

1) GLOA 400 FINAL PAPER This project goes over the Malaysian palm oil industry in its relationship with the local community (workers, residents, environment, etc.). I completed this project as a final component in my GLOA 400 (Capstone) course as I wanted to research further on why palm oil is so detrimental to the Malaysian environment and surrounding communities. The overall research of this case study enhanced my understanding of globalization as it connected the relationship of a product from the initial seed to the final product. I wanted to understand and analyze each step of this process from how harmful it is to those in local communities but how easy it is for first-world countries such as the United States to turn a blind eye towards these issues. I did this project by researching various recent media outlets and scholarly sources.

2) CRIM 475 RESEARCH PAPER This project goes over the concept of women in the terrorist sector. Throughout this paper, the discussion of the role of women in both domestic and international terrorist organizations was analyzed in reference to the various levels of female participation. I completed this project as it was one of my final papers in my CRIM 475 (Theory and Politics of Terrorism) course as a special topic approved by my professor. I did this project by researching terrorist organizations in both the domestic and international sense through online databases and older books located in the GMU Arlington library.

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The Malaysian Palm Oil Industry: The Dark and Controversial Side of Palm Oil Process

At the peak of dawn, a young Malaysian child starts off their day by picking up an empty 5-gallon bucket and making their way onto a vast Malaysian plantation bustling with palm trees to harvest its prized fruits. It is within these bright red and orange fruits that produce the world's most versatile oil found in popular companies such as Nestle and L'Oreal. By noontime, this child is expected to produce more than 10 hefty buckets and be paid less than 3 dollars a day with no job safety or healthcare. This wage is even lower for working females with an estimated 2 dollars a day. This child is amongst the thousands of children in Malaysia who work to supply such palm products to the Western world.

On the other side of the world, in the small Tennessee town of Jonesborough, 13-year-old girl scout, Olivia Chaffin, learns about this human abuse issue to which she advocates against the use of palm oil in all Girl Scouts cookies that begins one of the most major Girl Scouts controversies surrounding the international organization. Her young voice spoke to many around the country which resulted in the 2017 boycott of Girl Scout cookies in the United States.

Although these two children come from different sides of the globe, both are connected by the ever-flourishing palm oil industry. The palm oil industry's relationship with both producer, consumer, and its environment all link with each other within the global process of the

product. In 2021, the Associated Press released pieces of their investigation into the manufacturing process of palm oil and the interconnection of this global industry within the leading palm oil countries Indonesia and Malaysia. This investigation has brought the various palm oil issues back to light as Chaffin, amongst countless others, continues to petition and aid in the fight against the palm oil industry and its manufacturing process.

Palm oil is one of the largest resources for edible oil as it is extremely versatile in a variety of products and contributes to one-fifth of the world's production of fats and oils. Oil palm trees are native to Africa but were brought over to Southeast Asia where areas such as Malaysia and Indonesia now supply over 85% of the global supply of palm oil (Yew 306). Found in Southeast Asia, bordering Indonesia and Thailand, Malaysia is a tropical fertile area perfect for the cultivation of oil palms that thrives in humid tropics.

Over the years, the Malaysian palm oil industry has rapidly increased in production and assumed its position as a leader in the global edible oil market. This flourishing has also increased issues within the country's maintenance of the industry. Palm oil has an important role in the Malaysian government as it is one of the most essential resources in the country's income. In 2011, the Malaysian palm oil export profited 83.4 billion Malaysian Ringgit, equivalent to almost 20 billion United States Dollars today (Yew 306). The importance of this resource has allowed for challenges to emerge in recent years as the Malaysian government continues to ignore its weak policies concerning sustainability and humane methods of harvesting palm oil fruits. Since any harsh action to Malaysia's global palm oil income would significantly damage the country's economy, Malaysia has responded weakly to the issue and has even encouraged more plantations to be established in the country instead of focusing on these increasing issues.

This driving demand creates a variety of issues surrounding the local Malaysian community and environment including, but are not limited to, human abuse exploitation, deforestation, and loss of biodiversity. The increasing emergence of these issues is only expected to rise as the Malaysian government and palm oil businesses continue to ignore the issue. To advance a solution towards the overarching issue of palm oil harvesting, one must evaluate the rising concerns surrounding one of the leading palm oil industries to establish a comprehensive review on the detrimental effects of the overall palm oil industry. By establishing a comprehensive review on the detrimental effects of the Malaysian palm oil industry, one can clearly understand key factors and risks on various levels while bringing awareness to a deeper understanding of global market products and their relationship with the local area.

