The Rise of Illiberal Peacebuilding and Authoritarian Modes of Conflict Management

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Introduction

In recent years, the world has witnessed the regression of the liberal model in post-conflict resolution. Authoritarian Modes of Conflict Management (ACM) is the existing conceptual challenger to the liberal model; however, ACM has not fully captured the realities of authoritarian post-conflict governance. This paper aims to contribute to the ACM framework by addressing some of its major shortcomings. Through several historical and contemporary case studies, this paper suggests that weak authoritarian actors can obtain both material and discursive support from a strong international partner, thereby bolstering their capacity to govern and legitimizing their ruling status and controversial policies.

The liberal model of post-conflict resolution has fallen short of its architects' expectations. Cases of internationally brokered peace rose markedly in the 1990s, but has dropped quite significantly since the early 2000s, from eight cases in 2001 to one in 2010.[2] This number is particularly worrisome because it implies that parties involved in conflict are losing confidence in liberal institutions (e.g. peace treaties, international organizations). Despite these developments, international relations (IR) scholarship has not caught up with fluctuating political reality.

Peace and conflict studies tend to focus on the theorization of

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[2] Mimmi Kovacs and Isak Svensson, "The Return of Victories? The Growing Trend of Militancy in Ending Armed Conflicts" (paper prepared for the 7th General Conference of the European Consortium for Political Research, Sciences Po Bordeaux, Bordeaux, France, September 4-7, 2013), 4.

international liberal peacebuilding, which often describes the vertical intervention of international organizations like the United Nations in turbulent regions. Paris contends that "there seems to be no viable alternative to some version of liberal peacebuilding."[3] Though there is currently an academic consensus that international liberal peacebuilding is not operating effectively, there are no well-established academic frameworks that recognize authoritarian peacebuilding as a legitimate alternative.[4] Oftentimes, hard cases of illiberal peacebuilding, such as those seen in Sri Lanka or Chechnya, are understood through simplistic frameworks that consider the cases through the lens of military victories. Present-day scholarship has not yet recognized the political reality that authoritarian peacebuilding cases around the world have sustained themselves long enough to qualify as post-conflict governance.

For instance, while Sri Lanka and Chechnya may be cases of military victories, understanding these two cases solely through this lens inherently obscures the reality that violence was only one of the many tools used by authoritarian actors in post-conflict peacebuilding. One key difference between authoritarian peacebuilding and state repression is that the former embodies more soft tactics, including discursive practices such as changing politically sensitive labels, and incentive-based economic policies that pacify aggrieved populations.[5]

Recognizing the aforementioned gap in scholarship, Lewis, Heathershaw, and Megoran developed a new conceptual framework called ACM.[6] The framework not only considers the commonly-known hard authoritarian tactics of post-conflict management (e.g. torture, surveillance and mass arrests), but also emphasizes a range of soft tactics used by authoritarian actors in post-conflict management.[7] The purpose of the framework is to provide a more holistic understanding of

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[3] Roland Paris, "Saving Liberal Peacebuilding," *Review of International Studies* 36.2 (2010): 357, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210510000057.

[4] David Lewis, John Heathershaw, and Nick Megoran, "Illiberal Peace? Authoritarian Modes of Conflict Management," *Cooperation and Conflict* 53.4 (2018): 487, https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836718765902.

[5] Ibid., 493, 497.

[6] Ibid., 486-87.

[7] Ibid., 487. One point to note is that the conceptual framework was initially derived from Central Eurasia, a region where many post-Soviet states are employing authoritarian practices to manage their own inter-ethnic conflicts and dissident voices. See Catherine Owen et al., eds., *Interrogating Illiberal Peace in Eurasia* (London: Rowman and Littlefield International, 2018), 1-3.

authoritarian post-conflict governance.

The primary aim of this paper is to further contribute to this new conceptual framework by addressing the existing research gaps of ACM. This paper contends that ACM (1) fails to differentiate illiberal domestic peacebuilding from illiberal international peacebuilding, and (2) fails to consider that not all authoritarian states possess sufficient state capacity to employ the three strategies of control outlined in the ACM framework (i.e., discursive practices, spatial practices, and political economy). This paper seeks to address these shortcomings through analyzing the case of Cuban intervention in Angola, which represents a historical example of international illiberal peacebuilding, as well as a few brief contemporary cases. Through proposing two new mechanisms of international peacebuilding, this paper seeks to show how the three strategies of ACM can be deployed at both an international level and by a weak authoritarian actor with the help of a strong international partner. Building off these insights, the secondary aim of this research is to provide policy implications for liberal actors in this difficult era of democratic backsliding.

Liberal Peacebuilding and Illiberal Peacebuilding

There are two dimensions of liberal peacebuilding: domestic liberal peacebuilding and international liberal peacebuilding. In the theoretical sense, liberal peacebuilding is fundamentally anchored by liberal ideas which are clearly outlined in the charter of the United Nations—one of the world's foremost liberal international institutions. The UN Charter states that it "[reaffirms] faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women of nations large and small."[8] The founders of the UN also emphasized the importance of adhering to international law by stating that it is essential for states "to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained."[9] Furthermore, liberal peacebuilding ultimately seeks to end discord by addressing the grievances of parties in conflict and implementing market reforms considered to effectively promote economic equality.[10]

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[8] United Nations, Charter of the United Nations, Preamble, ¶1, June 26, 1945, https://www.un.org/en/charter-united-nations.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Lewis, Heathershaw, and Megoran, "Illiberal Peace? Authoritarian Modes of Conflict

The UN Charter summarizes the liberal ideals that underpin international liberal peacebuilding missions. In accordance with these principles, liberal actors often intervene in unstable regions through international institutions. However, such prescriptive vertical intervention is criticized for defying the principles of classical liberalism, as it rarely considers what solutions local populations desire. Instead, policymakers in these international institutions frequently and conveniently assume that the local populations in these regions desire international actors to impose structural reforms in their economic and political systems.[11]

These presumptions, however, are not necessarily aligned with political reality. As noted by Séverine Autesserre, sometimes local populations do not prefer foreign intervention. For example, interviews conducted by Autesserre in the DRC show that "Congolese youth activists…would prefer outsiders to leave, because international peacebuilders get in the way of local people trying to hold their government accountable."[12] Autesserre's first-hand research reflects the problematic underside of the seemingly liberal mission that characterizes many international organizations. Such strategies struggle to solve any structural problems, as the vertical gestures of international organizations in conflicted regions seldom align with real-life situations in those regions, and might engender discontent among the local population. Moreover, vertically imposing democratic elections in regions where civic education and rule of law are lacking means that these elections would likely become fertile grounds for corruption. For example, the democratically elected governments of Afghanistan and post-2001 Iraq, two countries facing chronic corruption and bad governance, have not only failed to improve people's livelihoods but may have worsened them.

Illiberal peacebuilding, on the other hand, defies many aspects of liberal peacebuilding. For instance, while actors involved in liberal peacebuilding concern themselves with the establishment of social justice and economic progress in post-conflict regions, actors in illiberal peacebuilding mostly concern themselves with an illiberal version of peace.[13] This version of peace disregards principles of social justice and the rule of law. For instance, Chinese policymakers involved in the

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Management," 498.

[11] Owen et al., *Interrogating Illiberal Peace in Eurasia*, 5-7.

[12] Séverine Autesserre, "International Peacebuilding and Local Success: Assumptions and Effectiveness," *International Studies Review* 19.1 (2017): 124.

[13] Lewis, Heathershaw, and Megoran, "Illiberal Peace? Authoritarian Modes of Conflict Management," 492.

