-on effect on Marshallese women's finances because most women generated income by selling goods they created from their properties and materials (Butale, 2019). This demonstrates how the effects of the bombs tested back in 1946 are still felt now and likely will be well into the future. While still affected, men faced fewer issues because of their social standing. It was the women who faced the brunt of sexual, physical, and emotional abuse, and it will be women who will struggle for generations to get back on their feet. The impacts are both gendered and generational, demonstrating how nuclear weapons exacerbate the pre-existing patterns of gender discrimination in our world. Thus, a world with nuclear weapons is not a world that is safer for women.

Conclusion

The feminist lens offers a crucial perspective on nuclear weapons and whether or not they make our world more secure. While yes, the lens has its limitations, and one could argue it leaves out race or social forces while hyper-focusing on gender, each lens has its tunnel vision issue. However, by challenging the realist narrative, feminism does look deeper into politics, gender, and real-life experiences, and demonstrates how threatening the weapon's existence is. For too long, the patriarchy has gotten away with preying on our world's gendered discourses to drive a favourable narrative to retain its nuclear arsenals. These weapons are not here for deterrence or security but to prop up patriarchal masculinity and allow governments to compete in a global game of "Mine is bigger than yours". The impacts of detonation demonstrate how nuclear weapons disproportionally impact women biologically and socially, by leading to abuse, illness, and death, therefore eroding their safety and security. Challenging the age-old notion of nuclear weapons for security is difficult but necessary because their existence places our world in a position of tension and vulnerability. Recognising that our world's ability to blow each other to smithereens does not make it more secure. It makes it dangerous and teetering on the edge of mass and deadly destruction.

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Sites of Suffering, Spaces of Meaning: The Significance and Symbolism of the Con Dao archipelago in Postcolonial Vietnam

Tracy Nguyen

Once labelled the "Hell on Earth," the Con Dao archipelago, or Poulo Condore, is an isolated cluster of islands off the southeastern tip of Vietnam. It stands as a powerful historical reminder of the brutal legacies of French colonialism and US imperialism, which were predicated on the concept of the prison island as a penal colony. Throughout its history, Con Dao prison became infamous for their barbaric treatment of inmates., Twhich included the use of torture and notorious French penal technologies such as 'tiger cage' (Figure 2 and 3) and 'barre de justice' (Figure 4) (a long metal pole shackling several prisons with one or both legs irons), exemplify the methods used to suppress anti-colonial resistance (Fuggle, 2021b; Fuggle & Hutnyk, 2022). According to Howard and Tran (2014), from French colonisation through to the end of the Vietnam-American War, it is estimated that over 20,000 prisoners were tortured to death in captivity on the island over its 113-year history. Despite the unimaginable conditions under the colonial prison system, Con Dao emerged as a pivotal place for political education, cultivating numbers of Vietnam's most distinguished political leaders, including the second president of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Ton Duc Thang, who was incarcerated there for 15 years (Fuggle & Hutnyk, 2022).

Today, Con Dao's prison depicts not only the atrocities committed under colonisation but also reflects the various local stakes of the global phenomenon of the mass incarceration crisis, which remains intricately linked to the enduring history of Western colonialism and imperialism. In order to recognize and comprehend how corporal violence, confinement, and restraint are ingrained in the colonial culture and its continuity to this day, Con Dao's prisons map the concepts of colonial prisons and the penal colony onto the larger landscape, in which not only of the strategic geographical position of Con Dao but of enduring colonial ideals regarding the role and importance of the prison island (Fuggle & Hutnyk, 2022). Drawing upon Con Dao colonial prison as a narrative story of Vietnamese resistance to imprisonment, the central notions in this essay will explore theare to unfold the exploration of human rights issues in Con Dao prison under French colonisation and US imperialism, and to challenge the Western conception of 'dark tourism' to postcolonial heritage in a formerly colonised country.

Physical marker/ space:

Figure 1: Con Dao prison (Photograph from Quinn Ryan Mattingly, n.d.)

Figure 2: 'Tiger cage' cells in Con Dao prison, with mannequins symbolising the guards (Photograph from Hayward & Tran, 2014).

Figure 3: 'Tiger cage' cell in Con Dao prison, with mannequins representing the inmates (Photograph from Dinh, 2024).

Figure 4: 'Barre de justice' inside Con Dao prison, with mannequins representing inmates (Photograph from Hayward & Tran, 2014).

A history of Con Dao prison:

According to Luu and Phan (2021), Con Dao has played an essential role in international trade routes since the middle period. It was an ideal place for commerce hubs and transshipment warehouses that connected the East and West, as well as for connecting and expediting travel to Asian nations. Con Dao became an essential focal point in trade activities according to Western nations' strategic vision (dating back to the 17th century) as it allowed control and domination of the maritime route connecting the Pacific and Indian oceans, guaranteeing the sole right to exploit and accumulate wealth in this region

(Luu & Phan, 2021). From the 17th century, the French East India Company sought to establish trading posts and military bases in Con Dao to obtain a political and economic edge to broaden their sphere of influence outside Europe. By signing the Treaty of Versailles with the Nguyen Dynasty in 1787 and the Treaty of Saigon in 1862, Con Dao and the southern third of Vietnam were formally transferred to French control (Hayward & Tran, 2014; Luu & Phan, 2021). However, despite the French's initial intention of turning Con Dao into a trading centre, Con Dao significantly evolved to a more atrocious role in the colonial apparatus of control and oppression. The Con Dao prison, built in 1862 by Governor Louis Adolphe Bonard, housed convicted criminal and political inmates until French withdrawal from Vietnam in 1954 (Hayward & Tran, 2014; Luu & Phan, 2021). The prison became notorious for its brutality as it served not only as a place of detention but also a site for forced labour to exploit the natural resources on the island to enrich France. Con Dao prison stood as a symbol of colonial oppression, where Vietnamese rebels and anti-colonial fighters were subjected to inhumane conditions to break the spirit of resistance while forced to work under a harsh labour regime. By the mid-20th century, Con Dao was known as the "Hell on Earth" of the patriotic Vietnamese and the model prison in the French colonial system in Vietnam and overseas (Luu & Phan, 2021). After decolonisation, the US replaced French colonial authority in Vietnam. During the conflict with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the National Liberation Front (NLF), the Republic of Vietnam and the United States expanded the prison to accommodate the growing number of political inmates (Eisner, 2018). The notion of the Con Dao prison can thus be called upon as a historical remark of a near-seamless transition from French colonialism to US imperialism.