COMMUNAL CONTEXT

When observing product trends within the global platform, it is not uncommon for large corporations to exploit smaller companies abroad for their cheap resources and labor. It is often that these large companies refuse to admit any responsibility or knowledge of such abuse to preserve their own image while exploiting such workers and residents who live on the land.

Global corporations and these local communities are heavily intertwined together as many global corporations' products are initially produced by these developing countries. The Malaysian palm oil industry is no exception to this system as it causes detrimental effects to the palm oil workers and residents living on or near the plantation land.

Palm Oil Laborers. Amidst all the controversies surrounding the palm oil industry, the exploitation of laborers has been at the forefront of it all. In 2015, the Wall Street Journal exposed the harsh working conditions and forced labor on the Malaysian government-owned

Felda Global Ventures, noted as one of the world's largest palm oil companies (Al-Mahmood, 2015). Like many forms of international corporation misconduct and human rights exploitation, the working conditions of palm oil employees had led to a significant physical and mental strain on its workers. Many of these Malaysian palm oil workers are exposed to daily unfavorable conditions whilst working. These various conditions range from working extensive overtime hours with little to no breaks or days off, dangerous working conditions, unfair wages, and even forced labor. However, like most low-wage and poor working condition jobs, these workers continue to work in this field to receive income to feed their families, seek a better life for their families, and establish a stable living situation for them (Giancattarino & Noor 20).

The majority of Malaysian palm oil laborers are forced to work long grueling hours to meet the plantation's demand for palm oil whilst completely disregarding the working hour limitations on such. If a worker opposes, they risk the chance of getting fired from the job that feeds their families. As a result, these workers are overworked and overwhelmed in striving to meet these high harvesting targets with physically demanding duties. The dangerous link between overworked palm oil laborers and their health must be addressed as it relays itself in a never-ending cycle.

There is an increase in stress levels on both the worker's bodies and minds as they are continued to overwork themselves. This may lead to many health risks for the worker in various ways. Since these workers are expected to harvest and haul numerous truckloads of palm fruits, the physically grueling tasks of operating heavy manual machinery on more than 15-meter trees and loading fruit bundles onto a truck may leave the worker in excruciating physical pain. If this regular overworked schedule continues, the worker's body will likely burn out which will lead to

a range of physical health problems from poor sleep to an increased risk of stroke. The physical strain on the body will also decrease overall work performance from these workers which will lead to a higher risk of the worker becoming injured or even killed. A range of penalties may also lay in waiting for workers who don't pick up ripe fruits on the ground or harvest unripe fruit. In addition to an unhealthy physical lifestyle, the negative impacts of overworking oneself may also lead to significant mental health risks for these palm oil workers. The mental health risks increase stress levels which have a greater chance of the worker having a higher chance of anxiety, depression, and even suicide.

On a Malaysian palm oil plantation, Malek Mia, a palm fruit worker, discusses his experience of being overworked and over-exhausted from his plantation's deadlines. Mia describes his experience with the palm oil industry in which he was forced to work long brutal hours that resulted in a life-long injury. On the plantation, Mia had been working seven days a week with little breaks in between for about a month. During one of his palm oil harvests, Mia narrates that his constant exhaustion led him to become unaware and eventually resulted in a palm thorn becoming "penetrated [in] his left eye" causing him to lose his left eyesight (Al-Mahmood, 2015). In worsening this experience, the palm fruit company only provided limited medical care which Mia had to pay the rest of his medical care with the funds that he had accumulated in the past few months of working on the plantation. It is within this example that one is able to notice the overworking nature encompassing the Malaysian palm oil industry.

In addition to being overworked, many Malaysian palm oil workers work in unsafe and hazardous conditions that jeopardize their safety and health. In varying Malaysian plantations, workers face many occupational safety and health risks from inadequate personal protective

equipment (PPE). Inadequate PPE may easily lead workers towards physical injuries or the development of industrial diseases.

The hazardous pesticides and fertilizers used in oil palm plantations have adverse effects on worker health since many are heavily exposed to such and sadly, remain unaware of the dangers surrounding the acute and chronic health impacts. It is important to note that a majority of pesticide sprayers are female workers who have stated that they have further medical concerns surrounding their reproductive health as those who were pregnant often miscarried their children whilst working for the plantation. In examining various toxic chemicals of pesticides in Malaysian palm oil plantations, the chemical, paraquat dichloride, is most used. Paraquat dichloride, or simply known as paraquat, is an extremely toxic chemical that is commonly used as a herbicide for weed control on palm oil plantations in Malaysia and other parts of Southeast Asia. Paraquat is frequently unregulated with no safeguards added towards those who handle it. This issue provides a significant concern towards plantation workers as paraquat poisoning may be fatal if consumed, inhaled, or absorbed through the skin with no existing remedy (“Paraquat Poisoning: Medlineplus Medical Encyclopedia”)

In March 2002, the Malaysia-led workers' rights organization, Pesticide Action Network Asia Pacific (PANAP) and Tenaganita, started investigating various studies and surveys encircling the topic of pesticides on Malaysian palm oil plantations and its workers. The surveys highlighted dangerous working conditions for the workers who had improper PPE training or knowledge and equipment alongside acute paraquat poisoning symptoms such as nosebleeds, sores, nail loss, etc.

