

ISLAND OF THE ROSES

A case study of the ontological threat of a micronation

Name of author: Lukas Gunnarson Hellerstedt

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Supervisor: Rasmus Andréén

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Abstract

The discipline of OSS's (Ontological Security Studies) incorporation in Security Studies has helped unravel state behaviour which other IR-theories (International Relations) have struggled to make sense of. Going beyond the physical security concerns which characterise the traditional literature, OSS has up until recently consistently emphasised the psychological threat of harm to the "self" – emanating from a point of departure which renders it disembodied. Disputing this detachment of the material body, Nina C. Krickel-Choi argues the significance of embodying the self in order to visualise how ontological and physical security converge.

This case study aims to develop on Nina C. Krickel-Choi's (re)embodiment of the self, further problematizing by what boundaries the body is encapsulated. Additionally, it draws on Jennifer Mitzen's seminal article on ontological security, utilising the hitherto underexplored basic trust system as a tool in uncovering anxiety-fueled state behaviour. This theoretical framework is applied to the peculiar case of the Republic of Rose Island, in order to make sense of the drastic measures taken by the Italian State in 1968-69 in response to the emergence of the independent micro-state. By disentangling the circumstances under which the course of action proceeded, this case study illustrates how the small republic outside the coast of Rimini inflicted severe anxiety to the state of Italy's ontological (in)security, causing the military occupation and final destruction of the platform which constituted the territory of the short-lived nation. The case is made that the measures taken by the Italian state in response to the emergence of the micro-republic was a result of a rigid attachment to routines, inducing behaviour not only confirming the entwined relationship between the body and the self – but indeed, as the study will show, demonstrating an even more apposite expression of the body's importance to a secure sense of being. Through this demonstration, the distinction between the juridical territory and the material body is problematised, as the study goes to show that the territorial borders does not firmly delineate the boundaries of the bodily self. Visualising and untangling this seemingly contradictory and *transcendent* imagining of the material body – as well as unfolding the connection between the proceeding and a rigid attachment to routines – aims to elaborate on existing literature on ontological security, as well as stimulate further research on the field.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract

1. Introduction	3
<i>1.1 Research problem</i>	4
<i>1.2 Aim and research question</i>	5
2. Literature review	6
<i>2.1 Theoretical framework</i>	14
3. Methodology	17
<i>3.1 Empirical material</i>	20
4. Analysis	21
<i>4.1 Background: Republic of Italy</i>	21
<i>4.2 Background: Republic of Rose Island</i>	22
<i>4.3 Rigid attachment</i>	23
<i>4.4 The transcendent body</i>	27
5. Conclusion	31
6. Bibliography:	32
<i>6.1 Litterature</i>	32
<i>6.2 Empirical material</i>	32

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional IR-studies teaches us the constant element of uncertainty within the anarchic structure of world politics, in accordance with the security dilemma presented primarily in the theoretical framework of realism (Waltz, 1979). Hard power and its accumulation lies at the centre of this uncertainty, as actors are unable to tell another actor's security-seeking from an impending aggression.

However, the military threat, or rather lack thereof, that the Republic of Rose Island at its emergence in 1968 posed to the sovereignty of Italy, raises the question of what reasons laid behind the micro-state's quick and brutal downfall. After commencing the construction of a two-level platform on international waters outside Italy in the early sixties, the engineer Giorgio Rosa and his associates had declared their republic independent on the 1st of May 1968. Only 55 days later, the island was militarily occupied by the combined forces of the Italian Police and Italy's armed forces. Remaining under occupation without any unauthorised access to or from the platform, the island was finally obliterated with hundreds of kilos of explosives less than a year after its birth, on the 13th of February 1969. (Musilli, 2021).

Drawing on Nina C. Krickel-Choi's (2022) (re)embodiment of the self, as well as Jennifer Mitzen's (2006) ground-laying implementation of ontological security into Security Studies, the curious case of the short-lived, independent micro-state of Rose Island is examined through the lens of a critical security perspective. In its aim to expand upon the "two-way relationship" (Krickel-Choi, 2022. p. 175) between physical and ontological security, this case study unravels the conditions predisposing the Italian State's prompt quashing of the micro-republic. The (re)embodiment of the self has thus far been weighed against cases where violence or the threat thereof have been palpably present, although responses to them have arguably lacked a grade of proportionality. In light of the case at hand's total absence of physical menace, along with the island's somewhat paradoxical state of existing "within and without" the Republic of Italy, this case opens up for new findings. Anchored in the conclusions drawn from these findings, the study aims to further build on the recent "material turn" (Krickel-Choi, 2022. p. 160) within the field, by visualising and problematising the dynamic relation between the judicial territory and the material body.

1.1 Research problem

The case of Rose Island has been subject to speculation since its very beginning, fueled by tabloid stories ranging from portrayals of the island as a potential base for Soviet missiles in the Adriatic Sea, to it being a tax haven for lawless gambling and pirate radio broadcasts (Musilli, 2021). Although varying theories regarding the “true” purpose of the island’s emergence have been innumerable, no evidence points to it being of a more sinister nature than the libertarian dream of autonomy which led Giorgio Rosa to commence its construction in the start of the sixties.

What then prompted the Italian state to take such swift and austere action against a seemingly harmless, or at the very least negligible, microstate of only 400 square metres situated in international waters? The discrepancy between the absence of physical threat and Italy’s drastic and rapid response, as well as the issue’s quick rise to the top of the governmental agenda constitutes the research problem which gave rise to this study. In the void created by traditional IR-theories’ incapacity to make sense of the case, ontological security theory (OST) appears to possess the toolbox necessary to decode the behaviour conducted by the Italian state. Exploring the potential implications beyond the somewhat limiting sphere of physical security therefore might provide the phenomenon with more clarity, ultimately offering explanations contributing to a deepened understanding of states’ pursuit of ontological security, and the case alike.

Primarily two aspects of the case advocate an ontological approach to make sense of it, where one emphasises the anxiety-laced rigidity predisposing such a disproportionate response, and the other suggests a (re)embodiment of the self. For one, the Republic of Rose Island possessed no military capabilities whatsoever, and expressed no territorial ambitions outside the outskirts of the 20x20m platform – hence posing no discernible physical threat to the continued existence of the Republic of Italy. Secondly, the territory of Rose Island was located outside of the Italian territorial borders, and thus did not constitute part of Italian territory. Nonetheless, the micro-republic, as the study will show, was seen as part of the Italian state body, and the matter was dealt with as a domestic issue. This indicates the perception of a body within the framework of the ontological self – a perception which furthermore transcends the factual, concrete definition of the territorial body that the geographical demarcation envelopes.

1.2 Aim and research question

This study aims to serve as a contribution to the field of OSS, primarily in its expansion on the comparatively recent discussion regarding the (re/dis)embodiment of the self. I argue that the case at hand is an even more apposite example of why the body can't be separated from the self in OST, than the case put forward by Nina C. Krickel-Choi. Furthermore, the study challenges the previously assumed synonymous meaning of body and state territory, problematising the dynamic between the two concepts. The Republic of Rose Island's Schrödinger's cat-like state of existing both inside *and* outside Italian borders – paired with its lack of actual physical threat, and the disproportionate measures taken in response to the state's emergence – constitute the central parts of this argument, demonstrating the transcendent potential of the body of the self in the procuring of ontological security.