The exploration of human rights issues in Con Dao Prison:
The Con Dao prison had famed 'tiger cages,' which were exposed in Life Magazine in 1970 by Tom Harkin, a former US Senator, causing international outrage and charges of human rights violations (Eisner, 2018; Dang, 2020). Thousands of political prisoners were killed, tortured, and imprisoned in the 'tiger cages' for several decades. Furthermore, for several decades, they were hidden by French and American administrators. In order to put an end to the 'tiger cages' and, eventually, the Vietnam American War, courageous individuals sacrificed their lives and careers for the sake of the truth. According to Berni (2024), the 'tiger cages' housed about 500 inmates. During the French colonial era, these underground steel enclosures were constructed with just overhead lighting (Berni, 2024). The prisoners were mistreated by having aggressive lime powder dripped into their eyes and confined like animals in stench-filled, sweltering cages (Berni, 2024). In his book The Colonial Bastille: A history of Imprisonment in Vietnam, 1862-1940, Zinoman (2001) cites a speech delivered by an inmate to bring the brutality of colonial prison on Con Dao into bold relief: "The life we lead on Poulo Condore is unbearable. The work is subhuman, the food rotten, the medical care inadequate. The brutalities of the guards are inconceivable, their punishments inhumane. I am driven to ask if I am not a man, if my guards are not men. The baton blows rain down upon us, but there is no one to hear our

cries" (Zinoman, 2001, p.264). Under US imperialism, 'tiger cages' were used to torture and ill-treat Vietnamese communist prisoners (Berni, 2024).

The 'tiger cages' in the Con Dao prison are preserved as symbolic traces of the abuse of humanity by colonial and imperial powers. According to Fuggle (2021a), today, these cages, with mannequins reenacting scenes of confinement, symbolise the barbarity enacted during the French and American occupations and the legacies of colonial torture and control technologies. The strained and juxtaposed nature of the French and American tiger cages demonstrates the continuity between old-world colonialism and new-world imperialism, providing nuanced standing of how systems of power, punishment, and human rights atrocities transcended historical periods and political regimes. The severe exploitation of human rights violations in Con Dao prison thoroughly exposes a more extensive and systemic fabric of human dehumanisation, not limited to Vietnam but serving as one of the arteries through which colonial oppression has ebbed (Fuggle & Hutnyk, 2022). Fuggle (2021a) offers an account of the 'carceral archipelago' theorised by Stoler, which captures how these inscriptions of imprisonment operate as many bricks of settlement accrued together within the empire's power expansion. Together, these sites, such as Con Dao prison, have turned into violent nodes of connection stretching across colonial geographies. As a result, Con Dao's preservation is not just about remembering the past; it is a call to acknowledge and resist the global systems of injustice that are still built on the foundations of colonial exploitation and repression. However, Hayward and Tran (2014) argue that the preservation of the Con Dao prison and the deliberate display of colonial-era torture techniques place the site within the broader phenomenon of 'dark tourism,' which offers a platform to engage with postcolonial heritage, inviting tourists to confront the uncomfortable legacies of colonialism that still shape the modern geopolitical and social-cultural landscapes.

The Western concept of *dark tourism*:
According to Dang (2020), dark tourism refers to trips to places of "death, suffering, violence and disaster," which provides aspects of the experiences regarding human-generated historical events (p.4). Hayward and Tran (2014) argue that the physical remains of the prisons and the graveyards connected to them were a significant draw for tourists, and the mannequins that were placed inside offered a dark and terrifying depiction of the barbaric conditions under which many people perished, and generations of dissidents were detained. Dark tourism at Con Dao is, hence, a site of remembrance and a reflection on human suffering in situations of repressive regimes. Dang (2020) suggests that people visit dark sites like Con Dao prison to seek inspiration, trigger excitement, and promote curiosity and conscience. Moreover, Stone and Sharpley (2008) address that "dark tourism privileges 'visual' and 'experiential' over the need for historical rigour" (p.577). In addition, Stone and Sharpley (2008) emphasise that dark tourism, as a chronologically modern phenomenon emerging in the twentieth century, has primarily been shaped by Western societal contexts, characterised by non-purposeful visits rather than intentional pilgrimages. From this point, Stone and Sharpley (2008) suggest many

tourists find themselves at sites of tragedy or death not as part of deliberate journey by as a byproduct of tour companies' itineraries or sheer happenstance, which contrasts with the forms of cultural or heritage tourism, where visitors often seek specific, historically significant locations with clear intentions. However, Dang (2020) argues that dark tourism encompasses not just death and suffering but also how people and society view and rationalise them, which focuses more on how socio-cultural circumstances affect people's perceptions of death and suffering sites since the "darkness" of dark places is socially created. Considering this influence, it is significant to observe that most of the literature on dark tourism is connected to the Western contexts and is based on Western viewpoints (Dang, 2020). As a result, the reasons behind dark tourism in developing nations, which are frequently associated with postcolonial legacies, are not well understood, even though culture plays a significant role in the process of making sense of tragic historical events (Dang, 2020).

Eisner (2018) argues that the term 'dark tourism' does not feel appropriate for the Vietnamese veterans' tourism practices in Con Dao due to their status as returning survivors and their motivation to participate in pilgrimages. Dang (2020) argues that the softening of dark tourism's narrative to emphasise the 'positive aspects' of brutal histories, such as the courage, resilience, and sacrifice of national heroes, reflects a critical reinterpretation of these sites within postcolonial contexts, which symbolise the perseverance of the Vietnamese people in their long struggle for independence against colonial and imperial oppression. This framing is essential to the formation of a national identity as Con Dao prison is ingrained with a sense of collective memory and serves as a powerful reminder of the country's painful yet triumphant journey towards self-determination, which, in turn, justifies dark tourism "as more to do with life and living, rather than with death and dying" (Stone & Sharpley, 2008, p.590). This connection between dark tourism sites and national identity also serves as a key distinction between Vietnamese and Western dark tourism. Dang (2020) argues that Western dark tourism often revolves around memorialising events like wars, genocides, or natural disasters, but it typically does so without confronting the legacies of colonialism that are foundational to many of these events. This absence of colonial critique reflects a broader reluctance in Western societies to fully grapple with their colonial and imperial pasts, whereas in postcolonial nations like Vietnam, these sites are deliberately used to reframe the narrative around resistance and sovereignty.

