



# THE COLLOQUIUM

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THE UNDERGRADUATE POLITICAL SCIENCE  
JOURNAL OF BOSTON COLLEGE

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# THE COLLOQUIUM

THE UNDERGRADUATE POLITICAL SCIENCE  
JOURNAL OF BOSTON COLLEGE

## MISSION STATEMENT

TO ADDRESS, PONDER, AND CRITIQUE THE  
POLITICAL ISSUES OF PAST AND PRESENT

## ABOUT THE JOURNAL

THE COLLOQUIUM IS BOSTON COLLEGE'S LEADING POLITICAL SCIENCE PUBLICATION. SERVING AS A FORUM TO PROMOTE ACADEMIC DIALOGUE AND EXCHANGE BOTH WITHIN AND OUTSIDE OF THE UNIVERSITY'S POLITICAL SCIENCE COMMUNITY, THE COLLOQUIUM EXPANDS UPON THE TRADITIONAL OFFERINGS OF A POLITICAL SCIENCE EDUCATION. COUPLED WITH THE DISCIPLINE'S INTENSIVE WRITING AND CRITICAL THINKING NATURE, THE COLLOQUIUM FURTHERS THE MEANS THROUGH WHICH STUDENTS ARE ABLE TO ADDRESS, PONDER, AND CRITIQUE THE POLITICAL ISSUES OF PAST AND PRESENT.

Front Cover Featuring:

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Redon, Odilon. Everywhere Eyeballs Aflame. 1888. Charcoal and chalk on paper. Public Domain Image Archive. The Public Domain Review. <https://publicdomainreview.org/collection/dore-new-zealander/>.

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# LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Reader,

In the midst of major threats to academic pursuits both by way of funding cuts and governmental overreach into the university, the amplification and elevation of student voices is now more important than ever. After a four-year publication hiatus, our editorial team has worked tirelessly to ensure that avenues for public discourse and debate about politics remain available. We have worked with a team of notable advisors to awaken *The Colloquium* from its slumber and, in line with the journal's mission, expand upon the traditional offerings for scholarship amongst political science undergraduates. Our editorial team was pleased to receive many deeply thoughtful submissions from university students across the city of Boston, reassuring us that the drive for academic scholarship is alive and well amongst the youth. The selection process was highly competitive, and thus, the articles featured in this edition represent only the most thoughtful, highly researched, and prescient article submissions we received.

Our issue opens with two pieces touching on immigration, one focusing on the French colonial legacy and the other on immigrant voters in the US and the UK. The debate surrounding immigration is not only pervasive and polarizing in the US, but globally, and these articles compel us to investigate the institutions that facilitate this growing hostility. We then turn to an examination of the laws that govern the taxation of indigenous people and next, a work on Spinoza's political philosophy. Both of these articles inspire scrutiny of the social contracts that govern us and invite an analytical discussion of their relevance today. Our next article tackles the diploma divide and growing domestic political polarization in the United States. Then, the scope of analysis widens with an analysis of globalization and human trafficking as a form of modern slavery. We conclude with two articles focusing on the Middle East with unique and enthralling perspectives highlighting Israeli presence. While one touches on alliances and the other touches on intelligence, they both emphasize learning from the past to build stronger relationships and institutions. Together, these articles tell the story of the plights of modernity, the history that shapes us, and the reconceptualization of our role in perpetuating a flawed system.

Our cover art features Doré's *The New Zealander*, depicting a fallen London. The ruins of empire embodied in his work evoke a sense of disarray and disorientation that can be felt in the United States today. We see a hegemon that once stood as a bastion of hope for immigrants, like the titular figure of Doré's art, but whose institutions now shudder under the threat of executive overreach. We hope that the figure at the forefront of the image can inspire our readers to similarly ponder the state of our world and remember the importance of critical examination of the institutions that shape our reality. Our back cover features Odilon Redon's *Everywhere Eyeballs are Aflame*. In the center of his work is an eyeball, surveying the world around it. This echoes the sentiment of the thinker on the front cover, and calls to mind both the necessary objective to revise our perceptions through engagement with perspectives differing from our own and the omnipresence of the surveillance state, exemplified by works such as George Orwell's *1984*.

Our status as Boston College's political science journal is inextricably tied to its status as a Jesuit university and its accompanying values. This not only encourages a more concerted focus on scholastic examinations of political happenings, but a utilization of this academic lens to call for an end to the dehumanization of many and a whittling away of vital liberal democratic institutions. We hope you enjoy the hard work apparent in these articles, and we thank you for reading this issue of *The Colloquium*.

Sincerely,



Joseph J. Murphy IV  
Co-Editor in Chief



Jessica K. Orrell  
Co-Editor in Chief

# ECHOES OF EMPIRE:

## IMPACTS OF FRENCH COLONIAL LEGACY

### ON IDENTITY, IMMIGRATION, AND

### INTEGRATION POLICIES

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THANG Q. LY

*This paper investigates how France's history of colonialism has shaped France's immigration and integration policies to understand how colonial ideologies can guide policies that shape national identity and social groups. By understanding the historical context and development of France's colonialism, from the French Revolution to postcolonial migration data, it can be found that France's self-image as a place for liberty contradicts its poor treatment of immigrants from colonies. Therefore, this research underscores that marginalized immigrants are affected by assimilationist and multiculturalist policies, institutional memory, and racism. The paper also briefly interrogates how the European Union's commitment to national sovereignty and unexamined colonial legacy prevents it from influencing France's approach. Ultimately, the paper offers a solution: only by confronting the myths of universalism and actively addressing the colonial roots embedded within its immigration policies can France achieve true reconciliation and equity.*

## I. Introduction

As Marianne stood firmly with the infamous tri-color French flag in *Liberty Leading the People* by Eugène Delacroix,<sup>1</sup> she reminded us of the universal struggles many have faced across time and space to earn freedom and recognition. The French Revolution (1789-1799) marked the beginning of France's path towards a more just and democratic society, one that distributed power to the hands of the common people and gave them the ability to participate in governance. Marianne personified the revolution and “liberty, equality, and fraternity” have since become central themes of French politics and national identity.<sup>2</sup> Her appearance has changed many times throughout different periods of the French Republic, but her signature red Phrygian cap and cockaded headpiece have never been altered.<sup>3</sup> Its original meaning can be traced to emancipated slaves in ancient Rome as their symbol of freedom.<sup>4</sup> The revolutionaries saw her cap as a rejection of monarchical oppression and the embodiment of self-determination. As France continued to conquer and colonize, Marianne traveled across new oceans and lands for roughly three centuries.<sup>5</sup> Under the false promise of “liberty, equality, and fraternity,” France brutally suppressed their colonies and exploited them. Many immigrants from these colonized regions regarded France as a beacon of hope, despite the oppression. Today, current French immigration policies still make it hard for them to enter and integrate into French society. Why is it that France—a country that understands the struggles for freedom and the privileges that it

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<sup>1</sup> Writer, Guest. “Marianne of France, Symbol of the French Republic.” The Good Life France, June 19, 2021. <https://thegoodlifeFrance.com/marianne-of-france-symbol-of-the-french-republic/#:~:text=Since%20there%20was%20no%20longer%20a%20republic%2C%20Marianne%20was%20no.>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères. “Marianne.” France Diplomacy - Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. Accessed December 7, 2023. [https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/coming-to-france/france-facts/symbols-of-the-republic/article/marianne.](https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/coming-to-france/france-facts/symbols-of-the-republic/article/marianne)

<sup>4</sup> Wills, Matthew. “The Rise and Fall of the Liberty Cap - JSTOR DAILY.” JSTOR Daily, October 19, 2021. [https://daily.jstor.org/the-rise-and-fall-of-the-liberty-cap/.](https://daily.jstor.org/the-rise-and-fall-of-the-liberty-cap/)

<sup>5</sup> “French Empire.” New World Encyclopedia. Accessed December 7, 2023. [https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/French\\_Empire#:~:text=France%20had%20colonial%20possessions%2C%20in,largest%20behind%20the%20British%20Empire.](https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/French_Empire#:~:text=France%20had%20colonial%20possessions%2C%20in,largest%20behind%20the%20British%20Empire.)

grants—shuts out so many immigrants from its former colonies, to whom it once promised liberty and opportunity? Analyzing France’s colonial past reveals that this history plays a significant role in shaping its current national identity and immigration policies. Meanwhile, the European Union (EU) can only do so much to mitigate colonial sentiments in France’s immigration policies while respecting their national sovereignty.

## II. The French Identity and Its Interaction with Colonialism

To understand the issues with France’s immigration policies, it is crucial to understand the complexities of the French identity and its intertwined history with colonialism. Identity is an amalgamation of everything that makes an individual or social group unique. This can be the characteristics, experiences, values, interests, relationships, and so on that come from the process of defining who they are and what they want.<sup>6</sup> Everyone goes through this process on their own terms, but the results may bring groups of people together with similar identities. In the case of national identity, which can be best exemplified in France, the people and the state are closely tied together with strings of shared cultural, historical, and political memory. Besides the shared institutional language, religion, and culture, the Jacobin tradition further elaborates that commitment to common political values and the state also contributes to the French identity.<sup>7</sup> Ernest Renan, who was a famous 19th-century French historian, defined the nation as “a soul [and] a spiritual principle” that it is worth “the desire to continue assert[ing] the heritage that [they] have received undivided.”<sup>8</sup> Renan does something interesting here: he personifies the state

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<sup>6</sup> Risse, Thomas. *A Community of Europeans?: Transnational Identities and Public Spheres*. Cornell University Press, 2010. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt7v8r0>.

<sup>7</sup> Safran, William. Review of *The French and Their National Identity: The Quest for an Elusive Substance?*, by Espaces 89, Club de l’Horloge, Revue Pluriel-Débat, Abdel Aïssou, Paul Oriol, Georges Abou-Sada, Hélène Milet, Harlem Désir, Jean-Pierre Colin, and Commission de la Nationalité. *French Politics and Society* 8, no. 1 (1990): 56–67. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42844146>.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

as a powerful, intangible being while giving it the justification it needs to be deified and shared with the world. The strong relationship between the French people and their nation throughout history built a foundation for patriotism and, at its most extreme level, nationalism.

During and after the French Revolution, nationalist movements directly perpetuated the idea of elitism and superiority, which later translated into colonialism. Though France's colonial expeditions started during the 17th century in North America,<sup>9</sup> their colonialism did not become what it is known as today until the late 19th century. After being defeated in the Franco-Prussian War (1870), they were humiliated into losing their continental European hegemonic status. The tensions heightened as France processed what their defeat meant. As Prussia began expanding and pressing against France's eastern borders, there was only one way for France to retain her great power. They must expand outside, particularly in Africa, starting with the southern shores of the Mediterranean.<sup>10</sup> This event became the motivation for the Third Republic, which would become France's premier colonial and imperial empire.

But those two reasons were not legal or honorable enough to authorize such a controversial venture. The "civilizing mission" was the core argument that gave European nations legitimacy for political, social, and economic extraction and indoctrination of other groups of people and their nations.<sup>11</sup> It highlighted racial, cultural, and societal differences primarily among non-white states, magnifying the presence of "underdeveloped" and "backward" states that supposedly needed intervention and assistance. In the name of Marianne, the Revolution's universalizing principles, and national pride, France built one of the world's

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<sup>9</sup> Parsons, Christopher M. "Discovering a Not-So-New World." In *A Not-So-New World: Empire and Environment in French Colonial North America*, 15–41. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv16t6h6t.4>.

<sup>10</sup> Andrew, C. M. "The French Colonialist Movement during the Third Republic: The Unofficial Mind of Imperialism." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 26 (1976): 143–66. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3679076>.

<sup>11</sup> Watt, Carey A. "Introduction: THE RELEVANCE AND COMPLEXITY OF CIVILIZING MISSIONS c. 1800–2010." In *Civilizing Missions in Colonial and Postcolonial South Asia: From Improvement to Development*, edited by Carey A. Watt and Michael Mann, 1–34. Anthem Press, 2011. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1xgp9mc.3>.

largest empires in modern history under the guise of advancing colonies through Westernization.<sup>12</sup>

### **III. Post-Colonial French Immigration Policies**

Amidst the conquest for resources, land, and glory, economic growth boomed like never before. To sustain the growing labor market during the mid-19th century, Indigenous people were commodified and relocated throughout the French Empire for work. The movement of people between France and her colonies resulted in colonial subjects being brought into the country for the first time.<sup>13</sup> Even though this was her first experience with colonial interaction within mainland France, it was not until after World War II that immigration laws specifically for these populations were officially codified into law. Interestingly, France had no intention of any formal codification or regulation until Moroccan migrants demanded recognition and official documentation of their work. They were mainly sent to work at coal mines in northern France during the 1950s, and many would lie about their age to be more desirable for hire and a chance to escape their country. Consequently, many years later, they would never receive pensions or benefits because of the lack of systems and processes in place to prove their real background information.<sup>14</sup> They were stripped of their identities in every aspect and were just as real as an unclaimed thought, seeking connection and recognition in a world that does not acknowledge their true worth.

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<sup>12</sup> Schwartz, Vanessa R. "French and the Civilizing Mission." Essay. In *Modern France a Very Short Introduction*, 36. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

<sup>13</sup> Hamilton, Kimberly, Patrick Simon, and Clara Veniard. "The Challenge of French Diversity." [migrationpolicy.org](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/challenge-french-diversity), September 6, 2018. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/challenge-french-diversity>.

<sup>14</sup> Spire, Alexis. "The Weight of France's Colonial Past on Immigration Policy." *Accueil - Archive ouverte HAL*, June 13, 2020.

After World War II, the age of European empires ended, resulting in a mass influx of immigrants from post-colonial states and abroad.<sup>15</sup> Immigration brought a new wave of ethnic diversity to France, and its effects have rippled throughout French society. The era from the 1950s to the 1960s can be described as the decolonization period, where colonies achieved independence and were given control of their statehood. It was a crucial starting point for witnessing the transformation of French immigration policy because it had to address newly independent subjects and their ability to immigrate to France.<sup>16</sup> The dominant post-colonial countries were Vietnam, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, and the region of sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>17</sup>

To understand French immigration policies after the decolonization period, it is important to understand their original purpose. France's immigration policy was built with the intent of protecting its national citizens. For that to happen, the French government was adamant about making a clear distinction between the colonized, the foreigner, and the natural citizen because the construction of the state heavily depended on knowing who were real natives and who was not.<sup>18</sup> The colonial subjects, though newly independent, faced many legal obstacles because they had no fair diplomatic representation abroad since their country was not fully stable yet and was still predominantly influenced by the French administration.<sup>19</sup> Even if they were to be able to go into the country, they had to do more work to get paperwork and become citizens. They had to erase their cultural background, fully adopt the French culture and language, and sign the Civil

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<sup>15</sup> Chafer, Tony. "Decolonization in French West Africa." Oxford Research Encyclopedias, October 26, 2017. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/The-Bantu-Expansion-Bostoen/57198055c5dd29e473508a377dcd911e0312391>.

<sup>16</sup> Cole, Joshua. "How to Be French: Nationality in the Making since 1789." The University of Chicago Press Journals, September 2010. <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/653170?journalCode=jmh>.

<sup>17</sup> Hamilton, Kimberly, Patrick Simon, and Clara Veniard. "The Challenge of French Diversity." migrationpolicy.org, September 6, 2018.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Zalc, Claire. "Alexis Spire Étrangers à La Carte." Cairn.Info I Matières À Réflexion, February 2007. <https://www.cairn.info/revue-critique-internationale-2007-2-page-201.htm>.

Code, which allowed the possibility, not the guarantee, of naturalization.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, non-colonial subjects, who were considered to be foreigners, had the protection and representation of their home state, which made the process much more seamless.<sup>21</sup> All they had to do was prove their political loyalty to France, which was both open-ended and less strenuous than their counterparts' requirements.

Twenty years later, after these policies had settled and seeped into neighborhoods and workplaces, anti-immigration sentiments grew because of the rise of far-right parties and politicians. From the late 1980s to the early 1990s, Jean-Marie Le Pen led the far-right National Front party, which gained significant popularity among the public. The far-right agenda proved destructive to immigration policies and further perpetuated the notion of French superiority over ethnic populations—many of whom were former colonial subjects. Under his party's rhetoric and grasp over society, they slowly diminished the immigrant population. There were 102,400 foreigners, including post-colonial and non-colonial people, who settled in France in 1990.<sup>22</sup> The following year, the anti-immigrant sentiments escalated after Jacques Chirac, then Mayor of Paris, delivered his infamous “Le Bruit et L’Odeur” speech. In it, he complained about the “noises and smells” caused by immigrants—primarily Muslim Arabs and Blacks—and how they were disrupting the lives of native French people.<sup>23</sup> His remarks were met with open arms and launched a period where hostile comments about immigration became more common.

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<sup>20</sup> Davidson, Denise Z. "How to be French: Nationality in the Making since 1789." *Journal of World History* 21, no. 4 (12, 2010): 765-769.

<https://ezproxy.bu.edu/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fscholarly-journals%2Fhow-be-french-nationality-making-since-1789%2Fdocview%2F840254458%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9676>.

<sup>21</sup> Zolberg, A. (1999) “Matters of State: Theorizing Immigration Policy”, in Hirschman, C., Kasinitz, P. and DeWind, J. (Eds.). *The Handbook of International Migration*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, pp. 71–93.

<sup>22</sup> Hamilton, Kimberly, Patrick Simon, and Clara Veniard. “The Challenge of French Diversity.” [migrationpolicy.org](http://migrationpolicy.org), September 6, 2018.

<sup>23</sup> Bourgneuf, Cécile. “Quand Jacques Chirac Évoquait ‘Le Bruit et l’odeur’...” *Libération*, September 26, 2019. [https://www.liberation.fr/france/2019/09/26/quand-jacques-chirac-evoquait-le-bruit-et-l-odeur\\_1505291/](https://www.liberation.fr/france/2019/09/26/quand-jacques-chirac-evoquait-le-bruit-et-l-odeur_1505291/).

In agreement with anti-immigration sentiments, Charles Pasqua, who was France's conservative interior minister, set the goal of having zero illegal immigration in 1993. He imposed the Pasqua Laws, which restricted immigration by tackling a wide range of demographics, such as international students and foreign spouses, and also gave more deportation power to the police and asylum officers. By 1995, the number of immigrants entering was 56,700, half of what it was five years prior.<sup>24</sup> That same year, the French presidential elections were held and won by Jacques Chirac, who rapidly rose to the highest seat of power, riding the wave since his speech and advancing the far-right agenda.

Yet, the Pasqua laws and Chirac's presidency were not unchallenged. Two groups of protesters, both of African and Chinese descent, were angry with the current strict immigration policies. It caused them to not be able to obtain resident permits, despite having lived and worked in France for several years, so they held a demonstration in a Parisian church. This would be called the Sans Papiers movement, or the people without legal documents movement.<sup>25</sup> With the support of over 10,000 people, they decided to mobilize in Paris. During the summer of 1996, they marched in solidarity, and though the police intervened, there would be similar events throughout the next two years.

After garnering national attention and support from many citizens throughout France, the Socialist Party was able to win the National Assembly during the 1997 legislative election year. During their time, they would ratify new rules to loosen immigration laws, such as giving special immigrant status to graduate students and highly skilled employees (RESEDA Law, 1998).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Hamilton, Kimberly, Patrick Simon, and Clara Veniard. "The Challenge of French Diversity." migrationpolicy.org, September 6, 2018.

<sup>25</sup> Behrman, Simon. "On the Creation and Accommodation of the Misery of the World: The Case of the sans-Papiers." Royal Holloway Research Portal, October 28, 2020. <https://pure.royalholloway.ac.uk/en/publications/on-the-creation-and-accommodation-of-the-misery-of-the-world-the->

<sup>26</sup> Hamilton, Kimberly, Patrick Simon, and Clara Veniard. "The Challenge of French Diversity." migrationpolicy.org, September 6, 2018.

This increased international students and cleared up 87,000 unauthorized immigrants who were not accounted for in the previous policies. The fight for fair immigration policies that are just and address colonial biases is not over. Transitioning into the 21st century, the emphasis became more on the integration of immigrants.

#### **IV. Integrating the “Other” into French Society**

In a government study collected in 2022, it was reported that 7 million immigrants lived in France, making up 10.3% of the total population.<sup>27</sup> With such a high immigrant population, integration has become more pressing than ever before. For the French, it began with the passage of the 1972 Pleven Laws, which criminalized racial discrimination and racist speech.<sup>28</sup> This was an important codification that brought about a more progressive society where the protection of ethnic minorities and immigrants is non-negotiable.

However, the protection of these groups became more extreme as they advanced integration, but through ethnic and cultural erasure. In February of 2005, France passed its most detrimental law on political memory and its history with colonization by forcing educational curricula to recognize France’s important role in its colonial project.<sup>29</sup> By way of explanation, to heroize France’s involvement in its colonies and protect her white savior identity, but it did not stop there. This moment revealed the corruption and revisionist history that was occurring at the institutional level and trickled down to the local level. In hopes of collective amnesia over their history with colonialism, the French government tried to clear their name.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> “L’essentiel Sur... Les Immigrés et Les Étrangers.” Insee, October 7, 2023.

<https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/3633212#graphique-infographie>. (see bibliography for population graphic)

<sup>28</sup> Bird, Karen L. “Racist Speech or Free Speech? A Comparison of the Law in France and the United States.” *Comparative Politics* 32, no. 4 (2000): 399–418. <https://doi.org/10.2307/422386>.

<sup>29</sup> Spire, Alexis. “The Weight of France’s Colonial Past on Immigration Policy.” *Accueil - Archive ouverte HAL*, June 13, 2020. <https://hal.science/hal-02867003>.

<sup>30</sup> Ticktin, Miriam, Ruth Marshall, and Paolo Bacchetta. “A Transnational Conversation on French Colonialism, Immigration, Violence and Sovereignty.” *CUNY Academic Works*, 2008. [https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc\\_pubs/847/](https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_pubs/847/).

Just two years later, the Constitutional Council banned all studies and data collections regarding ethnic and racial diversity and origins of people in France to adopt a more “color-blind” and “race-neutral” approach to French identity and citizenship.<sup>31</sup> It had the opposite effect: it made conversations about race taboo at the institutional level but brought more public attention to it than ever. How were they to help their immigration population if they did not have adequate data on them? The truth is, they could not back then, and even today. Similar to the effects of the civilizing mission, they magnified the presence of immigrants and their racial, cultural, and societal differences and placed a bigger target on their backs in an attempt to help them. The French government, while aggressively assimilating immigrants into society, created a dangerous new image for them as a by-product, the image of the “other.”

In literature, the “other” represents an individual who is viewed as different by a group, causing them to be villainized or shunned. For example, Victor Hugo’s *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* perfectly captured this through Quasimodo, a man who was feared for being deformed and monstrous in appearance. Parisian society did not accept him, and he was subsequently hidden in a cathedral. Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve’s *Beauty and the Beast* also has the “other” in the form of the Beast, who was a prince cursed for being selfish and unloving. Literature often reflects reality, so the Quasimodos and Beasts of the world do not only exist in their respective stories. In the context of French immigration and identity, the “others” perform three primary functions. They need to differentiate themselves from a main group, be self-identifying, and create boundaries for themselves.<sup>32</sup> Oftentimes in work industries and society, post-colonial immigrants carry the exclusionary label “francophone” and immigrant, which separates them

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<sup>31</sup> “Ethnic-Based Statistics.” Insee, September 16, 2019. <https://www.insee.fr/en/information/2388586>.

<sup>32</sup> Lucarelli, Sonja, “Mirrors of us: European political identity and the Others’ image of the EU” in *Debating Political Identity and Legitimacy*, pp. 148-167

from the general body of natural citizens, creating an out-group from the in-group.<sup>33</sup>

Furthermore, there are often heavily segregated neighborhoods that distinguish the different socio-economic classes, where immigrants are most likely to reside in the poorer areas.

Integration methods, such as assimilation and multiculturalism, have been used in Europe to accommodate the increasing numbers of immigrants and refugees. The most popular method in France is assimilation. This form is very aggressive and extreme, as it aims to create uniformity by destroying all self-identities. “Le citoyen,” or the citizen, is the preferred national identity, and any immigrants who come in must dissolve their previous connections with their old culture and replace it with French values and community.<sup>34</sup> Having everyone chase after the national French identity builds the notion of fear and anxiety towards the “others.” It is inherently blind to cultural diversity and provides equality for all at the expense of equity. Many minority communities are put at a disadvantage because they are underrepresented and underserved in all aspects of politics, economics, and social life. One can argue that the assimilating policies are a continuity of their civilizing mission practices because of how they subject postcolonial immigrants to the dominant French culture and tradition. It perpetuates the notion that they are culturally inferior and unworthy of taking up space in France, so they have to blend in to get by.

Marine Le Pen, daughter of Jean-Marie Le Pen and politician from the Front National Party, said at a 2014 Football World Cup that the immigration policies were a total failure because bi-national citizens still had their non-French citizenship and were refusing to fully

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<sup>33</sup> Alison Marmont, " French or Francophone: Postcolonial Immigrant Identities and Literature in Contemporary France," *Xanthos: A Journal of Foreign Literatures and Languages* 1 (2019): 1-16,

<sup>34</sup> Wilson, Robin. "Chapter 2: The old order: how Europe used to manage cultural diversity". In *Meeting the Challenge of Cultural Diversity in Europe*, (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2018) accessed Dec 8, 2023, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.bu.edu/10.4337/9781786438171.00006>

assimilate.<sup>35</sup> Algeria qualified for the second round against the French, and she said that they had to pick a side because they could not be both. She ends her remarks by saying that “there is not another country in the world that would accept what we go through on our territory”<sup>36</sup> showing how political memory and history run deep in their sense of self. Ironically, the French football team has historically been made mostly of immigrants or children of immigrants. Trevor Noah points out, “When they are unemployed, when they may commit a crime, or when they are considered unsavory, it’s the African immigrant. When their children go on to provide a World Cup victory for France, we should only refer to them as France.”<sup>37</sup> French media gets to pick and choose when an immigrant can be French or not, depending on how well they represent France.