Sarojeni V. Rengam, Executive Director of PANAP, describes this multi-year research of the relationship between palm oil workers and pesticides in the World Rainforest Movement's Bulletin 129 '*Malaysia: Severe Health Effects of Pesticides on Workers in Oil Palm Plantations*':

These include workers spraying pesticides without any knowledge of their hazards; not being provided with protective clothing; and even cases where the labels are removed from the pesticide bottles before being given to workers so that they are unable to identify the pesticide used. (2008)

Within this research, Rengam hoped to expose how pesticides are poisoning Malaysian palm oil plantation workers who work daily around these pesticide-infested areas who suffer a range of dangerous acute and chronic health effects.

Rengam's points are supported throughout other reports and studies such as the International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF), Rainforest Action Network (RAN), and OPPUK's November 2017 report, *The Human Cost of Conflict Palm Oil Revisited*, and Bin Sulaiman et al.'s 2019 *Evaluating the Perception of Farmers Towards Pesticides and the Health Effect of Pesticides: A Cross-Sectional Study in the Oil Palm Plantations of Papar, Malaysia* as both stated that those plantation worker interviewees were blissfully unaware of such dangerous conditions. In ILRF et al.'s 2017 report, they state that "Many interviewed workers who interact with and are at risk of exposure to hazardous pesticides and fertilizers reported that they were not given proper training on health, safety and handling of the chemicals in use" (ILRF et al. 20) while Bin Sulaiman et al.'s 2019 study further supports this claim by stating "Most of the workers responded that they did not receive any training in pesticide handling and used partial

personal protective equipment (glasses, hats, shirt, and gloves) during working hours” (Bin Sulaiman et al, 2019). These recent studies that have been posted throughout the past two decades have displayed the increasing danger of inadequate PPE knowledge, training, and equipment. Although many workers tend to remain tragically ignorant of the deadly effects of regular exposure to such pesticides, this concern must be met with a clear urgency to improve awareness and education of these workers towards the toxic health risks.

Furthermore, unfair wages plague Malaysian plantation palm oil workers as palm companies continue to exploit their work hours. The abuse surrounding worker pay ranges from being paid below the Malaysian minimum wage and even farther below the living wage. The most popular studies and reports included the 2015 Wall Street Journal and the 2020 Associated Press on unfair pay for these workers. In 2015, the Wall Street Journal explored the wage system involving the Malaysian palm oil industry, specifically focusing on Felda Global Ventures. It was found that in 2015 that the Malaysian minimum wage was 900 ringgit which is about the equivalent of 250 dollars a month. When interviewed, several Felda workers discussed how their pay was often below the country’s minimum wage line and even provided recent payslips under Felda that “showed monthly payments of 700 to 800 ringgit” a month (Al-Mahmood, 2015). In some cases, Felda supervisors would even give insufficient hours of work so workers wouldn’t qualify for the Malaysia minimum wage even though Malaysian law states that “plantations must provide enough for full-time workers to make minimum wage” (Al-Mahmood, 2015). Many of these workers state that sometimes they made as little as 10 dollars a day but were usually unexpected until their salaries were deposited. This wage was even lower for female workers who would get paid about 2 dollars a day with no medical benefits.

It is often that these low wages are even held away from these workers. In a 2020 Associated Press piece, Margie Mason and Robin McDowell interview Karim's experience with his boss that withheld his wages numerous times throughout working. Karim discussed that he was often "cheated" with his overtime hours which were usually not paid on time. In one instance, Karim added that "once when he asked for his unpaid wages, his boss "threatened to run me over with his car" (Mason & McDowell, Sept. 24 2020).

Along with including Karim's experience, Mason and McDowell also explained that certain wage deductions were given to several workers. Those who fail to meet their high quotas were regularly docked or had their salaries cropped. This deduction would often force workers' families to join in the palm oil harvest just to make the worker's daily quota. When looking through certain work interviewees, one Malaysian employee's earnings were deducted "more than 40 percent...including a deduction for electricity" (Mason & McDowell, Sept. 24 2020). These practices amount to a forced labor environment as the various assessments have found consistent evidence in identifying the illegal underpaying of palm oil workers.