Secondly, the study aims to highlight Mitzen's somewhat neglected exposition of the rigid/flexible attachment to routines, which predisposes state behaviour in fundamental ways. A great amount of research has been conducted on the dynamics of the Self/Other and anxiety, but the distinctive forms of attachment and their effects have remained comparatively overlooked. The significance of this system of *basic trust* (Mitzen, 2006. p. 346) in understanding seemingly irrational state measures is illustrated by applying it to the case at hand, unveiling the rigid attachment to routines preceding the Italian state's harsh reaction to the emergence of the Republic of Rose Island.

In addition to the research gap within OSS accounted for above, there are almost no studies on the subject of Rose Island outside of Italy, and none in relation to the field of Security Studies. With this unique application in place, the study has the potential to further build on the aforementioned "material turn" within the discipline, bridging the stated research gap and shedding light on this peculiar case alike. It is the hope and ambition of this study that the conclusions drawn will grant us a greater understanding of underlying motives behind seemingly illogical state conduct, as well as deepen the comprehension of how the body is perceived. In a broader scope, such an understanding can help us further make sense of irrational state behaviour in general, and in response to independently declared micro-states – and possibly secessionist movements – in particular.

With this intention in mind, the following research question has been formulated:

How did the Republic of Rose Island affect the Republic of Italy's ontological (in)security?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The discipline of ontological security studies' influence on the broader field of Security Studies spans two decades and counting, and so existing literature is ample. Inspired by Anthony Giddens (1991) sociological take on the concept, originally stemming out of the psychoanalytical affiliation within which the term was first coined (Laing, 1990), its addition to the traditional focus on the physical security of states has sparked a wide array of research on the area. The pervading interpretation of the self has however, seemingly uncontested up until fairly recently, rendered it disembodied ever since Mitzen's (2006) denomination of ontological security as "security not of the body but of the self" (Mitzen, 2006. p. 344). When contested, what comprises and limits this bodily self has not yet been explored, often leaving us with the implicit, while certainly not unreasonable, synonymization of the body and the state territory. To be sure, Mitzen does discuss the subject of what precisely constitutes the *state's* body, seemingly ending up with two possible definitions without providing a clear answer. The "spatial boundary" that the territory provides a state appears to suggest that the body of the state is indeed its territory, while the loss of sovereignty can be equated with the loss of one's body – indicating that sovereignty plausibly also could be interpreted as its body (Mitzen, 2006. p. 351).

Regardless of its definition though, a clear separation between the self and the body is prominent in this interpretation, a detachment which Nina C. Krickel-Choi (2022) objects to. With reference to the North Korean abduction of Japanese citizens in the 70s and 80s, she argues the disproportionate priority the issue has been given in Japanese foreign policy to be indicative of the body's importance to states' ontological security. However, the (re)embodiment of the self is all the while argued within the confines of a national territory, and the transgressions made against it. Consequently, the notion of the embodied self potentially transcending the geographical boundaries of its state is not discussed, again reaffirming the implicit assumption that the body is limited to the borders of the state.

Further objections to the disembodiment of the self can be found, as Filip Ejdus (2021) have similarly challenged this previously predominant take on state personhood. Describing how critical situations defined as “radical disruptions” (Ejdus, 2021. p. 30) generate anxiety, Ejdus demonstrates how this causes collective actors to display “regressive behaviour” and pursue attempts to reinstate a sense of serenity to the self (ibid: 30). In the pursuit of relieving ontological insecurity, material environments can be ascribed meaning through *introjection* or *projection*, transforming them into *ontic spaces* serving as reaffirmations of the self. (Ejdus, 2021. p. 27-30).

Ejdus aptly points out that within the existing studies in IR, the main focus has been on the social environment’s importance for ontological security, while the significance of material environments such as “architecture, natural landscapes or other locales from which states can also draw their sense of continuity in the world...” (Ejdus, 2021. p. 26) has generally been neglected. Although relationships and routines perceived as fixed and consistent serve as positive springs of ontological security, their lack of predictability compel states to acquire a supplemental source to procure stability and continuity from. In this void, familiar bodies in the form of landscapes, or other representations of material environments, can allow for a more congenial sense of collective agency, complementing the social dimension in the quest for a consistent self. (Ejdus, 2021).

The question of territory and its role in procuring ontological security is further discussed in Vincent De Sala’s (2017) dismantling of the “territorial myths” (De Sala, 2017. p. 546) narratively crafted by the European Union. Bestowing the EU with the sense of agency necessary to tackle pressing issues regarding migration and internal security, this “construction of territoriality” (ibid: 546) is described as one of the methods used to obtain the continuous stability which ontological security demands. Instigated by the flow of migrants seeking out refuge in the northern part of Europe in 2015, the European Union was faced with existential questions as to whether the EU in fact constituted a “territory or homeland” (ibid: 546). Political myths, described by De Sala as “sacred narratives” (ibid: 546), have when successfully contrived and mediated the capacity to grant the ontological security, as well as the political legitimacy needed to tackle such existential anguish. (De Sala, 2017).

This topic of choice is shared by Jennifer Mitzen (2018), in a later work similarly examining how the European Union's aspiration of moving beyond the Westphalian framework of sovereignty and its "territorial trap" (Mitzen, 2018. p. 1373), has left it with delicate predicaments in dealing with certain issues. In wake of discourses surrounding references to a "homeland" – striving to evoke a sense of personal entitlement to one's territory, as well as the need of its sheltering towards the threatening "outside world" – Mitzen seeks to probe into the ontological implications affixed to the concept of *home* (ibid: 1374). In this endeavour, an aim to move beyond the "microlevel understanding" of the notion of home is stated, arguing that a definition describing home in terms of "being with becoming" rather than "simply a place of being" is more relevant to ontological security – denominating this concept on a macro level as "homespace" (ibid: 1375). This homespace is "located, but not reducible to its location" and "emplaces the self, which is not reducible to giving it hard borders." (ibid: 1375) – meaning that the concept isn't as inflexibly connected to the factual territories as previous assumptions suggest, as it is related to "emplacement and centering." (ibid: 1375). Such a distinction thus allows for a conceptual reevaluation of "home", putting emphasis on the fulfilment of the basic need to feel "emplaced and centred" (ibid: 1379).

The consequences of "home" as an embodied space has previously been explored by Catarina Kinnvall (2004), analysing how nationalism and religion are potent "identity-signifiers" (Kinnvall, 2004. p. 757) in the wake of the destabilising effects of globalisation. By disrupting the sense of continuity through its de-territorialising impact, globalisation leaves space for anxiety and uncertainty as to what constitutes one's home. In the void created by this disruption, nationalist and religious narratives hold the ability to recover ontological security, by conveying convincing narratives linked to their capability of "naturalising" a "chosen trauma or chosen glory" (ibid: 756). The inherent power of "home" as a security-holder appears in its capacity to "link together a material environment with a deeply emotional set of meanings relating to permanence and continuity." (ibid: 747). Consequently, nationalist and religious narratives provide their subjects with the "idea of a home" by "...their ability to convey unity, security, and inclusiveness in times of crisis." (ibid: 762). Thus, reinforcing the material outlines of the national identity, along with a narratively conveyed demarcation of the community entitled to it, can provide continuity to the ontological self – fending off the uncertainties brought upon by globalised blurrings. (Kinnvall, 2004).