The assimilationist model fails to connect the idealized notion of French citizenship to the lived experiences of those living in the suburbs.<sup>38</sup> Immigrants often feel more disconnected and unacknowledged under the assimilationist model because they do not see the benefits of conforming to a culture that was never made for them. In 2008, at a football match against Tunisia, many immigrants booed the French national anthem because those living in the suburbs were experiencing discrimination and an ethnic hierarchy that was not what they imagined when they became French. Moreover, *laïcité* laws, which were secularist policies and ideas, banned religious values and garments in public schools in 2004, which targeted religious minorities and immigrants.<sup>39</sup> It started as a way to remain religiously impartial, but how it was enforced was too

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> FRANCE 24. “France’s Le Pen Calls for End of Dual Nationality in Algeria World Cup Row.” France 24, June 30, 2014. <https://www.france24.com/en/20140630-france-le-pen-algeria-world-cup-police>.

<sup>37</sup> The Daily Show. “Trevor Responds to Criticism from the French Ambassador - between the Scenes | The Daily Show.” YouTube, July 19, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=COD9hcTpGWQ>.

<sup>38</sup> Wilson, Robin. “Chapter 4: What went wrong?”. In *Meeting the Challenge of Cultural Diversity in Europe*, (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2018) accessed Dec 8, 2023, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.bu.edu/10.4337/9781786438171.00008>

<sup>39</sup> González, Francisco Colom, and Gianni D’Amato. “Chapter 7: Unveiling Contemporary French Secularism.” Essay. In *Multireligious Society: Dealing with Religious Diversity in Theory and Practice*, 117. London: Routledge, 2017.

aggressive and counterproductive, making it seem more like cultural erasure than intercultural dialogue.

Current assimilationist policies in France have caused backlash through many protests and riots. Most notably, the 2005 Youth Riots<sup>40</sup> and the 2015 Paris attacks<sup>41</sup> have sparked the conversation about civil unrest and homegrown terrorism. Both events had a common theme in which attackers were of minority and/or immigrant backgrounds who wanted recognition and community but were feeling shut out from their country. The attackers hoped to bring attention to the intense discrimination and marginalization that they were facing, but instead, they brought negative stereotyping that furthered the “other” identity narrative.<sup>42</sup>

## V. The European Union’s Influence on French Policies

As a member of the European Union (EU), France has few restrictions on its immigration and integration policies, allowing it to continue its practices without repercussions. The purpose of the EU is to create a thin layer of supranational governance that connects all 27 member states under common goals that promote peace and cooperation without hindering national sovereignty. Common institutions that serve this purpose include the passport, the Euro, and consistent branding across government institutions.<sup>43</sup> As outlined on the official EU fact sheet, they can only offer basic visa rules for workers and students staying longer than 90 days.<sup>44</sup> Immigrants outside of those base criteria must refer to the member state they are moving to, and it is up to

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<sup>40</sup> Mestries, Francis. “The French Autumn Riots of 2006 and the Crisis of Republican Integration.” PHP Web Hosting. Accessed December 8, 2023.

<sup>41</sup> Vasilopoulos, Pavlos. “Terrorist Events, Emotional Reactions, and Political Participation: The ...” Taylor and Francis Online, July 20, 2017. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01402382.2017.1346901>.

<sup>42</sup> Wilson, Robin. “Chapter 3: ‘Morbid symptoms’: the failure of prior social models”. In *Meeting the Challenge of Cultural Diversity in Europe*, (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2018) accessed Dec 8, 2023, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.bu.edu/10.4337/9781786438171.00007>

<sup>43</sup> McNamara, Kathleen. (2015) *The Politics of Everyday Europe* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>44</sup> “Immigration Policy: Fact Sheets on the European Union: European Parliament.” Fact Sheets on the European Union | European Parliament. Accessed December 9, 2023. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/152/immigration-policy>.

them to make the final decision on the applications.<sup>45</sup> In addition, integration policies are strictly up to the individual member states as well. There may be incentives for member states to promote integration, but the EU does not have an overarching policy that regulates it.<sup>46</sup>

If anything, the EU would most likely perpetuate France's immigration biases. One argument that can be made is that the EU itself has not addressed its colonial past. The argument follows that the EU's foundation was not built upon peace but rather economic recovery from the decolonization period, created after World War II when many colonial and imperial states knew that the decolonization period was forthcoming. Therefore, these states needed to band together (European Economic Community) to economically recover and continue their "grand and global civilizing mission" in Africa.<sup>47</sup> Europe must address its colonial and imperial history before it can comment on or help its member states.

## VI. Final Thoughts and Future Research

It is clear that France's colonial history has deeply influenced its current national identity, as well as its immigration and integration policies. Historical events and institutional memory are so deeply intertwined—with colonialism as the common thread—that it becomes difficult to separate the truth of the past from the narratives that the nation tells itself. The questions that now need to be asked are: How do they make things right? How will they confront institutional memory with the truth, and is it possible to reconcile with the communities that were most affected by it? There are no shortcuts to address this. As a starting point, France can ask themselves the same question that they posed at the beginning of their conquest. "Who was the monster, and who was the man?" For so long, they viewed Indigenous people as monsters who

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<sup>45</sup> "Immigration – Your Rights." European Union. Accessed December 9, 2023. [https://european-union.europa.eu/live-work-study/immigration-eu\\_en#:~:text=If%20you%27re%20a%20non,decision%20on%20individual%20migrant%20applications.](https://european-union.europa.eu/live-work-study/immigration-eu_en#:~:text=If%20you%27re%20a%20non,decision%20on%20individual%20migrant%20applications.)

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Kundnani, Hans. "Chapter 3: From Colonial Project to Community of Memory." Essay. In *Eurowhiteness: Culture, Empire and Race in the European Project*, 69–77. London: Hurst & Company, 2023.

needed help and westernization. Until they recognized that the people they were exploiting were never monsters but rather ordinary people who were progressing and living at their own pace, France could start to unravel the mistakes and find ways to repair their damages, if possible.

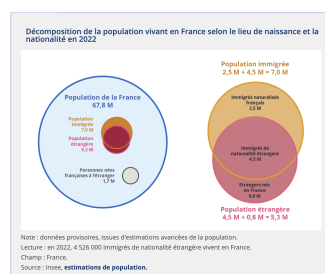
## VII. Conclusion

The purpose of this essay was not to arraign and convict France of her crimes. Rather, it was to share another perspective on the history of immigration and how it has been shaped by colonialism. Understanding the dark side of France's universal values from the Republic can close the gaps between principles and justice and how its application proved it to not be as universal as they thought. In a world that is more interconnected and diverse than ever before, France is standing at a pivotal moment where she has the opportunity to show the world that she can make amends for her wrongdoings to create a more inclusive and equitable society. Through active reflection and community-driven action, it is possible to heal the scars of colonialism.

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# VOTER TURNOUT DISPARITIES:

ANALYZING AND COMPARING RACIAL DIFFERENCES  
AMONG NATURALIZED IMMIGRANTS IN THE US AND  
THE UK

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SAHIL BHAKTA

## ABSTRACT

*This paper examines voter turnout among naturalized immigrants in the United States and the United Kingdom, focusing on the impact of race, socioeconomic factors, and systemic barriers.*

*It compares the participation rates of naturalized immigrants, particularly those from marginalized racial groups, and explores the underlying factors contributing to disparities in electoral engagement. Through a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative analysis of voter turnout data and qualitative case studies, this study highlights how race, naturalization status, and historical contexts of discrimination influence voting behavior. The findings suggest that while both countries face challenges related to immigrant participation, the United Kingdom tends to exhibit higher voter turnout among naturalized immigrants due to its more inclusive electoral processes and supportive community structures. In contrast, the United States' complex voting regulations and polarized political environment create more significant barriers. This research underscores the need for targeted policy measures to address these barriers and foster greater political inclusion. The study calls for further exploration of the intersectionality of race, socioeconomic status, and immigrant status, with an emphasis on long-term research and comparative studies to inform more equitable democratic practices.*

## **I. Introduction**

In a world marked by evolving dynamics and diverse societal interactions, understanding voter turnout among naturalized immigrants in the United States and the United Kingdom reveals critical insights into the functioning of democratic processes. This exploration not only highlights the political engagement of a growing segment of the population but also underscores the health and inclusivity of democratic systems in these countries. It begs the question, how do the voter turnout rates among naturalized immigrants differ between the United States and the United Kingdom, and what are the underlying factors that contribute to these differences?

By analyzing patterns and differences in electoral participation, this paper aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how race and naturalization status influence voting behavior. The theoretical and practical significance of this research extends beyond just statistical analysis. It delves into the systemic barriers and facilitators that influence voter turnout, contributing to the broader discussion on democratic representation and social equity. High voter turnout among diverse racial groups can lead to more comprehensive and representative policymaking, addressing the specific needs and concerns of these communities. When all parts of the population are actively participating in the electoral process, it ensures that the resulting policies are more reflective of the entire society. Additionally, uncovering potential disparities in voter turnout underscores the importance of identifying and mitigating systemic barriers to voting, therefore promoting a more inclusive political environment.

My central argument proposes that voter turnout rates among naturalized immigrants of different racial backgrounds in both the United States and the United Kingdom are significantly influenced by a combination of socioeconomic factors, access to voting resources, and historical and contemporary contexts of racial discrimination. My argument also asserts that the United

Kingdom tends to exhibit higher voter turnout rates among naturalized immigrant populations compared to the United States. Alternative arguments consider the role of political socialization, community support, and the differences in the political cultures of the host countries. Political socialization varies significantly between the US and the UK. In the UK, immigrants might experience a more inclusive political culture that encourages participation, while in the US, the polarized and often contentious political climate can deter immigrant engagement. Moreover, some might argue that the United States could offer higher voter turnout rates among immigrant populations compared to the United Kingdom, with its diverse and vibrant civic engagement landscape.

This study utilizes a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of voter turnout data with qualitative case studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by naturalized immigrants in the political arena. Data sources include national election surveys, census data, public opinion polls, and administrative records from immigration and naturalization offices.

This paper is organized in the following order: the introduction presents the main question, significance, and arguments. The literature review examines previous research on voter turnout among immigrants and racial disparities in political participation. The methodology section details the data sources and collection methods utilized. Quantitative and qualitative analyses are conducted to identify patterns and barriers to electoral participation. Finally, the discussion interprets the findings, compares the United States and the United Kingdom, and evaluates alternative explanations, concluding with a summary of key insights and suggestions for future research.

## II. Literature Review

The literature on voter turnout among naturalized immigrants provides many insights into the socio-political dynamics that influence electoral participation. The existing research on voter turnout among immigrants focuses on a variety of issues, specifically racial disparities, socioeconomic factors, political socialization, and the role of community support. Studies have consistently shown that naturalized immigrants tend to have lower voter turnout rates compared to native-born citizens. For instance, Matt Barreto argues that socio-economic disadvantages and lower levels of political socialization are the primary reasons for this political participation gap in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in the United Kingdom, Heath et al. found that ethnic minority and immigrant voters face substantial barriers, resulting in lower turnout rates.<sup>2</sup> These disparities are exacerbated by systemic racism and socioeconomic challenges, with authors like Heath and Khan demonstrating that Black and Latino immigrants in the US, as well as South Asian and Black immigrants in the UK, are particularly affected.<sup>3</sup> Socioeconomic status emerges as a crucial determinant of political participation, with higher income and education levels correlating with increased voter turnout.<sup>4</sup> Cho's research indicates that immigrants with higher socioeconomic status are more likely to participate in elections, as they possess the resources and confidence to navigate the political system. Similarly, Gelman et al. found that socioeconomic resources remain a strong predictor of voter turnout in the United States, despite rising income

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<sup>1</sup> Matt A. Barreto, "Latino Immigrants at the Polls: Foreign-Born Voter Turnout in the 2002 Election," *Political Research Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (2005): 79-86, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3595597>.

<sup>2</sup> Anthony Heath, Stephen Fisher, David Sanders, and Maria Sobolewska, "Ethnic Heterogeneity in the Social Bases of Voting at the 2010 British General Election," *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 21, no. 3 (2011): 255-77, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17457289.2011.562611>.

<sup>3</sup> Anthony Heath and Omar Khan, "Ethnic Minority British Election Study - Oxford University" (Oxford University, 2012), <https://conservativehome.blogs.com/files/embesbriefingfinalx-1.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Wendy K. Tam Cho, "Naturalization, Socialization, Participation: Immigrants and (Non-)Voting," *The Journal of Politics* 61, no. 4 (1999): 1140-55, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2647557>.

inequality.<sup>5</sup> In the United Kingdom, Heath and Khan identified socioeconomic disadvantages, like lower income and education levels, as significant barriers to political participation among ethnic minority and immigrant groups.<sup>6</sup>

Political socialization and community support also play essential roles in shaping voter turnout among naturalized immigrants. Ramakrishnan and Espenshade emphasize the importance of community-based organizations in mobilizing immigrant voters, highlighting that exposure to democratic norms and political engagement within immigrant communities significantly influence voting behavior.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Saggar's work discussed the effectiveness of local advocacy groups and community organizations in increasing voter turnout among immigrant populations.<sup>8</sup> Comparative studies between the United States and the United Kingdom reveal both similarities and differences in the factors influencing voter turnout among naturalized immigrants. Bird et al. found that institutional factors, like voter registration laws and electoral systems, significantly impact political participation in both countries.<sup>9</sup> However, the political culture and integration policies differ between countries, with the UK generally providing more supportive frameworks for immigrant political engagement. Spies et al. argues that while standard voter turnout models apply to both native-born and immigrant populations, immigrant-specific factors, such as ethnic networks and experiences of discrimination, play a

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<sup>5</sup> Andrew Gelman et al., "Income Inequality and Partisan Voting in the United States," *Social Science Quarterly* 91, no. 5 (2010): 1203–19, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42956457>.

<sup>6</sup> Heath and Khan, "Ethnic Minority British Election Study."

<sup>7</sup> S. Karthick Ramakrishnan and Thomas J. Espenshade, "Immigrant Incorporation and Political Participation in the United States," *International Migration Review* 35, no. 3 (2001): 870–909, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2675847>.

<sup>8</sup> Shamit Saggar, "British Citizens like Any Others?: Ethnic Minorities and Elections in the United Kingdom," in *Just Ordinary Citizens?: Towards a Comparative Portrait of the Political Immigrant*, ed. Antoine Bilodeau (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 63–82, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3138/j.ctv1005br1.7>.

<sup>9</sup> Karen Bird, Thomas Saalfeld, and Andreas M. Wüst, "Voter Turnout among Immigrants and Visible Minorities in Comparative Perspective," in *The Political Representation of Immigrants and Minorities: Voters, Parties and Parliaments in Liberal Democracies* (London: Routledge, 2011), 25–65, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203843604-12/voter-turnout-among-immigrants-visible-minorities-comparative-perspective>.

more significant role in the UK compared to the U.S.<sup>10</sup> These types of comparative perspectives highlight the need for new interventions into the system of political participation, including voter education, community building, and policy reforms to reduce systemic barriers and promote inclusive democratic practices.

### **III. Methodology**

To analyze voter turnout among naturalized immigrants in the United States and the United Kingdom, a comprehensive methodology that integrates multiple data sources and collection methods is needed. This section details the national election surveys, census data, public opinion polls, and administrative data from immigration and naturalization offices used to gather relevant information. National election surveys are pivotal for this type of research. The American National Election Studies (ANES) provides high-quality data on voting behavior, public opinion, and political participation in the United States. ANES has been collecting data since 1948, making it a valuable resource for understanding electoral participation trends. The relevance of ANES to this study lies in its detailed demographic information and comprehensive coverage of voter turnout rates. Data points, like voter turnout, age, race, gender, socioeconomic status, and political attitudes (e.g. party affiliation and political efficacy) are taken from ANES. Similarly, the British Election Study (BES), which has been running since 1964, provides extensive data on voting behavior, political attitudes, and demographics in the UK. BES is necessary for analyzing the electoral participation of naturalized immigrants in the UK. It offers a great deal of variables similar to those of ANES, including voter turnout rates, demographic information, and political attitudes.

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<sup>10</sup> Dennis C. Spies, Sabrina J. Mayer, and Achim Goerres, "What Are We Missing? Explaining Immigrant-Origin Voter Turnout with Standard and Immigrant-Specific Theories," *Electoral Studies* 65 (2020): 102103, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0261379419302641>.

Census data and voter turnout statistics are also essential parts of studying this issue of voter participation among naturalized immigrant populations. In the United States, the U.S. Census Bureau provides detailed demographic information through the Census and the American Community Survey. These data sources offer information on population characteristics, which is essential for analyzing voter turnout. The Census Bureau collects data through mail-in questionnaires, online surveys, and interviews, which ensures that there is broad coverage and high response rates. Voter turnout statistics are derived from the Current Population Survey (CPS) Voting and Registration Supplement, which provides data on reported voting and registration by various demographic groups. Key variables include race, ethnicity, age, gender, income, education level, and nativity status. In the United Kingdom, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) conducts the national census every ten years, providing detailed demographic information about the population. The ONS also conducts surveys like the Labour Force Survey, which includes questions on voter registration and turnout. Data collection methods for the ONS include online surveys, paper questionnaires, and interviews, ensuring comprehensive coverage. Voter turnout data is collected through surveys and electoral registers, providing insights into the voting behavior of different demographic groups. Key variables that are included in the ONS are race, ethnicity, age, gender, income, education level, and nativity status.

Public opinion polls from organizations such as the Pew Research Center and YouGov provide additional data on political participation and attitudes. Pew Research Center is a nonpartisan think tank that conducts public opinion polling on various topics, including political behaviors. The center's polls cover voter registration, turnout intentions, political efficacy, and individual perceptions of electoral fairness. Data collection methods include telephone surveys, online panels, and interviews, with thorough data processes to ensure its accuracy. YouGov is an

international research data and analytics group that conducts online surveys on political behavior as well as public opinion. These surveys focus on voting behavior, electoral participation, and political attitudes among different demographic groups.

Administrative data from immigration and naturalization offices provides crucial context for understanding voter turnout among naturalized immigrants. In the United States, data from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services includes naturalization applications, approvals, and demographic characteristics of naturalized citizens. This data helps contextualize the size and characteristics of the naturalized immigrant population and their potential electoral impact. In the United Kingdom, the UK Home Office provides similar data, including naturalization applications, approvals, and demographic characteristics of naturalized citizens. This data is collected and processed through administrative records maintained by the Home Office.

#### **IV. Quantitative Analysis**

Voter turnout is widely regarded as one of the most important indicators of democratic engagement, providing a snapshot of citizens' participation in the electoral process. High voter turnout is generally seen as a sign of active civic engagement, where citizens feel empowered and motivated to influence political outcomes. In contrast, low turnout often signals issues such as alienation, disenfranchisement, or inefficiencies in the electoral system, suggesting that certain groups may be excluded or lack confidence in the political process. One significant demographic that often experiences lower voter turnout is immigrants, particularly naturalized citizens, who historically participate in elections at lower rates than native-born citizens.<sup>11</sup> This disparity raises critical questions about democratic inclusion, particularly how race and naturalization status influence political participation. Given that immigrants are a growing and diverse population,

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<sup>11</sup> Loretta E. Bass and Lynne M. Casper, "Differences in Registering and Voting between Native-Born and Naturalized Americans," *Population Research and Policy Review* 20, no. 6 (2001): 483–511, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40230326>.

understanding the factors that shape their voting behavior is essential for addressing issues of representation and ensuring more inclusive democratic practices. To explore these patterns, this section will utilize various data sources, including the American National Election Studies (ANES), the British Election Study (BES), the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS), the Office for National Statistics (ONS), Pew Research Center, and YouGov, as well as data from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and the UK Home Office. In terms of metrics, the analysis will focus on voter turnout rates, comparing the proportion of naturalized immigrants who vote relative to the general population, and disaggregating this data by race and ethnicity.

The analysis of raw data from the sources listed above provides a detailed view of voter turnout rates among various racial and immigrant categories in the United States during the 2020 and 2022 elections. According to ANES, the overall voter turnout rate for naturalized citizens across all racial groups was low compared to native-born citizens.<sup>12</sup> This disparity becomes more pronounced when broken down by racial categories. The data reveals that naturalized Latino immigrants had a low voter turnout rate in 2020 when compared to native-born Latinos. The same can be said for Black immigrants, whose turnout rate was lower than native-born Black citizens. For Asian immigrants, however, the turnout rate was significantly higher than the turnout rate among native-born Asians. Further data from the Pew Research Center highlights significant inter-group differences. African immigrants, for instance, had a lower voter turnout rate than Caribbean immigrants, who exhibited a slightly higher turnout rate.<sup>13</sup> These variations suggest that even within broader racial categories, distinct immigrant groups experience different

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<sup>12</sup> American National Election Studies, *ANES 2020 Time Series Study Full Release* [dataset and documentation] July 19, 2021 version, [www.electionstudies.org](http://www.electionstudies.org).

<sup>13</sup> Christine Tamir, "Key Findings about Black Immigrants in the U.S.," Pew Research Center, 27 Jan. 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/01/27/key-findings-about-black-immigrants-in-the-u-s/>.

levels of political engagement. In the 2022 midterm elections, the trends remained consistent. The data shows that naturalized immigrant groups had a lower turnout rate compared to their native-born counterparts across all racial groups, save for Asian immigrants. These statistics underscore the persistent gaps between naturalized and native-born citizens, as well as among different immigrant groups.

The analysis of raw data from various sources provides a detailed overview of voter turnout among different racial and immigrant groups in the United Kingdom, focusing on the 2019 UK General Election and the 2021 local elections. According to BES data, voter turnout for naturalized immigrants in the 2019 General Election showed significant variation across racial categories.<sup>14</sup> South Asian naturalized immigrants had a low voter turnout rate, similar to the levels exhibited by Black naturalized immigrants. In comparison, White naturalized immigrants exhibited a higher turnout rate compared to every other immigrant group. The 2021 local elections data from YouGov further details these trends, with voter turnout rates slightly higher in local elections but still exhibiting significant disparities. South Asian and Black naturalized immigrants maintained similar levels of voter turnout rates. White naturalized immigrants continued to show higher political engagement with their turnout rate. These data points illustrate the complex landscape of voter participation among immigrant populations in the UK. Factors contributing to these disparities include socioeconomic status, language barriers, and the effectiveness of community support systems. For instance, South Asian and Black communities with strong local advocacy and community organizations tend to have higher voter turnout rates.

Racial disparities in voter turnout are a persistent issue in many democracies, particularly in the United States, where research consistently shows that racial and ethnic minorities vote at

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<sup>14</sup> Edward Fieldhouse et al., *British Election Study, 2019: Post-Election Random Probability Survey* [data collection] UK Data Service, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-8875-1>.

lower rates than their white counterparts.<sup>15</sup> This gap in voter participation can be traced back to historical patterns of disenfranchisement, such as the Jim Crow laws, which systematically excluded Black Americans from the political process. This gap has been further exacerbated by recent practices like voter ID laws, purging of voter rolls, and gerrymandering, which disproportionately affect minority groups. These barriers not only deter voting but also undermine the principles of democratic equality by limiting the political power of marginalized communities.<sup>16</sup> Naturalized immigrants, while granted the right to vote upon completing the naturalization process, often encounter additional obstacles that hinder their participation. These challenges are particularly pronounced for immigrants from racial minority backgrounds, who may face a unique combination of cultural and socioeconomic barriers that limit their ability to engage in the electoral process.

## V. Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative analysis section explores the nuanced experiences and contextual factors influencing voter turnout among naturalized immigrants in the United States and the United Kingdom. By examining geographic distribution, local case studies, and the localized barriers and opportunities affecting political participation, this section provides a deeper understanding of the interplay between environment and electoral engagement. Qualitative methods capture the lived experiences of naturalized immigrants and the specific challenges encountered in different regions.

The geographical distribution of naturalized immigrants plays a crucial role in shaping their political participation. Immigrants are not evenly distributed across regions, urban centers

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<sup>15</sup> Stephanie Zonszein and Guy Grossman, “Turnout Turnaround: Ethnic Minority Victories Mobilize White Voters,” *American Political Science Review* 118, no. 3 (October 2023): 1556–62, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S000305542300103X>.

<sup>16</sup> Tara Kini, “Sharing the Vote: Noncitizen Voting Rights in Local School Board Elections,” *California Law Review* 93, no. 1 (2005): 271–321, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3481392>.

typically host high concentrations of immigrant populations, while rural areas tend to have fewer immigrants.<sup>17</sup> This uneven distribution influences how immigrants engage politically, as certain areas may offer robust infrastructure and resources for political participation, like community centers, language assistance, and voter education programs. Alternatively, regions with fewer immigrants may lack these types of support mechanisms, potentially hindering political engagement. The interaction between geographical location and voting likelihood among naturalized immigrants is important, especially in areas with significant racial minority concentrations. The contrast between urban and rural settings is an example, as it significantly affects immigrant political engagement. Immigrant populations in large cities, such as Los Angeles, London, and New York, often benefit from greater access to resources like voter education programs, multilingual voting materials, and local immigrant advocacy organizations.<sup>18</sup> In urban areas, the density of the population and the presence of established immigrant communities create a supportive environment for political participation. Cities often have diverse media outlets, community organizations, and social networks that actively engage in voter mobilization efforts. Urban areas are also more likely to have representatives and policymakers who prioritize immigrant issues, further encouraging political engagement. In contrast, rural areas might offer fewer resources and less political infrastructure, leading to lower participation rates. The urban-rural divide also highlights differences in the political landscape and community support available to immigrants, which can either encourage or hinder their electoral participation. In rural settings, immigrants may face isolation, limited access to

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<sup>17</sup> Chenoa Flippen and Dylan Farrell-Bryan, “New Destinations and the Changing Geography of Immigrant Incorporation,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 47, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-090320-100926>.