Xinjiang re-education camps have actively disregarded issues like human rights or *habeas corpus*, but have successfully maintained order nonetheless. In establishing this type of stability, authoritarian actors practice peacebuilding through top-down coercive methods in both violent and non-violent forms, ranging from torture and surveillance to the erasure of politically sensitive symbols (e.g. the Russian government's "No Trace of War" program).[14] In short, instead of addressing the structural grievances that lead to social tensions, authoritarian actors aggressively suppress opposing parties and, in turn, prevent grievances from materializing into sustained social movements and rebellions.

The non-violent methods of authoritarian actors deserve further introduction. Johan Galtung, for instance, defines psychological violence as "violence that works on the soul… [which] would include lies, brainwashing, indoctrination of various kinds, threats, etc."[15] Almost all of these categories of "psychological violence" can be found in ACM.

One of the most recent and vivid examples of psychological violence is the imposition of the social credit system in China. Fear is essential to the social credit system: it is believed that by placing individuals under the threat of being ranked down in the system, the population will behave in accordance with the state's desires.[16] However, whether one is in compliance is unclear, due to the undisclosed criteria of the social credit system.[17] For instance, the experience of a politically active interviewee shows how it is possible for one to be banned from traveling due to trivial reasons, such as making a complaint to the railway authority.[18] The fear instilled under the social credit system falls neatly into Galtung's definition of "psychological violence," as it is essentially a "threat" that compels citizens to behave in accordance with ways that the state deems right.[19] The opaque criteria of the social credit system engenders fear among the population—one can still dodge the law if the law is written in black and white,

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[14] Ibid., 497.

[15] Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," *Journal of Peace Research* 6.3 (1969): 169.

[16] "Hēijìng rénshēng: lúnluò shīxìnrén [Life in the Black Mirror: Becoming a Discredited Person]," 黑镜人生：沦落失信人, *RTHK Channel 31*, April 30, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=srcGtNTMWvs.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Galtung, "Violence, Peace and Peace Research," 169.

but what if the law is no longer visible? Obscurity, uncertainty, and fear are the characteristics that best describe the fundamentals of the social credit system.

At the international level, the diffusion of illiberal peacebuilding is dependent upon the "growing multipolarity in the international system wrought by the decline of the West."[20] The diminishing capacity of the West to sustain liberal models around the world creates a vacuum that allows for the emergence of alternative models, including ACM. Furthermore, the emergence of illiberal peacebuilding as an increasingly popular mode of post-conflict governance coincides with the rising international influence of authoritarian powers like Russia and China. With these powers heading international organizations like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Collective Security Treaty Organization, the illiberal mode of post-conflict management could eventually become strong enough to contend against its liberal counterpart.

What is Authoritarian Conflict Management (ACM)?

ACM involves the "prevention, de-escalation or termination" of authoritarian actors' own internal turmoil, ranging from rebellion to widespread social violence.[21] Contrary to liberal peacebuilding, which often emphasizes negotiations, ACM rests on "state coercion and hierarchical structures of power."[22] While violence is central to the type of post-war order that ACM actors attempt to build, Lewis et al. recognize that violence alone is not enough for authoritarian countries to produce and sustain a long-term wartime or post-conflict order. Lewis et al. identify three strategies employed by authoritarian states in post-conflict governance: discursive practices, spatial practices, and political economy.

Discursive Practices

Though discursive practices are used by both liberal and non-liberal actors, these two camps employ and comprehend them quite differently. Liberal actors are often criticized for disregarding local situations by vertically promoting their

[20] Owen et al., *Interrogating Illiberal Peace in Eurasia*, 2. See also Andrew Hurrell, "Hegemony, Liberalism and Global Order: What Space for Would-Be Great Powers?" *International Affairs* 82.1 (2006): 1-19.
[21] Lewis, Heathershaw, and Megoran, "Illiberal Peace? Authoritarian Modes of Conflict Management," 491.
[22] Ibid.

hegemonic discourse on the meanings of peace and conflict.[23] Autesserre, for example, argues that when liberal actors conduct reconciliations in conflict-prone areas, they "misidentified parties in conflict and consequently organized reconciliation workshops between friends, and they used traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms in a way that made no sense in the given situation."[24]

Authoritarian actors, by contrast, consider such liberal practices dangerous because they view rebels and opponents as opportunists who might use the window of negotiation to mobilize internal and external support. For instance, in the Sri Lankan Civil War, the government displayed a reluctant willingness to initiate genuine peace talks with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and quickly moved to isolate the LTTE.[25] Authoritarian actors are more inclined to promote their own hegemonic discourse in order to constrain dissenting voices and delegitimize political dissidents.[26] These discursive practices, as laid out by Lewis et al., can be deconstructed into a range of measures.

One of the initial measures involves the absolute control of information dissemination through state repression. Although traditional modes of censorship (e.g. state control of newspapers and publications) have become increasingly difficult to enforce due to technological advancement, states still possess the power to seal off certain areas, restricting the access of journalists and researchers.[27] Accordingly, given limited access to first-hand information, interested parties often have to rely solely on states for information, allowing states to control the interpretation of the news. This strategy was seen in Myanmar in 2016, when the military forbade aid workers, researchers, and journalists from entering most of Maungdaw, a destabilized region with many reports of rape, torture, and murder.[28] State repression can further escalate into physical violence when

[23] Ibid., 9-11.

[24] Séverine Autesserre, *Peaceland: Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 155.

[25] David Lewis, "A Successful Model of Counterinsurgency? The Sri Lankan Government's War Against the LTTE," in *The Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counter Insurgency*, Paul Rich and Isabelle Duyvesteyn, eds. (London: Routledge, 2011), 315-16.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Lewis, Heathershaw, and Megoran, "Illiberal Peace? Authoritarian Modes of Conflict Management," 493-94.

[28] "A Peace Prize, but No Peace: Aung San Suu Kyi Fails to Calm Myanmar's Ethnic Violence," *The Economist*, December 24, 2016, https://www.economist.com/asia/2016/12/24/aung-san-suu-kyi-fails-to-calm-myanmars-ethnic-violence.

governments feel threatened by the spread of potentially damaging information. In Sri Lanka, for instance, nineteen journalists were murdered between 1999 and 2009.[29]

Along with the use of state violence to control the diffusion of information, authoritarian actors also seek to control and redefine the terms of both international and domestic discourse. A modern example—China's "re-education camps" in Xinjiang—illustrates these tactics. Initially, the Chinese government denied the existence of the camps, but as the issue garnered increasing international attention, Beijing sought to control the discourse by admitting the facilities' existence. Beijing labeled the facilities "re-education camps" that were established to de-extremize the Uighur population.[30] Beijing also allowed foreign news outlets, such as the BBC and Hong Kong's RTHK, to conduct interviews in selected re-education camps, where journalists were presented with a tailored version of the system.[31] However, with journalists remaining critical, these measures were unable to wholly convince the international community of Beijing's innocence. Nonetheless, Beijing's attempts to control the interpretation of the event changed the terms of discourse, balancing against the overwhelming criticism of its policy in Xinjiang. The tactic of influencing interpretation is not contained to authoritarian states, but can also be observed in more democratic states, where leaders attempt to delegitimize certain political segments. During the most recent controversy over the extradition bill in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong government initially labeled the protesters as rioters in an attempt to delegitimize the protests and justify police actions.[32]

Finally, by influencing the interpretation of events, authoritarian states usually desire to impose a "hegemonic discourse" in society.[33] In these cases, their

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[29] "19 Journalists Killed in Sri Lanka," *Committee to Protect Journalists*, https://cpj.org/data/killed/asia/sri-lanka/?status=Killed&motiveConfirmed%5B%5D=Confirmed&type%5B%5D=Journalist&cc_fips%5B%5D=CE&start_year=1992&end_year=2019&group_by=location.