The aspects of bordering and territoriality, and its ontological implications, are further discussed by Catarina Kinnvall along with John Cash (2017). In examining the relation between postcolonial borderings and ontological (in)security, Cash and Kindvall account for several angles from which this connection has been explored. The process of constructed narratives becoming “...emotional, embodied and material representations to which individuals and groups attach a sense of self and purpose...” is touched upon, demonstrating how these identity constructions can deflect uncertainty. (Cash, Kinnvall. 2017. p. 269). This practice is however not merely useful as a way for individuals to establish reassuring continuity, but also a viable instrument “...for elites to create borders and boundaries around constructions of collective identities.” (ibid: 269). In the face of tumultuous changes or questioning of previous certainties, the ensuing anxiety can lead to “...attempts to govern not only physical borders, but also ideational, emotional and embodied borders and boundaries...” (ibid: 270). With this venture described, the concept of “violent cartographies” is put forward – referring to a “a form of securitising bordering practices performed by postcolonial states to produce ontological security.” (ibid: 271). These performative, territorial imaginings can thereby be projected as imperative in attaining “...order, security and progress.”, discursively constructing and naturalising geographical borders which distinguish communities from one another (Cash, Kinnvall. 2017. p. 271).

Christopher S. Browning (2017) revise the relation of geopolitics and its implementations conducive to acquiring ontological security, examining the impact of EU:s growing concerns in the wake of Russian revanchist conduct on its geopolitical outlook. In contrast to the postnational project the EU claims to be – transcending sovereign borders and thus rising above being a geopolitical actor – the case is made that the Union in fact already is a unit of such, rejecting the regarding of it as unbound by geopolitical predicaments as an insufficient apprehension of geopolitics. (Browning, 2017).

Furthermore, Browning argues that what’s referred to the EU:s “geostrategies” are means in which the Union obtains ontological security, in the manner that these “reflect, reinforce, re-enact and routinize a particular conception of EU self-identity...” (Browning, 2017. p. 107) These practices thus reiterate a sense of continuity and grants it agency, through the “geopolitical ordering” of its ENP (European Neighbourhood Policy), which serve to satisfy the Union’s need to reassure its “stable sense of self-identity and coherence in its relations

with others” (ibid: 109). This ordering is in turn framed by the “mindscape” of the EU:s perception of its environment, also determining how it will act within the confines of the perceived outlines of its map (ibid:109).

The notion of re/disembodiment of the self within OSS has also been put forward by Kandida Purnell (2021) in relation to the theoretical framework of necropolitics, within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Purnell argues that the re/disembodiment of both collective and individual bodies is fluid, and at the mercy of the constant subjugation to existential “contest” (Purnell, 2021. p.7) – claiming that “any body can potentially and again gradually become known, used, and therefore be something else.”(Purnell, 2021. p.5). The distinction that “while some bodies are made more vulnerable than others, some have their ontological security protected” is made, and the procuring of said ontological security is made “via the repetition of speech acts and practices, which come to make bodies more or less secure.” (Purnell, 2021. p.5) In visualising the non-static process of re/disembodiment, Purnell aims to move beyond the predominantly dualist approach within OSS’ distinction between the concepts of *self* and *body* (Purnell, 2021).

The concept of state personhood – namely viewing the state as a person – which an embodied take on the self more or less is rooted in, is however not without contention. Alanna Krolikowski (2008) scrutinises the direct application of Giddens’ sociological framework to the studies of IR, rejecting the approach to the state as a “unitary actor” (Krolikowski, 2008. p.110). Krolikowski suggests that it is not states, but indeed individuals that endure ontological (in)security. Supporting instead an “individual-as-actor” approach (ibid:111), Krolikowski contends that such a point of departure avoids ignoring significant aspects pertinent to the concept as it was originally designed by Giddens, and thereby averts the risk of depleting it. Exemplified by contradictory behaviour in contrast with China’s assumed *rigid* attachment to routines, it’s argued that the discrepancy in Chinese foreign policy’s displayed *flexible* conduct corroborates a more individually, attribute attentive approach to decoding states’ basic trust. Rather than directly transmitting an interpersonal theory onto state level, Krolikowski suggests taking into account several factors which shape ontological security struggles on an individual level – a stance emanating from the findings that viewing the case of Chinese basic trust from an individual-as-actor perspective – as opposed to state-as-actor – helps disentangle the inconsistencies present in relation to China’s supposed rigid attachment. (Krolikowski, 2008).

Krolikowski builds this reasoning upon her interpretation of Jennifer Mitzen's basic trust system as not being *structural*, but "according importance to agent properties" (Krolikowski, 2008. p. 114). In other words, taking states' individual prerequisites for basic trust into account, as opposed to some interpretations viewing the theory as applicable to all states on a structural level. Krolikowski's deductions thus not only encompass a critical view of the concept of state personhood, problematising the upscaling of OST to interstate level – but also offers an alternative interpretation of Mitzen's basic trust system.

The basic trust model has been further assessed by Christopher S Browning and Pertti Joenniemi (2017), challenging what they argue is a one-sided application of the system to cases that display a rigidly characterised attachment. In other words, the claim that the existing literature within ontological security has "a tendency to focus precisely on instances where healthy basic trust, reflexivity and flexibility are absent." (Browning, Joenniemi. 2017. p. 35) is made, suggesting a lack of a holistic evaluation of the model. Furthermore, it's argued that this under-exploration of the concept has led to identity and selfhood being conflated, thus obscuring the mechanisms which dictate how "selves become connected to particular identities or articulate claims to identities in the way they do." (ibid: 40) and implicitly presuming that the self's already equipped with an identity. Consequently, by severing the self from the identities the self strives for in order to obtain ontological security, one can discern the process under which the self acquires identities in the constant "reflexive project of the self" (ibid: 40).

With previous research pertinent to the study's main focus laid bare – further underlining the research gap previously described – the following section will account for the theoretical framework of which the study is conducted within.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

In her distinguishing article from 2006, Jennifer Mitzen laid the foundation for the ontological security discipline within the field of Security Studies – challenging the view of considering the seeking of maximal *physical* security as the sole and utmost goal for any state operating within the anarchical system. Although reasonable as a point of departure, Mitzen argues this take on state behaviour inhibits sense-making of phenomenons which deviate

from this logic, as states sometimes operate in contradiction with what's in line with their search for physical security. In addition to protecting their territory and structure of governance, states also seek *ontological* security, a search which Mitzen defines as "the need to experience oneself as a whole, continuous person in time — as being rather than constantly changing — in order to realize a sense of agency" (Mitzen, 2006. p. 342). This security is acquired and maintained by sustaining continuity and predictability in routines and relationships with others. Being ontologically secure is thus defined as "...the condition that obtains when an individual has confident expectations, even if probabilistic, about the means–ends relationships that govern her social life." (Mitzen, 2006. p. 345). In the endeavour of securing the consistency of their self-perceived state identities, actors engage in relationships with others which confirm their self-image, or "self" (Mitzen, 2006. p. 344) – even those hazardous to their physical security. By the same logic that perilous engagements with rivalling states or "intractable conflicts" (Mitzen, 2005. p.343) can provide actors with ontological security, breaking free from these can inflict ontological *insecurity*. This consequently helps to explain the seemingly endless septic nature of some interstate relations, in spite of its mutually unfavourable consequences. (Mitzen, 2006.).