<sup>18</sup> John R. Logan et al., “The Impact of Race and Ethnicity, Immigration, and Political Context on Participation in American Electoral Politics,” *Social Forces* 90, no. 3 (2012), <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sor024>.

information, and fewer opportunities for political engagement.<sup>19</sup> The scarcity of community organizations and advocacy groups in these areas can result in a lack of awareness about the electoral process and reduced motivation to participate in elections. This disparity underscores the importance of tailored strategies to address the unique challenges faced by immigrants in rural areas.

a. *USA | Los Angeles:*

Los Angeles, one of the most populous cities in the United States, is home to a large and diverse immigrant population, comprising significant numbers of Latino, Asian, and Middle Eastern communities. This diversity is mirrored in the city's political landscape, where numerous community organizations and advocacy groups work to engage and mobilize naturalized immigrants. Organizations such as the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA) and the Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAAJ) play crucial roles in this context. CHIRLA, for instance, conducts extensive voter registration drives, organizes candidate forums, and offers education workshops on civic engagement. These initiatives help immigrants understand the political process and empower them to participate actively in elections. The impact of such organizations is evident in voter turnout statistics. Additionally, the presence of immigrant representatives in local government positions serves as a motivator and a source of trust for immigrant voters. In Los Angeles, the infrastructure supporting political participation is robust. The city itself offers numerous polling locations, early voting options, and mail-in voting, making it easier for immigrants to vote. The local government collaborates with community groups to ensure that voting materials are available in multiple languages, reflecting the linguistic diversity of the immigrant population. Additionally, the vibrant media landscape,

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<sup>19</sup> Magdalena Szaflarski and Shawn Bauldry, "The Effects of Perceived Discrimination on Immigrant and Refugee Physical and Mental Health," *Advances in Medical Sociology* 19 (2019): 173–204, <https://doi.org/10.1108/S1057-629020190000019009>.

including ethnic media outlets, plays a significant role in disseminating information about elections and political issues relevant to immigrant communities.

b. *USA | Rural South:*

In stark contrast, rural areas in the American South, such as parts of Alabama, Mississippi, and Georgia, present a different picture. These regions have much smaller immigrant populations, often dispersed over large geographic areas, which poses unique challenges to political engagement. The limited presence of community organizations means fewer resources for voter education and mobilization. Unlike Los Angeles, where organizations like CHIRLA and AAAJ are prevalent, rural areas lack similar support structures. Language barriers further complicate the situation. Many rural areas in the South do not provide voting materials in languages other than English, despite having significant non-English-speaking populations.<sup>20</sup> This lack of language-accessible voter materials discourages immigrants from participating in elections. Moreover, the logistical challenges of rural living, such as limited public transportation and fewer polling places, make it difficult for immigrants to reach voting locations. For instance, in some rural counties, voters may have to travel over 30 miles to reach the nearest polling station.<sup>21</sup> The socio-economic conditions in rural areas also contribute to lower voter turnout among immigrants. Economic hardships hinder access to information about elections and voter registration procedures. The absence of community support networks that are commonplace in urban centers like Los Angeles means that many immigrants in the rural South remain isolated from the political process. Consequently, voter turnout among naturalized immigrants in these areas is significantly lower.

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<sup>20</sup> “Limited English Proficiency Voters,” National Conference of State Legislatures, November 19, 2024, <https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/limited-english-proficiency-voters>.

<sup>21</sup> Carrie Rebala et al., “How One Rural County Struggles to Find Polling Places,” Center for Public Integrity, October 30, 2020, <http://publicintegrity.org/politics/elections/ballotboxbarriers/rural-county-struggles-to-find-polling-places/>.

c. *UK | London:*

London is a vibrant city with a substantial immigrant population, including significant communities from South Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe. The city's multicultural landscape is supported by numerous organizations dedicated to fostering political participation among immigrants. The Migrants' Rights Network and the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) are prominent examples of such organizations. These groups focus on educating immigrants about their voting rights and encouraging their participation in both local and national elections. They organize voter registration campaigns, provide legal advice, and conduct workshops on civic engagement. The presence of immigrant representatives in London's local councils and the Parliament inspires and motivates immigrant communities to become more politically active. For instance, candidates from immigrant backgrounds secured a significant number of seats in various London boroughs, reflecting the growing political influence of these communities.<sup>22</sup> The availability of voting materials in multiple languages and the active role of local media in covering immigrant issues further enhance political engagement. Data from the 2019 UK General Election shows that voter turnout among naturalized immigrants in London was around 68%, higher than the national average of 65%.<sup>23</sup> This higher turnout can be attributed to the efforts of community organizations, the presence of supportive infrastructure, and the overall political inclusivity of the city. London also benefits from a dense network of community centers, ethnic media, and advocacy groups that actively engage with immigrant populations, providing them with the necessary resources and information to participate in the electoral process.

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<sup>22</sup> Ben Kochan, ed., "Migration and London's Growth: Final Report of LSE London's HEIF 5 Project on Migration and the Transformation of London" (London School of Economics and Political Science, 2014), <http://www.lse.ac.uk/geographyAndEnvironment/research/london/Home.aspx>.

<sup>23</sup> Fieldhouse et al., *British Election Study*.

d. *UK | Small Towns:*

In contrast, smaller towns in the UK, such as those in rural areas of Yorkshire and Cornwall, present a different scenario. These towns have relatively low immigrant populations and lack the same level of community mobilization and political representation found in London. Immigrants in these areas often face significant barriers to political participation. The absence of robust community organizations means fewer opportunities for voter education and advocacy. Unlike London, where organizations like the Migrants' Rights Network and JCWI are active, smaller towns do not have equivalent support structures. The lack of representation in local councils further exacerbates the issue. Immigrants in smaller towns often do not see themselves reflected in the local political landscape, leading to feelings of disenfranchisement and disengagement. A study by the Electoral Commission found that voter turnout among immigrants in smaller UK towns was significantly lower, averaging around 45% in the 2019 General Election.<sup>24</sup> This lower turnout reflects the broader challenges faced by immigrants in these areas, including limited access to voting materials in their native languages and a lack of targeted outreach efforts. Moreover, the social and economic conditions in small towns can negatively impact voter turnout. Immigrants in these areas may face economic hardships, limited access to information, and a lack of social networks that can support political engagement. The absence of local media coverage on immigrant issues and the scarcity of community centers where immigrants can receive assistance further contribute to their political isolation. Additionally, systemic barriers such as strict voter ID laws and complex registration processes disproportionately affect immigrant communities, reducing their likelihood of participating in elections.

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<sup>24</sup> The Electoral Commission, "Voter Engagement Among Black and Minority Ethnic Communities," July 2022.

Finally, localized factors, like the level of political representation within local governments and the presence of community-based political organizations, play a significant role in immigrant political participation. Areas with active immigrant advocacy and outreach programs tend to have higher participation rates among naturalized immigrants.<sup>25</sup> These programs often include voter education, language assistance, and community efforts tailored to immigrant needs. For instance, local governments and political parties in immigrant-dense areas might invest in multilingual voting materials, culturally relevant voter education campaigns, and partnerships with local organizations to engage immigrant voters. In regions lacking these services, immigrants may experience disengagement and lower voter turnout. The absence of targeted outreach efforts can lead to feelings of alienation and mistrust in the political system.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, barriers like strict voter ID laws, complex registration processes, and limited polling locations can disproportionately affect immigrant communities, further discouraging participation.

## **VI. Discussion**

The interpretation of findings from this study reveals an interesting interaction of factors influencing voter turnout among naturalized immigrants in the United States and the United Kingdom. The quantitative and qualitative results above highlight significant patterns and disparities, showing that naturalized immigrants generally exhibit lower voter turnout rates compared to native-born citizens. This disparity is shown when examining different racial groups, with systemic barriers such as lower socio-economic status, limited access to information, and historical discrimination significantly impacting voter participation. Geographic

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<sup>25</sup> Caroline B. Brettell, *The Political and Civic Engagement of Immigrants* (American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2020), [https://www.amacad.org/sites/default/files/publication/downloads/Democratic-Citizenship\\_Immigrants-Civic-Political-Engagement.pdf](https://www.amacad.org/sites/default/files/publication/downloads/Democratic-Citizenship_Immigrants-Civic-Political-Engagement.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> Adam Miller et al., "Understanding Non-participation in Local Governance Institutions in Indonesia," *Biological Conservation* 294 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2024.110605>.

distribution also plays a crucial role; immigrants in urban areas, like Los Angeles and London, benefit from community support and resources that enhance political participation. In contrast, those in rural areas face significant challenges due to limited infrastructure and fewer community organizations. Socio-economic factors further influence voter turnout, with higher income, education, and stable employment correlating positively with political engagement. Community organizations and advocacy groups are important in mobilizing immigrant voters by providing essential services like voter registration drives, education, and support. The case studies underscore these findings, illustrating how localized contexts, such as the presence of immigrant advocacy organizations in urban centers versus their absence in rural areas, contribute to varying levels of electoral engagement.

The comparison between the United States and the United Kingdom reveals distinct differences in their electoral systems, community support structures, and socio-economic contexts, all of which significantly influence voter turnout among naturalized immigrants. These differences shape how immigrants engage with the political process and the barriers they encounter. One of the most notable distinctions between the two countries is the structure of their electoral systems. In the United States, voting laws are complex and vary by state which can create significant obstacles for naturalized immigrants, especially those who consistently move around the country. In contrast, the United Kingdom's electoral system is generally more straightforward and consistent across the country, with fewer barriers to registration and participation. The UK allows for postal voting and early voting across the board, which increases accessibility for immigrants, particularly those in areas with fewer polling stations. These regulatory differences reflect broader disparities in political culture and engagement practices. The U.S., with its more contentious political environment, often experiences polarized political

debates that can either mobilize or disenfranchise immigrant voters. On the other hand, the UK's relatively stable political climate provides a more predictable and structured environment for immigrants to participate. The UK's focus on inclusivity, at least in terms of its legal and institutional frameworks, has created an environment where immigrants are more likely to feel that their participation is valued and that their vote has an impact.

Community support and resources for naturalized immigrants also vary significantly between the two countries. In the US, the effectiveness of community organizations like CHIRLA and AAAJ in Los Angeles highlights the crucial role these groups play in mobilizing immigrant voters through targeted outreach and voter education programs. Similarly, in the UK, organizations such as the Migrants' Rights Network and JCWI provide essential support, but their impact can be more limited outside major urban centers. Local and national government initiatives in both countries support immigrant voters to varying degrees, with the UK generally providing more structured support compared to the fragmented approach often seen in the US.

Racial and socio-economic contexts show further disparities between the US and UK, affecting voter turnout among naturalized immigrants. The US, with its history of racial discrimination and socioeconomic inequality, sees greater disparities in voter turnout among different racial groups. Systemic barriers such as economic hardships, lower education levels, and limited access to information disproportionately affect minority immigrants. In the UK, while racial and socio-economic challenges persist, the scale and impact of these barriers can differ, partly due to different historical contexts and social policies.

The evaluation of alternative explanations for voter turnout among naturalized immigrants shows an interesting interplay of political socialization, community support, political culture, and economic and social integration. Political socialization plays a crucial role in

shaping voting behavior, with family, community, and social networks significantly influencing political engagement.<sup>27</sup> Effective community support systems, such as local advocacy groups and social clubs, can enhance voter turnout by providing education, resources, and a sense of belonging. In both the US and UK, the broader political culture, characterized by the national political climate and the role of political parties and candidates, also impacts immigrant voter turnout. Political parties and candidates who actively engage with immigrant communities and address their specific concerns can foster higher levels of political participation. Economic and social integration also plays a critical role. Economic stability, access to employment, and social cohesion foster a conducive environment for electoral engagement. Integration policies that promote economic stability and social inclusion are vital for encouraging political participation among naturalized immigrants.

## **VII. Conclusion**

The exploration of voter turnout among naturalized immigrants in the United States and the United Kingdom has highlighted significant disparities influenced by race, socioeconomic status, and systemic barriers. Analysis indicates that naturalized immigrants, particularly those from marginalized racial groups, face substantial challenges in electoral participation, especially when compared to their native-born counterparts. These challenges are increased by factors such as lower socioeconomic status, limited access to information, and historical and contemporary contexts of racial discrimination. A comparative analysis between the United States and the United Kingdom reveals distinct differences in electoral systems, community support structures, and socioeconomic contexts, which significantly influence voter turnout among naturalized immigrants. The United States, with its complex voting regulations, shows more pronounced

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<sup>27</sup> Jennifer Fitzgerald, "Social Engagement and Immigration Attitudes: Panel Survey Evidence from Germany," *International Migration Review* 46, no. 4 (2012): 941–70, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41804869>.

barriers to immigrant participation. In contrast, the United Kingdom's more accessible electoral processes and supportive community groups generally foster higher levels of engagement among naturalized immigrants. Future research should continue to explore the intersectionality of race, socioeconomic status, and immigrant status in electoral participation, with a focus on long-term studies to track changes over time. Comparative studies including other democracies with significant immigrant populations, like those part of the European Union, could provide new insights into the best practices for fostering inclusive political engagement. Ensuring equitable representation and political participation for naturalized immigrants is necessary for the legitimacy of democratic systems. By addressing the identified barriers and implementing targeted policy measures, both the United States and the United Kingdom can move towards more inclusive and representative democratic processes that reflect the diverse voices within their societies.

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# BEYOND THE SOCIAL CONTRACT:

POWER, RIGHT, AND STATE IN SPINOZA'S  
POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

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SIMON K. HOEFLING

## ABSTRACT

*This paper examines Baruch Spinoza's political theory and its evolution from the Theologico-Political Treatise to the Political Treatise. Spinoza's mature political philosophy rejects the notion of a voluntary transfer of power central to Hobbesian contractualism, instead grounding political authority in power relations and the passions. By exploring Spinoza's metaphysical stance on power and natural right, the paper contrasts his ideas with Hobbes, arguing that civil society is a natural extension of human interaction instead of a rational, contractual agreement. Ultimately, Spinoza's theory offers a compelling philosophical alternative to traditional social contract frameworks.*

## I. Introduction

Baruch Spinoza is widely considered one of the most pivotal philosophers of the Enlightenment period whose ontological and ethical ideas profoundly influenced thinkers such as Hegel, Kant, and Nietzsche. Less widely known, however, are his works of political theory, which contain significant threads of early republican political thought. Spinoza's political philosophy offers a compelling contrast to the more popular theory of his contemporary Thomas Hobbes, diverging in several subtle but consequential ways. This paper first explores the development of Spinoza's political thought from the *Theologico-Political Treatise* to the *Political Treatise*. Then, it outlines some key differences between his theory and that of Hobbes which ultimately form a strong critique of contractualism.

## II. Background

Born in 1632 to a prominent Jewish family in Amsterdam, Baruch Spinoza was steeped in the intellectual life of the Dutch Republic. At 24 years old, he was excommunicated from the Jewish community for heresy, a charge most likely connected to his early discussions of the ideas he would later promote in his notorious *Ethics*. Among these contentious ideas is a radical pantheistic monism, or the rejection of a transcendent, providential God.<sup>1</sup> Spinoza posits that God is immanent in all things and coextensive with nature itself while eliminating the possibility that the divine would give specific moral precepts or respond to prayers and rituals. This pantheistic view upends traditional religious beliefs, as does his strict determinism, which denies the existence of free will. Because of these and other controversial beliefs, Spinoza spent much of his life on the intellectual fringes, his ideas being largely ignored during the Enlightenment

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<sup>1</sup> Steven Nadler, "Baruch Spinoza," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, November 8, 2023, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/spinoza/>.

period as the vestiges of a world dominated by religious institutions remained. Even after the study of Spinoza had been rediscovered by philosophers in the 19th century, his political theory was often dismissed or overlooked, a tendency which has remained in philosophical literature since then. However, Spinoza's political theory and its development contain penetrating insights into the nature of power and right with regard to the state.

### III. Contractualism in the *Theologico-Political Treatise*

Spinoza's first major work of political philosophy came in 1670 with the publication of the *Theologico-Political Treatise*. This work aims to challenge the authority of theologians and emphasizes the importance of freedom of thought in a just government. It is in this work that scholars often point out Spinoza's explicit support of a social contract theory. Here he repeatedly refers to a "compact" or "contract" in which men agree to give up their natural right to a sovereign in return for peace and security.<sup>2</sup> Spinoza suggests that the state is formed when men "have transferred their common natural right to a common supreme power."<sup>3</sup> This transaction is undertaken in order to obtain "comfort and security" in a world of conflicting desires.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the *Theologico-Political Treatise* contains a rudimentary and under-developed exploration of a social contract theory which seems to merely echo the insights of contemporary Thomas Hobbes. It is important to note, however, that this text was not primarily intended as a work of political philosophy, but rather as a scholarly engagement with the debates of the time. Consequently, Spinoza's cursory and simplistic explanation of a social contract seems to serve merely as a starting point in his political thought, and one must look to the later *Political Treatise* to fully

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<sup>2</sup> Baruch Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Treatise* (London: Trübner, 1862) 273, 275.

<sup>3</sup> Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Treatise*, 276

<sup>4</sup> Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Treatise*, 273

grasp Spinoza's mature political theory. In this text, Spinoza powerfully critiques the contractualism popularized by his contemporaries and instead advocates for a politics based on a more realistic assessment of power dynamics and human nature.

#### IV. Power and Right in the *Political Treatise*

The *Political Treatise* sheds the various theological arguments and contributions to contemporary debates of the *Theologico-Political Treatise*, focusing solely on developing an abstract theory of the state, its purpose, and its optimal organization. Written in 1670 but published posthumously, this work represents a decisive break from the social contract theory that Spinoza supports in his earlier work. In it, Spinoza strikes several contrasts between his own theory and that of another philosopher often associated with realist power politics, Thomas Hobbes. Through these differences, a sharp critique of contractualism emerges.

Understanding Spinoza's critique of Hobbes requires an adequate grasp of his theory of power and its related concept of natural right. For Spinoza in the *Ethics*, power is defined as a person's capacity to act, a force which determines whether someone can assert their own individual will.<sup>5</sup> This characterization of power leads to a rather notorious aspect of Spinoza's political philosophy: his definition of right. For Spinoza in the *Political Treatise*, "the natural right of every individual, is coextensive with [his] power."<sup>6</sup> The connection here between power and right in Spinoza's framework implies that an individual has the natural right to do anything that he is capable of doing. This conception of natural right is entirely divorced from any notion of objective morality, for "that which our reason declares to be evil is not evil in respect of the order and laws of universal Nature, but only in respect of our own particular nature."<sup>7</sup> To use an

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<sup>5</sup> Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. Edwin Curley (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 75.

<sup>6</sup> Baruch Spinoza, *Political Treatise* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub, 2000), 38.

<sup>7</sup> Spinoza, *Political Treatise*, 41.

example by one commentator, “if a new Genghis Khan with his crushing forces would occupy a small Spinozistic republic, he would have the right to occupy it and also the right to oppress its inhabitants for as long as they remained too frightened to resist him.”<sup>8</sup> This does not imply that “everything that is done by right is done in the best way” or even that any such actions are justified by the moral standards set forth in the *Ethics*.<sup>9</sup> It simply means that these actions do not violate the law of nature, which, in Spinoza’s view, is the law of God. Natural right is, as Gilles Deleuze observes, “identical with my power and is independent of any order of ends, of any consideration of duties.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, Spinoza has a radical definition of right which does not rely on any teleological, deontological, or consequentialist moral frameworks. He grounds his political theory in a “might makes right” metaphysics in which power alone determines an individual’s right and the right of the state.<sup>11</sup>

## V. Spinoza’s Contrasts with Hobbes

### a. *Passions and State Formation*

With Spinoza’s concepts of power and right established, one can begin to construct an idea of the state from his perspective. For him, the state is a product of human passions alone, forming the first contrast between Spinoza’s theory and that of Thomas Hobbes. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes argues that passion and reason work together to create peace and security through government by furnishing both the desire and the means to attain it. The passions that “encline men to Peace, are Feare of Death; Desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a Hope by their industry to attain them.”<sup>12</sup> These impulses and emotions foster the desire to

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<sup>8</sup> Emilia Giancotti, Alexandre Matheron, and Manfred Walther, *Studia Spinoza* (Hannover, 1986), 176.

<sup>9</sup> Spinoza, *Political Treatise*, 61.

<sup>10</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books, 1988), 102.

<sup>11</sup> Steven Barbone and Lee Rice, Introduction to *Political Treatise* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub, 2000), 19.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 90.

quit the state of nature and live a more peaceful existence in an orderly civil state. From there, “Reason suggesteth convenient Articles of Peace” by supplying the “Lawes of Nature” in moral virtues such as justice, gratitude, and equity.<sup>13</sup> Here, Hobbes emphasizes the complementary relationship between passion and reason, as the former provides specific desires, and the latter supplies the most effective and constructive way to actualize these urges.

Spinoza, on the other hand, argues that the passions alone, without the help of reason, lead to the creation of the state, and these passions are closely related to his theory of right. In Spinoza’s view, “the more cause for fear a man has, the less power, and consequently the less right, he possesses.”<sup>14</sup> Here, power, right, and fear are all linked together, and fear is an accurate measure of a man’s power, for he would only fear something if he were unable to adequately defend himself against it. Thus, according to Spinoza, if men reduce the amount of fear they suffer, they commensurately gain more power and therefore control more of their natural right. Moreover, it is only when men unite and pool their respective powers that they can fully achieve the objects of their desires and retain their natural right. Therefore, “the natural right specific to human beings can scarcely be conceived except where men have their rights in common.”<sup>15</sup> Here in the *Political Treatise*, Spinoza argues that men come together to form a collective solely because of fear, and the formation of a state allows men to more fully possess the natural right, which is coextensive with their own power. Hence, Spinoza’s state is not the product of reason combining with the passions to establish the most effective peace as Hobbes suggests, for men are not aware of this process at hand. Instead, the state emerges directly from passions, particularly the fear rooted in powerlessness, which combines with the necessity of aggregated power to better preserve one’s rights and desires. Thus, in the words of Barbone and Rice in their

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<sup>13</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 90, 110.

<sup>14</sup> Spinoza, *Political Treatise*, 43.

<sup>15</sup> Spinoza, *Political Treatise*, 44.

introduction to the *Political Treatise*, “Spinoza’s state is reasonable, but it is not the creation of reason.”<sup>16</sup> This difference in the respective roles of the passions and reason in the formation of the state marks the first key distinction between the political theories of Spinoza and Hobbes.

*b. The Inalienability of Power*

Spinoza’s account of power in the *Political Treatise*, when understood alongside the *Ethics*, creates another contrast with Hobbes’ social contract theory. For Hobbes, an individual can deliberately “lay down this right to all things” or “transfer” it to another.<sup>17</sup> This is a “voluntary act” which is done “either in consideration of some Right reciprocally transferred to himself; or for some other good he hopeth for thereby.”<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the foundation of Hobbes’ entire theory rests on this ability to transfer one’s power and right to a sovereign, for the Hobbesian commonwealth is formed when men “conferre all their power and strength upon one Man, or upon one Assembly of men” and appoint this man or assembly “to beare their Person.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, Hobbes’ contractual theory of government relies on the metaphysical notion that individuals can voluntarily and rationally transfer their power and natural right to the sovereign in exchange for peace.

Spinoza’s mature metaphysics, as developed in the *Ethics* and employed in the *Political Treatise*, starkly contrasts with this Hobbesian conception of power and its transfer. In the *Theologico-Political Treatise*, Spinoza accepts the idea that the formation of a government entity depended on men rationally and voluntarily transferring their power to the state. However, with the writing of the *Ethics* and the *Political Treatise*, Spinoza’s definition of power evolves and ultimately eliminates the possibility of such a transaction occurring. For him, power “is the very

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<sup>16</sup> Barbone and Rice, Introduction to *Political Treatise*, 13.

<sup>17</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 92.

<sup>18</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 93.

<sup>19</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 118.

essence, or nature, of man.”<sup>20</sup> This idea is a fundamental axiom of the *Ethics*, which holds that power is an innate and primary part of a person’s existence that cannot be taken away or otherwise transferred. It is an inalienable, core part of one’s being.

Thus, because an individual’s power cannot be separated from their essence, the notion that one can voluntarily transfer their power to a sovereign in exchange for some benefit or protection becomes metaphysically impossible. The authority of the state, then, does not derive from a contractual transfer of power as in Hobbes’ theory. On the contrary, it stems from the collective power of many individuals acting together “as if by one mind.”<sup>21</sup> In a letter to the philosopher Jarig Jellis, Spinoza asserts that this is the main difference between his own view and that of Hobbes, stating that his theory will “always preserve natural right intact, and only allot to the chief magistrates in every state a right over their subjects commensurate with the excess of their power over the power of the subjects.”<sup>22</sup> Men are not obliged to follow the sovereign because they have surrendered their right to it in a contract; instead, men must follow the laws of the state simply because it has more power than them. For Spinoza, sovereignty is the combined right of all the citizens of a state, which is defined by their respective powers.<sup>23</sup> Individuals in Spinoza’s system retain their own power and right but live under the greater force of the state. This metaphysical conception of power as the essence of the individual contrasts with the Hobbesian account, insofar as it holds that power cannot be transferred. Thus, in Spinoza’s *Political Treatise*, sovereignty depends not on consent or contractual agreement, but on the state’s superior capacity to exert its power and assert its right.

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<sup>20</sup> Spinoza, *Ethics*, 117.

<sup>21</sup> Spinoza, *Political Treatise*, 64.

<sup>22</sup> Baruch Spinoza to Jarig Jelles, “Letter 50” (The Hague, June 2, 1674).