[30] John Sudworth, "China's Hidden Camps," *BBC News*, October 24, 2018, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/China_hidden_camps

[31] Ibid.; "Uighur Children in Xinjiang," *Newswrap*, produced by RTHK *Podcast One*, podcast, 6:22, July 5, 2019, https://podcasts.rthk.hk/podcast/item.php?pid=876&eid=139981&lang=en-US.

[32] Tony Cheung, Victor Ting, and Jeffie Lam, "Hong Kong Police Chief Stephen Lo Steps Back From Riot Label as Carrie Lam Keeps Low Profile," *South China Morning Post*, June 18, 2019, https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3014932/hong-kong-police-chief-stephen-lo-steps-back-riot-label.

[33] Lewis, Heathershaw, and Megoran, "Illiberal Peace? Authoritarian Modes of Conflict Management," 494-95.

citizens are presumably convinced by the official narrative. Normally, authoritarian states hope to employ the already installed hegemonic discourse to legitimize their actions. In Sri Lanka, for example, David Rampton argues that the government's "discourses and apparatuses of nationalism have become articulated into an enduring social formation where they have attained a hegemonic depth beyond mere elite instrumentality."[34] The key point of Rampton's argument is the "hegemonic depth" that Sinhala nationalism has attained, which refers to "the extent and depth to which such discourses become hegemonic and generative of the social and political representations that they seek to effect."[35] Very often, discursive control is viewed merely as an instrument of government; however, if sustained, it can eventually be incorporated into the common sense of common people.

Spatial Practices

Beginning in the late 1960s, Henry Lefebvre's spatial theory created a new framework for social sciences research.[36] During the last five decades, academics—including those in peace and conflict studies—have begun to attribute more importance to spatial practices. This spatial framework has informed many theoretical models within international relations, including ACM. Space matters to both liberal and non-liberal actors, though they often comprehend it in different ways. For liberal actors engaged in liberal peacebuilding, space is often seen as a public arena where actors with conflicting interests are brought together to settle disputes. Accordingly, space should not be controlled in favor of certain parties—rather, it should be arranged in a way that allows for free deliberation. Although often considered relatively unattainable, liberal conceptions of space allow for transparent negotiations and reconciliation.[37]

ACM, in contrast, considers space as a contested resource. Authoritarian states consider opposing actors to be opportunists that exploit space to recruit,

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[34] David Rampton, "'Deeper Hegemony': The Politics of Sinhala Nationalist Authenticity and the Failures of Power-Sharing in Sri Lanka," *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 49.2 (2011): 268.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Lukasz Stanek, *Henri Lefebvre on Space: Architecture, Urban Research, and the Production of Theory* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), vii-viii.

[37] Lewis, Heathershaw, and Megoran, "Illiberal Peace? Authoritarian Modes of Conflict Management," 495.

organize, and produce "counter-productive" discourse.[38] As such, authoritarian actors generally "seek to penetrate, close or dominate space through military patrols, encampment and occupation…and also through major infrastructure projects and urban reconstruction."[39] For example, in Xinjiang, Uighurs have been subjected to a series of coercive measures by the Chinese government. Checkpoints have been set up to exclusively search Uighur travelers and check their IDs, and "home visits" that aim to uncover religious material and practices are spontaneously carried out by police in Uighur homes.[40]

Authoritarian states recognize that common sense is constructed and manipulated within public spaces. As such, the transformation of public symbols, such as architecture and street names, is key to the spatial practices of authoritarian regimes.[41] In the post-conflict region of Osh, the Kyrgyzstani government strove to remove signs of conflict to eventually achieve manufactured cohesion.[42] In an attempt to build national identity, Kyrgyz authorities "[constructed] statues to ethnic Kyrgyz national heroes," albeit unsuccessfully.[43] Beijing's policy in Xinjiang replicates similar spatial practices. Along with installing loudspeakers that play pro-Communist Party narratives in the streets of Xinjiang's major cities, the provincial government also ordered signs written in Arabic to be removed in order to visually and semantically standardize cities across the country.[44] Although the effectiveness of authoritarian spatial practices have yet to be conclusively evaluated, it is clear that authoritarian regimes are manipulating and exploiting the vital resource of space.

Political Economy

In the context of ACM, political economy refers to "economic interventions

[38] Ibid., 493, 495.
[39] Ibid., 495.
[40] Adam Jones, "China's Approach to Countering Religious Extremism Among Uyghurs in Xinjiang," in *Interrogating Illiberal Peace in Eurasia*, eds. Catherine Owen, Shairbek Juraev, David Lewis, Nick Megoran, and John Heathershaw (London: Rowman, and Littlefield, 2018), 60.
[41] Stanek, *Henri Lefebvre on Space,* 118.
[42] Lewis, Heathershaw, and Megoran, "Illiberal Peace? Authoritarian Modes of Conflict Management," 497.
[43] Ibid.
[44] "Màibó zhōngwén tèjí: Yīsīlánjiào 'zhōngguóhuà' jìhuà [RTHK Pulse Chinese-Language Special: The Sinization of Islam]," 脉搏中文特辑：伊斯兰教「中国化」计划, *RTHK*, July 11, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wigyJmXJ9B8.

[that] are conducted with the aim of political stabilization, with overall economic growth an important, but secondary, concern."[45] ACM's political economy seeks to attain two goals: first, the denial of "[rebels'] access to economic and financial resources," and second, the assurance that "loyal clientelist groups are the main beneficiaries of financial flows."[46] With loyal patrons controlling vital resources at the local levels, ACM argues that rebel groups would find it more difficult to organize.[47] Present-day Xinjiang reflects this hypothesis. Ever since Beijing launched the Belt and Road Initiative, Xinjiang has become China's new economic front. However, despite this trend of economic growth, the "economic benefits of resource extraction and development are often disproportionately enjoyed by Han Chinese, and Uighur people are increasingly marginalized."[48] In a report by the Human Rights Watch, investigators remarked that Beijing is diminishing Uighur economic significance in the region by moving Han Chinese—who now account for 36 percent of Xinjiang's population—into the region.[49] Throughout history, aggrieved populations have used their economic significance to impact political changes. With local economic opportunities being taken up by Han Chinese, it is logical to contend that the Uighur population lacks the necessary economic resources to impact regional governance. However, by taking away the economic power of the Uighur population, Beijing has essentially erased their ability to mobilize politically. With the disappearance of lucrative economic opportunities in conjunction with the implementation of increasingly severe coercive measures, the Uighur population in Xinjiang lacks all the necessary conditions to resist.

One key difference between ACM's economic practices and liberal states' use of resources for political ends is that authoritarian actors often possess far more control over economic resources, thereby granting increased political

[45] Lewis, Heathershaw, and Megoran, "Illiberal Peace? Authoritarian Modes of Conflict Management," 498.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Lindsay Maizland, "China's Repression of Uighurs in Xinjiang," *Council on Foreign Relations*, October 9, 2019, https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-repression-uighurs-xinjiang.
[49] "Eradicating Ideological Viruses: China's Campaign of Repression Against Xinjiang's Muslims," *Human Rights Watch*, 2018, https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/09/09/eradicating-ideological-viruses/chinas-campaign-repression-against-xinjiangs.

influence over their own population. For instance, in Western states that endorse a *laissez-faire* economic policy, small states coexist with proprietors and corporations, which control most of the economic means and resources. In times of economic crisis, "small" states may even have to seek help from private corporations. By contrast, authoritarian states often possess a wide array of economic means and resources that serve as powerful tools to attain political ends. For example, in China, technological improvements are spurring a move towards cashless payments. As a result, the power of electronic payment platforms, such Alipay, is increasing—currently, 40% of the population utilizes cashless payment services to conduct financial transactions.[50] While these tools increase convenience, they also serve as a platform for government surveillance, enhancing the state's capacity to monitor and intervene in the lives of ordinary Chinese citizens. Recently, the Central Bank tightened its grip on Alipay by taking over the platform's financial deposits.[51] Though this move might appear to be a purely regulatory action, it signifies that the government is aware of the formidable political power of such a widely used financial tool.