Content Warning: This section contains discussions of sexual assault, rape, and trauma

However, throughout all exploiting conditions on palm oil workers, children and women laborers are the most at risk. In addition to being overworked, exposed to dangerous work conditions, and unfair wages, both children and women have further hardships within the palm oil industry. Many recent studies have now focused on the emerging threat of sexual assault, rape allegations, and child exploitation in the Malaysian palm oil industry. Those who fall under both the minor and female categories are even more at risk of being taken advantage of by both male palm oil workers and bosses.

In another AP piece, written by Mason and McDowell, they share the story of one unanimous 16-year-old Malaysian palm oil worker, this girl explained her tragic story while working in the industry. She recounted the days when her boss would lurk behind her while she was working to harvest palm oil fruits and the fatal day that her boss forced himself upon her and threatened that he would kill her and her family if she told anyone. From that horrific point, she said that she was raped numerous times until she gave birth to her boss' son. After the birth of her son, the 16-year-old and her family "filed a report with police, but the complaint was dropped, citing lack of evidence" (Mason & McDowell, Nov. 2020). In the end, the boss went scot-free without providing any medical assistance or income for the child. Sadly, like most rape cases, charges against the offender were let go as this growing 16-year-old has only received scars from the horrendous incident.

Residents. As Malaysian palm oil companies expand their business, they also further expand the palm oil land that produces their profit. Since many Malaysian residents and indigenous communities still live in rural areas, these companies' lands are often pushed towards these communal villages and towns. Depending on the palm oil company, the company may choose to buy the residents' land off them or entirely disregard their concerns and intrude on their land. These effects lead to residents becoming forcibly displaced with nowhere to go or have consequences in selling off their land. Since the palm oil industry is now becoming exposed to light, many research outlets have only focused on Indonesian plantations in reference to residential concerns. However, this concern has not only been seen in Indonesia's palm oil industry but various national industries around the world.

The displacement of these villagers or residents tends to follow a plantation's choice into further expanding their palm oil land. In the overall global context, many large corporations have bought land abroad to have cheaper expenses on both the workers and land. Verisk Maplecroft, a global risk and strategic consulting firm in England, has stated the correlation of land and displacement of residents is seen that "the demand for more land to produce goods had been accompanied by displacement of indigenous communities" (Ahmed, 2021). This claim is supported in the Human Rights Watch's statement that "The Indonesian government is failing to protect the rights of Indigenous peoples who have lost their traditional forests and livelihoods to oil palm plantations in West Kalimantan and Jambi provinces" ("Indonesia: Indigenous Peoples Losing Their Forests"). It is important to notice the significance that this impact holds against both indigenous communities and local residents as they are forced away from the area they call home. This displacement could forcibly intensify poverty conditions within these groups while restraining their economic mobility.

If not displaced, many of those who still live nearby these plantations will likely receive detrimental effects from palm oil plantations such as them harming local agriculture or instigating poor health issues within the community. As many Malaysian palm companies take advantage of the fertile Southeast Asian soil, the land slowly becomes less fertile which spreads to these neighboring communities. Since local plantations are located on rural land, many of these rural communities depend on the land for their own food. When the soil becomes degraded in a nearby area, it is likely to spread towards surrounding areas for more nutrients. In some instances, peatlands also become transformed into plantation land for the palm oil industry. This transformation is seen in Indonesia when the local village of Rukam accepts payment from the Indonesian palm oil company, Erasakti Wira Forestama, for their land. Syafei, chief of Rukam at

the time, states that his regretful decision on selling off the land in his quote that “In the end, the community sold the land. Valuable peatlands were converted to plantations — and the repercussions of the decision are still felt today” (Nugraha et al, 2020). Within Syafei’s account, Syafei pushes the environmental cost of palm oil as Rukam’s local agriculture and aquaculture was seriously hurt from the plantation fields. This encounter was due to the lands becoming drained to make the land fertile for the palm oil trees which dried up Rukam’s water sources. Consequently, both fishing and “Farming has become difficult” for the local residents. Meanwhile, Rukam residents suffered a hit in their economy with a study conducted by WALHI and the University of Jambi that had “found 366 of 494 families in Rukam were considered "poor" or "very poor" in 2018” (Nugraha et al, 2020). Overall, Rukam residents are now eating less, trying to find new sources of food, and finding new jobs to make an income. This emerging threat has called both industries and governments to act as residents have demanded a restoration on their lands from these palm oil plantations.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