<sup>23</sup> Spinoza, *Political Treatise*, 44.

c. *A Continuous State of Nature*

Another key distinction between Spinoza's *Political Treatise* and Hobbes' *Leviathan* lies in the interplay of the state of nature and the civil order. For Hobbes, "during the time men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called Warre."<sup>24</sup> Here, the state of nature is defined in stark opposition to a civil order, and the absence of the sovereign renders life "solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short."<sup>25</sup> Although some scholars have suggested that Hobbes merely employs this state of nature as a theoretical tool, it is clear in *Leviathan* that this is not the case, for he explicitly states that "it may peradventure be thought, there was never such a time, nor condition of warre as this; and I believe it was never generally so, over all the world: but there are many places, where they live so now."<sup>26</sup> He then goes on to cite such examples as "the savage people in many places of America" in order to illustrate how the state of nature is indeed a real condition.<sup>27</sup> Hobbes thus clearly believes that an anarchic state of nature with "no government at all" has existed and can exist.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, if some places are in the state of nature while others are not, this implies that these two conditions cannot coexist in the same location. According to Hobbes' theory, there is a distinct progression from the state of nature to civil society. While the state of nature may be revisited under extreme circumstances through rebellion or the collapse of the sovereign power, these two states cannot coexist simultaneously within the same spatial and political context.

Spinoza, however, differs from Hobbes in this respect, arguing that individuals are never fully outside of either the state of nature or the civil order. According to Spinoza, "men by nature

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<sup>24</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 88.

<sup>25</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 93.

<sup>26</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 89.

<sup>27</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 89.

<sup>28</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 89.

strive for a civil order, and it is impossible that men should ever utterly dissolve this order.”<sup>29</sup>

The state is a natural product of human interaction, arising inevitably as humans’ essences compound with each other. Spinoza contends that civil society is not something that one can voluntarily opt into or out of; rather, “human nature is such that men cannot live without some common code of law.”<sup>30</sup> Here, Spinoza critiques Hobbes and the social contract tradition more broadly by drawing political conclusions from his metaphysical framework. In the interpretation of Barbone and Rice, individuals in a Spinozistic world are “sempiternally citizens of some established (though not necessarily recognized) political regime.”<sup>31</sup> This civil order coexists with the natural state, as Spinoza states in the letter to Jellis that the power of the state over its subjects “always takes place in the state of nature.”<sup>32</sup> In a way, the civil order is the natural and inevitable state of man based on inherent power relations.

This interplay and coexistence of the natural state with the civil order relate to Spinoza’s previous critique of Hobbes’ transfer of power. An individual’s essence cannot be voluntarily transferred to another entity at a particular moment; rather, the power of the individual continually feeds into the collective power of the sovereign through inevitable natural forces. Spinoza believes that man is indeed a “social animal” and that civil society emerges naturally from human relationships.<sup>33</sup> Thus, while Hobbes envisions an exit from the state of nature into an “artificial” civil society, Spinoza argues in the *Political Treatise* that individuals are always part of some civil order.<sup>34</sup> The state is not a separate entity from the natural order but an enduring product of it, a perpetual interplay of forces from which humans can never fully escape.

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<sup>29</sup> Spinoza, *Political Treatise*, 64.

<sup>30</sup> Spinoza, *Political Treatise*, 34.

<sup>31</sup> Barbone and Rice, Introduction to *Political Treatise*, 10.

<sup>32</sup> Baruch Spinoza to Jarig Jelles, “Letter 50.”

<sup>33</sup> Spinoza, *Political Treatise*, 44.

<sup>34</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 110.

## VI. Beyond the Social Contract

Although the metaphysics and political philosophies of Hobbes and Spinoza differ in significant ways, they share some common elements such as their pragmatic conception of contracts. For Hobbes, “the force of Words” is “too weak to hold men to the performance of their Covenants.”<sup>35</sup> Contracts, he argues, are only reliably upheld by men when there is a “visible Power to keep them in awe, and tie them by feare of punishment.”<sup>36</sup> Moreover, Hobbes argues that “before the names of Just, and Unjust can have place, there must be some coercive Power,” and “where there is no common Power, there is no Law; where no Law, no injustice.”<sup>37</sup> Hobbes believes that men enter into contracts not out of inherent morality but out of self-interest. However, it cannot be assumed that men will inevitably maintain these compacts, for there is nothing keeping them from breaching the terms when doing so aligns with their interests. Therefore, the Leviathan, a strong and centralized government authority, is necessary to regulate and enforce contractual relationships. This pessimism about human nature, coupled with the tendency to break contracts without the fear of punishment, defines a significant part of Hobbes’ political theory.

Spinoza, in the *Political Treatise*, critiques the concept of contracts in a similar vein. He argues that contracts or pledges are only valid “as long as he who made it has not changed his mind.”<sup>38</sup> Spinoza states that “he who has the power to break faith has in reality not given up his right; he has given no more than words.”<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, if an individual concludes that “the loss resulting from the pledge he has given outweighs the advantage,” then he can rightfully break the

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<sup>35</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 99.

<sup>36</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 115.

<sup>37</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 100, 90.

<sup>38</sup> Spinoza, *Political Treatise*, 42.

<sup>39</sup> Spinoza, *Political Treatise*, 42.

promise he has made.<sup>40</sup> This characterization of contracts is extremely similar to that of Hobbes, as it is not a moral injustice for one to break a promise he has made. However, despite this shared skepticism of contracts and the theory of human nature it is based on, these philosophers draw vastly different conclusions about politics. Hobbes' system, which hinges on a complex network of contracts, necessitates an authoritarian government to hold society together, as men cannot be expected to preserve their contracts. In contrast, Spinoza's pessimism about human nature in this respect has little effect on his political theory in general because he denies contractualism entirely and conceives of the sovereign as a manifestation of power relations. When the foundation of the state is not a contract, it becomes irrelevant if men are prone to breaking promises, as the state's stability is rooted in the natural dynamics of power rather than the enforcement of agreements.

These contrasts that Spinoza strikes with Hobbes formulate a theory entirely distinct from social contract theories in general. Hobbes envisions the formation of government as a rational process in which men voluntarily transfer their power and right to a sovereign. This transaction marks the passage from a concrete and real state of nature to a structured civil order. The process is characterized by Hobbes as voluntary, reasonable, and artificial. Spinoza, on the other hand, argues that civil society emerges solely from the passions. In this case, submission to the sovereign involuntarily comes about through a natural and physical process involving power relations, instead of a willful transfer of power. Furthermore, Spinoza argues that the state of nature and civil society coexist, rather than transition into one another.

Ultimately, these features of Spinoza's theory render it fundamentally incompatible with any kind of contractualism. Spinoza believes that contracts involve some degree of rational

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<sup>40</sup> Spinoza, *Political Treatise*, 43.

calculation and that they are voluntary insofar as an individual has the power to opt out. His view of contracts therefore does not align with his theory of government, for he believes that politics is fueled by wholly irrational passions and deterministic power relations. Additionally, a social contract is structurally incompatible with Spinoza's political theory because he denies that there was ever a state of nature unaccompanied by civil society. This premise directly conflicts with social contract theory, which relies on the foundational contrast between a pre-political state of nature and a civil state to justify the creation of government through mutual agreement. By critiquing the assumptions underlying social contract theories, Spinoza underscores why he favors a model grounded in inherent power relations.

## **VII. Conclusion: Spinoza's Evolution**

Although Spinoza's first attempt at political philosophy offers a rudimentary social contract theory, his more sophisticated later work demonstrates a nuanced critique of this view. This shift in thought becomes particularly evident when comparing the *Political Treatise* to the work of Thomas Hobbes, a contemporary with whom Spinoza readily engaged. Spinoza argues that the state emerges from the passions alone, not as the product of rational agreements from a pre-civil state of nature. Moreover, his metaphysical stance asserts that an individual's power cannot be voluntarily transferred to a sovereign. The compounded power of the populace continually exists, and therefore men are perpetually situated in both a state of nature and a civil order. These contrasts with Hobbes demonstrate how Spinoza's political theory aligns power dynamics with political authority. Instead of envisioning a voluntary transfer of rights, Spinoza sees the state as a natural entity, emerging from the inherent power relations among individuals. This approach renders the idea of a social contract unnecessary. Spinoza shares Hobbes' cynical view of human nature in which contracts hold no weight if there is no superior power to uphold

them. However, Spinoza's rejection of contractualism on both practical and metaphysical grounds allows him to hold this belief about contracts while avoiding the tyrannical state of Hobbes. In this sense, Spinoza's *Political Treatise* can be read as a critical reevaluation of his own earlier work, which endorses a social contract theory. Spinoza's later philosophy reflects a profound rethinking of the relationship between power and the state, one that moves beyond the limitations of the social contract to propose a more complex and dynamic vision of political life.

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# LAND TO LEVY: TAXATION AS A TOOL OF SETTLER COLONIALISM

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ISABELLE MEGOSH

## ABSTRACT

*In both the United States and Canada, the taxation of Indigenous people is often viewed as an innocent tool for financing government operations. In the settler colonial context, however, taxation is not strictly a tool for financing the government – it is a powerful instrument for racial domination and forced assimilation of Indigenous people. This paper examines how colonial legal systems have utilized taxation not purely as a method of revenue collection but as a means to both secure white settler possession and to force assimilation on Indigenous people in order to delegitimize Indigenous sovereignty and enforce the Eurocentric definition of economic productivity and citizenship. Additionally, these taxations cause disproportionate financial effects on Indigenous communities and limit their economic opportunities. Drawing on the works of scholars Brenna Bhandar and Cheryl Harris, this analysis will reveal how taxation serves not solely as a method of revenue collection, but as an apparatus for upholding settler colonialism. From historical policies that explicitly categorized Indigenous people as “civilized” or “uncivilized” based on their tax status to contemporary rhetoric that frames Indigenous communities as economic burdens, taxation’s purpose is to maintain racial and economic inequities and reinforce the legitimacy of the settler colonial project.*

## I. Introduction

While Americans and Canadians may claim that Indigenous people do not pay any taxes, the response from Dakotah Lane, member of the Lummi Nation, is, “False and false... we do pay taxes.”<sup>1</sup> Indigenous people, despite their legal status as “domestic dependent nations,” are subjected to various forms of taxes, including federal income taxes.<sup>2</sup> The historical and contemporary rhetoric portraying Indigenous people as “non-taxpayers,” is far from true and perpetuates the myth of Indigenous economic irresponsibility. In this way, taxation is a colonial tool for the white settler to reaffirm their sense of authority and dominance over Indigenous people. The framing of Indigenous people as economic liabilities functions as a rationale for the continual colonial control and exploitation of Indigenous people, hidden under the guise of taxation. Building on Brenna Bhandar and Cheryl Harris’s work, the taxation of Indigenous people in North America can be understood as a continuation of the settler colonial project in two ways: first, by securing white settler possession, and second, by serving as both a tool of control and assimilation to further the legitimacy of the settlement.

In Brenna Bhandar’s book *Colonial Lives of Property: Law, Land, and Racial Regimes of Ownership*, Bhandar analyzes how colonial legal systems reframed land ownership to fit European agrarian and capitalist standards to justify the dispossession of indigenous peoples’ land. Central to her analysis is the concept of “proper-use,” which functions as a colonial tool to create racial hierarchies of ownership, framing non-European land users as incapable of progress or productivity.<sup>3</sup> At the root, the basic role of these legal frameworks is to establish, secure, and protect white possession of land. As summarized: the “legal systems in almost all settler colonial

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<sup>1</sup> Samantha Schmidt, "Native American Heritage Month: 'We're Still Here,'" *The Washington Post*, November 16, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/interactive/2021/native-american-heritage-month-were-still-here/>.

<sup>2</sup> “American Indian Law,” *Legal Information Institute*, Cornell Law School, accessed December 19, 2024, [https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/american\\_indian\\_law](https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/american_indian_law).

<sup>3</sup> Brenna Bhandar, *Colonial Lives of Property: Law, Land, and Racial Regimes of Ownership* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018).

societies, attempts two things: to mark Indigenous territory as empty and thusly as non-property and then to enroll that dispossession into a legal regime that empower[s] white settlers to value possession.”<sup>4</sup> The taxation of Indigenous people not only extends this process; taxation allows white possession to be secured.

Cheryl Harris similarly discusses the idea of racialized conception of property in her article, “Whiteness as Property.” She writes, “Only particular forms of possession – those that were characteristic of white settlement – would be recognized and legitimated. Indian forms of possession were perceived to be too ambiguous and unclear.”<sup>5</sup> By legitimizing only white settlement property, whiteness itself is equated to property and claims to Indigenous land become entirely illegitimate. The dispossession of Indigenous land, Harris argues, “laid the foundation for the idea that whiteness – that which whites alone possess – is valuable and is property.”<sup>6</sup> Whiteness as property was secured through law and taxation and continues to be upheld by the colonial state. Just as land is white property, tax, too, is white property and becomes a weapon used against Indigenous people.

## **II. Taxation to Secure White Settler Possession**

Taxation serves as a tool to reinforce and protect white settler dominance by framing Indigenous sovereignty and tribal tax-exempt status as an economic burden. By embedding dispossession within the framework of taxation, the white settler – positioned here as the “taxpayer” – is granted a sense of authority to intervene in Indigenous issues under the guise of “taxpayer concerns” as opposed to settler politics.<sup>7</sup> This phenomenon aligns with what Aileen Moreton-Robinson defines as white possessive logic, in which white settlers view themselves as

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<sup>4</sup> Kyle Willmott, “Taxes, Taxpayers, and Settler Colonialism: Toward a Critical Fiscal Sociology of Tax as White Property,” *Law & Society Review* 56, no. 1 (2022): 6–27, <https://doi.org/10.1111/lasr.12587>.

<sup>5</sup> Cheryl I. Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (1993): 1707–91.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Kyle Willmott, “Taxes, Taxpayers, and Settler Colonialism: Toward a Critical Fiscal Sociology of Tax as White Property,” *Law & Society Review* 56, no. 1 (2022): 6–27, <https://doi.org/10.1111/lasr.12587>.

entitled to govern, manage, and make decisions about Indigenous rights.<sup>8</sup> Through their role as the taxpayer, the white settlers reaffirm their perceived dominance and superiority over Indigenous people to frame Indigenous sovereignty and land claims as matters of economic accountability and “taxpayer concerns” rather than issues of settler colonialism.<sup>9</sup>

By portraying Indigenous land claims as taxpayer concerns, the role of the white settler/tax-payer is conflated with economic productivity and responsibility while casting Indigenous people as burdens that are paid for by taxpayers’ dollars. Settlers’ claims to legitimacy are couched in the language of fiscal responsibility, the same pattern seen in Bhandar’s writing describing the legal framework masking the dispossession of Indigenous land by language of “proper-use.”<sup>10</sup> This particular dynamic is evident in the rhetoric in an editorial from the provincial directors of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation in reference to the First Nations Financial Transparency Act: “Hopefully, aboriginal bands [sic] see this new law as an opportunity to grow their accountability to their members and to taxpayers.”<sup>11</sup> Note the distinct separation between “their members” and “taxpayers.” As evident in the distinction, taxation has created “racial imaginaries of taxpayers versus ‘taxeaters.’”<sup>12</sup> In letters written to former Canadian Senator Jean Bayek, constituents wrote sentiments such as: “I resent having to pay taxes that are used in part to subsidize first nation programs,” and “The endless funding pit of reserves has to stop.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Kyle Willmott, “Taxes, Taxpayers, and Settler Colonialism: Toward a Critical Fiscal Sociology of Tax as White Property,” *Law & Society Review* 56, no. 1 (2022): 6–27, <https://doi.org/10.1111/lasr.12587>.

<sup>10</sup> Brenna Bhandar, *Colonial Lives of Property: Law, Land, and Racial Regimes of Ownership* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Kyle Willmott, “Taxes, Taxpayers, and Settler Colonialism: Toward a Critical Fiscal Sociology of Tax as White Property,” *Law & Society Review* 56, no. 1 (2022): 6–27, <https://doi.org/10.1111/lasr.12587>.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

This dynamic extends beyond Indigenous communities to include all communities of color, who are frequently framed within settler colonial states as economic dependents draining public resources without contributing tax dollars, reinforcing whiteness as the standard of economic accountability. Not only are Indigenous people portrayed as “freeload-ers and parasites who feed off the labor of hardworking (white) taxpayers.”<sup>14</sup> A stark example of this is former U.S. President Ronald Reagan’s perpetuation of the “welfare queen” stereotype that portrayed Black women as fraudulent and thus undeserving of public assistance.<sup>15</sup> This stigmatization upholds the racial hierarchies created through colonization, as discussed by Bhandar, and reinforces how whiteness becomes property, as defined by Harris, by allowing white people to be immune from these stereotypes of “freeloaders.” The continual positioning of racialized groups as economic burdens serves as a logic to justify ongoing colonial domination and exploitation of communities of color under the guise of fiscal accountability.

Historically, taxation of the public has been viewed as a social contract between a government and its citizens. But the purpose of taxation has extended beyond the matter of a social contract or a singular relationship with the individual and the state.<sup>16</sup> Taxation reveals more about the nature of citizenship and personal freedom in that “rather than a singular kind of payment establishing their relationship with the state, citizens appear to see taxes as one of several types of payment that lead to communality and interdependence with social, religious, and state institutions.”<sup>17</sup> In this way, taxpayers view the lack of taxation of Indigenous people as

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<sup>14</sup> Daniel Martinez HoSang and Joseph E. Lowndes, *Producers, Parasites, Patriots: Race and the New Right-Wing Politics of Precarity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019)

<sup>15</sup> Eric Zorn, “Reagan Used Her. The Country Hated Her. Decades Later, the ‘Welfare Queen’ of Chicago Refuses to Go Away,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 10, 2019, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/2019/06/10/reagan-used-her-the-country-hated-her-decades-later-the-welfare-queen-of-chicago-refuses-to-go-away/>.

<sup>16</sup> Nicolette Makovicky and Robin Smith, “Introduction,” in *Tax Beyond the Social Contract: An Anthropology of Economic Citizenship*, ed. Nicolette Makovicky and Robin Smith (New York: Berghahn Books, 2020).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

unfair since Indigenous people are viewed as benefitting from “civilization” at the expense of taxpayers.<sup>18</sup>

To clarify, in both the United States and Canada, Indigenous and First Nations people do, in fact, despite public misconceptions on the contrary, pay various taxes. Tribal governments are not taxed, but individual Indigenous people are.<sup>19</sup> While some individual tax exemptions do exist, such as those tied to land or treaty rights, these exemptions are far rarer than settler rhetoric suggests. In the United States, for example, “every individual” is required to be taxed on “all income from whatever source derived,” which includes any income earned by an Indigenous person.<sup>20</sup> Yet, settlers capitalize on this perceived differentiation to construct a bifurcation between the taxpayer and the Indigenous person. This falsely perceived difference creates a distinction in the mind of the white settler between those “who cost and those who pay.”<sup>21</sup> The resulting divide allows the white settler to feel entitled to participate in the governance of Indigenous people, authorizing the white settler to retain control over property.

A historical example of this bifurcation can be found in Canada, where in 1855, “a Member of Parliament suggested that Native people were nominally causing white men’s taxes to be higher than they would be, ‘owing to the very Indian reserves’ that were exempted from tax.”<sup>22</sup> In a more recent context, a 2015 study analyzing settler-colonial racial structures in Canadian small towns revealed that white residents “claimed that Indigenous peoples were

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<sup>18</sup> Kyle Willmott, “Taxes, Taxpayers, and Settler Colonialism: Toward a Critical Fiscal Sociology of Tax as White Property,” *Law & Society Review* 56, no. 1 (2022): 6–27, <https://doi.org/10.1111/lasr.12587>.

<sup>19</sup> Internal Revenue Service, *Publication 5424: Income Tax Guide for Native American Individuals and Sole Proprietors* (Washington, DC: Department of the Treasury, September 2020), <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p5424.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> “Taxes on Native Americans,” *Project Finance* (August 2020), <https://www.projectfinance.law/publications/2020/august/taxes-on-native-americans/>.

<sup>21</sup> Kyle Willmott, “Taxes, Taxpayers, and Settler Colonialism: Toward a Critical Fiscal Sociology of Tax as White Property,” *Law & Society Review* 56, no. 1 (2022): 6–27, <https://doi.org/10.1111/lasr.12587>.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

incapable of governing themselves, and accused them of living in the past and receiving undeserved handouts at taxpayers' expense."<sup>23</sup>

### III. Taxation as Control and Forced Assimilation

Paradoxically, while settlers portray Indigenous people as “non-taxpayers,” taxation on Indigenous people has long served as a method of colonial control. Taxation is employed as a tool to forcibly assimilate Indigenous people by conditioning citizenship on the ability to pay taxes. An Indigenous person who is not “civilized” is thus not “civilized” enough to be taxed. As Bhandar identified: settler colonialism requires not only the dispossession of land, but also the continual subjugation of Indigenous people. Taxation, in this context, emerges as one such mechanism that not only secures white settler possession, it delegitimizes Indigenous autonomy. In both historical and contemporary tax laws, taxation continues to be weaponized to marginalize and subjugate Indigenous people.

As Bhandar discusses, Indigenous land was considered “unproductive” as Indigenous people lacked the mental capacity to engage in economic action and were “beyond improvement.”<sup>24</sup> She argues that this labeling of Indigenous land use as unproductive was a deliberate strategy to justify dispossession, aligning with the broader capitalist impulse to extract economic value from land. This exact sentiment is later reflected in the United States' tax laws through phrases such as “non-competent Indian.”<sup>25</sup> Extending Bhandar's argument, the taxation of Indigenous people – paired with labels like “non-competent” – additionally serves as a

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<sup>23</sup> Jeffrey S. Denis, “Contact Theory in a Small-Town Settler-Colonial Context: The Reproduction of Laissez-Faire Racism in Indigenous-White Canadian Relations,” *American Sociological Review* 80, no. 1 (2015): 218–42, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122414564998>.

<sup>24</sup> Brenna Bhandar, *Colonial Lives of Property: Law, Land, and Racial Regimes of Ownership* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018).

<sup>25</sup> Internal Revenue Service, “What Is Meant by the Term ‘Non-Competent Indian?’” last modified February 14, 2023, <https://www.irs.gov/government-entities/indian-tribal-governments/itg-faq-2-answer-what-is-meant-by-the-term-non-competent-indian>.

discrete tool for this same colonial control as land dispossession. For note, the U.S. Internal Revenue Service clarifies that “non-competent” should “never be confused with ‘incompetent,’ which refers to one’s inadequacy for a particular purpose.”<sup>26</sup> Regardless of one’s stance on the use of “non-competent” to describe a person, the terminology reflects the broader colonial project’s intent of subjugating Indigenous people by determining an Indigenous person’s capability.

As Audra Simpson, a professor of anthropology at Columbia University, writes, “To be taxed is to be a citizen.”<sup>27</sup> The connection between taxation and citizenship is strikingly clear in the United States’ termination policies of the mid-20th century. In 1953, the United States terminated the legal status of over one hundred tribal nations, declaring their members U.S. citizens and forcing Indigenous people to be subject to taxes.<sup>28</sup> Taxation thus served as a mechanism for forced assimilation of the Indigenous people into the colony as taxpayers. But taxation does not equate to complete citizenship. It serves as an “antechamber” with one requirement: “civilized.”<sup>29</sup> In the same way that Bhandar identifies property laws as methods to “assess one’s degree of assimilation” to Eurocentric definitions, tax laws serve the same purpose.

A clear example of taxation as a tool as a measurement of one’s assimilation is evident in Alaska’s 1919 school tax. The tax was enacted to fund schools and explicitly subjected Indigenous people to taxation only if they were “leading [a] civilized life.”<sup>30</sup> The law separated Indigenous people into two tiers: “civilized” colonial subjects who were taxed and therefore

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Audra Simpson, “Subjects of Sovereignty: Indigeneity, The Revenue Rule, and Juridics of Failed Consent,” *Law and Contemporary Problems* 71 (Summer 2008): 191–216, <https://scholarship.law.duke.edu/lcp/vol71/iss3/10>.

<sup>28</sup> Glenn, Evelyn Nakano. “Settler Colonialism as Structure: A Framework for Comparative Studies of U.S. Race and Gender Formation.” *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity (Thousand Oaks, Calif.)* 1, no. 1 (2015): 52–72. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2332649214560440>.

<sup>29</sup> Maximilien Zahnd, “Not ‘Civilized’ Enough to Be Taxed: Indigeneity, Citizenship, and the 1919 Alaska School Tax,” *Law & Social Inquiry* 48, no. 3 (2023): 937–70, <https://doi.org/10.1017/lsi.2022.44>.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

partially assimilated and “uncivilized” Indigenous people who were excluded from the framework of citizenship. The taxation reinforced settler colonial power by forcing Indigenous people to fund segregated schools that Indigenous children could only attend if they were either “of mixed blood” or “le[d] a civilized life.”<sup>31</sup> The purpose of the school tax, however, extended beyond the funding of schools. The tax gave settlers a legal structure for determining which Indigenous people were considered “civilized.” Lisa Phillips, a professor of taxation law and fiscal policy at Osgoode Hall Law School, argues that this tax, much like modern income tax, is a “potent site for identity production.”<sup>32</sup> The taxation serves as a site of entry for an Indigenous person to be considered fully assimilated and “civilized” in the minds of the settlers. As Secwepemc leader George Manuel and journalist Michael Posluns write, “Authorities... have offered an open hand to an Indian who ‘becomes one of us’ – that is, an enfranchised, tax-paying Christian, who brings nothing from his past.”<sup>33</sup>

Taxation has the power to function as a double-edged sword: it functions as a civilizing scheme while also inflicting economic harm on Indigenous people. For example, in 1921, Alaska enacted a “fur tax,” described as “strictly a revenue measure.”<sup>34</sup> In reality, the fur tax was far from a strictly revenue generating measure. Since most of the trappers in Alaska were Indigenous people, this tax de facto targeted them and caused extreme economic hardships. Like the school tax, this tax was part of broader efforts to force “uncivilized” Indigenous people who hunted nomadically, into “civilized” farmers. The tax reflects the overarching colonial goal of “manufactur[ing] Native subjects to its liking.”<sup>35</sup> As Elsbeth Heaman, a history professor at

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Lisa Phillips, “Registered Savings Plans and the Making of Middle-Class Canada: Toward a Performative Theory of Tax Policy,” *Fordham Law Review* 84, no. 6 (2016): 2677–98.