More recently, Sesame Credit's Social Credit System has been incorporated into the Alipay system.[52] The Alibaba-owned Sesame Credit System even has access to Alipay's database, meaning that the social credit system can access records of citizens' spending habits.[53] The connection between the widely-used Alipay and the social credit system sheds light on the monitoring capacity of the Chinese state. There is still a lack of empirical evidence on how information obtained through the Alipay system is used by the Chinese state, so one can only speculate as to how such information will be employed. For example, the question of whether the state will leverage one's consumption habits deserves further scholarly investigation.

The Chinese state's ability to penetrate into its citizens' lives can also be observed through punishments imposed by the state on ordinary citizens. Citizens with unsatisfactory social scores are placed in the "List of Untrustworthy Persons"

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[50] Lerong Lu, "Decoding Alipay: Mobile Payments, a Cashless Society and Regulatory Challenges," *Butterworths Journal of International Banking and Financial Law* 33.1 (2018): 40, https://ssrn.com/abstract=3103751.

[51] Christopher Balding, "China is Strangling Its Private Champions," *Bloomberg Opinion*, March 10, 2019, https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2019-03-10/pboc-s-move-to-control-alipay-wechat-pay-deposits-is-power-grab.

[52] Charlie Campbell, "How China Is Using 'Social Credit Scores' to Reward and Punish Its Citizens," *Time*, https://time.com/collection/davos-2019/5502592/china-social-credit-score/.

[53] Ibid.

and will be prohibited from buying high-end consumer products like high-speed railway tickets; currently there are around 17 million people who the policy bans from traveling on flights.[54]

Existing Gaps in the ACM Conceptual Framework

Since ACM is still a nascent conceptual framework, there are many gaps, ranging from theoretical to operational, that remain unaddressed by the academic community. Addressing these oversights is important, because ACM was initially designed to help academics and policymakers better understand illiberal peacemaking. Though Lewis et al. proclaimed that the conceptual framework adopts no political stance or normative judgment on either liberal peace or illiberal peace, ACM, nonetheless, will generally be used by actors in the liberal world to understand the illiberal world. This paper hopes that the following critiques will allow academics and policymakers who consult the ACM conceptual framework to have a clearer sense of how illiberal peacebuilding is conducted at the international level.

Conceptual Clarity

Though Lewis et al.'s ACM framework has clearly described how authoritarian regimes manage their own domestic conflicts, the conceptual clarity of the framework remains hazy. This issue deserves further scholarly attention, as ACM does not discuss the dimension of international illiberal peacebuilding.

Lewis et al. initially began their examination of international illiberal peacebuilding by recognizing that the latter has become a legitimate post-conflict mode of governance. The purpose of doing so is to put forward the argument that liberal peacebuilding norms at the international level (e.g. intervention through international institutions, adherence to principles of human rights, and the rule of law) are constantly being challenged by illiberal ones.

Following this logic, Lewis et al. should have utilized examples to explain how international illiberal peacebuilding is becoming a serious alternative to international liberal peacebuilding. For instance, in what ways are authoritarian states cooperating among themselves to create international institutions that allow them to settle either international or domestic disputes with illiberal

[54] Ibid.

practices? Though some cases of cooperation between authoritarian states (e.g. between Russia and Uzbekistan) are analyzed in individual papers, the practices of international illiberal peacebuilding are never fully theorized into the framework.

Lewis et al. have overlooked this aspect of the conceptual framework, as the examples that they have used to illustrate ACM are predominantly domestic (e.g. individual Central Asian states, Russia in Chechnya, China in Xinjiang, Rwanda). This approach necessarily undermines the conceptual sophistication of ACM, as one cannot compare international liberal examples with illiberal domestic examples. If Lewis et al. are examining illiberal domestic examples, then they should have employed domestic examples such as Israel or the American Civil Rights Movement. But, now that they are trying to contribute knowledge to the understanding of international peacebuilding on both sides of the spectrum, it is imperative for them to introduce examples of international illiberal peacebuilding into their conceptual framework. With the current dearth of international illiberal examples, it is hardly possible for academics and policymakers who use ACM to derive any meaningful understanding of how illiberal norms are challenging liberal ones in the international order.

Individual states such as Kyrgyzstan are using illiberal tactics to manage their own conflicts, which raises questions about how such practices affect the diffusion of liberal peacebuilding ideas at the international level. Are authoritarian states resisting international liberal peacebuilding norms as a collective entity? What are the mechanisms for diffusion of illiberal peacebuilding norms at the international level? Furthermore, what if authoritarian states do not possess adequate state capacity to carry out the three practices outlined in ACM? Can weak state capacity be resolved through material and discursive support from a strong international partner?

By performing a case study of Cuban intervention in Angola in the 1970s, this paper aims to further contribute to the ACM framework by constructing mechanisms of international illiberal peacebuilding. This essentially covers how the three strategies in Lewis et al.'s paper, namely discursive practice, spatial practice, and political economy, operate within an international context. To be concrete, the first mechanism proposed in this paper demonstrates how international peacebuilding can be conducted at the international level; the second mechanism, in turn, illustrates how the issue of weak state capacity can be remedied through international illiberal peacebuilding.

Lack of State Capacity

Though Lewis et al.'s thesis on ACM is quite compelling at first glance, the framework lacks the capacity to consider that not all authoritarian states possess sufficient state capacity to carry out the three practices outlined in ACM.

The three practices outlined in ACM focus predominantly on the vertical and hierarchical imposition of state violence over a given territory; spatial practices pertain to how a state manipulates citizens and space within its own territory, while discursive practices, refer to how states manipulate discourse within their own borders. While ACM successfully illustrates how authoritarian states manage their internal conflicts through the aforementioned three practices, it fails to consider that authoritarian states do not always possess the state capacity to project sufficient influence over some or all of their territories. Kyrgyzstan, for example, is more or less able to keep its capital, Bishkek, and surrounding areas under control. However, Kyrzyk policies in response to violence in the southern province of Jalal-Abad in June 2010 showed that Bishkek is not able to sufficiently extend its influence outside of its immediate region, as Bishkek was not able to protect its Uzbek citizens from inter-ethnic violence.[55] Although Bishkek did reach out to Moscow through the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CTSO) to ask for assistance, Bishkek's request was turned down by the CSTO on the grounds that there were "restrictions in the mandate of the organization."[56]

Although the inter-ethnic conflict was eventually contained by the Kyrgyz security apparatus, Bishkek still has a hard time projecting hegemonic control over the southern part of the country. However, Khamidov et al.'s paper on bottom-up peacebuilding in the town of Aravan in June 2010 revealed that local peacebuilding efforts initiated by local Kyrgz elites substantially assisted the weak central government.[57] Though Megoran and Heathershaw are among the coauthors, they have not theorized bottom-up peacebuilding efforts into the ACM conceptual framework. The effects of a central government's inability to project extensive influence remain overlooked and unresolved.

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[55] Alisher Khamidov, Nick Megoran, and John Heathershaw, "Bottom-up Peacebuilding in Southern Kyrgyzstan: How Local Actors Managed to Prevent the Spread of Violence From Osh/Jalal-Abad to Aravan, June 2010," *Nationalities Papers* 45.6 (2017): 1118-1119.