Conclusion:
After years of foreign occupation and exploitation, today, Con Dao has developed into one of the world's most stunning and promising islands, serving as a 'shield' to safeguard vital seaports and strategic commercial hubs in the southern part of Vietnam. Con Dao is no longer merely a tragic past in light of this new position; it is rising consistently in the middle of the sea to demonstrate its economic-political 'frontline position' on the maritime routes connecting Asia and European in the 19th century and its strategic location to support Vietnam's development and integration in the 20th century.

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Protecting the Rights of Nature: Exploring how gender equality and Indigenous rights remain prerequisites for protecting the rights of our natural environments

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Author's Note: *This paper was originally submitted as a final assignment for HIST391, a course I completed during my semester exchange at the University of British Columbia in 2024.*

Introduction

What does it mean for an entity that cannot speak or express itself like humans can to be afforded rights? Surprisingly, this legal phenomenon is more common than one might think. Corporations and universities are a few entities that hold this status in various jurisdictions (Boyd, 2017). Another that is possibly less known, but increasingly topical, are the Rights of Nature.

In this essay, I argue that protecting the Rights of Nature on a global scale is not possible without taking into consideration the struggle for Indigenous rights and gender equality. The aim of presenting this argument is to disseminate an understanding that the Rights of Nature, Indigenous rights and gender equality should not be looked at in isolation, but in tandem. If this is done, human rights organisations and governments can ensure that any progress made towards developing and protecting the Rights of Nature is done adequately and meaningfully in coming years.

Rights of Nature Movement

It is essential to begin with a brief overview of the Rights of Nature movement. This is paramount as any progress made towards promoting the Rights of Nature within civil society or otherwise requires a concrete understanding of how the Rights of Nature movement emerged and importantly, how the Rights of Nature differ from environmental human rights.

In his book, Boyd (2017) recounts how the Rights of Nature movement stems from within the legal community. Specifically, during the 1960s, the planned build of a ski resort in a pristine region of the U.S. sparked opposition by community members (Boyd, 2017). This build also drew the interest of a law professor named Christoper Stone, alongside Judge William Douglas who would later rule in the eventual lawsuit brought against the resort project (Boyd, 2017). Both individuals spoke out regarding the idea that natural spaces deserve to have their well-being, protection and rights advocated for by humans (Boyd, 2017). In coming years, Judge William Douglas would even face ridicule by his work peers who believed that this new system of rights was too abstract (Boyd, 2017).

Outside of the legal context, in 1994, civil society members and NGOs came together to begin drafting an Earth Charter (Earth Charter, n.d.). The drafting process became a global collaboration, eventually leading to the publication of the Earth Charter in 2000 (Earth Charter, n.d.). Of significance is how this document iterates the interconnectivity of all living beings, irrespective of their utility to humankind (Earth Charter Commission, 2000). Despite developments like these, even today, many courts exhibit a general preference for acknowledging the rights of humans before those of nature (Boyd, 2017). This speaks to the importance of civil society taking initiative so that this status quo can one day shift permanently.

When we think of the Rights of Nature, it may be tempting to equate these with the manifestation of environmental human rights which are often referred to in political and social contexts. For instance, the 1981 African Human Rights Charter iterates citizens' right to a healthy environment (Borràs, 2017). Similarly, in Resolution 76/300, the UN states that a "clean, healthy and sustainable environment" is a human right (United Nations General Assembly, 2022, p.3). However, one aspect that underpins both of these rights is the fact that they are centred around human needs and thus, anthropocentric in nature (Borràs, 2017). In contrast, the Rights of Nature are biocentric, focusing on how all living things within our natural environment are equal and connected (Borràs, 2017). Therefore, the Rights of Nature framework contends that humankind has a fundamental responsibility to utilise legal channels to represent nature's interests, not for the sake of humanity's right to a clean environment, but for the sake of nature's inherent right to be respected and kept healthy (Borràs, 2017).

This distinction is a key point that governments and civil society should keep in mind. Furthermore, I propose that acknowledging this core difference between the Rights of Nature and environmental human rights should encourage organisations and institutions to address each separately to begin with, so as to not cause one set of rights to mask the meaning of the other. Despite their similarities, immediately merging both types of rights under one decision-making task force could easily take away from the biocentric understanding underpinning the Rights of Nature.

Rights of Nature & Indigenous Rights

As Borràs (2017) outlines, the neoliberal underpinnings of the right to a healthy environment produces a norm whereby society often does not defend nature for nature's sake, but for the sake of preserving what society can gain from the Earth's resources. It is therefore crucial to consider the power that Indigenous populations and their beliefs have to reorient society's understanding and help mobilise the Rights of Nature in practice. For instance, the development of Ecuador's 2008 Constitution is one document which explicitly acknowledges the Rights of Nature (Borràs, 2017). This Constitution not only prefaces that nature is living and worthy of legal rights, but its preamble outlines how humankind should operate in harmony with the environment to optimise the state of living in Ecuador (Borràs, 2017).

What is essential to recognise in this case is how this shift from a neoliberal to biocentric interpretation of nature's rights was a product of collaboration and community input (Akchurin, 2015). In this case, the Ecuadorian government's engagement with Indigenous peoples regarding their values and beliefs was key to establish a foundation for introducing a biocentric interpretation of nature within political and legal spaces (Akchurin, 2015). Therefore, one lesson governments and civil society should take away from this case study is how the beliefs and insights of Indigenous peoples are paramount to decipher biocentric perspectives and bridge knowledge gaps - both of which can help political and civil society actors implement the Rights of Nature in a meaningful way.

Although Indigenous values and traditional perspectives on the relationship between humans and nature were drawn upon to develop the Ecuadorian Constitution, Indigenous peoples faced many obstacles to have their voices heard at the government level (Akchurin, 2015). Akchurin (2015) highlights how Indigenous peoples were not solely focused on pushing for the Rights of Nature to be acknowledged in Ecuador. Instead, Indigenous peoples were passionate about lobbying for a plurinational political system and this advocacy is what ended up being essential in bringing to light an alternative view of nature compatible with the concept of the Rights of Nature (Akchurin, 2015).

Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination and their freedom to choose their political standing are clearly outlined in the 2007 UNDRIP (United Nations General Assembly, 2007). Furthermore, in the case of Ecuador, communication between Indigenous populations and the government regarding Indigenous self-determination was one factor that gave way to the Rights of Nature being legally entrenched, nationally (Akchurin, 2015). I argue that this showcases how the Rights of Nature directly connect with the struggle for Indigenous rights and supports one reason why human rights organisations and decision-making institutions should feel inclined to adopt an intersectional outlook when interpreting the Rights of Nature.

Rights of Nature & Gender Equality
One way the United Nations acknowledges the Rights of Nature is via Sustainable Development Goal 6, which highlights the importance of universal access to clean water and proper sanitation standards (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.; United Nations, 2023). Here, the United Nations argue that promoting the Rights of Nature can help safeguard and improve water quality, particularly amid climate change (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.). In the same breath, it is important to acknowledge how limited access to sanitation and potable water remain gendered issues (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.).

In the following section, I propose that governments and civil society must ensure that their work regarding the Rights of Nature is accompanied by advocacy for gender equality, given how neglecting the latter can jeopardise the success of the former. To understand

how these are interconnected, we can look at the UN's 1979 CEDAW, which states that all women have the right to enjoy and access proper sanitation facilities and water supplies (United Nations General Assembly, 1979). Unfortunately, this remains to be the case when we examine the global prevalence of period poverty.

Period poverty encapsulates how the unaffordability of period products, significant knowledge gaps and poor access to sanitation negatively affect those managing their menstrual cycle (United Nations Women, 2024). This issue is not exclusive to one group of women or jurisdiction, as period poverty impacts those living in rural and urban areas, poor and wealthy countries and humanitarian crisis zones, to name a few (United Nations Women, 2024). A few scholars make compelling arguments connecting climate change to topics of poor sanitation, period poverty and menstrual health (Khorsand et al., 2023; Sommer et al., 2021). However, I argue these works can also act as compelling tools to iterate how ignoring period poverty can undermine any progress civil society and state actors make in pursuit of the Rights of Nature.

Contrary to what some may assume, not everyone has the privilege to choose or access the period products they prefer (Khorsand et al., 2023). This is due to existing systemic barriers like not having access to clean water or robust sanitation systems (Khorsand et al., 2023). For instance, although reusable period products are an eco-friendlier option than tampons and pads, using reusable products is not possible for all given they require sanitation between uses, which requires accessing potable water (Khorsand et al., 2023). Given how systemic challenges make these products impractical for some, disposable products are often more realistic options, despite their unsustainable impacts (Khorsand et al., 2023).

Further insights from researchers suggest that improper mechanisms to dispose of single-use period products could lead to the contamination of beaches, sewage systems and water bodies via microplastic particles (Khorsand et al., 2023; Sommer et al., 2021). These current and prospective realities exemplify how it is not only corporate-lead practices like deforestation or chemical contamination that have the potential to degrade natural ecosystems. Rather, neglecting systemic problems like poor sanitation and period poverty represent slow-burning issues that could make protecting the Rights of Nature unmanageable in the future.

Overall, this example shows that if a natural entity were to be awarded rights in a particular jurisdiction, it faces the potential to have these rights violated in the long-term if period product disposal cannot be managed adequately or, in other words, if gender inequalities continue to be ignored. Given that the only way to alleviate this problem is to address period poverty, this points to one major way in which the Rights of Nature are connected and reliant upon the advancement of gender equality and women's rights, globally.

Conclusion

Although the Rights of Nature diverge from traditional human-centred rights discourses, it remains important to examine how ignoring certain groups of human rights can jeopardise the utility of awarding and implementing the Rights of Nature in future. Above all, this essay highlights how it is essential to acknowledge the individuality of the Rights of Nature, as opposed to interpreting them as synonymous with environmental human rights. This will help encourage civil society to step outside itself and into the shoes of natural entities to better understand what can be done to maximise nature's current and future well-being.

To complement this, human rights organisations and governments should not restrict themselves from examining the Rights of Nature through an intersectional lens. The utility of doing so can be seen in how the struggle for Indigenous rights and gender equality connect to the Rights of Nature. Overall, without addressing gender equality and Indigenous rights, I argue that attempting to implement the Rights of Nature will become increasingly difficult and potentially a lost cause in some jurisdictions where Indigenous oppression or period poverty are heightened, yet remain ignored.

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What the COVID-19 Pandemic Reveals About the Potential for Cooperation in Global Politics

Pengfei Rui

Personal security is regarded as an essential component of human rights, and guaranteeing civilians' personal security is also considered one of the crucial duties of the state. Despite the devastating war machines on the battlefield, tiny bacteria and viruses are just as deadly. A disease pandemic can throw a massive wrench into a relatively stable situation. For example, the steep decline of the population due to the Black Death pandemic in the medieval era weakened the authority of the aristocracy. It challenged the otherwise rigid social hierarchy (Horrox, 1994), or the outbreak of the Spanish Flu during WWII caused severe non-combat attrition in the military and affected the trend of the war (Johnson & Mueller, 2002). Due to the sudden and accidental nature of disease outbreaks, controlling disease epidemics and reducing their influences has become the emphasis of policy research. After entering the 21st century, with the development of medical technology, humans seem to have been more successful in controlling the spread of diseases such as H5N1 and Ebola. However, the outbreak of COVID-19 at the end of 2019 has once again posed an unprecedented challenge to epidemiological policies. According to the WHO (2023) statistics, countries officially reported 760 million infections, including 6.9 million deaths.