<sup>33</sup> George Manuel and Michael Posluns, *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019 [1974]).

<sup>34</sup> Maximilien Zahnd, “Praise the Gardeners, Dun the Hunters: Alaska Natives, Taxation, and Settler Colonialism,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 65, no. 4 (2023): 932–59, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417523000300>.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

McGill University, argues, politicians justified taxation on Indigenous people because “taxes could train Indigenous peoples to civic spiritedness.”<sup>36</sup> In the eyes of the colonizer, taxation is not merely an economic tool. Taxation is civilizing.

Tax policies have the power to not just create, but to entrench inequalities in institutions.<sup>37</sup> Sociologists have shown that American taxation has the ability to completely destroy the wealth of people of color while simultaneously “enforc[ing] white entitlement to the state and democracy.”<sup>38</sup> Taxation as a method of control has enduring effects on the economic opportunities now available to Indigenous people. The impact is particularly severe because tax policy tends to be “regressive,” meaning taxes take a larger percentage from low-income groups than high-income groups.<sup>39</sup> The resulting disparity is reflected in past statistics: in 2022, 23% of Indigenous people lived in poverty, compared to just 9% of white people.<sup>40</sup> The inequality is further compounded by housing tax policies. While homeownership tends to be the most valuable asset a family owns, the historical displacement of Indigenous people makes homeownership more difficult, with roughly 54% of Indigenous families owning homes compared to 72% of white families.<sup>41</sup> Thus, tax subsidies for homeownership further worsen these racial inequities.

Individual state tax policies create significant economic constraints for Indigenous businesses through jurisdictional overlaps in taxation authority. While states are prohibited from

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<sup>36</sup> Elsbeth Heaman, “‘The Whites Are Wild about It’: Taxation and Racialization in Mid-Victorian British Columbia,” *Journal of Policy History* 25, no. 3 (2013): 354–84, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0898030613000158>.

<sup>37</sup> Kyle Willmott, “Taxes, Taxpayers, and Settler Colonialism: Toward a Critical Fiscal Sociology of Tax as White Property,” *Law & Society Review* 56, no. 1 (2022): 6–27, <https://doi.org/10.1111/lasr.12587>.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Debbie Becher, “Land Inequalities in the United States,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 49, no. 1 (2023): 421–41, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-030420-122704>.

<sup>40</sup> Adam Looney, “How the Federal Income Tax System Can Worsen Racial Disparities,” *Urban Institute*, August 18, 2020, <https://apps.urban.org/features/federal-income-tax-system-can-worsen-racial-disparities/>.

<sup>41</sup> “National Native American Heritage Month: Key Insights on Population Demographics and Homeownership,” *National Association of Realtors*, November 2021, <https://www.nar.realtor/blogs/economists-outlook/national-native-american-heritage-month-key-insights-on-population-demographics-and-homeownership>.

taxing a transaction between two Indigenous parties, states can tax any transaction between an Indigenous party and a non-Indigenous party. This complex jurisdictional framework leaves Indigenous businesses non-incentivized to tax a business transaction out of fear that the non-Indigenous party will be deterred by the prospect of double taxation – facing both tribal and state taxes. Consequently, tribes are forced to choose between either exercising their sovereign right to tax, potentially deterring external investment and economic development, or forgoing tax revenue to maintain economic competitiveness.<sup>42</sup> The resulting conundrum represents a de facto constraint on tribal sovereignty or self-governance, contradicting the federal policies that supposedly support tribal self determination.<sup>43</sup>

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The taxation of Indigenous people is far from a neutral mechanism of revenue collection. Taxation functions as a deliberate tool for settler colonialism and racial domination. Upon analyzing the historical and contemporary experiences of Indigenous people in North America through the theoretical frameworks of Brenna Bhandar and Cheryl Harris, it is blatantly evident that taxation has been weaponized to secure white settler possession, delegitimize Indigenous sovereignty, and enforce Eurocentric definitions of citizenship and economic productivity. Settler states like the United States and Canada continue to deploy taxation strategically to create the racialized hierarchies described by Bhandar, positioning racialized groups as economic dependents who drain public resources. This framing allows taxation to successfully reinforce white possessive logic and whiteness as property while obscuring the violence of settler colonialism. Taxation is not purely economical. It is deeply intertwined with the regulation of identity and assimilation. The consequences of these practices are simply beyond evident in the

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<sup>42</sup> Pippa Browde, "Sacrificing Sovereignty: How Tribal-State Tax Compacts Impact Economic Development in Indian Country," *Hastings Law Journal* 74, no. 1 (December 2022).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

ever-present wealth disparities faced by not just Indigenous people, but all marginalized racialized groups. Taxation has entrenched systemic inequities by perpetuating economic marginalization of Indigenous people while simultaneously maintaining white entitlement to land and resources. From land to levy, settlers continue to use the strategies that enabled their genocide and displacement of Indigenous people through legal frameworks with yet another tool in their colonial arsenal: taxation.

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# THE DIPLOMA DIVIDE

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ELIZABETH HEALY

## ABSTRACT

*This paper uses political behavior to support the argument that affirmative action is still necessary in today's culture to create more tolerant campuses, and in turn, a more tolerant American population. The sunset provision in previous Supreme Court cases, such as Bakke and Grutter, demonstrates that affirmative action should not be a forever policy, but is necessary in order to provide opportunities to students of all backgrounds and ultimately strive towards the American ideal of equality. Studies have shown that the more educated a person is, the more likely they are to be more tolerant of people outside of their own in-group due to social learning theory, contact theory, and increased levels of personal efficacy. Data also shows that this tolerance is enduring over a lifetime. The so-called "diploma divide" can also be explained by the aftermath of attending a university.*

Another election passed, and so another series of analytical articles, journals, editorials, and op-eds flood the news cycle, all trying to answer the question, “why and how did this happen?” Following the election, Bernie Sanders openly criticized his former party, noting that the Democrats have embraced the educated elite and left behind the working class, so it should come as no surprise “that the working class has abandoned them.”<sup>1</sup> This comes even after the Supreme Court decision in *Students For Fair Admissions v. Harvard*, which effectively overturned affirmative action and racial balancing in university admissions. Why is there this growing gap between party supporters, especially concerning education levels, and how can it be rectified? Political scientists have been trying to explain this, and have come up with the “diploma divide” as an all-encompassing term for why the supporters of the two political parties are moving further and further apart.

The “diploma divide” describes the growing trend of the Democratic party attracting more college-educated voters than the Republican party. On the surface, this can be a vague partisan attack that only cleaves a bigger divide between the two parties of the American political system. However, there may be valid psychological explanations for the trend. Those who attend college encounter a greater variety of people compared to those who stay in their respective homogeneous communities. The contact theory and social learning theory both help to explain how simple exposure to different minority groups can increase a person’s overall tolerance, in addition to an educated person’s social connectedness. These concepts are vital because tolerant or intolerant attitudes can often turn into lifelong beliefs.

The top universities around the world have made it their mission to attract a diverse student body, understanding the impact that a multicultural community has on campus culture, student perspectives, and even their future tolerance towards different marginalized groups.

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<sup>1</sup> Sanders, Bernie [@BernieSanders]. X, 6 Nov. 2024, <https://x.com/BernieSanders/status/1854271157135941698>.

Since the ruling in *Students For Fair Admissions v. Harvard*, admissions rates for student populations like black and Hispanic Americans have dropped significantly. Brown reported that the rate of black and Hispanic students in the incoming undergraduate class dropped from 15 to 9 percent and from 14 to 10 percent, respectively.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, Democratic or liberal policies, especially those in relation to race, tend to align more with these tolerant beliefs and social systems, which could explain why college-educated voters have gravitated towards the Democratic party in recent years. Social safety nets, income redistribution aimed at reducing inequality, expanded and affordable healthcare, and better public education have all become trademark Democratic policy platforms, and are generally aimed at improving the greatest number of lives, especially for those who are in the most need.

To assert that Democratic voters are, on average, more inclined to vote in accordance with socially tolerant policies is a defensible claim. Many liberal policies backed largely by Democrats aim to support those who are disadvantaged and promote progressivity, which has created an association, at least in the minds of Americans. According to the Pew Research Center, “About six-in-ten adults (57%) say the phrase ‘respectful and tolerant of different types of people’ describes the Democratic Party very or somewhat well, compared with 38% who say it describes the Republican Party.”<sup>3</sup> The contact theory, however, provides one explanation for why those who receive a higher education tend to be more tolerant and therefore support Democratic policies. Proposed by Gordon Allport, the contact hypothesis states that “social contact between social groups is sufficient to reduce intergroup prejudice.”<sup>4</sup> Being consistently

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<sup>2</sup> Rosenberg, John S. “Admissions after Affirmative Action.” *Harvard Magazine*, 9 Sept. 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Pew Research Center. “As Partisan Hostility Grows, Signs of Frustration with the Two-Party System.” *Pew Research Center*, 9 Aug. 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2022/08/09/as-partisan-hostility-grows-signs-of-frustration-with-the-two-party-system/>.

<sup>4</sup> Mcleod, Saul. “Contact Hypothesis.” *Simple Psychology*, April 12, 2023. [www.simplypsychology.org/contact-hypothesis.html](http://www.simplypsychology.org/contact-hypothesis.html)

exposed to outgroups can begin to reduce stereotypes or hostility towards that group. Between living, working, and studying, the people who attend university tend to have consistent exposure to groups other than their own. Today, diversity and inclusion are still at the forefront of many educators' and administrators' minds. Kelly Slay, an assistant professor of higher education and public policy at Vanderbilt University, says colleges must continue to emphasize diversity in their student populations. Not only does this bring higher levels of cultural awareness and acceptance, but diverse organizations are also “more profitable,” “more innovative,” and “more competitive in a global society.”<sup>5</sup> College admissions want to implement policies that allow students to interact with a variety of groups of students.

Studies have proven contact theory to be influential when it comes to different groups of students engaging with one another. Mitchell Chang's PhD dissertation for UCLA sought to prove this, and found that “after controlling for student background characteristics, college environmental factors, and college experiences, we find that racial diversity has a positive impact on the white student's inclination both to socialize with someone of a different racial group and to discuss racial issues. This implies that a racially diverse student body is a direct causal factor in how frequently white students socialize cross-racially and discuss racial issues.”<sup>6</sup> Simply going to school with different groups other than your own does not immediately correlate with an increase in tolerance towards that outgroup, but it has been shown that consistent exposure and positive experiences with minority groups do. Having a campus with a diverse student body allows majority and minority groups to interact and forge a bridge between people who have historically been forcibly separated. Coming into frequent contact with a diverse student body is

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<sup>5</sup> Slay, Kelly. “How Can Universities Diversify Their Classes in a Post-Affirmative Action Admissions Landscape?” *Vanderbilt University*, 20 Oct. 2023, <https://news.vanderbilt.edu/2023/10/20/how-can-universities-diversify-their-classes-in-a-post-affirmative-action-admissions-landscape/>.

<sup>6</sup> Chang, Mitchell James. *Racial Diversity in Higher Education: Does a Racially Mixed Student Population Affect Educational Outcomes?* PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1996. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses

one way that education (particularly higher education) can be associated with an increase in tolerance.

Social learning theory also provides an explanation for any those who receive a higher education are more likely to adopt tolerant views. College students and graduates are known to have a higher social connectedness given their higher level of education and exposure to media and are therefore more prone to accepting popular cultural views. The NIH cites this social trust and openness, saying that a college experience “expands the horizon of individuals on economic and social change, makes individuals more open-minded to accept otherness from heterogeneous groups.”<sup>7</sup> Those with more education are also less likely to view their status in society as threatened by another group and are therefore more personally efficacious. Over time, tolerance has grown to include those of lower classes; social programs that advocate for minority groups have highlighted racial and gender equality, in addition to the acceptance of LGBTQ individuals.

Education not only promotes tolerance for specific outgroups—it creates a general feeling of tolerance and reduces outgroup hostility for a wide array of racial minority and religious groups. Depending on whether or not they hold prejudices, stereotypes, and outgroup hostility, voters behave differently when it comes to political participation, such as which candidates or policies they choose to support. This is seen to a higher extent as of late, as “scholars have argued that both racial resentment... and authoritarianism... have become stronger predictors of political behavior.”<sup>8</sup> Education and the subsequent tolerance and acceptance that stems from it can predict political behavior, such as voting, which can help both sides of the aisle determine which groups make up their base and possible voting bloc. It also

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<sup>7</sup> Oreopoulos, Philip, and Kjell G. Salvanes. "Priceless: The Nonpecuniary Benefits of Schooling." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2011, pp. 159–184. *PubMed Central*, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3183293/>.

<sup>8</sup> Zingher, Joshua N. "Diploma Divide: Educational Attainment and the Realignment of the American Electorate." *Political Research Quarterly* 75, no. 2(2022)

allows psychologists and political scientists to study who is voting for whom, and why, allowing for a deeper look into political and, more broadly, human behavior.

Some argue that race should simply be eliminated as a consideration in education and that administrators should focus more on individual students or economic considerations. Economic considerations are essential to creating an equitable world, but we have not moved so far as to completely ignore the current situation in the United States concerning race, especially when it comes to its presence in our current political atmosphere. Racial attitudes have real-world implications, which were highlighted in the 2016 election. Though increasing partisanship has been a recent pattern, the 2016 election was especially notable due to the strong personality of President Trump, who ran on policies and mottos that encouraged the maltreatment of racial minorities. According to the study, “high levels of racial and anti-immigrant animus were associated with a much greater likelihood of supporting Trump in the Republican primary... and supporting Trump over Clinton in the general election.”<sup>9</sup> Exit polls have shown that Trump voters were significantly less educated than Clinton voters, 29% compared to 43% respectively.<sup>10</sup> Uneducated voters tend to have lower personal efficacy and feel that their status in society is threatened by others, which can lead to outgroup hostilities. This is enhanced by “misrepresentations, misunderstandings, and mistrust between the two groups... because there is little or no first-hand interaction experience.”<sup>11</sup> Evidently, Trump used this embedded hostility to rouse his following by promoting intolerance toward minority groups, specifically immigrants. Although this is a recent research example, it highlights how education, tolerance, and politics

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<sup>9</sup> Zingher, 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Pew Research Center. *An Examination of the 2016 Electorate Based on Validated Voters*. August 9, 2018. [www.pewresearch.org/politics/2018/08/09/an-examination-of-the-2016-electorate-based-on-validated-voters](http://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2018/08/09/an-examination-of-the-2016-electorate-based-on-validated-voters)

<sup>11</sup> Stark, Rodney. "Ingroups and Outgroups." *Research Starters: Sociology (Online Edition)*, EBSCO, 2006, <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/social-sciences-and-humanities/ingroups-and-outgroups>.

shape American political culture, as reflected in the two-party system alongside the views of its respective supporters.

Alongside racial attitudes, stereotyping—a negative association with outgroups often resulting from ignorance or lack of contact with outgroups—has also been shown to stem from a lack of education and intelligence. This is unsurprising, as people without interpersonal experience with these outgroups are less likely to challenge or combat the stereotypes presented. In a survey done by *The Journalist's Resource*, “survey respondents with better scores on the verbal ability test were much less likely to have a negative view of black people’s intelligence and work ethic. For example, 45.7 percent of respondents who scored the lowest on the test reported that they think ‘blacks are lazy.’ About one-quarter (28.8 percent) of the highest scorers agreed with the statement.”<sup>12</sup> Whether it is a result of natural intelligence or the benefits that come with an education, educated people are found to be more tolerant. Perpetuating these kinds of harmful stereotypes is detrimental to these outgroups and to society’s overall tolerance. Though some stereotypes derive from deep-seated and generational hate, most come from the lack of knowledge about groups other than one's own coupled with the desire to believe one's group is superior to others. Education not only provides the knowledge to combat this dangerous ignorance but also allows for intermingling among groups, promoting tolerance. There is a clear difference between educated and uneducated voters when it comes to specific policies that generally promote tolerance or benefit the well-being of others.

Attitudes towards outgroups, often traced back to one’s level of education, have been shown to directly influence the specific policies people support. Those who have received more education have higher levels of support for liberal attitudes, “such as freedom of expression,

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<sup>12</sup> Ordway, Denise-Marie. "Are Smart People Less Racist? New Research." *The Journalist's Resource*, January 14, 2016.

ethnic diversity, gay and lesbian rights, and non-traditional gender roles.”<sup>13</sup> Those who have received higher education are more equipped and likely to adapt to societal changes and tolerate those with different lifestyles from their own. The acceptance of the LGBTQ community and alternative family structures marks a new century of acceptance for all people and is a sign of progress in a modern nation.

In addition to accepting those with “non-traditional” lives and families, education also affects feelings of nationalism, even through the lens of globalization as a whole. In a cross-national study, Bekhuis et al. “found that the effect of globalization on nationalist attitudes was conditional upon education. People with higher levels of education were less likely to experience an increase in nationalistic attitudes in response to higher levels of immigration.... increased levels of schooling caused more positive attitudes toward immigrants and lower levels of support for anti-immigrant political parties.”<sup>14</sup> When presented with the same situation, the less educated subjects turned towards outgroup hostility more quickly than their educated counterparts. This may also arise from their seemingly threatened social status. People who view themselves as “low on the totem pole” are quicker to try to ostracize the groups around them to make them feel more secure in the perceived social hierarchy. Education is key to breaking this cycle. This study provides evidence that education was the isolated variable that led to a statistically significant increase in tolerance for outgroups.

Higher levels of education are also correlated with lower levels of religiosity, which “are associated with higher levels of trust in science and scientists... and more liberal values on gay and transgender rights and abortion.”<sup>15</sup> The inverse relation of religion and general tolerance of others is noteworthy, especially when the Republican demographic has been more consistently

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<sup>13</sup> Zingher, 2022.

<sup>14</sup> Zingher, 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Zingher, 2022.

religious, particularly among white protestants and catholics.<sup>16</sup> Reflected in specific policies, and we can see how those policies divide into the respective liberal and conservative lines. These divides often align with party ideals, as liberal policies are more likely to promote “tolerant” ideas and practices that advocate for the acceptance of minority groups.

The connection between education, tolerance, and partisanship is seen in a CES analysis revealing that “holding a bachelor’s degree has been a significant predictor of Democratic partisanship in each year since 2008. Perhaps more importantly, the effect increased markedly starting in 2014. The impact of having a college degree doubled between 2013 and 2020, with degree holders being nearly 0.75 points more Democratic along the seven-point scale.”<sup>17</sup> Though the diploma divide is a relatively new phenomenon, it is significant. As the two parties become more politicized, their respective voting blocs become more pronounced. These differences between Democratic and Republican voters and the overall tolerance stemming from higher education are markedly important, given that many of these beliefs can be held for a lifetime.

Education and intelligence can be influential in childhood as well, as early education significantly correlates with attitudes towards political tolerance in adulthood. A “2008 study published in *Psychological Science*, for example, indicates a strong association between children’s general intelligence and their social attitudes as adults. The researchers learned that children with higher intelligence levels at age 10 tended to have more liberal, nontraditional attitudes at age 30.”<sup>18</sup> This study does not account for contact theory, which states that exposure to outgroups creates more tolerance for those outgroups and others; instead, it isolates the

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<sup>16</sup> Pew Research Center. “Party Identification Among Religious Groups and Religiously Unaffiliated Voters.” *Pew Research Center*, 9 Apr. 2024, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2024/04/09/party-identification-among-religious-groups-and-religiously-unaffiliated-voters/>.

<sup>17</sup> Zingher, 2022.

<sup>18</sup> Ordway, Denise-Marie. "Are Smart People Less Racist? New Research." *The Journalist's Resource*, January 14, 2016.

correlation between the individual's political beliefs and their levels of intelligence and education during formative years. Intelligence in a person's youth directly translates to more liberal attitudes as an adult, further supporting the theory behind the diploma divide and explaining why more educated voters, even without higher education, tend to gravitate towards the Democratic party.

Higher education does, however, affect many crucial aspects of an individual's social identity, which can cement beliefs and last a lifetime. This can include beliefs about racial, religious, and gender groups, separated loosely along party lines. Both can affect and be affected by the identity that someone has built through their years of higher education and beyond. When studying these lasting effects, "Mason (2015) and others have noted, the party coalitions have sorted along demographic lines, with people of color, urbanites, and the non-religious moving toward the Democrats and Whites, rural America, and the religious becoming more Republican."<sup>19</sup> Groups of people with similar beliefs, including the educated, tend to gravitate toward members of their own in-group. This can create entire communities that share common belief systems, which often translate to corresponding political affiliations. This phenomenon has been seen specifically among college graduates, as they have "become more likely to live near and work with other college graduates. As a result, it stands to reason that educational attainment might operate as an increasingly strong signal of identity and shape political behavior in ways unrelated to policy, racial attitudes, and the like."<sup>20</sup> No one would generalize that every educated voter votes Democrat—or that every uneducated voter votes Republican—but education affecting social identity is significant.

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<sup>19</sup> Zingher, 2022.

<sup>20</sup> Zingher, 2022.

Even if a workplace or home residence was not intentionally chosen for these reasons, “living and working around a set of people with comparable experiences works to reinforce a shared set of values.”<sup>21</sup> If college-educated people are moving to and working in similar areas, one can infer that these people are continuing to socialize with like-minded individuals. The salience of education as a strong indicator of identity and political behavior is a very important trend within the American political system—a trend that can offer insightful commentary about the Democratic and Republican bases. Once crystallized, identity rarely dissipates; college and post-graduate students base life decisions on the values they learned at university and the people they have surrounded themselves with. This gives them a

Moratorium — a time and a place in which they can experiment with different social roles before making permanent commitments to an occupation, to intimate relationships, to social and political groups and ideas, and to a philosophy of life. Gurin argues that such a moratorium should ideally involve a confrontation with diversity and complexity, lest young people passively make commitments based on their past experiences, rather than actively think and make decisions informed by new and more complex perspectives and relationships.<sup>22</sup>

The opportunity of higher education is a playground for a vast array of life experiences that shape a student’s mindset and can continue to influence their decisions for decades to come.

The long-term effects of surrounding oneself with a diverse group of people and receiving a higher education are clear: a higher level of tolerance and a higher likelihood of supporting liberal candidates and policies. However, the short-term effects of mixing many

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<sup>21</sup> Zingher, 2022.

<sup>22</sup> Gurin, Patricia, Eric L. Dey, Sylvia Hurtado, and Gerald Gurin. "Diversity and Higher Education: Theory and Impact on Educational Outcomes." *Harvard Educational Review* 72, no. 3 (2002): 334.

different groups of people together who either have a limited or even negative view of one another can be harmful. A study examining on-campus hate crimes at American universities highlights the violent effects of having a diverse campus, finding that “the more diverse a student population is, the more likely it is that there would be hate crimes on campus.”<sup>23</sup> The study noted a variety of potential explanatory factors and found that “what makes college campuses unique is how they gather people from different backgrounds and put them all together in one space. Some of these students come from very homogenous backgrounds.”<sup>24</sup> Coming from an extremely homogeneous background, surrounded mostly by others, presumably in your own in-group, can cause a high amount of exposure to different people to be experienced as a stark change. For some individuals or groups, this sparks hostility and even violence towards outgroups, particularly other racial and religious groups. Though this evidence can be disheartening, the “research shows that exposure to other groups can reduce prejudice in the long term... but in the short term, you also have the opportunity for victimization to increase when all these people from different backgrounds come together in a physical space.”<sup>25</sup> Campuses should pay attention to student safety and be particularly mindful of students on campus who may be targeted by hate crimes, namely minority groups.

This is not to discourage campuses from actively seeking to establish a diverse student population. The United States has come a long way in its history, but it is understandable why the seemingly glacial pace of change can be frustrating. Since the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the U.S. Federal Government has implemented policies to encourage integration and equality between all of its citizens, and many universities decided to follow suit. Tolerance for minority

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<sup>23</sup> Bryant, Jessica. “Hate Crimes on College Campuses.” *BestColleges*, November 10, 2021. [www.bestcolleges.com/news/analysis/2021/07/22/hate-crimes-on-college-campuses/](http://www.bestcolleges.com/news/analysis/2021/07/22/hate-crimes-on-college-campuses/). Accessed 3 May 2023.

<sup>24</sup> Bryant, 2021.

<sup>25</sup> Bryant, 2021.

groups was deemed a manner of such importance that for decades the Supreme Court upheld universities' right to cultivate a diverse student body through a variety of admissions methods, known broadly as affirmative action. *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* and *Grutter v. Bollinger* both upheld narrowly tailored affirmative action as legal. Education was a compelling interest, particularly in the context of integrating groups of students who had previously been legally and socially restricted from attending. From countless pieces of evidence, one can see the essential benefits of promoting a more diverse, educated society in order to make America more tolerant, and programs like affirmative action expedite that process.