Ontological *insecurity* is in turn defined as "...the deep, incapacitating state of not knowing which dangers to confront and which to ignore, i.e. how to get by in the world." (Mitzen, 2006. p. 345). The proclivity to feel ontologically (in)secure is rooted in how functional the *basic trust* of the actor is, determining how the actor responds to disruptions to its routines. Mitzen presents us with the two general forms of attachments to routines: *flexible* and *rigid*. (Mitzen, 2006). A flexible attachment is associated with an ability to maintain a healthy distance towards routines, and the uncertainty which disruptions to them cause. A trust in the routines eventually being restored enables actors with a flexible attachment to endure small disruptions, which renders them less ontologically vulnerable. Actors which in turn lack this distance towards their routines possess a *rigid* attachment, where the uncertainty of disruptions is perceived as deeply threatening, as the actors in question align themselves excessively with their respective routines. This results in actors experiencing *anxiety*, which increases in step with how conscious the actor is of their necessity of the routines. A rigid attachment thus makes actors more predisposed to act irrationally in response to uncertainty and the anxiety it causes, out of the more or less desperate need to reinstate the routines of which they've come to identify themselves with. (Mitzen, 2006).

Importantly, Mitzen as previously mentioned states that “Ontological security is *security not of the body but of the self*” (Mitzen, 2006. p. 344). Building on the existing framework of OSS, Nina C. Krickel-Choi proposes in contrast to this disembodiment of the self that ontological security instead should be seen as “*security of the self-in-the-body*” (Krickel-Choi, 2022. p.159). Exemplified by the “North Korean abduction issue” in Japan (ibid:159), which refers to the kidnapping of 17 Japanese citizens by North Korea in the 1970s and 80s, Krickel-Choi assert that the role of the material body for ontological security hasn’t been fully appreciated in current literature. Drawing on the aforementioned works of R.D Laing and Anthony Giddens, the ineluctable union of body and mind needed for the sense of feeling ontologically secure is argued. Concisely and aptly put, “...ontological security-seeking actors are embodied...” and consequently “...this fact matters for their sense of being and their subsequent actions.” (ibid:160). Emanating from a point of departure which argues that the bodily forms of statehood to its core constitutes physical territory and the citizens tied to it, the importance of the body to the self is illustrated in light of the disproportionate priority the “abduction issue” has been given in Japanese foreign policy – trumping issues which pose a much larger threat to the physical security of Japan. Krickel-Choi argues that the abductions in question undermined Japan’s ability to perform as a state, confirming that physical damage even on a relatively small scale can cause serious damage to the ontological security of a state. Importantly though, “...this does not mean that all physical violations generate feelings of anxiety, but only those that challenge the particularly performed and experienced embodied self.” (ibid:176). An embodied view of the self, which highlights the body’s importance to ontological and psychical security alike, thus helps illuminate the understanding of when and how these two converge. (Krickel-Choi, 2022.).

Krickel-Choi’s chosen case of the North Korean abduction of Japanese citizens constitutes as she puts it a “disproportionate response to a comparatively ‘minor’ threat...”(Krickel-Choi, 2022. p. 160), a phrase which fittingly also can be put in the context of describing the case of Rose Island. There are several other observations in Krickel Choi’s reasoning which further underpin her central thesis’ relevance in relation to the case at hand. A crucial aspect of the embodied state is the subjugation of the citizens of the territory in question to “exclusive state protection” (ibid:170). One part of exercising this exclusive right is the “claiming, delineating and protecting of territory.” (ibid:170), while another is “...laying claim to the exclusive right to decide over their citizens’ lives” (ibid.: 170). Krickel-Choi further argues

that the absence of embodying the state has led to current OSS not acknowledging "...that a failure to protect the body, whether in the form of citizens or territory, indicates a failure by the state to perform as a state." (ibid:171). The threat of transgressions on the integrity of the body thus generates anxiety, since harm inflicted on the body is harm inflicted on the self alike. Even minor infringements that jeopardise the body-mind balance and undermine the state's ability to perform as a state consequently become sources of great anxiety, creating a need to reinstate their sense of self. Importantly, Krickel-Choi states that as much as harm inflicted to the body can generate devastating psychological effects, "... a strengthening or reaffirming of the body can enhance a feeling of ontological security." (ibid:171). In other words, the need for the state to constantly reiterate their bodily self in order to procure ontological security can result in different reaffirmations, "...for example by emphasising borders, increasing national unity, or strengthening protective capabilities in defence of that body." (ibid.:171).

Furthermore, Krickel-Choi brings forward the case of when a state is being threatened to its very ontological core, and not just in its more specific identity as being for example neutral, economically prospering or peaceful. In other words, scenarios where the question is raised of whether the state is in fact even a proper state at all can occur, calling for unhesitating reaffirmations of the self to avoid the deeply troubling limbo of uncertainty (Krickel-Choi, 2022). Another interesting observation in relation to the case at hand lies in the Krickel-Choi's sense-making of Japan's reassertion of its self, in response to the abduction issue: "This is because the body of the state is not given but needs to be continuously performed and reaffirmed, and because the body is the visible aspect of the self, subject to the judging gaze of others. Hence, Japan's actions can be further understood as working towards keeping up the appearance of intact sovereign statehood." (Krickel-Choi, 2022. p.175).

With these formulations in mind, one can clearly make out how an undermining of the prerogative sovereign states possess to govern over its physical territory and citizens might cause serious anxiety to the state which encounters such contention. Even small and seemingly negligible disruptions contending bodily integrity thus possess the ability to cause uncertainty great enough to trigger disproportionate backlash. In light of such deductions, the logic behind the behaviour conducted by the Italian state in its reaction to the emergence of the Republic of Rose Island begins to become clearer. The contours of this inference are further outlined by the fact that Rose Island didn't constitute part of Italian territory, yet was

seen as a mock state within the body of the state. (Camera dei Deputati, 5th of July 1968. p. 143-144.) Furthermore, the notion of being contested in your ability to perform as a state – challenging the very credibility and status as a state at all – highlights the deep anxiety such queries can cause, as well as the urgent need for reaffirmation it calls for. With the body under constant scrutiny from critical bystanders, ceaseless reassertions of the body's firmness are needed to avert any questioning of its integrity.

The study will go on to further argue that this now fleshed-out account of the embodied self can help us make sense of the case of Rose Island, justifying the bodily reattachment to the self. Furthermore, the inconsistencies in the stated, dual view of the island's emplacement arguably advocates the problematization of the nature of the body, and what delimits its perimeters. Lastly, the rigid attachment predisposing the irrational actions taken in face of the perceived threat to the embodied self's continuity will be discerned. The two following sections detail the empirical material at hand, and the methodology used to decode it.

3. METHODOLOGY:

In order to analyse the case at hand and its implications on the ontological (in)security of the Republic of Italy, a qualitative text analysis with an interpretivist approach is conducted on the empirical material. With a fairly large portion of the material on the subject being in Italian, AI-generated translations from Italian to English have been made through the program Chat GTP when necessary. Although obviously not bulletproof, the translations have been deemed considerably coherent and accurate. With that said, it undoubtedly appears more ideal to analyse material in its original language, thereby avoiding the risk of compromising its signification in the process of translating it. All things considered, the aspect of analysing translated content has not been considered a problem for the study's validity or reliability. The statements most central to the analysis have been tested against other translation services, providing if not identical then highly similar translations with undifferentiated meaning.