COVID-19 erupted in a complex political period encompassing the arms race represented by the confrontation between China and the US, the isolationism trend featuring the UK's withdrawal from the EU, and the globalisation tendency represented by multilateral international organisations increasingly moving from the margins to the centre of the political arena. Different political contexts have led to significant differences in domestic policies on epidemic prevention. Take, for instance, the extremely strict city closures in China (Huang, 2020) or the initially launched but criticised policy of mass immunisation in the UK (Kumar, 2020). However, the UN (2020) has noted a general policy restricting the movement of people and goods across borders, which tends to be a securitise policy. Undoubtedly, although such policies are consistent with a rational understanding of the need to control the spread of disease, they have not been as successful as expected in terms of results. From a Constructivist Theoretical Lens, I argue that securitised thought is hardly a cure for the problem of worldwide epidemics of disease, but it also poses a legitimate challenge to general models of cooperation. Thus, more refined regional cooperation may shed new light on epidemic control policies.

This essay will begin by clarifying the realist theory of securitisation, the liberal approach to cooperation and the concept of "norms" from a constructivist perspective. It will then demonstrate the deficiencies of the securitisation theory in the current era but unravel the inadequacies of the existing cooperation model. It will conclude with an examination of the inspiration for regional cooperation.

The Copenhagen School, with most realists, developed the concept of "securitisation" in the 1990s. "In essence, securitisation is the process by which 'normal' items on the political agenda come to be treated as urgent existential threats. Securitised issues are prioritised in decision-making processes, warrant exceptional measures, and enable security apparatuses to be deployed to ensure extraordinary responses to whatever challenge arises (Duarte & Valenca, 2021, p236, as cited in Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998)." Securitised thinking is often reflected in discourse, such as Donald Trump saying, "[t]his is worse than Pearl Harbor, this is worse than the World Trade Centre. There has never been an attack like this (Duarte & Valenca, 2021, p240, as cited in BBC 2020)", or a "decisive battle' in the 'people's war' against the pandemic" (Duarte & Valenca, 2021 p240, as cited in Tian 2020) said Xi Jinping. Not surprisingly, this context adds seriousness and even a certain exclusivity to the anti-epidemic policy. The general existing liberal cooperation model emphasises the importance of responding to global events close to international organisations such as the WHO. During COVID-19, the WHO can host policy coordination and resource-sharing through multilateral consultation (Fidler, 2020). However, in this pandemic, the purely securitised mindset and the proposition of cooperation have been challenged. Constructivism focuses on "norms". Simply put, such norms arise from common ideology in social life (Wendt,1999) and, therefore, gain public acceptance and be able to regulate their behaviour (Finnemore & Sikkink,1998); norms also change in response to social challenges and evolution (Katzenstein, 1996). In COVID-19, for example, a securitisation or cooperation policy can be seen as a social norm by the leadership to reach an agreement to prevent the spread of disease. The following essay will explore problems encountered in practice with these two norms.

The norm of "securitisation" is deeply embedded in the binary thinking that nationalism brings, fragmenting what should be a coherent response to global events. As stated earlier, it is the responsibility of the state to protect the personal security of its nationals, so the effect of isolation through the closure of borders is akin to placing its nationals under the protection of a safety net. Similarly, forced factory shutdowns blocked the virus transmission pathway and controlled the outbreak's spread. However, those policies have prevented the spread of the virus and medical supplies and information. This has undoubtedly hit the global supply chain of medical products, making exchanging information on epidemics between countries difficult and further hindering coordination and cooperation. Furthermore, such policies are likely related to the norms of populists and nationalist populists (Pevehouse, 2020). This kind of mindset is, to a large extent, dangerous because it excludes the benefits that cooperation may bring to other countries (Pevehouse, 2020), which can easily lead to the isolation of a particular country and, ultimately, disaster for its nationals.

However, it has also been argued that the cross-border spread of disease necessitates a similar securitisation policy by the state to respond urgently. Firstly, the disease is ideologically expressed in a severe and securitised discourse, effectively avoiding its

subjective emotional neglect (Duarte & Valenca, 2021, as cited in Honigsbaum, 2017). Secondly, concerning the movement of goods, in the context of a high degree of globalisation and the countless numbers of people and goods that pass through borders every day, if the policy of closing borders were not to be adopted, but instead of checking each one individually, it would put an incalculable strain on the country's human and financial resources. Realism reminds politicians of the costs and benefits of complex political interactions, and the securitisation policy works well to maximise national interests.

To quote Tom Frieden, "Diseases do not care about governments, ideologies or borders" (Davies & Wenham, 2020, p1246); it is easy to see that the above policy is, at best, a placebo. The diseases that continue to rage in the wake of widespread border closures are a testament to this. In addition, such policies have had an enormous impact on society. Take China, for example, where the initial outbreak was most severe. China is recognised as a manufacturing powerhouse, but in the face of the sudden onset of the disease, there was a severe shortage of medical supplies such as masks and protective clothing, which initially resulted in high infection rates among healthcare workers (Yu & Richard, 2020). In the case of North Korea, which has the strictest border controls, a protracted disease epidemic has caused severe economic hardship and food shortages (Park & Cho, 2024). It can be seen that, unlike war, disease can dismantle a nation's resistance from the inside and that a nation's power is meagre in the face of a global public health event. Elbe (2012) describes the seriousness and urgency of the securitisation context as turning one's body into a battlefield. This not only calls into question the patient's right to identity, as the patient is thus seen as the "enemy", which is not in line with human rights concepts. At the same time, it puts the whole community in a state of fear and leaves no room for social care (Duarte & Valenca, 2021, as cited in Agamben, 2020). Consequently, the policy of mere securitisation is weak in responding to sudden and protracted world crises.

Although the realist norm of securitisation has not achieved the desired results expected in the practice of epidemic prevention, it has forcefully challenged the traditional view of cooperation and allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of global health governance. As mentioned earlier, liberalism emphasises reliance on international organisations like the WHO for international coordination and cooperation, whereas securitisation theory challenges this idea firstly at the level of state sovereignty. "In a political environment of anarchy, where the WHO has no direct authority over member states" (Davies & Wenham, 2020, p1229), the WHO is not authorised to independently investigate outbreaks that are part of a country's internal affairs. At the same time, States are reluctant to accept investigations, considering their national interests and, notably, their international prestige. The introduction explains that COVID-19 erupted during a complex political period, characterised mainly by conflicting interests and that it is ironic to attempt to bring the conflicting parties to an agreement through negotiation. In the case of the US-China conflict, for example, the President of the US decided to stop funding the WHO because he believed that the WHO was politically cooperating with China (Javed

& Chattu, 2020, as cited in The New York Times, 2020), and China has repeatedly denied the lack of transparency of information and bureaucratic problems in the prevention and control of epidemics to maintain its international image (Javed & Chattu, 2020, as cited in Husain & Bloom, 2020). International organisations such as the WHO, on which the traditional model of cooperation depended, are becoming more fragmented, and member states are turning platforms intended for cooperation into battlefields for proxy wars. The norms of realism, which state that states' foreign policy prioritises the service of their national interests, have significantly reduced the possibilities of the traditional modes of cooperation.