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# HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD: A MODERN FORM OF SLAVERY

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ELIZABETH KANE

## ABSTRACT

*This paper explores the complex relationship between globalization and human trafficking, framing the latter as a modern form of slavery sustained by global economic systems. As globalization increases the movement of goods, services, and people, it also creates vulnerabilities that traffickers exploit—particularly among immigrant populations and marginalized communities. The paper outlines the historical development of human trafficking, notably through the adoption of the Palermo Protocol, and examines its presence in multiple industries, including sex work, agriculture, and mining. Using data from international organizations and firsthand survivor accounts, the research highlights how economic inequality, migration pressures, and unregulated supply chains enable exploitation. The paradox of globalization is emphasized: while it promotes economic development, it simultaneously facilitates illicit labor practices. This paper concludes by recommending systemic reforms such as stronger international collaboration, corporate accountability, legal protections, and survivor-centered support as key strategies in the global fight against trafficking.*

## I. Introduction

An estimated 27.6 million people worldwide are victims of human trafficking.<sup>1</sup> To put that into perspective, the continent of Australia's entire population is only 27.1 million people.<sup>2</sup> Human trafficking, a repercussion of globalization, is fueled by economic inequality, insecure state borders, and the demand for cheap labor. Globalization, as defined by George Ritzer and Paul Dean, is "a planetary process or set of processes involving increasing liquidity and the growing multidirectional flows of people, objects, places and information as well as the structures they encounter and create that are barriers to or expedite those flows."<sup>3</sup> It involves increasing interconnectedness among state economies, cultures, and nations, and is driven by trade, technology, and communication. Although globalization allows for global collaboration, it also presents challenges such as inequality and exploitation. Human trafficking is a stark example of the negative impacts of globalization, as interconnected economies enable criminal networks to take advantage of vulnerable populations. The rise of human trafficking as a "modern form of slavery" is deeply intertwined with globalization, as low labor standards and global inequalities have created exploitation in industries like sex work, agriculture, and mining.<sup>4</sup> Thus, this paper examines human trafficking to understand how the integrated global economy has led to an increased exploitation of humans to learn how this "modern form of slavery" can be fought.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of State, "About Human Trafficking," *US Department of State*, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/humantrafficking-about-human-trafficking/>.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, "National, State and Territory Population," Australian Bureau of Statistics (Australian Bureau of Statistics, September 19, 2024), <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/national-state-and-territory-population/mar-2024>.

<sup>3</sup> George Ritzer and Paul Dean, *Globalization : The Essentials*, 2nd ed. (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2019), 2.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of State, "What Is Modern Slavery?," United States Department of State, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/what-is-modern-slavery/>.

## II. Forms, Victims, and Historical Development of Human Trafficking

According to the United States Department of Homeland Security, “Human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act.”<sup>5</sup> Modern forms of human trafficking include sex trafficking, forced labor, and child exploitation. Although trafficking does supply human beings for interpersonal relationships, i.e. prostitution, marriage, and adoption, nearly 70% of victims are exploited in the private economy, enduring brutal conditions across industries like manufacturing, agriculture, and mining.<sup>6</sup> These industries possess physical and psychological hazards, as victims face abuse, low wages, and the constant threat of being replaced. Furthermore, Dr. Loring Jones, a scholar of sociology at San Diego State University, reports that “Among illegal enterprises, trafficking is second only to drug dealing, and tied with the illegal arms industry, in its ability to generate dollars.”<sup>7</sup> With over \$150 billion in profits annually, human trafficking has become a low-risk, high-reward industry for perpetrators who thrive on the exploitation of some of the world’s most vulnerable populations—immigrants.<sup>8</sup>

As of 2006, the International Organization for Migration estimated that there were more than 191 million immigrants worldwide.<sup>9</sup> As Dr. Jones goes on to write, “Immigrants are frequently treated as outsiders in their host countries and not afforded the same protection and rights as citizens.”<sup>10</sup> Due to this outsider status, immigrants are more vulnerable to exploitation—most clearly seen in human trafficking. Thus, this modern form of slavery is one

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<sup>5</sup> Department of Homeland Security, “What Is Human Trafficking?,” Department of Homeland Security, September 22, 2022, <https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/what-human-trafficking>.

<sup>6</sup> “Exploitation and the Private Sector,” Human Rights First, May 1, 2016, <https://humanrightsfirst.org/library/exploitation-and-the-private-sector/>.

<sup>7</sup> Jones, Loring; Engstrom, David W.; Hilliard, Tricia; and Diaz, Mariel (2007) "Globalization and Human Trafficking," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 34: Iss. 2, Article 8, 108.

<sup>8</sup> “Exploitation and the Private Sector”

<sup>9</sup> “Globalization and Human Trafficking,” 108.

<sup>10</sup> “Globalization and Human Trafficking,” 108.

of the dark consequences of globalization where traffickers exploit power dynamics to target marginalized populations.<sup>11</sup>

As human trafficking increasingly becomes more recognized globally, its historical development highlights how globalization has transformed it into a widely acknowledged crisis. Human trafficking has long existed in multiple forms, but it gained significant global attention in the late 20th century as nations began to recognize its scale and impact as a modern form of slavery. The United Nations' adoption of the Palermo Protocol in 2000 marked a critical moment in modern history, establishing the first international definition of human trafficking.<sup>12</sup> The Palermo Protocol defines human trafficking as:

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons by means of threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or a position of vulnerability, for the purpose of exploitation, which includes at a minimum, sexual exploitation, forced labor, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the removal of organs; regardless of the victim's consent if any of the aforementioned means were used to achieve it.<sup>13</sup>

Although in the 21st century human trafficking is defined and acknowledged worldwide, the surge in recognition did not begin until the late 20th century. The growth of interconnected economic systems during this period facilitated the movement of goods and services, enabling the exploitation of vulnerable populations. For example, the International Labour Organization estimates that nearly 25 million people worldwide are victims of forced labor, much of it driven

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<sup>11</sup> "Globalization and Human Trafficking," 108.

<sup>12</sup> "Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime," November 15, 2000, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/ProtocolonTrafficking.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> "Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons"

by the demand for cheap goods and services in global supply chains.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the historical course of human trafficking, shaped by globalization and state interconnectedness, highlights the need for efforts to combat this human rights crisis.

### III. Challenges in Estimating the Scale of Human Trafficking

It is undisputed that human trafficking is an extensive issue with global implications, but its true scope is difficult to estimate due to the hidden nature of the crime and inconsistencies in research methods. The absence of a universal methodology for estimating human trafficking prevalence has led to widely varying global estimates, ranging from millions to tens of millions of victims. According to Kelle Barrick and Rebecca Pfeffer, two researchers at RTI International, the populations involved (i.e. victims, traffickers, and exploiters) are largely hidden, making it nearly impossible to create accurate estimates.<sup>15</sup> Even with the internationally agreed-upon definition of trafficking outlined in the Palermo Protocol,<sup>16</sup> national and state-level variations in definitions impact the collection of trafficking-related data. Studies often use administrative data, surveys, and interviews, each having limitations when trying to apply them across studies and contexts. This inconsistency also extends to state data. For example, while the National Human Trafficking Hotline identified 11,500 potential trafficking situations in 2019, federal law enforcement opened only 1,830 cases, which reflects the complexity of prosecuting trafficking crimes.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the anti-trafficking field still lacks a standardized approach for designing large-scale studies capable of capturing the multifaceted nature of trafficking. Developing a unified methodology for estimating human trafficking is essential to understanding its true scale

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<sup>14</sup> “Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage,” 2017, [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_75479.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_75479.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Barrick, Kelle, and Rebecca Pfeffer. 2021. “Advances in Measurement: A Scoping Review of Prior Human Trafficking Prevalence Studies and Recommendations for Future Research.” *Journal of Human Trafficking* 10 (1): 1–19. doi:10.1080/23322705.2021.1984721.

<sup>16</sup> “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons”

<sup>17</sup> Barrick, “Advances in Measurement”

and addressing its root causes so that research can guide policy and strategies to prevent future crimes.

#### **IV. The Paradoxical Relationship Between Human Trafficking and Globalization**

When considering the vast prevalence of human trafficking, it is important to understand its far-reaching impact on the lives of victims. Trafficking victims often endure severe physical, psychological, and economic harm. Kathy Zimmerman and Ligia Kiss, two researchers at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, report that:

The exploitation that is at the heart of trafficking comprises different forms of abuse, such as extensive hours, poor pay, extortionate debt, physical confinement, serious occupational hazards, violence, and threats. These forms of abuse occur across a spectrum at varying levels of severity.<sup>18</sup>

This abuse strips victims of basic human rights and dignity and supports the notion that globalization has “spun out of control”<sup>19</sup> and expanded across industries without sufficient regulation, creating economic inequalities between nations. This social inequality leads to negative outcomes such as violence, abuse, and exploitation.<sup>20</sup> “Globally, these inequities result in the increasing socio-economic gap between developing and industrialized nations in this era of globalization. . . [thus], one of the most serious contemporary effects of inequalities between and within nations is the phenomena of global sex trade or human trafficking for the purposes of sex.”<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the link between inequality and exploitation makes trafficking a direct

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<sup>18</sup> Cathy Zimmerman and Ligia Kiss, “Human Trafficking and Exploitation: A Global Health Concern,” *PLOS Medicine* 14, no. 11 (November 22, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1002437>, p 2

<sup>19</sup> Klaus Schwab and World Economic Forum, “Our Global System Has Spun out of Control. Here’s How to Rebalance It,” *World Economic Forum*, February 5, 2019, <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2019/02/how-to-rebalance-our-global-system/>.

<sup>20</sup> Barner, John R., David Okech, and Meghan A. Camp. 2014. "Socio-Economic Inequality, Human Trafficking, and the Global Slave Trade" *Societies* 4, no. 2: 148-160. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc4020148>

<sup>21</sup> “Socio-Economic Inequality, Human Trafficking”

byproduct of globalization where vulnerable populations are targeted through economic inequalities.

Human trafficking is paradoxical in its nature as it is both a barrier to and facilitator of globalization. In a study done by Yselle Flora Kuete Malah, a researcher at the University of Yaoundé 2 in Cameroon, and Simplicé Asongu, a researcher at the University of Johannesburg in South Africa, found that “human trafficking is positively related with economic development.”<sup>22</sup> They found that the countries where the level of human trafficking is highest correspond to states where the average level of economic, political, and social globalization is high.<sup>23</sup>

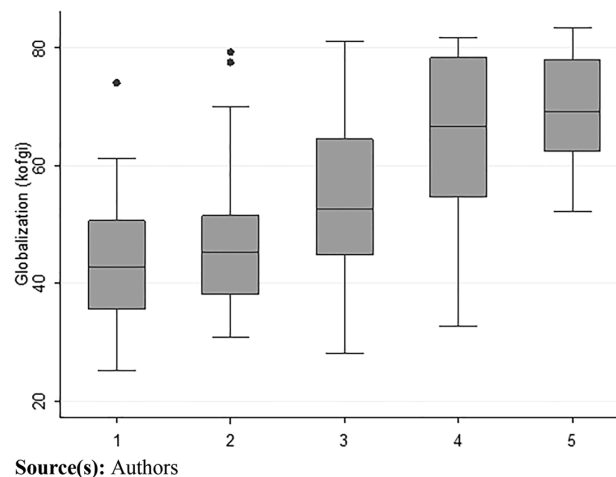


Figure 1: Demonstration of Globalization related to human trafficking levels.<sup>24</sup>

This graph shows that there is a relation between globalization and the levels of human trafficking. Even though human trafficking undermines the shared ethical foundations that uphold international cooperation—such as justice, human dignity, and mutual respect—it simultaneously sustains global supply chains by providing cheap labor. This means that

<sup>22</sup> Yselle Flora Kuete Malah and Simplicé Asongu, “An Empirical Analysis of Human Trafficking in an Era of Globalization,” *Journal of Economic Studies* ahead-of-print, no. ahead-of-print (October 20, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1108/jes-06-2021-0288>, p 1276

<sup>23</sup> “An Empirical Analysis of Human Trafficking,” p 1275

<sup>24</sup> Figure 1: As shown by the box plots, countries where the level of human trafficking is the highest also corresponds to those that have the highest levels of economic, social, and political globalization.

exploitation is an important component of globalization, generating questions about the connections between horrific crimes and an expanding global economy.

## **V. Understanding the Push and Pull Factors Behind Human Trafficking**

After understanding the interconnectedness of human trafficking and globalization, the next logical question is “why?” Why is human trafficking happening? As Loring Jones writes, global “push” and “pull” factors lure individuals to wealthier foreign countries that have strict legal immigration restrictions.<sup>25</sup> “People are ‘pushed’ out of poor countries where economic opportunity is lacking and ‘pulled’ into countries that have a higher level of economic prosperity with a corresponding demand for cheap labor.”<sup>26</sup> Traffickers use this push and pull factor to promise individuals, usually poor and uneducated victims, a better life with increased opportunity. These promises are blatant lies that lead vulnerable immigrants to be exploited. Hannah Gould, a Global Citizenship Fellow on the End Trafficking project at UNICEF, writes that, “Human trafficking is the only industry in which the supply and demand are the same thing.”<sup>27</sup> This quote underscores the unique nature of the crime: the very individuals who are exploited (i.e. the “supply”) are simultaneously driven by global economic need, creating a “demand” for traffickers to exploit. This relationship is fueled by global economic disparities and poorly regulated global supply chain vulnerabilities. The global supply chain becoming “an intricate, almost endless network of trade and production, [is] making the economic interactions of our world much more complex.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, the push and pull factors described by Loring Jones coupled with the complex web of international interconnections provide the perfect conditions for traffickers to manipulate victims into believing in false opportunities, trapping them in a

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<sup>25</sup> “Globalization and Human Trafficking”

<sup>26</sup> “Globalization and Human Trafficking”

<sup>27</sup> Hannah Gould, “What Fuels Human Trafficking?,” UNICEF USA (UNICEF, January 13, 2017), <https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/what-fuels-human-trafficking>.

<sup>28</sup> Yoni Wilkenfeld, “The Challenges of Supply Chain Regulation,” GIS Reports, July 13, 2022, <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/supply-chain-regulation/>.

cycle of exploitation. Understanding the economic and systemic forces behind human trafficking is crucial to disrupting this vicious cycle and addressing the root causes of both supply and demand.

In turn, the push-pull dynamic of exploitation allows forced labor to thrive, especially in industries like agriculture, mining, and manufacturing that are hard to regulate due to intricate global supply chains. The International Organization for Migration writes that “the vulnerability of migrants throughout the migration cycle is evident at all stages and in a wide variety of manifestations during pre-departure, transit, entry, stay and return.”<sup>29</sup> Thus, the combination of economic inequality, migration, and weak state partnerships allows trafficking to thrive.

## **VI. Sex Trafficking**

Narrowing in on the different types of human trafficking, sex trafficking stands out as a particularly devastating sector, intensified by online platforms that target and exploit vulnerable individuals. Globalization has accelerated the growth of sex trafficking by allowing traffickers to use technology to treat people as products within global markets. Advancements in international communication have been misused to make trafficking more widespread—and thus harder to stop. Online platforms have become a key tool for recruiting, advertising, and controlling victims, making it easier for traffickers to connect with potential buyers while remaining anonymous.<sup>30</sup>

Victims of sex trafficking suffer severe economic exploitation as traffickers often retain all profits, leaving victims economically devastated. Additionally, the psychological harm inflicted on victims is profound, with many enduring post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and

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<sup>29</sup> “World Migration Report 2024,” Publications.iom.int, 2024, <https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2024>, p 12.

<sup>30</sup> Jo Doezema, “Who Gets to Choose? Coercion, Consent, and the UN Trafficking Protocol,” *Gender & Development* 10, no. 1 (2023): 20–27, [https://www.academia.edu/78364396/Who\\_gets\\_to\\_choose\\_Coercion\\_consent\\_and\\_the\\_UN\\_Trafficking\\_Protocol](https://www.academia.edu/78364396/Who_gets_to_choose_Coercion_consent_and_the_UN_Trafficking_Protocol).

depression years after escaping their traffickers.<sup>31</sup> A disturbing example of this issue is provided by the International Labour Organization which estimates that 4.8 million people are victims of forced sexual exploitation globally, generating approximately \$99 billion in profits annually.<sup>32</sup> This data highlights the profitable yet vile nature of sex trafficking within the broader context of human trafficking. With sex work being a highly controversial matter, often the scale of forced labor in the industry is underplayed. Instead of describing the industry as full of willing individuals, Dr. Loring argues:

Most anti-trafficking advocates, service providers, and policy makers believe that all those involved in the sex trade are coerced in some way. They argue that prostitution cannot be regarded as a rational choice, because too often it is a forced choice by those who have no alternatives for economic survival. . . . Women may even agree to be trafficked for prostitution, but when they arrive at their destination they find the conditions to be much worse than they had agreed to or been promised-but they have no way to get out of the deal gone bad or return home. . . . Prostitution arouses major concern because it is usually an illegal activity and carries stigmas that make it more difficult for the trafficked to escape than other types of work. Prostitution is also likely to involve the most vulnerable segments of the population: women and children; however, it is important to note that significant numbers of males are also trafficked as sex workers.<sup>33</sup>

Sex trafficking, a major part of human trafficking, has grown with globalization, creating an ongoing international crisis. This issue requires both global and local efforts to protect victims and stop trafficking networks.

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<sup>31</sup> David Hodge, "Sexual Trafficking in the United States: A Domestic Problem with Transnational Dimensions on JSTOR," *Jstor.org*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.2307/23721103>.

<sup>32</sup> International Labour Organization, "Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage | International Labour Organization," [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org), September 19, 2017, <https://www.ilo.org/publications/global-estimates-modern-slavery-forced-labour-and-forced-marriage>.

<sup>33</sup> "Globalization and Human Trafficking"

Amid the statistics and complexities of sex trafficking, individual stories demonstrate the human cost of this worldwide emergency. An anonymous victim known by the name Susannah experienced firsthand the falsely promised opportunities and the harsh reality of exploitation, shedding light on the real and personal impact of this issue. Susannah's story began when she fled an abusive domestic violence relationship and decided to try commercial sex work because "[she] had been having sex since [she] was two years old and knew that [her] body could provide income."<sup>34</sup> She met someone she thought was her savior who had promised to keep her safe. Initially believing she was in a business partnership, she quickly realized she had lost all autonomy as her trafficker took full control, moving her across state lines and profiting from her forced sex work. "This was the first time in my life where I was labeled with a price and sold as goods to others," Susannah recounted, emphasizing the profound loss of dignity that comes with being reduced to an object.<sup>35</sup> She recounts that the abuse she went through in the four years as a trafficking victim was worse than the domestic violence relationship she had previously escaped from. She wrote, "I have always dealt with shame over sexual abuse, but trafficking stripped me of my dignity."<sup>36</sup> Susannah's escape was made possible by the National Human Trafficking Hotline, a resource she discovered through a sticker on a bathroom stall. The hotline's assurance that her situation would not be reported to law enforcement without her consent was critical. "If they had said we have to report, I would have hung up the phone and figured it out on my own," she explained, noting that her traffickers had threatened her child's safety.<sup>37</sup> By offering resources and empowering her to make choices, the hotline became her ticket to freedom. Susannah's story highlights the immense economic despair, psychological harm, and personal

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<sup>34</sup> Susannah, "Survivor Story: Susannah," [polarisproject.org](https://polarisproject.org/survivor-story-susannah/), February 10, 2023, <https://polarisproject.org/survivor-story-susannah/>.

<sup>35</sup> "Survivor Story: Susannah"

<sup>36</sup> "Survivor Story: Susannah"

<sup>37</sup> "Survivor Story: Susannah"

toll victims endure as a result of sex trafficking, underscoring the importance of survivor-centered approaches to combat trafficking.

Building on the devastating experience of Susannah, the story of a young Colombian woman trafficked into sex work in Japan provides an additional example of the dark side of globalization and its role in enabling exploitation. Born in Colombia in 1978, Marcela became a single mother at 17, working several jobs to provide for her child. “My circumstances made me a perfect target for human traffickers,” she explained, as a man who loaned her money for her child’s hospital bills later offered her a job as a professional dancer in Japan.<sup>38</sup> Upon arrival, her passport was taken and she was told she had to repay \$50,000 by becoming a prostitute. For 18 months, she was forced into sex work, enduring unimaginable physical and emotional trauma. “When I was able to escape, I returned to Colombia feeling afraid and hopeless,” she recounted, noting the lack of any assistance upon her return.<sup>39</sup> Initially driven back into prostitution by her circumstances, she refused to remain a victim. She published two books to raise awareness about trafficking. Her advocacy efforts expanded as she partnered with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and established a foundation in her name to support survivors.<sup>40</sup> Her story not only highlights the human cost of the unchecked aspects of global systems but also serves as a powerful call for efforts to prevent exploitation and support survivors worldwide.

## **VII. Agricultural Trafficking**

Agricultural trafficking is a critical yet often overlooked facet of human trafficking that is tied to globalization and the demand for inexpensive food in global markets. Trafficked immigrants working in agriculture are subjected to harsh physical and economic exploitation,

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<sup>38</sup> “Testimonies by Victims of Human Trafficking from around the World,” n.d., [https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/GLO-ACT/GLOACT\\_Victim-Testimonies\\_October\\_2017.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/GLO-ACT/GLOACT_Victim-Testimonies_October_2017.pdf), p 1

<sup>39</sup> “Testimonies by Victims of Human Trafficking from around the World” p. 1

<sup>40</sup> “Testimonies by Victims of Human Trafficking from around the World” p. 1

often working long hours in dangerous conditions for little to no pay. According to the International Labour Organization, approximately 11% of the 25 million victims of forced labor globally are exploited in agriculture, forestry, and fishing industries.<sup>41</sup> These individuals are coerced into farming, harvesting, and processing food that becomes part of the global supply chain. For example, a case study in Florida's tomato industry revealed widespread exploitation, with workers forced to pick tomatoes under conditions that constituted a form of modern-day slavery, earning less than \$4 an hour despite grueling 12-hour shifts.<sup>42</sup> This exploitation affects global food systems as it drives down costs for consumers while hiding the human cost of cheap agricultural products. Globalization intensifies this issue by creating a demand for low-cost labor to maintain competitive food prices, leaving vulnerable migrant workers at risk of being trafficked. Addressing agricultural trafficking is essential to creating ethical and sustainable global food systems that prioritize human rights.

The story of a young girl, Phengma, from the Savannakhet province in Thailand who was trafficked into forced labor highlights the brutal realities of agricultural trafficking and how globalization's demand for low-cost labor creates advantageous conditions for human trafficking. Phengma left school at grade 5 to help her family in the rice fields. Hearing about "a good job in Thailand,"<sup>43</sup> offering 75 Euros a month with food and accommodation, she left home seeking a better future. Instead, Phengma was enslaved. Her trafficker, Mr. P, forced her to labor in his food shop and later at his home, where she was brutally beaten "on the head and torso with a metal ice shovel every day" and doused with hot water.<sup>44</sup> "With raw bruises, I was forced to

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<sup>41</sup> "Forced Labour: Global Overview" (International Labour Organization), accessed November 19, 2024, [https://flbusiness.network/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ilo-gbnfl\\_factsheet\\_jan2020.pdf](https://flbusiness.network/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ilo-gbnfl_factsheet_jan2020.pdf), p 1

<sup>42</sup> Ian-Paul Poulos, Barry Estabrook, and Andrews McMeel, "Tasteless Tomatoes and Slave Labor in Florida's Factory Farms," 2014, <https://www.hofstra.edu/pdf/academics/colleges/hclas/cld/cld-rlr-sp14-tomatoes-poulos.pdf>.

<sup>43</sup> "Testimonies by Victims of Human Trafficking from around the World" p 2

<sup>44</sup> "Testimonies by Victims of Human Trafficking from around the World" p 2

work” Phengma recounted, sleeping outdoors on the floor and receiving no pay.<sup>45</sup> This exploitation reflects how traffickers exploit economic desperation for low-cost labor. Despite her suffering, kind neighbors eventually helped Phengma escape and monks brought her to a hospital. Phengma’s two years in a shelter in Thailand led to legal action against her traffickers where she ultimately received 500 Euros in compensation. Phengma’s story illustrates how traffickers capitalize on the vulnerabilities of the poor without care for the real human impact. Experiences like Phengma’s highlight the dark side of globalization, where economic inequities fuel trafficking networks, underscoring the need for systemic reforms to prevent such exploitation.

### **VIII. Mining Industry Trafficking**

The mining industry is a prominent industry for human trafficking, particularly for trafficked labor in the extraction of precious metals and minerals like cobalt and gold. This is considered a form of human trafficking because adults and children “are working against their will and under threat, intimidation or coercion.”<sup>46</sup> Although the exact number of humans forced into labor in the mining industry is unknown,

The International Labour Organization estimates that about one million children aged 5 to 17 are engaged in small-scale mining and quarrying activities worldwide. These children toil under dangerous conditions and go without access to schools, health clinics, and other basic necessities.<sup>47</sup>

These situations occur under trafficked or forced labor conditions. The exposure to toxic chemicals and collapsing mines frequently results in injuries, long-term health issues, and death.

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<sup>45</sup> “Testimonies by Victims of Human Trafficking from around the World” p 2

<sup>46</sup> James Melville, “From Stone to Phone: Modern Day Cobalt Slavery in Congo,” *Byline Times*, June 19, 2020, <https://bylinetimes.com/2020/06/19/from-stone-to-phone-modern-day-cobalt-slavery-in-congo/>.

<sup>47</sup> “The Burden of Gold Child Labour in Small-Scale Mines and Quarries,” International Labour Organization, August 2005, <https://www.ilo.org/publications/burden-gold-child-labour-small-scale-mines-and-quarries>.

Furthermore, a significant portion of cobalt, crucial for “rechargeable lithium-ion batteries, electronic devices, and electric cars,” is mined in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where of the “255,000 Congolese mining for cobalt, 40,000 are children, some as young as six years.”<sup>48</sup> The global demand for electronics, jewelry, and other products encourages trafficked labor, as cheap commodities are an integral part of global supply chains. Thus, consumer demand in wealthy nations drives the exploitation of vulnerable workers in developing countries.