Excerpts from two separate interpellations in the Italian Chamber of Deputies from 1968, as well as the response to one of the interpellations by the Minister of the Interior at the time, are put forward in the analysis and their ontological implications disentangled. Additionally,

relevant segments from the petition submitted by Giorgio Rosa et al. to the European Council are presented and scrutinised, revealing further reason for the arguments made.

Although the amount of official statements presented admittedly is not of an overwhelming figure, the quotations and its formulations at hand are key in understanding the ontological anxiety behind the procedure – as will be further discussed in the analysis. Rather than aiming to bolster the study’s congruence on sheer quantity of data in accordance with the study’s hypothesis, the selected material is meant to mediate the pervading attitude towards the microstate in the political top echelon at the time of the events. This in turn helps to provide the study with the adequate foundation necessary to visualise the underlying anxiety, as the study will further argue.

With that said, there are some clarifications to be made in the spirit of transparency. The petition to the European Council is written and signed by the creators of the Republic of Rose Island and its territory, as well as by their partners, and is therefore to be analysed in light of that fact. Nonetheless, it constitutes a primary source providing important background to the proceeding, as well as the views of the plaintiffs, in regards to the official reasons given for the decision of occupying and ultimately demolishing their creation. Furthermore, it bears mentioning again that the study has the theoretical approach of exploring the (dis)embodiment of the self *in relation* to the case, and does not aim to primarily provide a right or wrong verdict on the grounds of its crisis management.

All things considered, additional official statements in line with those presented would have served to further strengthen the study’s main argument. With more time and access to investigate deeper into Italian records, such findings or contradictory ones might have come to light. However, given the time frame and scale of the study, a necessary delimitation has been made in terms of assembling the empirical groundwork. Furthermore, the fact still stands that the Italian state acted with swift austerity against the micro-republic, militarily occupying and obliterating it within less than a year from its birth. This in turn further supports the notion that the selected quotations are indicative of the views of the most senior representatives of the Italian State at the time of the events, and not “cherry-picked” and disjointed quotes without any real political buoyancy.

Some clarifications of significant concepts pertinent to the field of study are also relevant to discuss in this section, in order to illustrate in which light actions or proceedings relating to the case are seen as and deemed symptoms of ontological insecurity. Central to understanding ontological security theory is the concept of *anxiety*, which can be defined broadly as “... a feeling of inner turmoil over the uncertainty of anticipated events.” (Ejdus, 2020. p. 9). Anxiety stands in contrast to *fear*, which stems from “real”, physical threats in concrete terms, whereas anxiety “disregards the object” in the sense that the object in question does not dictate the level of anxiety the subject is experiencing. The extent to which anxiety is felt is instead determined by the “...person’s sense of power and cognitive control over the external world.”. (Freud, 1974: 395).

With the notion of anxiety and its distinction with fear somewhat unravelled, a highly simplified chart differentiating the two and how they relate to reactions to perceived threats can be constructed, to more easily and visually highlight the ideal types for each emotion. Whereas “proportionate” action taken in response to “real” and concrete threats to the physical security of a state suggests *fear* as catalyst, equally extensive measures with no discernible physical threat– or a reaction disproportionate to the threat’s intrinsic potential to inflict physical harm – in turn indicates *anxiety* as the trigger.

Within the reasoning of this logical inference, the following chart has been assembled:

EMOTION	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Example:</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
FEAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – An emotion stemming from “real”, physical and external threats which can be concretised in material terms. 	<p>"A little Cuba in the sea of Rimini."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Quote from a newspaper article reporting on the construction of Rose Island (Musilli, 2021). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In light of the time of the events, this quote and others hinting at a possible Soviet involvement arguably stem from the physical insecurity of the Cold War. – In response to the notion of the island emerging out of clandestine purposes, the catalysing emotion behind the statement arguably is <i>fear</i>
ANXIETY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A feeling of inner turmoil over the uncertainty of anticipated events – Disregards the object, in the sense that the object in question does not dictate the level of anxiety the subject is experiencing. 	<p>“In anticipation of the opening of a restaurant bar, the person in charge of SPIC even claimed, with concrete demonstrations (flag, offices, coins, stamps), a supposed autonomy of the artificial island from the Italian state. A situation prejudicial to public order and safety arose.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Statement by the Minister of the Interior Francesco Restivo in a chamber session held on the 18th of October 1968, in response to an interpellation questioning the government’s stance on the Republic of Rose Island 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Declaring the emergence of a 20x20 metres platform without any military capabilities “a situation prejudicial to public order and safety” indicates a disproportionate assessment of the situation. – Considering the lack of physical threat and the disproportionate response to it, the catalysing emotion behind the statement is arguably <i>anxiety</i>

This chart and its examples, of course, does not capture the many nuances of fear and anxiety, and the grey areas in which the lines separating the two concepts disintegrate. Physical threats which span beyond the more apparent security concerns of a malevolent third party working behind the scenes are not included – nor does the chart aim to outline a comprehensive definition of what qualifies as a (dis)proportionate response. Such fine-meshed structure, encompassing all aspects of the perception of physical threats, disruptions to routines and the adequate response is not possible to produce within the frame of a chart, or any other measurement tool. Still, the chart serves its purpose in providing a more synoptic overview of the logical framework put forward, with the aim of aiding us in identifying indications suggesting a rigid attachments to routines.

3.1 Empirical material

The empirical material at hand consists of primary sources, such as official documents including the aforementioned excerpts from interpellations in the Italian Chamber of Deputies, and the petition from the 21st of July 1970 to the European Council submitted by Giorgio Rosa et al. Along with the stated material is the book *Isola delle Rose. Insulo de la Rozoj. La libertà fa paura* (2021) by the Italian journalist Giuseppe Musilli, as well as some secondary sources such as newspaper articles. The book features interviews of key individuals on both sides of the fence, along with thorough descriptions of the course of events of which the case encompasses. Paired with the official documents from the archives of the Council of Europe and the Italian Chamber of Deputies, the empirical material at hand creates a comprehensive image of the case, the chain of events leading up to the ultimate destruction of the island, as well as the views of the policy makers at the time of the republic's short-lived existence. Finally, the Encyclopædia Britannica has been consulted in regards to providing the historical background on the Republic of Italy, found in the opening part of the analysis. The Encyclopædia Britannica is a highly esteemed encyclopaedia, with a history that stretches quarter of a millennium years back – making it the oldest still active and continuously published encyclopaedia in the world.

In short, the empirical material at hand constitutes a valid background on which the theoretical framework presented can be applied. As the study is more theory based with an interpretivist approach, the relatively slender empirical girth is deemed justifiable for the purposes of the study.

4. ANALYSIS:

Before delving further into the ontological implications of the case, background information detailing the chain of events of which the case constitutes is needed. Furthermore, an overview of the circumstances making the Republic of Italy prone to feelings of ontological insecurity at the time of the events is relevant to the discussion, as it visualises the prerequisites predetermining the rigid attachment to disruptions of the sort that the Republic of Rose Island constituted. The following two sections will therefore offer a brief account of

the proceedings, as well as the adjacent historical context forming the preconditions that dictated how the events unfolded.