[56] Ibid., 1119.

[57] Ibid., 1120.

Hence, this research paper aims to fill this gap by considering a case of international illiberal peacebuilding. Through a case study of Cuban intervention in Angola, this research paper aims to show that relatively weak authoritarian states can still project sufficient state influence within their territories if they are aided by a strong authoritarian partner at the international level.

Methodology

In the context of this paper, Cuban intervention in Angola has been picked from a wide range of historical examples because the case reflects how authoritarian states cooperate to create and sustain illiberal peace. A historical case is preferable to a present-day case due to the availability of primary and secondary sources. Though current examples of illiberal peacebuilding include policies in present-day Xinjiang, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, political sensitivity has made primary sources inaccessible to many. Historical cases like the Cuban intervention, by contrast, are backed by rich archival resources, as time has diminished the political sensitivity of relevant policies.

Cuban Intervention in the Angolan Civil War

Why Cuba in Angola?

Cuban intervention in Angola is an international example that can be used to illustrate how illiberal peacebuilding is carried out at the international level. Not only were Cuba and Angola authoritarian states in the 1970s, but the way that Cuba assisted Angola's MPLA to fight against the US-backed UNITA and FNLA for political dominance in Angola matches the discursive, economic, and spatial practices outlined by Lewis et al. In the following sections, this paper first introduces the historical context of Cuban intervention in Angola. Then, it moves on by formulating the mechanism of international illiberal peacebuilding. While one of the aims of this paper is to illustrate how ACM's three practices are carried out at the international level, this paper does not divide the following sections into those three categories. Rather, this paper seeks to incorporate the mechanisms into the process of international illiberal peacebuilding that this paper proposes.

Cuban Intervention in the Angolan Civil War, 1975-1991

The relationship between Cuba and the MPLA is rooted in the late 1950s and 1960s. One notable event is Che Guevara's meeting with MPLA's Agostinho Neto in January 1965 in Brazzaville, during which Guevara and Neto came to

an agreement that would offer substantial help to the MPLA in the form of military instructors and a "large military mission for Brazzaville."[58] Prior to the Portuguese Carnation Revolution in 1974, the Soviets only provided "lukewarm support to Angola's liberation movements" and Soviet support to the MPLA was, at best, tenuous, given the "embarrassing collapse of several prominent African allies" in the 1960s.[59]

The 1974 Carnation Revolution in Portugal caught the world and its African colonies by surprise, and altered Portugal's policy on its colonies.[60] Prior to 1974, counterinsurgency operations within the Portugese colonies of Angola and Mozambique "had taken a severe toll on the Portuguese population."[61] By 1973, Portugal had five times the troops in Angola that America had in Vietnam, totaling around 150,000 men. Such devoted engagement had "the Portuguese armed forces…stretched to the limit," especially with the high number of casualties—more than 35,000 by 1974.[62]

Determined to improve the internal economic conditions of Portugal, the newly-installed government sped up the decolonization process in Africa. Mozambique was granted independence in 1975 after a series of negotiations, and Angola also gained its independence with the signing of the 1975 Alvor Agreement. The pact was affirmed by Portugal and the three major Angolan independence movements: the MPLA, UNITA, and FNLA. According to the agreement, a transitional government consisting of these three independence organizations was established to oversee the transitional process.[63] The Alvor agreement, however, failed to establish peace in Angola and instead, pushed it into a decades-long civil war.[64] Portugal's sudden exit from Africa also "[opened] the door to foreign intervention," making the situation even more chaotic.[65]

In July 1975, around six months after the signing of the Alvor agreement,

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[58] Edward George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola, 1965-1991: From Che Guevara to Cuito Cuanavale* (London and New York: Frank Cass, 2005), 22-23.
[59] Ibid., 11-12, 22-23.
[60] Ibid., 50-53.
[61] Ibid., 49.
[62] Ibid., 50.
[63] United Nations. "Text of the Alvor Agreement Between the FLNA, MPLA, and UNITA." *Decolonization* 2.4 (1975): 17-32.
[64] George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 49.
[65] Ibid.

the MPLA militarily expelled the FNLA from the capital, Luanda, to the coastal municipality of Ambriz.[66] This marked the escalation from armed conflict to full-fledged civil war. Fearing that the war would affect its various investments in Angola, South Africa decided to stage a military intervention. In response to the increasing level of international involvement in Angola, Havana also decided to escalate matériel support to the MPLA. According to a declassified CIA memorandum, though the number of Cuban military personnel in Angola prior to 1975 was limited to only a few hundred, the troop count rose significantly after 1975, and "remained fairly constant at an estimated level of 10,000 to 14,500" between September 1976 and May 1977.[67]

The Angolan Civil War is often viewed as a proxy battlefield between the United States and the Soviet Union, with other players, such as South Africa and Cuba, serving as pawns of the two superpowers.[68] Such a binary representation, however, is far from what actually took place in Angola. In fact, the Soviet Union was reluctant to involve itself in the civil war because Angola—strategically speaking—did not deserve significant attention or resources. As noted by George, prior to the Carnation Revolution in 1974, the Soviets initially provided only "lukewarm support to Angola's liberation movements."[69]

The Soviets only began to offer increasing levels of support to the MPLA in the 1970s for two reasons. The first was the exit of Portugal from Africa that "[revived] Soviet interest in the region."[70] The second was that Cuba's demonstrated commitment in Angola pushed the Kremlin to be more involved in Angola, as the Kremlin could not abandon Cuba and the MPLA—doing so would undermine the demonstrated solidarity of the Eastern Bloc. However, in the context of Angola, rather than functioning as a puppet of the USSR, Havana made its own decision to intervene in Angola. This is reflected in Guevara's 1965 visit to Brazzaville where

[66] Ibid., 59-60.

[67] Memorandum on Cuban Involvement in Angola from the Acting NIO for Latin America, Central Intelligence Agency, to Zbigniew Brzezinski, National Security Advisor to President Carter, CIA-RDP79R00603A002700040001-1 (June 23, 1977) (on file with the Central Intelligence Agency), 1.

[68] As noted by Gerald Bender during the Angolan Civil War, Henry Kissinger and some U.S. officials saw the Cuban troops as playing the part of surrogates in the war. See Gerald Bender, "Kissinger in Angola: Anatomy of Failure," in *American Policy in Southern Africa: The Stakes and the Stance*, ed. Rene Lemarchand (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1978): 95.

[69] George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola,* 11.

[70] Ibid.

he met the MPLA leadership, as given Guevara's negative views of the USSR, it makes little sense to consider him as a proxy of the Soviets.[71] It would be incorrect to apply simplistic Cold War bipolarity to the Angolan Civil War, as doing so significantly understates the autonomy of actors like Havana and the MPLA. As such, based on this historical reality, this paper considers Cuba a highly autonomous actor and infers mechanisms of international illiberal peacebuilding from the tactics employed by Havana.

Given that this is a political science paper that aims to infer theories from a historical case, this paper will not structure events chronologically. Rather, events will be arranged to help illustrate the proposed mechanisms of international illiberal peacebuilding. Within each respective section, after inferring mechanisms, this paper tests these mechanisms by examining how they are still relevant to the present-day tactics of authoritarian actors.

Mechanisms of International Illiberal Peacebuilding

As mentioned previously, the primary concern of this paper is to address ACM's failure to (1) differentiate international and domestic illiberal peacebuilding and (2) consider certain authoritarian actors' lack of state capacity. As such, this paper proposes two mechanisms to address these shortcomings. The first mechanism will show how material support from a strong international partner can help an authoritarian regime gain the necessary capacity to carry out the three strategies of ACM, while the second mechanism will demonstrate how discursive support from an established international partner can help a regime improve its legitimacy either at home or abroad. The illustration of these two mechanisms will begin with a probe into the case of Cuban intervention in Angola, before moving on to a few contemporary cases of international illiberal peacebuilding.