Additionally, securitised norms reinforce the international community's concern for the interests of less developed countries and their reflection on the justice of global health governance. Clause 5(c) of the TRIPS Agreement, an essential liberal cooperative document, stated that "when in public health crises [...] or extreme emergency [...] patents for pharmaceuticals are public goods" (Javed & Chattu, 2020, p302, as cited in WTO Ministerial conferences-Doha 4th Ministerial-TRIPS declaration, WTO, 2001). Such a provision may seem to facilitate the worldwide flow of medical supplies and build a common barrier against disease for all humanity. However, it ignores the specific differences in national conditions between countries. Specifically, when critical defence products such as particular medicines or vaccines enter the market, developed countries or powerful transnational capitals will monopolise the market through economic manipulations, thus affecting the fairness of distribution and creating a severe human rights crisis, but the less developed countries fail to counterattack. For example, in 2007, the Government of Indonesia refused to share samples of the H5N1 virus with the WHO for fear of not being able to afford the cost of repurchasing a new vaccine from another country (Davies & Wenham, 2020, as cited in Elbe, 2010). However, this behaviour slowed the international response to H5N1 because Indonesia could not develop a vaccine. The liberal hope that international organisations would be able to act as defenders of justice in cooperation has not been successful. This is not only because international organisations do not have substantial authority in anarchic international politics but also because of a general lack of trust among states because of their entangled interests.

Till now, effective drugs and vaccines are still being developed to deal with COVID-19, but concerns about the distribution of supplies persist. Traditional forms of cooperation struggle to balance the two norms of interest and justice and provide strong support. Next, the essay will discuss the illuminating potential of regional cooperation as a new kind of cooperation.

Davies and Wenham (2020) mentioned that politics is not unifying globally, and the concern for national interest is the essence behind the securitisation strategy, which was also pointed out earlier. For example, global intergovernmental organisations such as WHO start from the norm that "external crises would be unifying events for mass public" (Pevehouse, 2020, E204) and idealise that countries will be united. However, when the

norm of entangled interests is considered, making communities of interest cooperate on a small scale is much more realistic. For example, the two major international non-governmental organisations, the Red Cross and the Red Crescent have excellently balanced the conflict of religious taboos with the human right to health. During the MERS-COV period, the Red Crescent actively coordinated with the Government on humanitarian assistance programmes for remote areas (Al-Mohaimeed, 2017). In the case of a public health crisis of this kind, which has a precise geographical dimension, it may be that consultations would have been complicated if Western countries or organisations had intervened. Take the Ebola epidemic ravaging Africa as another example. Africa's particularities lie in its relatively poor health status, economic development, expertise, and high population density. As Africa's most representative intergovernmental cooperation organisation, the African Union is crucial in coordinating anti-epidemic policies (Makoni, 2014). Similar development situations, discourse systems and cultural backgrounds provide a solid basis for consensus. It is conceivable that developed countries may be able to offer more effective scientific preventive and control measures. However, they cannot adapt to the specific conditions of Africa, and ultimately, they cannot escape the fantasy.

It is evident that small-scale regional cooperation embodies a new potential for cooperation, but several problems still need to be addressed. Firstly, unlike political cooperation in general, health governance needs to be underpinned by solid expertise; in other words, instead of a regional "UN", a regional "WHO" is needed. However, the widespread establishment of organisations with the same high standards is difficult because of the different levels of scientific development in different regions. Secondly, the spread of disease is highly territorial, but good-neighbourly relations are not universally friendly globally, as in the case of the Russian-Ukrainian and Palestinian-Israeli conflicts. This challenges health governance, which is premised on peace and stability. However, from a constructivist perspective, it is absurd to create health conflicts through securitised norms that put the right to health of one's nationals above those of others. "As summarised by Ventura (2016: 3, as cited in Duarte & Valenca, 2021, p242), who will truly be safe at the end of each 'war'?" Thus, even if there are disputes of interest or even historical animosities between neighbouring countries, cooperation in the face of the hostile disease is still possible as an acknowledged norm.

In summary, this essay illustrates how securitised standards impede the process of cooperation and challenge traditional notions of cooperation, yet their inability to cure global public health events. It not only shows that the search for new methods of cooperating is the key to solving problems in a highly globalised context, but it also examines the viability of regional cooperation as a potential in the context of the constructivist focus on the notion of norms. Norms in the constructivist perspective are constantly updating, and the relentless search for commonly accepted norms to unlock the potential of cooperation is a topic of great significance.

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The Colonisation-Decolonisation Binary as a Global Phenomenon

Abhi Puthigae

Introduction

Our everyday lives are interwoven with fragments of history, and the significance of these markers of time is often overlooked. Engaging with our environment can reveal the complexities that reflect changing social narratives, helping understand how global phenomena shape our localities. This essay uses theoretical lenses to analyse the impact of the colonisation vs decolonisation binary as a global phenomenon.

Background context on the binary is crucial when examining how it plays out internationally and within New Zealand. Following this backdrop, the essay will then explore how the St Heliers bus shelter as a symbolic marker embodies this global phenomenon. Postcolonialism and poststructuralism are useful lenses to unpack this binary's impact on the area of St Heliers, providing invaluable insight into its role in wider society.

Colonisation vs Decolonisation as a Global Phenomenon

Driven by a desire for territory expansion and economic prosperity, colonisation refers to the acquisition of an area by the colonising power, claiming sovereignty over the indigenous people and land. This initial process often resulted in contrasting consequences for the groups involved, whereby the colonising state would experience economic growth, improved access to resources, and efficient industrial systems, whereas the indigenous communities suffered from withdrawn sovereignty, loss of cultural identity, and oppression. Although many countries resisted the colonising powers by either assimilating to the colonial society or eventually gaining independence, the implications of colonisation remain engrained into many processes within these countries (Open Education Resource, n.d., pp. 16.2K.1-16.2K2). Subsequently, decolonisation emerged to counteract these ongoing adverse effects.