4.1 Background: Republic of Italy

The Republic of Italy in the year of 1968 was a nation marred by the events wrapping up the end of the Second World War. With the Fascist regime coming to a definite end in 1945 after fighting on the losing side of the Axis powers, the country was little more than two decades away from the autocratic collapse and subsequent climb back from the depths of it. The war had been paved by military shortcomings – most notably by the defeats in North Africa and total failure to occupy Greece, both resulting in the need of extensive aid from Nazi Germany. By 1943, Italy had lost their territorial domains in both North and Eastern Africa and was enduring regular bombing. First succumbing to the invasion of the Allies, dictator Benito Mussolini's position was in jeopardy before Italy finally was incorporated as a protectorate to Nazi Germany, under the name of the Republic of Saló. After this puppet regime fell along with Mussolini and the rest of the Axis powers in 1945, the birth of the Italian Republic was a fact. As a result of the Peace Treaty of Paris in 1947, the new Republic was forced to give up all their African colonies, as well as territories in the Alps along with islands in the Eastern Mediterranean. Further territorial issues however remained, as the delicate question of the city of Trieste was left unsolved. Not until 1954 was the city put back under Italian administration, after formerly being divided into two parts where Yugoslavia controlled one of them. Yugoslavia had previously claimed the region after taking it in 1945, and thereafter undertaken a comprehensive purge resulting in the killings of thousands of Italians. This and further interrelational disputes made this regional strife illustrative for the tensions that existed between the two nations during the subsequent Cold War. (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2023).

In short, the young Republic of Italy was in 1968 not in any sense of the word a politically, or arguably ontologically stable state. The Nato membership in 1949 securing its military alliances aside (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2023), the lack of continuity of routines and relations needed for ontological security was still ubiquitous. Territorial strifes, a brutal autocratic rule, military shortcomings and the deep insecurities of war were yet discernible in the rear window of the newborn democracy – laying the groundwork thin for the nation to

establish the healthy basic trust, required for flexible responses to disruptions of the sort that the Republic of Rose Island constituted.

4.2 Background: Republic of Rose Island

In the late spring and early summer of 1968, the headlines of the Italian press covered a peculiar case on the eastern coast of the Italian peninsula. In the contiguous waters just outside the city of Rimini, a two-floor platform measuring 400 square metres had been erected on top of nine pylons in the Adriatic Sea. The engineer behind the construction, Giorgio Rosa, had long nurtured a dream of autonomy from the obstructive shackles of state bureaucracy. Building had started already in the early sixties, conducted by Rosa's company SPIC with the necessary permits to export the materials and, as stated by the Minister of the Interior at the time, "carry out experimental work involving the installation of poles..." (Camera dei Deputati, 18th of October 1968. p. 387. AI-generated translation). As the construction proceeded, Rosa's creation started taking the form which was going to materialise his yearning for self-rule. (Musilli, 2021).

And so, on the 1st of May 1968, the independence of the *Respubliko de la Insulo de la Rozoj* (Esperanto for the Republic of Rose Island) was declared upon the very same platform which made up the territorial borders of Rosa's state. Complete with a flag, stamps, the official language of Esperanto as well as a cabinet of Ministers, the new-born state drew the attention of tourists and both national and international magazines – along with the upper echelons of the Italian State. Initially unobstructed by authorities, a growing concern arose within the ranks of the polity in the wake of the declaration of independence, culminating on the 25th of June 1968. Only 55 days after its birth, an assembled group of officials from the Italian Carabinieri (National military police of Italy), police and Finanza di Guardia (Finance Guard, authority of the Ministry of Finance) occupied the platform, blocking any passage to or from the artificial island. Subsequently, an order was issued by the Rimini Port Authorities on behalf of the Ministry of the Mercantile Marine (Chierici et al., 1970.), commanding the representatives of SPIC to destroy the island. In reply to the order, an appeal to suspend its execution was submitted by SPIC to the Italian Council of State. Following the rejection of the appeal, the island was demolished on the 13th of February 1969 with hundreds of kilos of explosives attached to the seabed. (Musilli, 2021).

With this background providing an overview of the events of prime importance to the case, a closer interrogation of the state of affairs and their ontological ramifications follows.

Logically ordered, the exhibition of the Italian state's symptoms of rigid attachment precedes the subsequent exposition of the embodied self, and its transcendent capacity.

4.3 Rigid attachment

After the island's dramatic downfall in 1969, Giorgio Rosa and his associates at SPIC authored a petition to the Council of Europe disputing the actions taken's accordance with Italian and international law – as well as pleading for their investigation of the case to determine whether the Italian State “may have acted in violation of human rights in the case of the Island of Roses” (Chierici et al., 1970. p.7).

Contending several transgressions within the frame of the state's taken measures, the petition divulges several aspects of the proceeding which highlight the disproportionality of the course of action, in relation to the grade of severity of the island's supposed unlawfulness. The sheer scale of the assembled squad of officials from different branches of the Italian law enforcement and armed forces – embarking the island unannounced without any prior notification given to the owners of the island (Chierici et al., 1970) – in itself demonstrates a gravity not commensurate with the actual threat the island could have possibly posed. Nor was the maintained military occupation of the island on par with the situation in question, refusing all access to or from the island and detaining the sole resident present at the time of the occupation for several days (Musilli, 2021). Furthermore, as the island de facto was located outside Italian territory, the legal room for manoeuvre for the Italian state to operate within was limited to matters concerning customs, taxation, health and immigration laws, in accordance with the Geneva Convention of 1958. (Chierici et al., 1970. p. 3). However, none of the claims justifying the occupation and subsequent demolition of the island were in reference to these policy areas. In fact, no search warrant or warrant of any other kind were put forward – nor was the activity the platform was suspected of committing disclosed until after the occupation, in a decision presented to the representatives of SPIC on the 17th of August 1968. (Chierici et al., 1970. p. 5)

Claims were instead later made that the island was obstructing navigation in the contiguous waters of Italy (ibid: 3), as well as conflicting with the exclusive rights of Italy's (at the time

of the events) state owned and leading energy company ENI to exploit “liquid and gaseous hydrocarbons in the territorial sea and continental shelf.” (Camera dei Deputati, 18th of October 1968. p. 388. AI-generated translation). However, no evidence points to the island having ambitions of extracting natural resources of the type which would interfere with the stated rights of ENI. Aptly enough, the petition furthermore raises the question of a similar case, namely the establishment of an even bigger platform in the contiguous waters of Italy built for “industrial purposes” by an Italian company (ibid: 7). The construction and operation of said platform, in close time proximity with Rose Island, faced no repercussions from Italian authorities, although reasonably constituting similar interference with navigation or any of the other claims that were made in opposition to Rose Island. Such disparity undoubtedly evokes the sense that the motivations behind the island’s demolition originated from elsewhere than the stated navigational issue, further reinforcing the notion that the act of declaring independence instigated the measures taken. Moreover, the situation of the island had also been marked out “in accordance with the agreements concluded between the SPIC and the Ministry of the Italian Mercantile Marine” (Chierici et al., 1970. p. 3). Thus, the 20 x 20 metres large platform should have been of no issue to the navigational possibilities in the contiguous waters outside the coast of Rimini.

In the decision of the Italian Council of State from the 17th of June 1969, recounting the grounds for the destruction of the island, the conduct was further justified by arguing that “the activity of a citizen is subject to the ‘uncensurable appreciation of the State’ ”, even if said activity was “only potential” (ibid: 4). Moreover, in response to the deprivation of the private property the platform constituted, the decision states it as a result of the “prudent, discretionary judgement of the State authority” (ibid: 4). As the authors of the petition quite reasonably assert, such rationalisation of the measures implicitly sanctions capricious government actions. What’s more, it arguably adds to the sensation that the behaviour sprung from other motivations than those officially stated, considering the arbitrariness of the justification. Lastly, it further corroborates the notion of Italy viewing their line of action as being within the scope of their jurisdiction, in contrast with the territorial demarcation suggesting the opposite. This highlights the question of the transcendent potential of the embodied self, which will be discussed further in the upcoming section.