Malaysia is said to contain the richest biodiverse areas in the world as its wet tropical climate produces favorable conditions for the growth and development of both plants and animals. Today, Malaysia’s unique biodiversity is threatened by land development from the palm oil industry. As the palm oil industry continues to expand further as a manufacturing business, the expansion of plantations starts rapidly cutting down forests to create more farming areas. Upon observing environmental influences within Malaysia, it is clear that palm oil plantations are increasingly emerging within the state. According to Palm Oil World, which supports Malaysian palm oil cultivation, states that only “4.2 million hectares, less than 13% of the total land area of

Malaysia” is used for palm oil plantations (“Official Palm Oil Information Source”). However, many experts disagree with these statistics and only emphasize that more research must be done along with predicting that Malaysia will only continue to clear more conserved land for this industry. At the end of 2020, palm oil plantations took up about 2.7 million hectares which are a little more than 20% of Malaysian land (Kate et al, 2021). As palm oil plantations spread rapidly, deforestation impacts wildlife by destroying their habitats which may result in extinction. This forced removal of forests causes permanent damage to the land with aridity or desertification.

Animal Wildlife. As Malaysian-native trees are cut down to make more space for the ever-expanding Malaysian palm oil industry, much native wildlife such as the orangutan, Malayan tiger, Malayan Tapir, etc. are slowly becoming extinct as their natural habitats are destroyed and removed. Many of these species are appearing in the IUCN’s Red List of Threatened Species as countless Malaysian wildlife are beginning to decrease. Species such as the black shrew contain a unique role that will prompt a negative cascading between the food chain that will impact other species and the entire ecosystem. This ecological communal unbalance will start wiping out other life forms as they try to find another species to consume for survival. They will struggle to survive which may lead to the complete wipeout of the species. Furthermore, while these animals are chased out of their homes, they will meet unexpected human populations which increase human-wildlife conflict statistics (Norwana et al 9). These conflicts could lead to the injury or death of either party as both are afraid of the other.

Natural Environment. The natural environment and land of Malaysia have slowly degraded throughout the years due to the economic expansion of the palm oil industry. Concerning all issues, deforestation is one of the biggest issues facing Malaysia as its palm oil industry grows in

size. The concept of deforestation has many environmental impacts including desertification, soil erosion, increased carbon emissions, etc. These negative impacts will hit Malaysia harder than other environmental areas as Malaysia relies on its lush vegetation for many things such as a purifier for the air, preventing erosion, and as a buffer from climate change effects. As we have mentioned, these forests also support the communal lives of Malaysian or indigenous communities. The eventual degradation of land will lead to the aridity of it which will eventually lead to national issues as the land will be unable to support more Malaysian communities. Globally, this issue will further the climate change process as many of these tropical rainforests contain large amounts of carbon in both their trees and soil. By cutting or burning these components down for palm oil cultivation, it will increase more carbon into the air (Lustgarten, 2018).

ECONOMICAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

After studying the various detrimental effects surrounding the Malaysian palm oil industry, it is clear that both Malaysian and International actors must put a stop to this devastating issue. When looking at potential solutions, it is clear all these actors have chosen to remain blissfully unaware of the abuse towards both the local community and environment due to the economic advantages that it brings to Malaysia. Since this issue tends to directly affect Malaysia, global third parties have not stepped in towards this matter surrounding the industry. However, due to recent studies and research reports into the matter, this issue has made news once again on the international platform which has spurred both national and international human rights, worker rights, environmental rights, etc. organizations to take action.

Malaysian Palm Oil Industry. The Malaysian palm oil industry has been at the center of many of these issues as it has allowed for many humane rights to fall through. Nevertheless, this industry has turned a blind eye to its workers' experience in the field and the degrading environment while, instead, focusing on economic profit. With weak government policies surrounding the industry, the industry is only continued to thrive. When analyzed further, Gemma Tillack, Forest Policy Director of the US-based Rainforest Action Network, has declared that "the industry's hidden secret" is the "funding that makes this system of exploitation possible" (Tillack, 2020). Tillack urges that funding by Western financial institutions such as JPMorgan Chase or Deutsche Bank are "heavy investors in the industry" (Tillack, 2020). Although Tillack states that more research is required into this heavily hidden sector, she continues that we must first be aware of this carefully hidden secret.