Decolonisation aims to challenge the remnants of colonial oppression and exploitation which result in systemic control over integral aspects of indigenous communities. These aspects include spirituality, individual and cultural freedoms, and the population's self-sufficiency. Decolonisation requires a comprehensive understanding of the locality's history to detangle the deep-rooted processes that marginalise indigenous populations. It seeks to transition a country from vulnerability under foreign rule to sovereignty, achieving a level of self-determination. Each locality adopts its own approach to decolonisation, akin to how its colonial experience is unique, tailored to addressing the colonisation issues most pertinent to its people (Veracini, 2007).

The clash between the polar sides of this binary makes it complex — what one side aims to achieve, the other aims to oppose. This binary is a global phenomenon as many countries transcending continents are grappling with the effects of colonisation, such as racial inequity embedded not just within government processes and public bodies but throughout society. To alleviate such effects and empower the indigenous voice, social activists are turning to tools of decolonisation, such as constitutional reform (Veracini, 2010). From this, it is clear that this global phenomenon is well-situated within the local-global continuum.

Given New Zealand's unique history of colonisation, the binary of colonisation vs decolonisation is particularly relevant to New Zealand's society today. The implications of colonisation span across generations and affect minority populations beyond the indigenous Māori population. Distinctive events of colonisation, which include land alienation, mass settler immigration, and forced cultural assimilation, impact our daily lives. This, in turn, has shaped fundamental operations, leading to multidimensional hegemonic racism that diminishes the rights of minority populations within New Zealand (Moewaka Barnes & McCreanor, 2019). In New Zealand, most decolonisation efforts manifest through demands of institutional change, given that the signing of The Treaty of Waitangi-Te Tiriti o Waitangi governs settler-indigenous relations. This calls for a commitment towards co-existence between Māori and the Crown, the efforts of which can largely be divided into two categories: legislative reform and reshaping narratives on a local level. Examples of the latter include increased education of Te Reo Māori and, particularly relevant to this essay, contesting symbols that glorify the colonial history (Elkington et al., 2020).

The global impact of the colonisation vs decolonisation binary is especially interesting to me as my heritage grapples with the effects of colonisation and during my upbringing, I was exposed to notions of decolonisation. Having an Indian cultural background but living in New Zealand has revealed to me the two societies' contrasting experiences with this phenomenon. A significant consequence of colonisation in India that is presently embedded within communities and institutions is the indoctrination of society to function under a rigid hierarchy, creating a sense of othering between religions and castes (Kolås, 2023). I see the direct implications of how these tensions exacerbated by colonial rule continue to influence mindsets within my extended family, many of whom justify this belief through their higher-ranked status within the hierarchy. My perspective on this social othering is strongly influenced by my exposure to Te Tiriti principles and interest in Tikanga Māori; therefore, conversations with my family on this topic are often confronting yet profound. This experience of challenging social attitudes is a microcosm of the global tensions encapsulated by this binary and is shared throughout postcolonial nations.

The St Heliers Bus Shelter
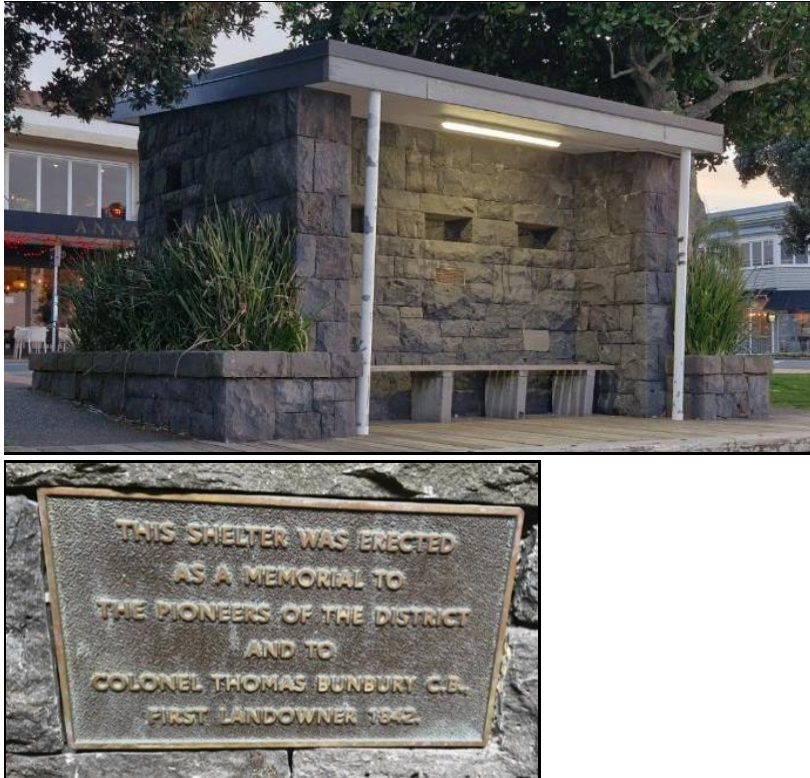
The St Heliers bus shelter is a stone shelter erected in 1959 in memory of Colonel Thomas Bunbury, recognised as the first landowner in the St Heliers-Glendowie district (New Zealand Herald, 1959). Since then, this bus shelter has been used by many and locals consider it a marker of the area's history. Bunbury arrived in New Zealand in 1840 to assume the lieutenant governorship in the event of Lieutenant-Governor Hobson's health deteriorating. However, as Hobson recovered, Bunbury was sent to travel to other parts of New Zealand that had not yet been ceded to the Crown. He succeeded in Stewart Island and many parts of the North and South Islands. Bunbury purchased the first two allotments sold at the auction of Tamaki land in February 1842, hence becoming coined the first landowner of the district (Jackson, 1976/2005a, pp. 8–13).