With these inconsistencies and disproportionate measures displayed and argued for, it is relevant to return to the previously exhibited chart, to review the basis on which an inference can be drawn from this account:

EMOTION	Definition	Example	Explanation
FEAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – An emotion stemming from “real”, physical and external threats which can be concretised in material terms. 	<p>"A little Cuba in the sea of Rimini."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Quote from a newspaper article reporting on the construction of Rose Island (Musilli, 2021). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In light of the time of the events, this quote and others hinting at a possible Soviet involvement (Musilli, 2021) arguably stem from the physical insecurity of the Cold War. – In response to the notion of the island emerging out of clandestine purposes, the catalysing emotion therefore arguably is <i>fear</i>
ANXIETY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A feeling of inner turmoil over the uncertainty of anticipated events – Disregards the object in the sense that the object in question does not dictate the level of anxiety the subject is experiencing. 	<p>“In anticipation of the opening of a restaurant bar, the person in charge of SPIC even claimed, with concrete demonstrations (flag, offices, coins, stamps), a supposed autonomy of the artificial island from the Italian state. A situation prejudicial to public order and safety arose.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Statement by the Minister of the Interior Francesco Restivo in a chamber session held on the 18th of October 1968, in response to an interpellation questioning the government’s stance on the Republic of Rose Island 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Declaring the emergence of a 20x20 metres platform without any military capabilities “a situation prejudicial to public order and safety” indicates a disproportionate assessment of the situation. – Considering the lack of physical threat and the disproportionate response to it, the catalysing emotion is arguably <i>anxiety</i>

Given the lack of consistency, and considering the irregularities presented, the case can be made that the conduct of the Italian state in response to the micro-republic’s emergence is symptomatic of a rigid attachment to routines – a conduct thus fueled by anxiety engendered by the disruption the island caused. This is further supported by the aforementioned historical tribulations adjacent in time to the events. The better part of the first half of the 20th century saw Italy go through a totalitarian regime, a devastating world war with humiliating losses of territory and sovereignty, as well as the political instability this induced. Giorgio Rosa’s somewhat sardonic comment on the occupation of the island as “the only war Italy’s ever won” (Imarisio, 2009), might therefore not be far-fetched from the ontologically insecure

tendencies that the siege suggests. That is to say, it is not inconceivable to imagine that the historical proximity to the defeats of the Second World War – as well as the downfall and aftermath of the Fascist regime – played a part in predisposing a disproportionate reaction to *any* contention of territory, or Italy’s ability to perform as a state. Hence, viewing Italy’s attachment to routines as rigid helps explain why the declaration of independence appeared as such an impudent challenge of the exclusive rights reserved by the state – consequently becoming a pressing matter for the state, to shut down all indications of its sovereignty being undermined.

With the rigid attachment to routines, its engendering of anxiety and the utterances now accounted for, the underlying ontological insecurity inclining the Republic of Italy’s stark reaction to the micro-republic’s surfacing is made visible. With this frailty to disruptions disclosed, the following section will dismantle how the case further goes to show that the body is not separated, but conjoined with the ontological self. Furthermore, it demonstrates the border-transcending potential of the body.

4.4 The transcendent body

Two parliamentary interpellations were made in the year of 1968 on the subject of the Republic of Rose Island to the Minister of the Interior at the time, Fransesco Restivo. The first one was presented by the MP (Member of Parliament) Stefano Menicacci of the party MSI (Italian Social Movement), in the session held on the 5th of July 1968. It inquires about the government’s stance on the matter, questioning how the construction of the platform was allowed to continue despite reported orders on its suspension from the Rimini port authority, as well as what directives marine authorities had been given in relation to its existence. Two excerpts from this interpellation are of particular interest:

*“I would like to understand the reasons why, despite the ministerial order, the construction not only continued but also led to the establishment of habitable conditions, the setup of shops, the stamping of postage stamps, the hoisting of a flag, and the minting of currency. **All of this gives rise to the presumption of the existence of a mock state within the Italian state.**”* (Camera dei Deputati, 5th of July 1968. p. 143-144. AI-generated translation, my highlighting.)

This passage underlines the duality of the stance on Rose Island pervading the political leadership, devaluing the newly formed republic to a “mock state” whilst still addressing it as an issue to be dealt with urgently. Interestingly, Menicacci interprets the micro-state as existing “within the Italian state”, despite it de facto not being part of Italian territory – neither its terra firma nor its coastal waters. This interpretation raises questions as to how the body of the state is perceived, and its importance to the self. The phrasing suggests that the island constitutes part of the Republic of Italy in a sense which evidently transcends the strictly physical definition of being – a definition which, again, by nature of the island’s location makes Menicacci’s statement incorrect. This in turn illustrates how the body was perceived, enveloping the island into the notion of the self despite the territorial contradictions. Accordingly, the micro-republic situated on the platform arguably took the somewhat paradoxical state of existing both inside *and* outside the state of Italy – demonstrating that a material body can be interpreted as part of a state’s ontological self, while physically existing outside the outskirts of the territorial borders.

Furthermore, Menicacci addresses the urgency of the matter, and the potentially baneful consequences perceived:

*Additionally, I request to know how the Ministry intends to intervene with the **utmost urgency** to ensure compliance with the Navigation Code and the laws of the Republic in cases like this. I also want to know how the Ministry plans to **uphold the state's authority**, in line with the national legal system, **to prevent any economic and moral repercussions resulting from uncontrolled initiatives by third parties.**” (Camera dei Deputati, 5th of July 1968. p.144. AI-generated translation, my highlighting.)*

In this passage the urgency of the matter is explicitly emphasised, along with the importance of reiterating the bodily self, to prevent the state’s ability to perform being undermined or questioned further. The “moral repercussions” at risk afflicting the Italian state if action is not taken immediately, are not further explained in the interpellation – although deciphering the implicit signification of the statement hardly constitutes an insurmountable obstacle. The animosity towards the Republic of Rose Island’s undermining of Italy’s prerogative of exclusive state protection – along with the strong disinclination concerning the risk of the micro-republic becoming a precarious precedent – is highly present throughout the interpellation, and particularly in the excerpt presented. It indicates both the ontological

insecurity this “uncontrolled initiative” engendered, by nature of its disruptions to the established routines of Italy, and the “utmost urgency” of which the body of the self must be reaffirmed in order to reduce the anxiety brought upon it.

The second interpellation, far less extensive but instead emphasising the medial impact, was presented by the MP Nicola Pagliarani of the party PCI (Italian Communist Party) only a week later, on the session held on the 10th of July:

*“To know the background as well as the current official stance taken by the Ministry regarding the construction known as "L'Insulo de la Rozoj" located off the coast of Rimini, which has **received significant coverage in both national and international media.**”*(Camera dei Deputati, 10th of July 1968. p.338. AI-generated translation, my highlighting.)