Despite the fact that many Malaysian palm oil companies have denounced this human and environmental abuse such as Wilmar International Limited through yearly sustainability reports, many of them continue to do the things that they condemn and criticize other palm oil companies for. The closest case study to a Malaysian palm oil company implementing such enforcing strategies is the IOI Group. In 2017, the IOI group released a report discussing their new standards on "an industry rife with forced labor, child labor, and worker exploitation" (Lierley et al, 2017). Although IOI had a rough past of failing the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)'s certification, it is taking baby steps to obtain it back with the help of a group of NGOs. Robin Averbeck, Senior Campaigner at Rainforest Action Network, discusses how IOI will struggle as it gets back on its feet on sustainability issues but "Beyond full implementation of these new labor policies, IOI Group must resolve long-standing grievances, most notably with the Long Teran Kanan communities, before it can be considered a responsible supplier of palm

oil, or a worthy recipient of financial investment” (Lierley et al, 2017). The IOI seems to be one of the very few companies that are taking steps to combat the detrimental consequences of the palm oil industry on the Malaysian community.

Malaysian National Government. One reason that conflicts with potential solutions to the Malaysian palm industry is the blindspots or grey zones of the government policies and rulings surrounding land demand and agricultural trade. In Taheripour et. al’s *Market-Mediated Responses Confound Policies to Limit Deforestation From Oil Palm Expansion in Malaysia and Indonesia*, Taheripour et al states that “laws and regulations related to land use are only as effective as their enforcement” to which the government has turned a blind eye to in certifying plantation areas which “less than 1% of the residual forest area inside Malaysian oil palm plantations” (Taheripour et al, 2019). With current trends predicting that the world palm oil market is expected to reach a market value of 90 billion dollars by 2021 (Stam, 2020), the government is swayed to be inattentive toward the issue. According to official Malaysian government data, “74% of Malaysia’s agricultural land is devoted to palm oil production” (Stam, 2020). As stated in the introduction, Malaysian palm oil exports boost the nation’s national economy. It is clear that the disinterest towards taking action against this issue is evident through its lenient policies surrounding palm oil manufacturing. Although various Malaysian officials have stated that the palm oil industry isn’t as bad as we think, it is important that Malaysia, in the coming years, enforce stricter government regulations and policies concerning the industry.

International Actors. In an effort to generate a sustainable approach towards this issue, many have studied and created organizations to intervene in the regulation of palm oil. Organizations such as Rainforest Action Network, National Wildlife Federation, and many others have formed

groups to protest the issue. Some of these organizations such as the National Wildlife Federation have even joined as a member of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), an organization set to promote and ensure the global principle of sustainable palm oil commodities through specific humane standards and practices. Although even in recent years, many experts and researchers have sought and pushed for a stronger network of standards. In more developed countries, foreign citizens have advocated for possible solutions and effects towards the issue abroad. In Norway, many Norwegian companies have “have divested or distanced themselves from palm oil companies in recent years” (Mason & McDowell, Sept. 24 2020). In 2020, various United State senators such as Sherrod Brown and Ron Wyden demanded action after various media outlets exposed the cruel treatment of human workers in the Malaysian industry. Brown, Ohio Democrat, spoke about the issue and demanded that “The federal government needs to enforce this law and investigate all instances of forced labor in supply chains and block imports made with forced labor from coming into the U.S.” and “In addition to strong government enforcement, corporations need to hold themselves accountable” (Mason & McDowell, Sept. 28 2020).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the palm oil industry’s relationship with both producer, consumer, and its environment all link with each other as one wonders the justification of the valuable parts of life. The connection between cultural and ecological degradation is not regulated by those who focus on the economic and political sectors. Within the Malaysian palm oil industry, these various parties are not affected evenly. As this issue is only increasing throughout the years, it is important to look towards future solutions on the matter. As seen in this paper, both the

Malaysian palm oil industry and the national government should work together concerning policymaking to reach more humane objectives in harvesting such palm fruits. To reduce future conflicts surrounding the Malaysian palm oil industry, these institutions should become aware of intrusive factors and pursue to remove or reduce them. The Malaysian government should encourage further research investigations on palm oil statistics and surveys while endorsing policy suggestions to decrease any support for unsustainable palm oil procedures. Overall, the purpose of this paper is to analyze the varying components surrounding the Malaysian palm oil industry that lead to detrimental effects on both the community and the environment. By understanding key factors and risks of palm oil unsustainability, one can correlate the relationship between a market product and how that might alter various individuals and environments abroad. From the palm fruit seed to the final palm oil product, this case study is a step closer for individuals to realize the tireless, complicated, and long process of how palm oil is processed from examining its influence on local Malaysian individuals, communities, and their environment.

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Women and Terrorism: Exploring the Activity and Role of Women in Terror Groups

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore and analyze the relationship between women, the state, and terrorism by utilizing comparative research. In a traditional setting, many perceive the role of females to be non-violent and peaceful which is transferred over and reinforced by mainstream society. However, it is important to note that the notion of female involvement in terror groups has become increasingly prominent and distinguished in many research outlets.