As someone who has used the St Heliers bus shelter since childhood, this physical marker has existed throughout my daily life, representing a familiar yet relatively insignificant aspect of my environment. Growing up in this area, I was unaware of the shelter's historical significance, including that it is a memorial to a key figure in New Zealand's colonial history. Like many other locals, I accepted this shelter as solely a functional part of the landscape but nothing more.

However, after reading the plaque and discovering the shelter's ties to colonial roots, I began to question how spaces like this reflect broader narratives of both colonisation and decolonisation, and how they interact with the community's values on such topics. My positionality helps me see the tensions present in this binary that are encapsulated by this seemingly ordinary physical marker that has become familiar to me. Using the postcolonialism and poststructuralism lenses to analyse this physical marker within a

global context helps inform an understanding that historical narratives further compound the tensions of this binary.

Postcolonialism

A postcolonial analysis of the St Heliers bus shelter draws attention to an indigenous perspective, situating this local marker within the broader global issue of indigenous erasure. This concept refers to the dismissal and suppression of indigenous history and knowledge, degrading sovereignty and cultural identity (Sabzalian et al., 2021). Erected in the memory of one of New Zealand's prominent colonial figures, this bus shelter is a reminder of colonial dominance. Moreover, by commemorating Bunbury as this area's first landowner, this physical marker actively silences the indigenous history that predates the arrival of settlers to St Heliers.

Although Bunbury was the first to 'own' land in the St Heliers area — individual land ownership is a concept introduced by settlers — it is misleading to imply that he was the first to occupy it as this ignores the stories of those on the land before him. Māori first encountered the St Heliers area of the Tamaki region during the third wave of immigration from Hawaiki in 1350. The Tainui waka was the first to moor in Wai o Taiki Bay, establishing the iwi of Ngā Marama and Ngā Tai (Jackson, 1976/2005b, pp. 5–16). The bus shelter's memorial to Bunbury rewrites the past, implying that the colonial record marks the beginning of St Heliers' history, overwriting the rich indigenous stories that existed long before settler arrival.

Physical markers like this bus shelter are crucial in shaping historical portrayals and determining whose stories are remembered. The exclusion of Māori history from this memorial is not an isolated case; it is part of a global pattern in which colonial powers sought to erase indigenous histories, and current authorities allow the continuation of such symbols. This normalisation of colonial narratives reinforces the oppression experienced by indigenous communities. The bus shelter exemplifies the global tensions between colonisation and decolonisation, where balancing the two contrasting perspectives is often fraught with controversy.

Particularly following the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, protesters worldwide, including in the UK, Ghana, France, and New Zealand, called for the removal of memorial statues of colonialists (Labadi, 2024). Thus, indigenous erasure is an issue on the rise, indicating that the colonisation vs decolonisation binary tensions are shifting to account for changing social perspectives on reclaiming indigenous sovereignty. Postcolonial theory supplements this shift by recognising the cultural significance of ordinary structures, like the bus shelter, highlighting the need for a more inclusive retelling of history. It calls for an amelioration of these markers, aided by collaboration with indigenous voices to reflect a more holistic account of an area's history.

Poststructuralism

Poststructuralism reinforces the postcolonial issue of the underrepresentation of indigenous history but frames this issue from a social context, focusing on the power dynamics that shape historical narratives. Understanding the social norms of a community is vital as they influence the changing interpretation of symbols and structures, shaping collective memory. This reveals that the St Heliers bus shelter is more than just a memorial as it symbolises the values and power dynamics the local community holds.

St Heliers is a predominantly Pākehā area, with more than 80% of the population identifying as European and nearly 40% having an annual income greater than $70,000 (Statistics New Zealand, 2018). This affluent demographic, many of whom are descendants of early settlers, views the bus shelter as a symbol of their heritage and historical pride. Poststructuralism highlights the fluidity of meaning. For some, the shelter honours Bunbury's pioneering role, while for others, it signifies the erasure of Māori history. This tension between interpretations is not unique to St Heliers; it reflects a global trend where dominant cultural groups maintain control over how history is represented in public spaces, retaining legacies that align with current social values.

In St Heliers, the lack of protest against the bus shelter, influenced by the demographical background, mirrors a global reluctance to engage critically with colonial legacies. Although notions of decolonisation in New Zealand have manifested as calls for removing colonial symbols (Labadi, 2024), there have been no demands to remove the bus shelter or alter the language of the plaque. Just as the shelter reinforces Pākehā culture and the institutionalised resistance to decolonisation in St Heliers, dominant cultures worldwide influence discourse and cultural structures. Poststructuralism is beneficial in showing that those with power not only shape the presented narratives but also determine which are excluded. This discourse of silence on underrepresented indigenous voices in St Heliers extends beyond this community to the global stage, where cultural hegemonies control historical truths and challenge decolonisation. The cultural turn in poststructuralism shows that overcoming this challenge requires a reinvention of the production of mass culture so that dominant forces do not quash alternative perspectives.

When addressing the phenomenon of the colonisation vs decolonisation binary, poststructuralism explores the global struggle to represent history in a way that acknowledges both colonial and indigenous narratives by critiquing this binary. Instead, viewing this phenomenon as a spectrum enables a balance of multiple perspectives. The binary favours one side while excluding the other; however, poststructuralism suggests that both colonial and indigenous perspectives are products of historical construction. Finding a balance requires a recognition of these identities' complexities, rather than forcing a binary opposition. Accordingly, the St Heliers bus shelter reflects a global tension between respecting colonial legacies and pushing for decolonisation, symbolising the struggle to determine how these contrasting narratives should coexist in public spaces.

Conclusion

The St Heliers bus shelter embodies historical and cultural narratives that reflect the ongoing global tensions between colonisation and decolonisation. Through a postcolonial lens, it is clear that the shelter signifies indigenous erasure and is part of a global issue where colonial markers portray history through a biased perspective. A poststructuralist analysis deepens this understanding by showing how St Heliers' demographic reinforces colonial narratives through a discourse of silence akin to the global dynamic of cultural hegemonies controlling historical truth.

Viewing the tension between colonisation and decolonisation as a spectrum rather than a binary acknowledges all historical narratives, which are products of their respective contexts. The global challenge lies in appropriately conveying various historical perspectives; therefore, the St Heliers bus shelter is a local example of this global phenomenon — a reminder of the difficulties in balancing colonial legacies with the push for decolonisation in the public sphere.

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