Proposed Mechanism 1: Maintaining Domestic Peace with Material Support From a Strong International Partner(s)

One of the major weaknesses of the current ACM framework is its failure to consider the implications of weak authoritarian actors which do not possess sufficient state capacity to exert control within their territory. The current version

[71] Ibid., 19.

of ACM naturally assumes that all authoritarian actors possess sufficient capacity to carry out discursive, spatial, and economic practices to maintain domestic peace. This fails to account for scenarios in which the authoritarian actors are simply too weak. Usually when an authoritarian state is too weak, it tends to seek support from international partners that share similar ideologies and values. For instance, in the 2010 South Kyrgyzstan ethnic clashes, the Kyrgyz government sought help from Russia through the CSTO.

In a similar vein, Cuban intervention in Angola provides insights into the role played by a strong authoritarian partner in illiberal peacebuilding. Cuba's material support to the MPLA was multifaceted, ranging from financial to military. Charting financial transactions in Angola is difficult; Havana did not directly support the MPLA with capital, as Angola's oil exports provided sufficient funds to the MPLA.[72] Thus, Cuba decided instead to provide the MPLA with free humanitarian aid until 1977, when Havana decided to charge the MPLA $20 million per year for the aid provided. The humanitarian aid, according to a declassified CIA memo, included the deployment of advisers such as "agricultural and livestock technicians, medical personnel, advisers to help restore sugar and coffee production… and teams of construction personnel to assist in the construction of public buildings, roads, [and] airfields."[73] The purpose of such aid was to "fill at least part of the vacuum created by the departure of the managerial, supervisory, and technical personnel of the colonial era."[74]

The charge was waived again in 1984, when Havana agreed to continue providing free humanitarian aid to the MPLA after the Angolan economy imploded in the early 1980s.[75] In this particular case, though Havana did not provide any direct financial support to the MPLA, it did at least alleviate some of the MPLA's financial responsibilities. The aid provided for public services (e.g. medical service and basic food supply) within the MPLA's controlled territories, allowing it to direct more resources to fight rival powers.

Havana also provided the MPLA with more substantial military support. Cuban garrisons were stationed in major cities like Luanda, Benguela, and Lubango, while remote outposts were set up in rural areas, such as Huila, Cuando Cubango, and Moxico. Cuban civilian internationalists also assisted the military campaign

[72] George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 150.
[73] Memorandum on Cuban Involvement in Angola, 5.
[74] Ibid.
[75] George, *The Cuban Intervention in Angola*, 150.

through "medical, [educational], and technical" support.[76] The presence of Cuban soldiers in the aforementioned areas was significant, as their presence allowed the MPLA more flexibility in troop deployment.

In addition, Cuban soldiers, alongside MPLA troops, launched a few large-scale military campaigns to help the MPLA seize territories. One notable campaign was Operation Carlota. Recognizing the necessity to intervene militarily after the MPLA was overwhelmed by South African troops at Catengue, Havana launched a massive military campaign. Operation Carlota was a success. By the end of March 1976, almost all South African troops had retreated onto the South African border, while the US-supported FNLA troops retreated into the Zairian border. Alongside the retreat of South Africa, the MPLA continued to vanquish the remaining insurgent forces and by the end of 1976, had successfully secured the oil fields near Cabinda.[77] These victories created the material base for the MPLA to be recognized by the international community as the legitimate government in later years.

After the military campaigns in 1976, Cuban troops did not completely pull out from Angola; instead, the Cubans remained to assist the MPLA in maintaining post-conflict stability. Cuban garrisons were still stationed at their outposts, and civilian internationalists who assisted the larger military missions were also scattered across major cities to provide logistical support to both Cuban and MPLA personnel.[78] The presence of Cuban soldiers contributed significantly to post-conflict peace in Angola. Most road patrolling and internal security missions were handled by Cuban military personnel, allowing the MPLA more latitude in confronting the remaining hostile forces within Angola.

Contemporary Examples

By placing the historical case of Cuban intervention in Angola into a contemporary context, one can see it is not uncommon for a strong international partner to help a relatively weak authoritarian actor maintain domestic peace. Material support still plays an essential role in international illiberal peacebuilding. Nonetheless, in the past two decades, international illiberal peacebuilding has often been carried out under the cover of equal international cooperation

[76] Ibid., 158.
[77] Ibid., 117-119.
[78] Ibid., 58-60, 150.

between sovereign states. Present day non-liberal actors, unlike Cuba, are reluctant to overtly support their illiberal partners, as these actors fear potential international criticism, especially from the United States. One core reason is that in the present-day international order, the liberal camp faces almost no serious competitive paradigms. Almost all international organizations that are familiar to the public, including the United Nations, European Union, International Monetary Fund, and World Bank, are founded upon liberal ideas. For authoritarian actors, openly defying liberal norms risks attracting international criticism and undermines their international image. Beijing's use of the pretext of 're-education camps' to justify its oppression of the Uighur population is evidence of the underlying implication that liberal norms are—so far—the only legitimate set of norms in the international community.

However, this situation might change in the future if illiberal actors become stronger, and are able to diffuse illiberal peacebuilding norms through alternative international organizations. After all, the legitimacy of any international practice draws from political narratives that have gained wide recognition. So, if those illiberal norms sustain themselves long enough, and become strong enough, to develop into a popular practice, it is entirely possible for them to contest liberal ideology. One contemporary example is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), founded in 2001. Headed by China, the SCO is one of the rising international organizations that are considered "conflict management actors."[79] As of November 2019, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, and Pakistan are the member states of the SCO. Countries such as Afghanistan, Belarus, and Iran are observer states, but are not yet formal members. Notably, though Western powers have sought to develop ties with the SCO, the organization has systemically excluded them. For instance, the United States, applied for an observer status, but was rejected.[80]

Despite this, the US has still attempted to bond with regional organizations. As noted by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in September 2010, the US wished to "build a network of alliances and partnerships, regional organizations, and global institutions."[81] Earlier that year, Clinton also remarked that "the failure of

[79] Owen et al., *Interrogating Illiberal Peace in Eurasia*, 13.
[80] Dilip Hiro, "Shanghai Surprise," *The Guardian*, June 16, 2006, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2006/jun/16/shanghaisurprise.
[81] Daniel W. Drezner, "The Good, The Bad, and the BS," *Foreign Policy*, September 8, 2010, https://foreignpolicy.com/2010/09/08/the-good-the-bad-and-the-bs/.

the United States not to participate [in regional organizations] demonstrates a lack of respect and a willingness to engage."[82] In that particular speech, Clinton highlighted the importance of cooperation between the United States and various regional institutions in the Asia-Pacific region. The speech demonstrated American eagerness to reach out to Asian regional organizations, with Clinton saying that "as we've also seen new organizations, including the ASEAN Regional Forum, ASEAN+3, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, we hope that we will be able to participate actively in many of those."[83] Clinton's mention of the SCO indicated that the organization continued to play a significant role in American policy in East Asia. This behavior is unusual, as during the Cold War era, the US only agreed to cooperate with Asian nations on a bilateral basis—multilateral engagement would have been unthinkable.[84]

The SCO's unwillingness to include the US only further confirms the suspicion that the SCO is being used by major powers like China to diffuse and sustain authoritarian practices. The SCO's official statement outlines the following organizational goals:

> strengthening mutual trust and neighbourliness among the member states; promoting their effective cooperation in politics, trade, the economy, research, technology and culture, as well as in education, energy, transport, tourism, environmental protection, and other areas; making joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region; and moving towards the establishment of a democratic, fair and rational new international political and economic order.[85]

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[82] U.S. Department of State, "Remarks on Regional Architecture in Asia: Principles and Priorities" (speech given by Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State, Imin Center-Jefferson Hall, Honolulu, Hawaii, January 12, 2010), https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2010/01/135090.htm

[83] Ibid.