Throughout this paper, the discussion of the role of women in both domestic and international terrorist organizations will be analyzed in reference to the various levels of female participation. The increase in female participation raises the question of whether women's involvement will continue to grow in the upcoming years. It is notable to understand this concern as women tend to fall under the radar by national security enforcement when inspecting terrorist activity.

This study will approach two case studies of the domestic terror group, Columbia's Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC), and the international terror group, Ku Klux Klan (KKK), to evaluate concepts and the role of women in the terrorist fields to advance a solution to the overarching issue of global terrorism. The research found that female members increased an organization's advantage and rate of success towards operations compared to their male counterparts. This success surrounding female participation indicates an expected increase of women in terrorist groups.

Introduction

“We must recognize that women comprise a self-conscious, dynamic sector of our society which often perceives itself to be an oppressed majority... that oppression mirrors all of the classic conditions conducive of terrorist violence”

Georges-Abeyie, 1983, p. 84

In 1983, Daniel Earl Georges-Abeyie, American criminologist and professor, stated that women have typically rendered themselves towards a minor role in terrorist activities, but predicted in the near future that there will be an increase in women involvement. As the years pass, Georges-Abeyie’s prediction only becomes more accurate as this small yet expanding role in terrorist violence has grown to become significant and noticeable by the community in recent years. The study seeks to answer and discover the role of women in terrorist groups, both domestic and international, to truly understand terrorism studies without neglecting the issue of gender. To understand such concepts, we need to understand the debatable term of terrorism.

Many experts in the field debate about what terrorism is and defined as with over 100 definitions given. Terrorism is a violate term that must be acknowledged as a difficult concept to define. However, the most used definition comes from the American definitional model that defines terrorism as “a premeditated and unlawful act in which groups or agents of some principles engage in a threatened or actual use of force or violence against human or property targets. These groups or agents engage in this behavior intending the purposeful intimation of governments or people to affect policy or behavior with an underlying political objective” (Martin 519). This term is used the most in reference to both scholars and government institutions.

Under this umbrella term, we see two of many various branches of terrorism emerge: domestic and international terrorism. The United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has defined both terms in *Title 18 of the United States Code* that determine the United States federal criminal procedures. It is within this document that the FBI has defined international terrorism to “violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups who are inspired by, or associated with, designated foreign terrorist organizations or nations (state-sponsored)” (FBI, 2016) while domestic terrorism is defined as “violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups to further ideological goals stemming from domestic influences, such as those of a political, religious, social, racial, or environmental nature” (FBI, 2016).

Principal Findings for Empirical Research Literature

Female participation in violent attacks has been a somewhat difficult concept for society to understand and grasp. Especially in patriarchal societies that deem women non-threatening and have lower or limited societal roles, attacks by female terrorist members are more unsuspected and covert. Society’s acknowledgment that violent women don’t tend to exist lead to a more ingrained concept that women are harmless which poses a danger to security enforcement. To challenge these traditional views, it is of great importance that one understands the dynamic history and current theories of research that encompass female participation in terror organizations.

The recently increased shift of female members has called upon more focus on the importance of women in these terrorist groups. As Karen Jacques and Paul J. Taylor have stated, “As female involvement in terrorism has increased so too has female terrorism research” (Jacques & Taylor 3) including historical trends. Historically, women have accounted for a

smaller portion than their male counterparts in terrorist groups. However, this rate is slowly increasing as proven by multiple scholarly research experts such as Jakana L. Thomas and Karla J. Cunningham. The historical role of women in terrorist organizations has always enveloped itself in conventional and revolutionary military movements to which Laqueur furthers in her research with statements such as “women have participated in almost all guerilla movements” (Gonzalez-Perez 14). Cunningham also agrees with this comment and pushes further that the women’s roles are primarily limited to supportive roles.

While others tend to believe that this role will stay limited, Georges-Abeyie refutes with the stance that women will obtain more active positions in the future that “will play an increasingly and dynamic role” (Georges-Abeyie 71) in the organization. He supports his points by providing guiding principles that must be met for female growth in terrorist operations. The increase of research has only supported this stance and furthered other arguments within the field.

One of those discussions includes how women participate on various levels within the terrorism sector (Gonzalez-Perez 16). The participation standings vary due to factors such as external and internal structures and blockades. One of the most important aspects of such includes traditional gender roles with a gender division of labor. These factors may pose as a limitation towards the role of women in terrorist violence. For example, women in Latin America are more susceptible to such limitations in the terrorist field. This restriction could be due to the conventional notion that women should stick to housework or care-taking activities.