The stories of boys like Gordo and Oscar, children exploited in Peru's gold mining regions, exemplify the realities of mining industry trafficking and its exploitation of vulnerable children. For many of these children, mining is the last resort. At just 12 years old, Gordo’s family was evicted by drug traffickers, “leaving the 12-year-old boy with no choice but to go down in the mines or face starvation.”<sup>49</sup> Although Gordo spent six years doing dangerous work, his only reward was barely enough food to survive on and a mat for bed. The story of Oscar, a young Peruvian boy who was sold to a gold mine by his cousin at age 16, further demonstrates the victimization of some of the world’s most vulnerable populations. “He was forced to carry at least 100 wheelbarrows full of rock per day through the mud,” leading him to contract malaria and being left to die.<sup>50</sup> Oscar shares that he was barely kept alive by the food scraps he got from the kitchen he worked in.<sup>51</sup> These cases highlight how illegal mining operations exploit children under inhumane conditions, driven by the global demand for cheap commodities. Trafficking in mining regions thrives when children are treated as disposable labor who work to meet the relentless global demand for resources.

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<sup>48</sup> “The DRC Mining Industry”

<sup>49</sup> “Gold Mining Is Modern Slavery for Many Children in Peru,” Amazon Aid Foundation, February 25, 2014, <https://amazonaid.org/gold-mining-modern-slavery-many-children-peru/>.

<sup>50</sup> “Gold Mining is Modern Slavery”

<sup>51</sup> “Gold Mining is Modern Slavery”

Globalization plays a significant role in fueling this exploitation, the interconnected global economy driving the need for precious metals like gold and cobalt. The lack of regulation and oversight in the mining industry creates a system where traffickers and illegal mining operators can exploit vulnerable children without consequences, while simultaneously making profits and supporting the global economy. This global demand leads to cycles of poverty and exploitation, ensuring that vulnerable populations remain trapped in inhumane conditions. To combat trafficking in the mining industry, it is imperative to enforce stricter regulations, promote ethical sourcing practices, and address the systemic issues that allow trafficking to thrive in the shadow of globalization.

### **IX. Efforts to Combat Human Trafficking**

The global crisis of human trafficking demands bipartisan efforts from states, governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and more. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has been a leader in counter-trafficking for over 25 years, directly assisting more than 100,000 victims.<sup>52</sup> IOM collaborates closely with governments, the United Nations, and NGOs to implement comprehensive strategies addressing prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnerships, along with humanitarian actors to “ensure that anti-trafficking considerations are integrated within emergency response interventions, to prevent and mitigate risk of further harm.”<sup>53</sup> Similarly, the United Nations has established international agreements to combat trafficking, such as the “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.”<sup>54</sup> This protocol provides a framework for countries to

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<sup>52</sup> IOM, “Counter-Trafficking,” International Organization for Migration, July 27, 2018, <https://www.iom.int/counter-trafficking>.

<sup>53</sup> “Counter-Trafficking”

<sup>54</sup> United Nations, “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime,” OHCHR (United Nations, November 15, 2000),

develop laws and policies targeting trafficking, emphasizing the importance of international cooperation. Some of the important features of this protocol include protecting the privacy of victims, providing for their psychological and social recovery, offering employment and educational opportunities, information exchange between state authorities to enable trafficking prevention, and the importance of strengthening border control.<sup>55</sup> Essentially, the United Nations has created a series of rights and support networks that victims of trafficking are entitled to. Thus, global corporations play an important role in the fight against human trafficking.

Although many parts of the global supply chains inadvertently allow exploitation, many companies are taking proactive measures to combat trafficking. For instance, “Nike uses the CUMULUS Forced Labor Screen™, a due diligence tool to help identify risks related to the recruitment of foreign migrant workers by NIKE suppliers.”<sup>56</sup> This program aims to ensure ethical labor practices throughout their company. Despite these efforts, significant challenges persist. In many developing states, enforcement of anti-trafficking laws is difficult because of corruption, lack of resources, or inadequate state regulations. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) highlights that an “acute lack of quality evidence and research for the development of national policies and programs to combat human trafficking is a major setback facing governments and other counter-trafficking actors.”<sup>57</sup> Thus, addressing human trafficking requires collaboration across countries and continents, corporate responsibility, and legal regulations. By strengthening partnerships and enhancing enforcement practices, the

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<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons>.

<sup>55</sup> “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish”

<sup>56</sup> “NIKE, INC. STATEMENT on FORCED LABOR, HUMAN TRAFFICKING and MODERN SLAVERY for FISCAL YEAR 2022,” 2022,

[https://admin.about.nike.com/media/files/709d93f5-36d7-49a7-8e48-31587f8e8630/NIKE\\_Inc\\_Statement\\_Forced\\_Labor\\_Human\\_Trafficking\\_Modern\\_Slavery\\_FY22\\_11.30.2022.pdf](https://admin.about.nike.com/media/files/709d93f5-36d7-49a7-8e48-31587f8e8630/NIKE_Inc_Statement_Forced_Labor_Human_Trafficking_Modern_Slavery_FY22_11.30.2022.pdf).

<sup>57</sup> “IOM and UNODC Release New Guidance to Help Combat Human Trafficking through Data,” International Organization for Migration, October 5, 2023,

<https://www.iom.int/news/iom-and-unodc-release-new-guidance-help-combat-human-trafficking-through-data>.

international community can work towards eradicating the gross violation of human rights that is human trafficking.

## **X. Solutions and Recommendations**

As human trafficking is deeply embedded in globalization, it requires an approach that addresses its root causes. Exploitation in sex trafficking, agricultural trafficking, and mining industry trafficking highlights the need for targeted solutions tailored to each sector's specific challenges and issues. By addressing economic inequality, raising labor standards, and prioritizing victim support, the systems of modern slavery can slowly be dismantled.

Economic inequality and migration policies play a central role in preventing trafficking. In the mining sector, for example, regions like Peru's gold mines exploit children such as Oscar, who's graphic story illuminates the horrors.<sup>58</sup> Traffickers rely on desperation, and this desperation leads to forced labor. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), enforcing fair wages and safe working conditions is critical to dismantling trafficking networks embedded in supply chains.<sup>59</sup> Thus raising global labor standards and addressing systemic poverty can reduce this vulnerability.

Like the mining industry, sex trafficking stems from economic desperation. As seen in the story of the Colombian woman trafficked to Japan, traffickers exploit individuals seeking better opportunities. Thus, reforming migration policies to create legal pathways for work would reduce the risk of traffickers targeting undocumented migrants.

Stricter enforcement of laws aimed at industries that rely on low-cost labor is critical in combating exploitation. In agricultural trafficking, traffickers exploit migrants in unregulated

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<sup>58</sup> "Gold Mining is Modern Slavery"

<sup>59</sup> ILO, "LABOUR STANDARDS in GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS HOW to MEET THEM to BECOME MORE COMPETITIVE and SUSTAINABLE," 2019, [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@asia/@ro-bangkok/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms\\_725761.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@asia/@ro-bangkok/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms_725761.pdf).

environments as seen in Florida's tomato farms where workers endured modern-day slavery. Global supply chains must be held accountable while companies conduct rigorous checks to ensure ethical labor practices. Nike utilizing the CUMULUS Forced Labor Screen™ to mediate risks related to migrant worker exploitation sets a standard for commercial responsibility. However, mining and agriculture present additional challenges due to the informal nature and independent-contractor heavy sectors. Recommendations include formalizing these industries and increasing state oversight in regions where trafficking is most prevalent.

Education for at-risk populations is critical to reducing exploitation. In the mining sector, educating communities about the dangers of trafficking and providing alternative livelihoods can help break the cycle of trafficking. Similarly, empowering women and immigrants in vulnerable regions through access to education and economic opportunities can decrease the risks of sex trafficking. Survivor-led initiatives, like the foundation established by the Colombian woman trafficked to Japan, demonstrate the impact of giving survivors a voice and a platform to advocate for systemic change. Empowering individuals can create ripple effects in combating trafficking.

Human trafficking, the modern form of slavery, is a grim consequence of globalization, fueled by economic inequality and the demand for cheap labor. While globalization has increased the interconnectedness of economies and societies, it has also created lanes for exploitation, introducing trafficking into industries like agriculture, mining, and sex work. However, globalization also offers opportunities for collaboration and accountability across states to address this modern form of slavery. The fight against trafficking requires a global, unified response that looks at the root causes of exploitation (e.g. poverty) while also strengthening regulations and providing resources to empower vulnerable populations. Stronger enforcement of

international laws, such as the UN's Palermo Protocol, combined with corporate responsibility initiatives like supply chain audits, can curb the systemic vulnerabilities that allow trafficking to flourish.

Human trafficking is not merely a violation of human rights—it is a system that prioritizes profits over people. Addressing this issue demands coordinated efforts between governments, corporations, NGOs, and individuals. Globalization is a powerful force, and what we choose to value can profoundly influence its effects—either uplifting lives or deepening inequalities. By working together to enforce regulations, support survivors, and reduce economic inequality, we can begin to dismantle the constructs that allow trafficking to thrive, creating a world where human dignity is upheld, and exploitation is not tolerated.

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# THE VICTIMS OF SUCCESS: HOW COMPLACENCY BRED ISRAELI INTELLIGENCE FAILURE

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper inquires into the conditions under which intelligence failures occur.*

*This question is critical in understanding both past security failures and preventing surprise attacks in the future. To address this question, I test three separate Israeli cases—two intelligence failures and one intelligence success—against three potential explanations. While alternative factors like analytical failure and confirmation bias played varying roles in the examined intelligence failures, success-induced complacency emerges as the most plausible condition for surprise attacks. This factor didn't just contribute to intelligence failures; a lack of complacency also helped produce Israel's 1967 War success—highlighting the theory's generalizability. This theory warns intelligence analysts against excessively confident assumptions, instructing them to constantly evaluate their preconceived notions and to adjust them when necessary.*

## I. Introduction

Despite the advanced technological reach of modern intelligence agencies, security threats still slip through the cracks. From Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor to Al-Qaeda's Sept. 11 attack on the World Trade Center, these sorts of security failures have grown prominent enough to warrant thoughtful study and deliberation. Intelligence agencies, like any government bureaucracy, are prone to human error, especially when facing particularly shrewd adversaries. This reality prompts an important question: Under what conditions do intelligence efforts fail to occur, while others succeed? Amid a bloody conflict in Ukraine spurred by a Russian surprise attack and in anticipation of potential Chinese escalation against Taiwan, this question bears significant relevance both in the present and the future. If intelligence agencies are more cognizant of their own structural or strategic limitations, they will be better equipped to proactively neutralize security threats. To that end, this paper intends to examine the most prominent surprise attacks in Israel's history to assess and identify the common root causes of intelligence failures.

To answer this paper's central question, I conducted a comparative analysis of three separate cases, with the first two coming from Israel's early history and the third coming last year. Two of these events represent major intelligence failures, while one represents a major intelligence success. The two examples of failure I selected are Egypt and Syria's surprise attack on Oct. 6, 1973 and Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023 attack against Israel. Both of these examples represent some of the most damaging intelligence failures in the nation's history and sparked costly wars. While occurring in vastly different time periods and contexts—Israel in 2023 possessed greater military and security power than it did in 1973, just 25 years after the nation was established—identifying failures common to both incidents could help explain why surprise

attacks of this magnitude can slip through the cracks. The remaining case, on the other hand, concerns a prominent intelligence success, which occurred directly prior to the intelligence failure of 1973.

Collectively, this research design deals with one country, two surprise attacks, and one intelligence success—an intentionally paralleled research approach.<sup>1</sup> In each event, a combination of factors led to two distinct dependent outcomes: either an intelligence failure or an intelligence success. To begin this study, I first present three plausible elements: analytical failure, confirmation bias, and success-induced complacency. To evaluate the merits of each of these factors, I utilized both theoretical scholarship and records of practical decision making. The path to identifying valid conditions required matching theoretical explanations for security failures with concrete actions taken by government actors prior to the incidents. Although the former two theories do contribute to the broader understanding of intelligence failures, the theory of analytical failure lacks explanatory depth, while the confirmation bias theory doesn't hold up as well when tested through a negative case. Thus, by analyzing these three events, I identified success-induced complacency as the condition most likely to produce intelligence failure.

## **II. Causes & Conditions For Intelligence Failure**

A number of theories offer reasonable explanations for the occurrence of intelligence failures.<sup>2</sup> A common hypothesis, about which “most scholars and practitioners who write about intelligence agree,” involves an analytical failure to incorporate pieces of intelligence into a broader picture.<sup>3</sup> An alternative explanation concerns confirmation bias, a cognitive tendency that essentially functions as a screening mechanism filtering information based on whether it

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<sup>1</sup> See 8–9 for further detail.

<sup>2</sup> This paper defines intelligence failure as an inability to perceive and defend against security threats, whether that be because of incomplete information collection or faulty analysis.

<sup>3</sup> Dahl. “Why Does Intelligence Fail, And How Can It Succeed?”, 7

conforms with one's prior opinions and assumptions.<sup>4</sup> Such a tendency could compel analysts to ignore potentially critical information if it contradicts his or her assumptions. Third, success-based complacency drives analysts to cling to previously successful intelligence strategies, even if such approaches are no longer optimal. Together, these three theories represent plausible conditions for intelligence failure.

*a. A Failure To "Connect the Dots"*

While surprise attacks and national security failures inevitably shake a nation's psyche, they don't necessarily come as a complete shock to intelligence agencies.<sup>5</sup> Oftentimes, revealing clues and signs emerge years prior to intelligence failures, hinting at the calamity to come. Thus, one compelling explanation for the cause of security failures concerns not inept intelligence collection, but rather insufficient intelligence analysis. In these cases, analysts possess much of the information necessary to stop surprise attacks before they happen, yet fail to do so because of "an inability on the part of intelligence authorities to 'connect the dots' of existing information."<sup>6</sup> The "connect-the-dots" theory of intelligence failures is simultaneously reassuring and alarming. On one hand, the theory posits that agencies are wholly capable of identifying intelligence sufficient to dismantle surprise attacks; on the other hand, the theory highlights agencies' faulty analysis as the critical factor in intelligence failures. For this theory to hold true, the examined cases will need to demonstrate that actionable intelligence existed prior to the given event, demonstrating the likelihood of an attack. What could undermine this theory, however, would be a lack of prior intelligence clues. The plausibility of this theory rests on whether the relevant factor is an analytical error or an intelligence-gathering error.

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<sup>4</sup> See 5–6 for further detail.

<sup>5</sup> This paper defines a surprise attack as a deceptive assault launched without prior suspicion or warning. From Israel's Mossad and Shin Bet to the United States' CIA and FBI, intelligence agencies are tasked with preventing such surprise attacks and protecting against national security threats both internal and external.

<sup>6</sup> Dahl. "Why Does Intelligence Fail, And How Can It Succeed?", 7

Such a trend played out in the lead-up to Al Qaeda's Sept. 11 attacks against the United States. As Elaine Kamarck notes in an essay for the Brookings Institution regarding Sept. 11 intelligence failures, "pieces of the puzzle were to be found in many corners of the U.S. government."<sup>7</sup> One of those puzzle pieces included the arrest of a man identified as taking flight lessons with the intention of executing an attack.<sup>8</sup> Despite these seemingly obvious signs, however, agencies like the CIA and the FBI failed to stitch those clues together as part of a broader terrorist plot. As the theory suggests, the fault here lies not with the U.S. government's ability to collect intelligence, but rather its difficulty in interpreting and unifying that information. Ultimately, this failure to connect the dots resulted in one of the most lethal surprise attacks to ever occur on U.S. soil. While this theory provides a compelling proximate explanation for why intelligence failures occur, other hypotheses add flesh to these bones by highlighting underlying reasons why the analysis shortcomings endemic to intelligence failures occur in the first place.

*b. The Role of Confirmation Bias*

As discussed above, a central challenge intelligence agencies face in identifying security threats is accurately analyzing the information collected. Akin to finding a needle in an enormous haystack, this task is certainly not straightforward. But even when compelling evidence of impending security threats stares agencies right in the face, analysts can still fail to connect the dots. Among other cognitive errors, agency-wide confirmation bias often triggers significant analytical failure, despite the presence of actionable intelligence.

Confirmation bias thrives on analysts' tendency to depend upon previously held assumptions, driving them toward intelligence that suits their preexisting worldview while

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<sup>7</sup> Kamarck. "9/11 and the Reinvention of the US Intelligence Community."

<sup>8</sup> Kamarck. "9/11 and the Reinvention of the US Intelligence Community."

dismissing intelligence that does not.<sup>9</sup> Such commonly held assumptions are often taken as fact, as David Hoover writes in the *American Intelligence Journal*: “Habit of thought, also known as common wisdom, occurs when an idea circulates throughout a culture and permeates it until the idea gains position in the collective consciousness and becomes prejudices or common presumptions. This ‘folk wisdom’ is a dominant ‘truth’ appealed to as authority though it may never have been critically examined, or is not reexamined in the light of new knowledge.”<sup>10</sup>

Without treating these prior opinions with a healthy dose of skepticism, analysts may turn a blind eye to otherwise glaring warning signs. To validate this theory, evidence must demonstrate that a misunderstanding of a state’s adversaries helped produce the intelligence failure. What would undermine this argument, however, is evidence showing that the surprise attack threat had been on intelligence agencies’ radar prior to the incident, with significant resources devoted toward warding off that threat.

While not a failure that produced a surprise attack, confirmation bias played a role in one of the bigger American intelligence failures of the 21st century: the United States’ post-Sept. 11 invasion of Iraq. Confident assumptions that Iraq possessed and concealed weapons of mass destruction (WMD) distorted the process through which analysts collected intelligence: “Instructions to collectors compounded this tendency [for confirmation bias] by telling them to ‘seek information about Iraq’s progress toward obtaining WMD,’ rather than about whether Iraq was trying to get WMD.”<sup>11</sup> This seemingly minor difference in instructions precluded analysts from considering the possibility that Iraq didn’t possess WMD, turning the preventable prospect of invasion into an inevitable reality. To prevent the range of unintended consequences that followed this particular instance of confirmation bias, it’s critical for intelligence agencies and

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<sup>9</sup> Betts. “Two Faces of Intelligence Failure: September 11 and Iraq’s Missing WMD,” 600

<sup>10</sup> Hoover. “A Failure of Imagination in the U.S. Intelligence Community,” 60

<sup>11</sup> Betts. “Two Faces of Intelligence Failure: September 11 and Iraq’s Missing WMD,” 600

analysts to understand whether this theory is simply a cognitive quirk or the product of specific circumstances. The following theory offers a compelling answer to that question.

*c. Success-Induced Complacency*

Success often breeds complacency—even in the high-stakes world of national security. If a particular analytical strategy produced intelligence successes in the past, analysts may be more likely to defer to that strategy and less likely to formulate a new one, regardless of whether that approach suits the moment’s circumstances. After all, why throw away what is working? Intelligence analysts aren’t alone in succumbing to this pitfall: “Success may encourage businesses to stick to a winning formula, triggering complacency and risk aversion,” writes Swarthmore College political science professor Dominic Tierney.<sup>12</sup> Even if emerging security challenges require novel solutions, analysts may be unwilling to abandon that “winning formula,”<sup>13</sup> given its proven track record. The success-induced complacency hypothesis incorporates elements of the previous two theories; when giving previously successful strategies or assumptions undue deference, analysts will be more likely to fall prey to confirmation bias and thus fail to piece together a cohesive intelligence picture. To support this argument, evidence would need to show that an intelligence failure came amid a wave of success and national overconfidence; meanwhile, a case showing an intelligence failure occurring amid low national morale, economic turmoil, or recent military failure would significantly weaken the potential link between success-based complacency and intelligence failures.

Prior to the Sept. 11 attacks, the United States found itself in a state of success-induced complacency. The nation was years removed from the Cold War and was coming off a Gulf War campaign generally considered to be an American success.<sup>14</sup> After the World Trade Center fell,

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<sup>12</sup> Tierney. “Intelligent Failure,” 45

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Helfont. “The Gulf War’s Afterlife: Dilemmas, Missed Opportunities, and the Post-Cold War Order Undone.”

that mindset vanished: “The shocks jolted Americans out of the complacency about national security that they had enjoyed during the dozen years after the Cold War.”<sup>15</sup> As discussed previously, U.S. intelligence analysts had collected a number of signs warning of a serious attack; their failure to connect the dots could reasonably be attributed to success-induced complacency, with analysts clinging to once-successful intelligence strategies that had long since grown stale. Accordingly, a key focus of this inquiry will concern the level of “success,” or lack thereof, enjoyed by intelligence agencies prior to the given surprise attack, with the goal of determining the extent to which complacency may influence the intelligence failure.

### **III. Examining Israeli Intelligence Failures, Past and Present**

To test the above hypotheses, I selected three Israeli cases: an intelligence success in the 1967 War, an intelligence failure in the 1973 War, and an intelligence failure in Hamas’ Oct. 7, 2023 attacks. For obvious reasons, studying prominent intelligence failures provides significant insight into their causes and conditions. Identifying any connective tissue between the cases points toward conditions responsible for intelligence failures. Additionally, I chose these two intelligence failures not only because they represent arguably the two most prominent security lapses in Israeli history, but also because of the striking similarities the two cases share.

The most important element of this research design, however, involves the study of intelligence success. By varying the outcome, I seek to avoid a common pitfall of existing intelligence literature: “‘selecting on the dependent variable,’ or choosing cases to study based on how those cases turned out.”<sup>16</sup> Comparing the conditions involved in both intelligence failures and successes offers a more rigorous test of a given hypothesis, since much of a theory’s

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<sup>15</sup> Betts. “Two Faces of Intelligence Failure: September 11 and Iraq’s Missing WMD,” 585

<sup>16</sup> Dahl. “Why Does Intelligence Fail, And How Can It Succeed?,” 14

value comes from its generalizability. These three cases offer a range of scenarios broad enough to gauge the accuracy of the three aforementioned theories.

*a. The 1973 War*

Over the 25 years following its inception in 1948, Israel enjoyed a generally steady upward trajectory. The events of 1973 changed that reality. On Oct. 6, 1973, Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack against Israel that sent shockwaves throughout the nation. The attack caught Israel entirely off guard, contributing to the coalition's initial success. Though Israel eventually regained its footing and fought off the Egyptian and Syrian forces, the conditions and causes that led to this monumental security collapse are worth examining. For one, Israel's neighboring Arab states weren't just more willing to wage war this time around; they were also far better equipped: "Increased Soviet backing for Egypt and Syria included the provision of antitank weaponry as well as SAM missile batteries that would challenge the Israeli defense force's previous dominance. Arab solidarity had also increased and included plans to use the oil weapon against states that supported Israel."<sup>17</sup> Even in the face of this increased Arab preparedness, however, Israel remained unable to recognize its susceptibility to a surprise attack. It wouldn't be the only such incident.

In the days prior to the attack launched on Yom Kippur, both American and Israeli intelligence had observed a significant buildup of Egyptian and Syrian troops along its borders.<sup>18</sup> In hindsight, the signs appear obvious. Yet, "consultations between the US and Israel suggested little possibility of war, with the Israelis interpreting the Arab moves as maneuvers."<sup>19</sup> In both the years and days before the outbreak of conflict, Israel had repeatedly failed to connect the dots between rising Arab hostility and capabilities and the possibility of a surprise attack. But while

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<sup>17</sup> Johnson and Tierney. "The Yom Kippur War," 186

<sup>18</sup> Ashkar. "The Syrian and Egyptian Campaigns," 21

<sup>19</sup> Ashkar. "The Syrian and Egyptian Campaigns," 21

the connect-the-dots theory at least partly aligns with the events prior to this particular intelligence failure, its explanatory power here is rather limited. The theory leaves several questions unanswered, though none more important than the question of why Israeli intelligence analysts failed to connect the dots in the first place. Identifying an answer to this question first requires an understanding of the mindset Israeli intelligence agencies held prior to the conflict.

Time and time again, Israeli intelligence systematically underestimated the threat it faced. Aside from an overall misunderstanding of the Arab states' strengths and capabilities, Israel clung to the belief that "[Egyptian President Anwar] Sadat would not fight until he had long-range fighter-bombers to use against Israeli air bases and Scud missiles to deter air attacks inside Egypt."<sup>20</sup> Together, these misperceptions were dubbed "'the Concept'" by some at the time, "an article of faith throughout the nation's military and political establishment" that seemed infallible even in the face of direct warnings to the contrary from those like Jordan's King Hussein.<sup>21</sup> Beyond just Israel's mistaken understanding of its adversaries, the nation's military overestimated the strength of its own defensive capabilities—a perfect storm of hubris that led to a colossal intelligence failure.<sup>22</sup>

These misperceptions were not simply random errors in judgment; they manifested as a result of extensive confirmation bias. Despite contradictory evidence, like the aforementioned troop buildup or improved weaponry, Israeli analysts refused to budge from their belief that the country's Arab neighbors were both unwilling and unprepared to go to war. Unable to grapple with growing evidence disproving its preconceived notions, Israel's fundamentally flawed interpretation of its geopolitical landscape created conditions sufficient for a successful surprise attack. Had Israeli analysts been more willing to assess information opposed to their prior

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<sup>20</sup> Johnson and Tierney. "The Yom Kippur War," 195

<sup>21</sup> Johnson and Tierney. "The Yom Kippur War," 195

<sup>22</sup> Ashkar. "The Syrian and Egyptian Campaigns," 19

assumptions—or even consider the possibility that their assumptions were incorrect—then the country would all but certainly have been far better equipped to deal with the eventual surprise attack.

Confirmation bias, however, also faces limits as an explanation for this intelligence failure. The theory fails to address why exactly Israel held so steadfastly to its mistaken assumptions. Challenging one's assumptions usually tends to be a difficult task, but why were these particular internal and external misperceptions so deeply entrenched? While accurately capturing a condition that contributed to Israel's vulnerability, the confirmation bias theory still sees room to develop as a framework for understanding intelligence failures. The confidence that Israel held toward its intelligence assessments did not emerge from nothing, a reality that the confirmation bias theory takes for granted.