[84] Christopher Hemmer and Peter J. Katzenstein, "Why is There No NATO in Asia? Collective Identity, Regionalism, and the Origins of Multilateralism," *International Organization* 56.3 (2002): 575-76.

[85] "About SCO," Shanghai Cooperation Organization, January 9, 2017, http://eng.sectsco.org/about_sco/.

Within the mission statement, there are two key goals that allude to the SCO's intentions, the first being the maintenance of "peace, security, and stability," and the second being the establishment of "a democratic, fair and rational new international political and economic order."[86] The adjective "new" is of particular interest, as it pertains to the SCO's desire to create an alternative to the existing American-centered liberal order. This paper argues that these two elements are mutually reinforcing—while member states are promoting their own definitions of peace, security, and stability, they are also installing and sustaining a new world order that can be roughly understood as illiberal. Although this paper does not seek to examine the definitions and normative judgments around peace, security, and stability, it is still evident that actors involved in illiberal peacebuilding merely seek to achieve the absence of violence rather than imposing liberal principles.

In order to achieve peace, security and stability, the SCO vows to fight "terrorism, separatism and extremism."[87] Unlike in the liberal world, where there are strict legal definitions for these terms, here, they are used interchangeably to satisfy the political ends of authoritarian regimes. These include governments' use of discursive power to delegitimize political dissidents. The Chinese government, for instance, has labeled political dissidents as separatists who intend to destabilize the country, and it is not uncommon for dissidents to be charged with "inciting subversion of state power."[88] In the name of combating extremism, Beijing has also been gradually erasing the public symbols that remind the Uighur population of their cultural heritage.[89] Within Xinjiang Province, the national government has also endeavored to disseminate the CCP's values through mass lectures that are based on three themes: "[1] the dangers from the three evil forces…[2 the] five kinds of identification that Uighur citizens are supposed to cultivate...[and 3] increased awareness of and gratitude for the CCP's *huìmín* policy."[90]

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[86] Ibid.

[87] "Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism," in *International Instruments Related to the Prevention and Suppression of International Terrorism* (New York: United Nations Publications, 2008), 232.

[88] "Human Rights in China Submission to the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders," *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner*, June 15, 2012, https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Defenders/Answers/NGOs/Asia/China_HRIC.pdf, 4.

[89] "Màibó zhōngwén tèjí: Yīsīlánjiào 'zhōngguóhuà' jìhuà [RTHK Pulse Chinese-Language Special: The Sinization of Islam]," 脉搏中文特辑：伊斯兰教「中国化」计划, *RTHK*, July 11, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wigyJmXJ9B8.

[90] Adam Jones, "China's Approach to Countering Religious Extremism," in Owen et al.,

In an international context, it is evident that Beijing is attempting to diffuse authoritarian methods of managing conflicts at the international level through the SCO. Located in Beijing, the Secretariat of the SCO functions both as an executive body that oversees the daily operations of the organization and as a platform for information exchange and dissemination.[91] The Secretariat is a means of communication between the high-level decision-making bodies of its member states, a mechanism that provides member states with a foundation for further cooperation. The SCO has held several "Peace Missions"(which are essentially military exercises) between 2005 and 2016, during which member states demonstrate their commitment to carrying out peacebuilding missions.[92] Though strong powers like China and Russia have yet to militarily assist weaker states in managing domestic peace, in the future, the SCO may increasingly begin to serve as a vehicle for peacebuilding military intervention.

Strong states can also provide informational support to weaker authoritarian partners. As noted by Stein Ringen, information is critical to a state's ruling tactics. For instance, the Chinese state is experienced in alternately curtailing and disseminating censored information, especially through state organs like the Chinese State Internet Information Office.[93] However, Beijing also uses private corporations and organizations to accomplish its ends. For example, Huawei—one of China's largest telecommunications firms—has helped Ugandan and Zambian ruling parties intercept encrypted correspondence and track the movements of political opponents.[94] On a broader scale, Huawei has helped fourteen African national governments establish surveillance systems, and

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Interrogating Illiberal Peace in Eurasia, 65.

[91] "General Information About the SCO Secretariat," *Shanghai Cooperation Organization*, January 10, 2017, http://eng.sectsco.org/secretariat/.

[92] "SCO to Hold Joint Anti-Terrorism Exercise in 2019," *Xinhua Online*, March 3, 2019, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-03/16/c_137900065.htm; "Flexibility by Design: The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the Future of Eurasian Cooperation," *Center for Security Studies*, Zurich, 2018, 12.

[93] Stein Ringen, *The Perfect Dictatorship: China in the 21st Century* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2016), 108, 112.

[94] Joe Parkinson, Nicholas Bariyo, and Josh Chin, "Huawei Technicians Helped African Governments Spy on Political Opponents," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 15, 2019, https://www.wsj.com/articles/huawei-technicians-helped-african-governments-spy-on-political-opponents-11565793017.

with Huawei's rapid expansion in Africa, this number is likely to grow.[95] This case is not an isolated one, and it is quite common for strong states that have sophisticated information capacity to share intelligence with their authoritarian partners through various means. Russia, for instance, has mechanisms of "surveillance, detention, interrogation, and forced returns" that have assisted Uzbekistan in suppressing its political dissidents.[96]

In conclusion, one mechanism of international illiberal peacebuilding is strong authoritarian states offering help to relatively weak authoritarian states. This proposed mechanism has tentatively addressed one of ACM's weaknesses, and this paper hopes that this proposed new mechanism can open new directions for scholarly research in the future.

Proposed Mechanism 2: Maintaining Domestic Peace with Discursive Support from Strong Authoritarian Partners

Legitimizing discursive support from a strong international partner, though not as visible as material support, is just as vital. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, countries that have not endorsed the liberal norms of governance have been criticized or condemned by the international community (e.g., the EU and UN). In effect, the international community has adopted a hegemonic liberal discourse. Within this international order, it is difficult for actors who refuse to endorse the liberal agenda of the West to be accepted by the international community. China, for instance, was refused membership in the World Trade Organization until 2001, as its economic policies conflicted with liberal economic principles. If even a major power like China faces resistance when it comes to being accepted by the Western-led international community, one can only imagine the hardship experienced by peripheral actors who do not fully endorse the liberal way of governance.

However, peripheral actors are not permanently relegated to the fringes of the international community. By examining the case of Cuban intervention in Angola, we can identify how strong actors provide discursive support to weaker authoritarian allies, thereby helping that ally gain stature in the international community. By late 1976, the MPLA had become the *de facto* government of

[95] Ibid.
[96] David Lewis, "'Illiberal Spaces:' Uzbekistan's Extraterritorial Security Practices and the Spatial Politics of Contemporary Authoritarianism," *Nationalities Papers* 43.1 (2015): 140-41.