In addition to these typical gender roles, the role of women in terrorism is also restricted in accordance with their class system. According to scholar, Linda L. Reif, Reif states that

working-class women tend to make up the greater majority of female terrorist members. This fact suggests that those in the working class tend to face greater challenges than those of the upper class. Women in the working class are inflicted with more responsibility, such as housework activities, with less freedom compared to women in the middle and upper class that have more freedom and are usually accepting of social and political issues. It is within these concepts that women tend to be swayed a certain way in terms of their situation. As Reif goes in their study, “working class women are doubly burdened by class and gender” (Reif 153).

To connect such concepts to real-life case studies, this study will assess case studies that involve two terror groups, both domestic and international terrorism, from the Americas.

The domestic case study will go over Columbia’s Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) which is the most dominant terrorist campaign in Columbia. This group started in 1964 after their first attack with the Colombian government in Marquetalia. Since then, it has only grown bigger as it is considered one of “the largest and best-equipped terrorist armies in history” by *the Economist* (Gonzalez-Perez 41). As a domestic group, FARC’s purpose is to overthrow Colombian government oppression and corruption to reform the political scene. They would promote such resolve in terrorist attacks towards government officials, including kidnapping them and their families. In terms of female participation in the organization, many of the FARC members were women, with some holding high positions. The group’s agenda allowed for women to act regarding limitations on their situations of poverty and illiteracy. Colombian government data shows that women received wages 66% lower than their male counterparts and were 6% more illiterate than males (Gonzalez-Perez 41). In 2000, 30% of FARC members were female which increased 10-15% in 2001 and 2002. This cause of female member increase was

noted through Gonzalez-Perez's survey which stated that the main reason to join was to fight for their political and social rights. Although FARC's power is slowly declining throughout the years, one can see the power of female involvement due to various factors.

Concerning international terrorism, the case study of the infamous US-based terrorist group, Ku Klux Klan (KKK), comes into the exploration of the study. The KKK emerged after the American Civil War in 1865 which was made to be a white supremacist movement. Amidst the reconstruction of the American South, many wanted to maintain the traditional social hierarchy which led to the creation of the KKK. It is within this terror group that spread its hate towards those who were or supported freed slaves in various violent acts such as vandalizing or destroying victims' property to even murdering or mutilating them. Although it started to be a domestic terrorist group, it developed into a worldwide terrorist movement in various countries such as Ireland and Canada. As this international terrorist group increased in size, many developed branches or chapters within the group, including the Women's KKK (WKKK). Much like many international terror groups, WKKK had limitations in obtaining leadership positions with roles restricting itself to those of supportive roles. In 2003, Kathleen M. Blee questioned several female members of the KKK and WKKK about their roles within the group. Blee highlighted the fact that Klanswomen had no access to formal group meetings besides the occasional rallies or picnics. The women's operative roles were quite gender-specific to which Klanswomen complained of gender disparity. These roles ranged from cooking to birthing more KKK-supporting children. In one case, Blee investigated one Klanswomen that stated she and other females were used in protests to "discourage retaliation from protestors" (Blee 61) by holding infants and pushing strollers. This notorious anti-black terrorist group displays the gender inequality and limitations of female roles in terror groups.

Discussion & Conclusion

By studying the different variables in various situations, one can accurately reference gender and its role in the exhibition of terrorist acts. Based on the current trends and research, this study argues that female participation will steadily increase in more domestic terror groups rather than international terror groups. Due to the limitation of female roles in more international terror groups, participation by women is heavily determined by the goals of the group. Since domestic terror groups tend to face more subjective political and social objectives, women are more likely to join such terror organizations.

The study discovered the role of women in terrorist groups, both domestic and international, to truly understand terrorism studies without neglecting the issue of gender. As we have learned, female participation is only increasing around the world. To reduce the increased membership of terror groups, states and institutions should become more aware of such motivating factors and seek to remove or reduce these determinants. Governments should encourage policy suggestions or further scientific research on the matter to enhance the greater chance of decreased support of terror groups.

Overall, the purpose of this study is to analyze concepts surrounding women in the terrorist fields to advance a solution to the overarching issue of global terrorism. First, we addressed terminology surrounding terrorism and its terror groups. Secondly, we examined the conceptual and historical background of women in terrorist activities and analyzed two case studies of both domestic and international terror groups. By establishing this alternate view of terrorism and the role of women, we find that women participate in terror groups at various levels in relation to goals and objectives. The growing and immediate emergence of women's

terrorist activities call governments and institutions to act as terror threats and operations are only increasing throughout the years.

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