The mentioning of the “significant coverage in both national and international media” indicates, yet again, the sense of urgency created by the media sprawl the case generated – prompting a swift response from the government to avoid further “economic and moral repercussions”, as the MP Menicacci put it. This passage underlines the particularly dire need to reiterate the body of the self when being under the watching eye from outside spectators, “...because the body is the visible aspect of the self, subject to the judging gaze of others.” (Krickel-Choi, 2022. p.175). A disruption of the kind that Rose Island comprises, all the while gaining international coverage, consequently amplifies the acute necessity of reaffirmation, calling for actions consistent with “keeping up the appearance of intact sovereign statehood.” (ibid: 175)

Important to note is also that the two interpellations stem from each ends of the political spectrum. The Italian Social Movement was a far-right party founded after the Second World War in 1946 by supporters of Benito Mussolini (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2023), while the Italian Communist Party needs no further introduction to reveal its political affiliation. Furthermore, the government at the time of the events was a centre-left coalition with the Democratic Centre as the ruling party (Musilli, 2021). This indicates the party-crossing nature of the issue, leading it away from being a mere difference of opinion between parties on opposite sides of the chamber. A 20x20 metres big platform outside the small town of Rimini gaining the attention and concern of all political camps nationally, this further supports the notion of its perceived threat being of a different nature. Additionally, it serves to

demonstrate that the interpellations chosen, as mentioned earlier, are not individual, disjointed statements without anchoring at the table of the policymakers.

The aforementioned interpellation presented by MP Pagliarani was in turn answered by the Minister Restivo, in a session held on the 18th of October 1968. In the written response the course of events from the commencement of the construction, to the orders of demolition are thoroughly described, as well as the legal framework within which the island allegedly infringed. Among the references to specific law decrees motivating the measures taken, the following excerpt is of particular interest:

“In anticipation of the opening of a restaurant bar, the person in charge of SPIC even claimed, with concrete demonstrations (flag, offices, coins, stamps), a supposed autonomy of the artificial island from the Italian state. A situation prejudicial to public order and safety arose. Consequently, on June 25, 1968, the police were mobilised to evacuate the platform's occupants, excluding only the essential personnel for maintenance and operation of the lighting facilities.” (Camera dei Deputati, 18th of October 1968. p.387. AI-generated translation. My highlighting).

The highlighted passage and its implications open up for scrutiny. Again, a 20x20 metres large platform on international waters, without any known military power or exhibited aggression created “a situation prejudicial to public order and safety”. This wording is in turn directly preceded by a reference to the declaration of independence of the micro-republic, accentuating the connection between the autonomous claim and the perceived threat against “public order and safety”. No further explanations in relation to *how* the platform or its autonomy posed a considerable threat to the maintenance of order and safety are given in the reply – leaving the remainder of the account only further detailing the actions, without supplemental context as to which parts of “public order and safety” were at stake.

Thus, the implications are again subject to interpretation. For all the claims of legal trespassing that the Minister of the Interior makes, the threat jeopardising specifically safety and order is arguably in relation to the declaration of autonomy. With the threat of military force ruled out, and the platform’s situation in effect not violating Italian territory, making sense of how the Republic of Rose Island could generate circumstances deemed perilous to public safety and order by the Minister of the Interior indicates a rationale beyond legal and

physical concerns. Consequently, the formulations of the Minister of the Interior can be decoded as further underpinning the ontological insecurity ubiquitously permeating the case. When the unsettling act of Giorgio Rosa severing his island from the sovereign body came into the consciousness of the Italian polity, the ontological disarray induced the Minister of the Interior to label a 400 square metres large platform, without any military capabilities of any sort, a “situation prejudicial to public order and safety”. This further underscores the firmly intertwined relationship between feeling safe in your body and its boundaries and being ontologically secure – even when the perceived body territorially transcends the physical boundaries.

Accordingly, the rephrasing of ontological security as meaning *security of the self-in-the body* appears to hold water, but with the important reservation – and indeed addition – that the embodied self evidently isn’t limited to the physical borders of the state. Consequently, by problematising the previously assumed synonymous nature of the material body and the judicial territory of the state, the *transcendent* nature of the embodied self has now been distinguished – anchored in the presented, contradictory statements and actions taken by senior officials of the Italian State.

5. CONCLUSION

By constructing an island in the contiguous waters of the Republic of Italy and declaring it independent, Giorgio Rosa created a disruption in the routines of the ontologically insecure Italy, which in the light of their anxiety due to maladaptive attachment appeared as an undermining of their “sovereign body” and the exclusive right to govern the people within that territory. Even though the island didn’t share or infringe on the territorial borders of the Italian Republic, it was still perceived as part of this body as exemplified in the statements presented. This explains why the Italian state acted so harshly and unequivocally determined towards the micro-state, which could have just as easily been dismissed as a spaced-out, utopian daydream project in the spirit of the times. It is arguably an even stronger case for the importance of the body to ontological security than Krickel-Choi’s exemplification of the Japanese abduction issue, since no physical harm or threat of harm was ever brought upon the Italian state by the micro-republic. Moreover, the emergence of the island, as argued, involved no territorial transgressions on the sovereignty of Italy, as it did in the case of the abduction issue. Despite this absence of physical threat, the issue of Rose Island managed to

climb its way up on the governmental agenda far and rapidly enough, for the issue to be “resolved” in a matter of months. In light of these findings, the study has problematised the dynamics between the judicial boundaries of the state and the material body, illuminating the body’s importance for the ontological self, as well as visualising the transcendent nature of its imagining.

That being said, there obviously exists some objections to an unambiguous inference of the causes behind the unfolding of events. The case that the state of Italy acted fully within the rights of their sovereignty – as well as both the national and international legal framework at the time – can arguably be made. An in-depth scrutiny of the legality of the undertaking is however not in any sense the focus of the study, and has therefore not been considered significantly. To be sure, there are also grounds on which the legitimacy of the Italian conduct can be questioned, as has been shown. Regardless, the aspect of lawfulness has little bearing on the most principal target of the study.

Nor can the zeitgeist and the tensions characterising the bipolar world order of 1968 be completely ignored when examining the case. With the student protests of ‘68 creating political disarray at the height of the Cold War, the measures taken could feasibly be linked to plausible, physical security concerns. As mentioned earlier, rumours alluding to a possible Soviet involvement in connection to the island flourished, fueled by media speculation. However, such an assessment is not within the grasp or interest of this study to make, and, yet again, has hence not been considered as it transcends the objective of the study. Equally, no official records or statements in relation to the case lend this scenario any credibility. Still, this aspect underlines the difficulties in differentiating anxiety from fear as catalysing emotions when analysing state behaviour. As mentioned earlier, in relation to the chart constructed for this study, the line between the two is far from unambiguous, and constantly subject for interpretation as the nature of state concerns naturally is multifaceted. However, the study has hopefully been successful in providing a detailed account of the arguments supporting the view of the Italian state’s conduct as anxiety-fueled.

All in all, the study bestows the field of OSS with an analytical broadening of the concept of the self, applied on an unprecedented case, on which further research can build upon. The research mapping of the embodied self remains comparatively uncharted within the field of study, and so additional probing into how the material body affects ontological (in)security

could unlock new insights on seemingly erratic state behaviour. Illustrating the border-transcending capacity of the body opens up for a new analytical outlook on the ontological security-seeking of states, and will hopefully spark future explorations into the nature and significance of the body. Ascribing entitlement to extraterritorial areas, justifying measures taken beyond jurisdictional boundaries, is far from a thing of the past, and so a critical eye on such proceedings remains relevant.

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