Angola, and the final step for it to become the legitimate government was formal recognition from the international community. Accordingly, the MPLA sought recognition from both the Organization of African Unity and admission into the UN General Assembly. However, these two processes could not have been accomplished without significant diplomatic and discursive support from Cuba. For example, the MPLA faced little resistance in securing approval from the OAU, most likely due to Cuba's positive relationships with OAU states. Ever since the establishment of the OAU, Cuba had shown a considerable level of respect for the organization, and such respect was reflected through Cuba's declared support for African unity and "[Africa's] anti-colonial, anti-imperialist and anti- apartheid struggles."[97] Given Cuba's amicable relationship with the OAU, it is logical to deduce that the MPLA benefited from such connections. By February 1976, the OAU had recognized the MPLA as the legitimate government of Angola.[98]

At the international level, the MPLA managed to circumvent US diplomatic isolation by deploying diplomatic missions to Jamaica, Venezuela, Guyana, and Panama.[99] Playing off of Castro's popularity throughout South America, the MPLA quickly gained international recognition. In December 1976, Angola was admitted as the 146th member of UN General Assembly despite US abstention. Eventually, in 1994, the US formally established diplomatic relations with Angola by deploying Ambassador Edmund T. De Jarnette.[100] The case of Cuban intervention in Angola shows the importance of discursive support from a strong international ally. In a broader sense, the legitimacy of an international action depends upon the actor's ability to secure recognition and approval from an established international power.

The lessons from Angola's entrance into the international community can be applied to Hong Kong today. Recent political turmoil concerning Hong Kong's extradition bill illustrates how discursive support from strong states and

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[97] Analúcia Danilevicz Pereira, "Cuba's Foreign Policy Towards Africa: Idealism or Pragmatism," *Brazilian Journal of African Studies* 1.2 (2016): 113.

[98] Eugene Keefe, *Area Handbook for Portugal,* 1st ed. (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), 275.

[99] *Angola Country Study Guide: Strategic Information and Development*, vol 1. (Washington DC: International Business Publication, 2013): 80.

[100] "A Guide to the United States' History of Recognition, Diplomatic, and Consular Relations, by Country Since 1776: Angola," *United States Department of State*, https://history.state.gov/countries/angola.

international organizations legitimize extradition practices. Currently, extradition practices on the international stage are predominantly regulated by international law. According to Jeremy Bentham's classical definition, international law refers to "a collection of rules governing relations between states."[101] However, as pointed out by Malcolm Shaw, international law should be viewed as "a rapidly developing complex of rules and influential—though not directly binding—principles, practices, and assertions coupled with increasingly sophisticated structures and processes."[102]

Concerning extradition practices between different jurisdictions, present-day international law places a strong emphasis on protecting human rights, minimizing the possibility of cruel torture and inhumane treatment, and maintaining the "non-refoulement principles" outlined in the 1951 Geneva Convention.[103] As such, the possibility of being subjected to capital punishment is frequently brought up whenever an extradition case stirs up public controversy. While human rights lawyers and social activists often act as fervent defenders of human rights in extradition cases, very seldom do they, or any other members of the public, bother to trace back the roots of these normative standards and practices.

Why does extradition have to be carried out in accordance with liberal principles under international law? Antony Anghie argues that "the universalization of international law was principally a consequence of imperial expansion."[104] The "imperial expansion" that Anghie refers to is the process of colonization carried out by various Western powers, meaning that international law was exported from the West to the rest through coercion.[105] The proclaimed universality of international law is a construction. Even the liberal outlook of current international law is—in and of itself—a political story that was conceived less than a century ago. Institutions that govern international political life, such as the International Court of Justice, were constructed and sustained after the Second World War, at a time

[101] Malcolm Shaw, "International Law," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, December 7, 2016, https://www.britannica.com/topic/international-law. See also Vaughan Lowe, *International Law: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
[102] Ibid.
[103] Lewis, "'Illiberal Spaces,'" 151.
[104] Antony Anghie, "Finding the Peripheries: Sovereignty and Colonialism in Nineteenth-Century International Law," *Harvard International Law Journal* 40.1 (1999): 1.
[105] Ibid.

when the US was gaining international importance and influence. International law, as an institution, is not static and can be substantially affected by external forces.

After considering the liberal narrative of international law, we should ask: is it possible for an alternative version of international law to emerge? If so, under what conditions?

With strong international institutions and powers endorsing a less liberal version of extradition practices, it is entirely possible for such practices to be gradually accepted by the international community as appropriate or—at the very least—an alternative. In his 2015 paper, David Lewis explores how Uzbekistan employs extraterritorial practices to sustain contemporary authoritarianism and examines how Russia and former Soviet Central Asian states are sustaining an alternative version of extradition.[106] Russian authorities very often ignore the set of standards (e.g. fair trial, torture) laid out in international law by directly extraditing Uzbek activists, who would likely face torture, back to Uzbekistan.[107] Some may consider such policies as ad hoc, but the practices have been written into the 1993 CIS Convention on Legal Assistance and Legal Relations in Civil, Family, and Criminal Matters. Under this convention, signatories agree to "[simplify] extradition practices and offer no protection for refugees and asylum seekers," which are normally granted in Western states.[108] Similar arrangements have been made between SCO member states, where signatories agree to unconditionally extradite personnel involved in terrorism and extremism.[109] As noted by Lewis, though the sustainability of such policies remains arguable, the practices of the SCO and the CIS "do reflect a tendency…[that challenges] the non-refoulement principle [of the West]."[110] Accordingly, it is entirely possible for a set of new international practices to emerge, so long as there is enough discursive support in the international community. Hence, it becomes evident that illiberal peacebuilding can be accomplished through authoritarian actors obtaining discursive support from stronger international actors or international institutions.

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[106] Lewis, "Illiberal Spaces," 140-42.
[107] Ibid., 151.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid.

Policy Implications for Liberal Actors

To conclude, this paper hopes to provide policy implications for liberal actors in these turbulent times. Liberal actors who seek to continuously promote and sustain the liberal mode of conflict management should no longer moralize their opposition to authoritarian modes of conflict management, as doing so undermines the prospects of a mutual understanding between liberal actors and their counterparts and disincentivizes strategic cooperation. As asserted in the introduction, it is rare for liberal peacebuilding missions to succeed when democratic elections are vertically imposed in regions not ready for democratization. Should this underlying mindset of liberal actors persist, there will be few options for liberal actors to counteract the growing influence of ACM. It is important to recognize the reality that the validity of ACM is intertwined with power dynamics in international politics; with the rise of major authoritarian states like China and the formation of non-liberal international organizations like the SCO and CSTO, it is entirely possible for the authoritarian mode of post-conflict governance to become strong enough to contend against liberal modes of peacebuilding. Accordingly, for strategic reasons, liberal actors must begin to view ACM neutrally rather than emotionally.

Post-conflict peacebuilding, for instance, is inextricably linked with the pressing issue of terrorism. As noted by James Piazza, states that are "[experiencing] high degrees of state failure are indeed more susceptible to transnational terrorist attacks."[111] Building upon Piazza's logic and applying it to peacebuilding, if a state fails to govern a post-conflict space with an effective mode of governance, that area risks becoming a hotbed for extremism.

Devising solutions for these crises is no easy job, and it requires joint international effort. But, before that, a mutual understanding must be forged between liberal and illiberal actors, especially when they both have very different interpretations of peace and security, as well as ideologically different approaches for managing post-conflict spaces. Although the mission statements of liberal and illiberal organizations share similar language on the issues of peace and security, the difference in their implicit meanings foreshadow tensions for when liberal and illiberal actors attempt international cooperation.

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[111] James Piazza, "Incubators of Terror: Do Failed and Failing States Promote Transnational Terrorism?" *International Studies Quarterly* 52.3 (2008): 483, www.jstor.org/stable/29734247.

Dividing international peacebuilding into liberal and illiberal peacebuilding problematically implies that our world is becoming bipolar again. However, this paper hopes that the proposed mechanisms of international peacebuilding can contribute to the nascent ACM framework, thus offering the liberal policy world a conceptual tool to comprehend authoritarian modes of conflict management.

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