Israeli intelligence agencies' stubbornness in their assumptions was born out of years of success. Whether it was its foundational success in 1948, the Suez Crisis, or the Six-Day War, Israel had collected a number of reasons supporting its self-confidence.<sup>23</sup> From Ariel Sharon to Yitzhak Rabin, a number of Israeli political and military elites openly expressed that confidence with an “almost smug aura to it.”<sup>24</sup> That success-induced confidence morphed into a sense of complacency, which eventually took root in the military: “The fact that Israel was not expecting a large scale confrontation with the Arabs in the near future was demonstrated by reorganizations within the army itself. ... [Lt. General David Elazar] began to retire high-ranking officers, and replace them with officers from the younger, unknown, and unpolitically involved category.”<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile, Israel's Arab neighbors continued to strengthen their own military capabilities. All those prior Israeli successes had built an unwavering confidence in its own assumptions,

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<sup>23</sup> Johnson and Tierney. “The Yom Kippur War,” 185

<sup>24</sup> Johnson and Tierney. “The Yom Kippur War,” 185

<sup>25</sup> Ashkar. “The Syrian and Egyptian Campaigns,” 18–19

regardless of evidence to the contrary. If one were to remove Israel's sense of complacency from the equation and instead replace it with the kind of heightened vigilance it had approached past conflicts with, then Israel would likely have seen a far different outcome on Oct. 6, 1973.

Instead, success-induced complacency blinded Israeli intelligence analysts to the growing threat of its adversaries, culminating in the intelligence failure known today in Israel as the *mechdal* ("omission or shortcoming").<sup>26</sup>

*b. Mechdal, 50 Years Later: Hamas' Oct. 7 Attack*

Almost 50 years after the surprise attack that sparked the 1973 War, *mechdal* reemerged in Israel to produce an eerily similar intelligence failure. On Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas launched an extended attack on the border between Gaza and southern Israel, taking hundreds of lives and hostages. Like the intelligence failure that occurred half a century earlier, Hamas' attack came with a number of warning signs, both in the years and moments directly prior. Just three months earlier, one Israeli analyst noticed Hamas conducting a training exercise far more intense and sophisticated than usual, an observation she warned her superiors about.<sup>27</sup> Again, Israeli intelligence agencies were familiar with the puzzle pieces but found themselves unable to put them together. These warning signs continue to emerge, even in the hours before the attack in the early hours of Oct. 7: "The Gaza Strip was unusually active for the middle of the night. Israeli intelligence and national security officials, who had convinced themselves that Hamas had no interest in going to war, initially assumed it was just a nighttime exercise."<sup>28</sup> After again picking up activity well out of the ordinary, Israeli intelligence agencies still couldn't associate the incidents as part of a broader pattern. Questions, however, still remain: what prevented Israeli analysts from comprehending the imminent threat they faced? Should it be chalked up to mere

<sup>26</sup> Johnson and Tierney. "The Yom Kippur War," 168

<sup>27</sup> Bergman, et al. "How Years of Israeli Failure on Hamas Led to a Devastating Attack."

<sup>28</sup> Bergman, et al. "How Years of Israeli Failure on Hamas Led to a Devastating Attack."

incompetence or to flaws more systemic? To what extent is this failure to connect the dots similar to what occurred in 1973? The connect-the-dots theory falls short again in this regard, prompting further inquiry.

In a manner perhaps even more glaring than in 1973, Israeli officials consistently dismissed evidence warning of a potential attack in favor of evidence that supported their prior assumptions. More than a year before the attack, Israeli intelligence had discovered a smoking gun: a thorough Hamas blueprint detailing a sophisticated attack, which the militia would eventually follow precisely on Oct. 7.<sup>29</sup> In spite of that significant warning sign, Israel still dismissed the evidence, ostensibly because the blueprint didn't match its preconceived notion of Hamas: "The audacity of the blueprint, officials said, made it easy to underestimate."<sup>30</sup> Rather than preparing for the possibility of this particular kind of attack, Israel placed more weight on alternative information that better aligned with its previous assumptions, like Hamas' negotiations for Palestinian work permits in Israel—"which Israeli officials took as a sign that Hamas was not looking for war."<sup>31</sup> The analytical choices made here are striking. Israeli analysts downplayed information that contradicted their assumptions about Hamas' capabilities, instead embracing the evidence that supported their assumptions. This manifestation of confirmation bias ultimately cost hundreds of lives and contributed to the worst Israeli intelligence failure since the Yom Kippur War broke out in 1973. Further resembling what occurred in 1973, Israel's confirmation bias stemmed from a sense of complacency.

With Israel having long since established itself as the Middle East's preeminent military power, the events of Oct. 7 left itself partly the victim of its own success. Convinced that their "military and technological superiority to Hamas would keep the terrorist group in check," Israeli

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<sup>29</sup> Bergman and Goldman. "Israel Knew Hamas's Attack Plan More Than a Year Ago."

<sup>30</sup> Bergman and Goldman. "Israel Knew Hamas's Attack Plan More Than a Year Ago."

<sup>31</sup> Bergman and Goldman. "Israel Knew Hamas's Attack Plan More Than a Year Ago."

intelligence analysts systematically underestimated the threat Hamas posed, despite the presence of actionable intelligence.<sup>32</sup> Israel's unpreparedness came not as the result of insufficient manpower, but rather because of success-based complacency. Supremely confident in both its defense capabilities and its assessment of Hamas' intentions, the Israeli intelligence agency Unit 8200 opted to stop eavesdropping on the Hamas members' hand-held radios, which could have revealed hints about the Oct. 7 attacks before they occurred.<sup>33</sup> By placing excessive faith in its existing strategies, Israel's intelligence approach deteriorated into one rigid and inflexible, despite growing evidence that Hamas intended to launch an attack of some sort. Had Israel altered its approach and "redirected significant reinforcements to the south, where Hamas attacked, Israel could have possibly blunted the attacks or possibly even prevented them."<sup>34</sup> Just as what happened 50 years earlier, increased caution and self-skepticism could have limited Israel's sense of invincibility, offered its intelligence agencies the space to adjust their priors when necessary, and reduced the likelihood of a surprise attack like Oct. 7's.

*c. The Six-Day War*

Unlike the previous two examples, the 1967 War represents one of the great intelligence successes in Israeli history. As noted in its name, the Six-Day War was an efficient campaign that yielded significant territorial gains for Israel. Given the differing outcome in this case, it is crucial to investigate the nature of the underlying factors. For one, the complacency that plagued Israel in the 1973 and 2023 surprise attacks didn't play a role in its 1967 strategy. Instead, Israel exhibited the opposite: "On Israel's side, the most important unit-level factor that propelled the war was the extreme sense of vulnerability of the country's population. This resulted in the 'securitization' of Israeli internal discourse – the phenomenon of almost every important political

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<sup>32</sup> Bergman, et al. "How Years of Israeli Failure on Hamas Led to a Devastating Attack."

<sup>33</sup> Bergman, et al. "How Years of Israeli Failure on Hamas Led to a Devastating Attack."

<sup>34</sup> Bergman, et al. "How Years of Israeli Failure on Hamas Led to a Devastating Attack."

and socioeconomic issue being viewed in security terms.”<sup>35</sup> This hypervigilant mindset represents a stark departure from the Israeli approach in 1973 and 2023, years in which past success had lulled the country’s intelligence agencies into a state of complacency. This perceived vulnerability swayed the Israeli military into ramping up its preparations, demonstrating a tactical agility the country had not seen in the two subsequent cases: “Fear of war obliged the IDF to implement a highly demanding training program that included military exercises at all levels.”<sup>36</sup> With a lack of complacency producing an intelligence success, the 1967 War underscores how intelligence failures stem from success-induced complacency.

While a lack of success-based complacency contributed to Israel’s intelligence success in the Six-Day War, the confirmation bias condition remains constant in this case, highlighting that theory’s weakness. Despite the different outcome, Israeli intelligence agencies still displayed a noteworthy degree of confirmation bias in their pre-war assessments, particularly regarding Egypt’s intentions: “Despite all these verbal pyrotechnics and concentrations of force, there does not seem to have been any intention in Cairo to initiate a war. In reply to a question by British M.P. Christopher Mayhew interviewing [Egyptian President Gamal Abdel] Nasser on June 2, ‘And if they do not attack, will you let them alone?’, the President said, ‘Yes, we will leave them alone. We have no intention of attacking Israel.’”<sup>37</sup> Yet, even in the face of such contradictory evidence, Israel remained steadfast in its belief that Egypt intended to start a war. Whether it was Nasser’s blockade of the Straits of Tiran or a buildup of Egyptian troops, Israel interpreted Egypt’s maneuvers as threats of war, regardless of whether or not that perception aligned with its adversary’s stated intentions.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Aly, et al. *Arabs and Israelis: Conflict and Peacemaking in the Middle East*, 142

<sup>36</sup> Aly, et al. *Arabs and Israelis: Conflict and Peacemaking in the Middle East*, 145

<sup>37</sup> Yost. “The Arab-Israeli War: How It Began,” 317

<sup>38</sup> Yost. “The Arab-Israeli War: How It Began,” 318

Among the three discussed cases, the 1967 War stands out as the most revealing. While both cognitive bias and success-induced complacency contributed to the Israeli intelligence failures seen in 1973 and 2023, 1967’s intelligence success occurred in spite of confirmation bias. Here, with success-induced complacency no longer a factor, one can isolate confirmation bias as a factor. Given that the outcome changed along with the former condition, while the latter remained constant, one can reasonably conclude that success-induced complacency is the predominant factor causing intelligence failure, at least in these particular cases.

	<b><u>1967 War</u></b>	<b><u>1973 War</u></b>	<b><u>Oct. 7</u></b>
<b>Analytical Failure</b>	N/A	Present	Present
<b>Confirmation Bias</b>	Present	Present	Present
<b>Success-Induced Complacency</b>	Absent	Present	Present
<b>Intelligence Outcome</b>	<i>Success</i>	<i>Failure</i>	<i>Failure</i>

#### IV. Conclusion

Throughout history, surprise attacks and intelligence failures have caused significant casualties, bloody wars, and national trauma. Identifying the conditions responsible for such intelligence failures is crucial for any state’s national security. After delving into the most prominent intelligence failures and successes in Israeli history, I identified success-induced complacency as a condition likely to precede intelligence failure. While competing theories of analytical failure and confirmation bias offer some additional understanding, success-induced complacency represented a key ingredient in both intelligence failures and successes. In the 1973 and 2023 surprise attacks, prior military and security success prompted Israel’s intelligence

analysts to let their guard down and place excessive deference toward its past strategies. Analysts saw little reason to scrutinize or modify their preexisting assumptions and approach, and Israel's adversaries took advantage. In an inverted case, however, a heightened sense of vigilance led to the monumental intelligence success of 1967's Six-Day War. Consequently, the success-induced complacency theory emerges as the primary condition for intelligence failures.

This conclusion offers a number of noteworthy implications. First and foremost, the success-induced complacency theory instructs powerful nations to constantly assess the validity of their assumptions and analytical approaches. Due to past military and security successes, powerful states are susceptible to surprise attacks and intelligence failures, because of the analytical blind spots complacency creates. Intelligence analysts must be willing to adapt and dispense with previously successful methods when necessary; just because a strategy worked against one particular threat does not mean it will succeed against every threat. Even when intelligence failures do occur, agencies must avoid applying yesterday's lessons to tomorrow's problems. After all, inflexibility and unreasonable rigidity helped create the conditions for a number of surprise attacks, from Oct. 7 to Sept. 11. That being said, overcorrecting for success-induced complacency would be a mistaken approach as well. Operating in a state of constant hypervigilance would treat much of an adversary's actions as a threat, regardless of their underlying intentions. Additionally, excessive second-guessing of an agency's security approach could realistically inhibit its ability to act decisively and with conviction. Thus, analysts must remain nimble, striking a delicate balance between vigilance and confidence.

While this study offers practical explanations for the occurrence of intelligence failures, some tertiary questions remain unanswered. The focus of this study centered around developed nations like Israel and the United States; further inquiry could investigate the conditions

surrounding intelligence failures in less developed countries. An example like North Korea's 1950 surprise invasion of South Korea comes to mind here.<sup>39</sup> By testing the success-induced complacency theory in a different context, one can further gauge the theory's generalizability. Other studies could examine the causes of surprise attacks launched against hypervigilant national security states—in order to rule out success-based complacency as a factor. Regardless of an explanation's credibility, no one-size-fits-all answer exists. To comprehensively attack the problem of intelligence failures, analysts must remain aware of as many potential pitfalls as possible. The more plausible causes uncovered—alongside increased awareness of those conditions—the less likely the next intelligence failure becomes.

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# WHAT MAKES AN ALLIANCE DEVOTED?

## INSIGHTS FROM AMERICAN-ISRAELI AND ANGLO-ISRAELI RELATIONS

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ANNA C. O'DONNELL

### ABSTRACT

*This paper explores the question, “What causes devoted cross-regional alliances?” Using a comparative case study approach, I examine the United States and the United Kingdom’s relationships with Israel through the lens of realist and constructivist theories of alliance formation. These theories assess whether alliances are driven primarily by strategic interests or shared identity. By analyzing these relationships during their most pivotal periods, I have determined that while strategic interest is necessary to cultivate an alliance, shared identity and ideological alignment transform them into devoted, unconditional partnerships that transcend regional boundaries. The contrast between the U.S.-Israel “special relationship” and the more conditional Anglo-Israeli alliance highlights the critical role of identity and public opinion in shaping foreign policy. These findings carry significant implications for understanding current U.S. and U.K. responses to the Israeli war in Gaza and the broader discussion on how ideology reinforces strategic alliances.*

## I. Introduction

On October 7, 2023, the Hamas attack on Israel shocked the world, triggering a cascade of events that reshaped global discourse on alliances and foreign policy. Israel's subsequent military campaigns in the Gaza Strip and West Bank that have killed tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians, alongside escalating conflicts with Hezbollah, have drawn intense scrutiny, particularly regarding the role of its strongest ally, the United States.<sup>1</sup> Since the Hamas invasion, the U.S. has sent billions of dollars in aid and weapons to Israel, even amidst domestic and international backlash.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, amidst a declining relationship, the support of the United Kingdom –Israel's former colonizer and another one of America's strongest allies– is much more restrained. This has led many in and outside the U.S. to wonder why the U.S. relationship with Israel is so unconditional compared to other nations. In the broader sense, this raises the question: What causes devoted cross-regional alliances?

In the complex arena of international politics, especially in the conflict-ridden Middle East, intra-regional and inter-regional alliances are crucial to advancing strategic objectives. However, explaining the determining factors behind cross-regional alliance formation and endurance remains debated. Realist theory emphasizes the role of balancing common threats, while constructivist theory highlights the importance of shared ideologies and identities in creating enduring partnerships. This paper bridges this theoretical divide by examining how

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<sup>1</sup> "41,788 Palestinians Killed in Gaza Offensive since Oct. 7, Health Ministry Says," *Reuters*, October 3, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Bilmes, Linda J., William D. Hartung, and Stephen Semler. "United States Spending on Israel's Military Operations and Related U.S. Operations in the Region, October 7, 2023 – September 30, 2024." *Watson Institute for International & Public Affairs*, October 7, 2024.  
[https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2023/2024/Costs%20of%20War\\_US%20Support%20Since%20Oct%207%20FINAL%20v2.pdf](https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2023/2024/Costs%20of%20War_US%20Support%20Since%20Oct%207%20FINAL%20v2.pdf).

strategic interests and shared identity interact to produce alliances that transcend regional boundaries.

To explore these dynamics, I conduct a comparative case analysis of U.S. and U.K. alliances with Israel during two key periods. First, I compare the U.S.-Israel relationship from the emergence of their “special relationship” in 1967 through the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, to their subsequent unconditional relationship from 1991 through the U.S. war in Iraq ending in 2011. My second two cases in this study will be Israel’s relationship with its former colonizer, the United Kingdom, from its most amicable period (1956-1967) to the subsequent period from 1967-1974 in which the relationship deteriorated to the apathetic one it is today. The insights from realist and constructivist theories of alliance formation are evident when analyzing these cases. Both the U.S. and Britain aligned with Israel when they recognized Israel as an effective balancer of Soviet influence on hostile Arab states, but the roles of ideology and identity are markedly different in both relationships. Comparing these case studies reveals that the differences in these alliances are rooted in the sense of shared identity and ideology between America and Israel that the United Kingdom lacks. This provides the necessary evidence to conclude that while strategic interests initiate alliances, shared identity and public opinion sustain and deepen them, making them unconditional.

Building on these conclusions, I examine how the U.K. and U.S. governmental and public responses toward Israel’s invasion of Gaza following October 7th reflect the trajectories of their respective alliances. While the U.K.’s restrained approach aligns with its turbulent historical ambivalence toward Israel, the U.S. government’s unconditional support persists, despite growing polarization within its domestic public. These findings underscore the interplay

of ideology and strategy in international relations and offer critical insights for understanding the future of cross-regional alliances.

## II. A Divergent Theories of Alliance Formation: Realist and Constructivist

To answer the question of *what causes devoted cross-regional alliances*, I will examine two competing hypotheses that reflect the realist and constructivist divide in international relations. Firstly, I will use the working definition of “devoted alliance” as an unconditional partnership between two countries that includes military aid, economic aid, a degree of security, and consistently positive public-facing rhetoric regarding the other state.

It is first necessary to define these schools of thought. On the one hand, realist thinkers focus on “strategic interest”. I will define that in this paper as the practical benefits a state seeks when engaging in international relations, such as enhancing national security, countering threats, securing vital resources, or advancing political objectives. Stephen Walt posits in his 1985 article “Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power,” and subsequent 1987 book *Origins of Alliances*, that in response to international threats, states work in their strategic interest by either allying with fellow threatened states to balance the threat’s power or allying with the threat itself to bandwagon.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout its history, realism focused on the balance of threats that create alliances on a more regional scale because, until the 20th century, international politics focused on a regional scale rather than a wholly international one. However, starting during the First and Second World Wars, an increasing number of threats in international politics are threats to states in more than

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<sup>3</sup> Stephen M. Walt, “Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power,” *International Security* 9, no. 4 (Spring 1985): 4, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2538540>. pp. 6 ; Stephen M. Walt, “Balancing and Bandwagoning,” in *Origins of Alliances* (Cornell University Press, 1987).

one region. For example, today, much of America's alliance-making and balancing is against threats across the world, such as China.

Today, China weaponizes its growing power to threaten U.S. and East Asian interests, including their encroachment upon the South China Sea, Taiwan, and the U.S.'s "economic well-being and democratic values."<sup>4</sup> While East Asian states aim to prevent China's dominance for their own security, the U.S. is primarily concerned that China's authoritarian regime and expanding economy could surpass it as the global leader. In response, the U.S. has built alliances with East Asian countries, like Japan and South Korea, to counterbalance China's rise.<sup>5</sup> These countries prefer aligning with the U.S. to safeguard their security and freedom, as it is the only power capable of curbing China's potential hegemony.<sup>6</sup> Thus, China's rise highlights how modern threats can lead to cross-regional alliances.

On the other hand, the two tenets of the constructivist school of thought are "(1) that the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and (2) that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature."<sup>7</sup> In other words, core concepts of international politics—such as identity, interests, and alliances—are socially constructed rather than inherently defined by human nature. The second hypothesis I will examine reflects a constructivist argument: a shared identity between two countries leads to sympathy from the relatively stronger government and its public, which reinforce each other to mobilize virtually unconditional support, creating strong, devoted alliances that transcend geographical distances. My working definition of a "shared

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<sup>4</sup> "The China Threat" (FBI, n.d.), <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/counterintelligence/the-china-threat>.

<sup>5</sup> Wooseon Choi, "New Horizons in Korea-U.S.-Japan Trilateral Cooperation," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, June 27, 2024, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/new-horizons-korea-us-japan-trilateral-cooperation>.

<sup>6</sup> Walt. "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power." pp. 5

<sup>7</sup> Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations 67 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

identity” will be two (or more) states with common histories, cultures, ideologies, and characteristics.

While the literature on this constructivist approach to international relations is more limited than robust realist theory, many scholars recognize shared identity as one of the multiple causes of alliance formation. Walt’s *Origins of Alliances* emphasizes the role of “ideological solidarity” alongside traditional realist thinking in explaining alliance formation. The ideological solidarity hypothesis suggests that states with shared political, cultural, or other characteristics are more likely to form alliances.<sup>8</sup> Walt outlines three reasons for this: first, alignment defends shared political principles, second, similar states fear each other less, and third, alignment boosts the legitimacy of weak regimes.<sup>9</sup> While Walt notes that states must publicly frame their allies as having shared values and subordinates this hypothesis to his balance of threat theory, he still considers it valid.<sup>10</sup>

Certain case studies also highlight the role of shared identity as a primary cause for alliance formation. For example, scholars Katzenstein and Hemmer argue that the role of perceptions of identity is “underappreciated” in explaining differences in the U.S.’s behavior toward its North Atlantic and South Asian security partners: “Shaped by racial, historical, political, and cultural factors, U.S. policymakers saw their potential European allies as relatively equal members of a shared community. America’s potential Asian allies, in contrast, were seen as part of an alien and, in important ways, inferior community.”<sup>11</sup> As a state founded by European

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<sup>8</sup> Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Cornell University Press, 1987), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt32b5fc>. pp. 33

<sup>9</sup> Walt. *The Origins of Alliances*. pp. 34-35

<sup>10</sup> Walt. *The Origins of Alliances*. pp. 38

<sup>11</sup> Christopher Hemmer and Peter J. Katzenstein, “Why Is There No NATO in Asia? Collective Identity, Regionalism, and the Origins of Multilateralism,” *International Organization* 56, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 575–607.

immigrants, the shared identity of Western European states and the United States is a key factor in their unprecedentedly strong trans-Atlantic alliance.

There is growing evidence in internationalist and constructivist literature that public opinion influences foreign policy. Holsti contrasts early 20th-century views, which dismissed public opinion as too volatile to affect decision-making, with more recent studies highlighting its increasing relevance.<sup>12</sup> One study on U.S. presidential elections from 1952 to 1984 found that foreign policy issues significantly affected voter behavior, with incumbents being rewarded or punished for foreign policy successes or failures.<sup>13</sup> Another study, covering 1960-1974, found a 92% correlation between foreign policy outcomes and public opinion.<sup>14</sup> Holsti's work underscores the growing influence of public opinion on U.S. foreign policy, particularly in decisions aligned with shared ideological values.<sup>15</sup>

The war in Ukraine illustrates the two prongs of this hypothesis – how shared identity and public opinion come together to shape foreign policy decisions. In 2022, when Russia invaded Ukraine, Western governments and their citizens framed Ukraine as “at the frontline of the democratic world pushing back against a revisionist wave of authoritarian powers’ assault on the rules-based international order.”<sup>16</sup> In the U.S., this ideological framing resonated deeply with the public, as government leaders’ statements amplified the American public’s sympathy toward Ukraine based on shared democratic values and anti-Russian sentiment. This public support permitted the U.S. government to allocate significant aid to Ukraine — \$54.9 billion by May

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<sup>12</sup> Ole R. Holsti, “Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Challenges to the Almond-Lippmann Consensus,” *International Studies Quarterly*, Merston Series: Research Programs and Debates, 36, no. 4 (December 1992): 439–66, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2600734>.

<sup>13</sup> Holsti. “Public Opinion and Foreign Policy.” pp. 452

<sup>14</sup> Holsti. “Public Opinion and Foreign Policy.” pp. 453

<sup>15</sup> Holsti. “Public Opinion and Foreign Policy.” pp. 455

<sup>16</sup> Rick Larsen, “2022 - SPECIAL REPORT - UKRAINE’S FIGHT FOR FREEDOM & ALLIED AND GLOBAL RESPONSE TO RUSSIA’S WAR” (NATO Parliamentary Assembly, December 6, 2022), <https://www.nato-pa.int/document/2022-ukraines-fight-freedom-allied-and-global-response-russias-war-report-016-dsc>.

2022.<sup>17</sup> At the time, 31% of Americans felt the government was not giving enough to Ukraine, while only 12% believed it was giving too much, indicating robust initial public support.<sup>18</sup>

The U.S. would have provided aid to Ukraine for strategic reasons, such as balancing Russian power, regardless of public sentiment. However, sympathy from the public allowed for unprecedented levels of aid in early 2022. The strength of public sympathy wouldn't have been possible without a shared identity of being defenders of democracy against Russia, an ideological framework first pushed by government officials following the invasion, highlighting how shared identity reinforces public and government support for foreign aid. Ideology is one of the most potent forces in politics, and values such as liberal democracy and territorial sovereignty are shared by countries throughout the world, thus creating ties between countries across regions.

The incentive to balance fosters strong, cross-regional alliances, but as geopolitical threats change and the balance of power shifts, these alliances weaken. In contrast, identity-driven alliances, anchored in shared identities and cultural ties, tend to create unconditional, more enduring relationships. In the following section, I will draw evidence from four cases: the American-Israeli relationship from 1967-1991 and 1991-2001, and the Anglo-Israeli relationship from 1956-1967 and 1967-1974. Through these cases, I will argue that while strategic interest is necessary to cultivate an alliance, when states have a shared identity, with similar histories and ideologies, that identity is likely to be the driving factor behind an unconditional, cross-regional alliance. Additionally, I will examine how the analysis of these

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<sup>17</sup> Jonathan Masters and Will Merrow, "How Much U.S. Aid Is Going to Ukraine?," *Council on Foreign Relations*, September 27, 2024.

<sup>18</sup> Richard Wike et al., "US Views of Ukraine Aid, Zelenskyy, and the Russia-Ukraine War" (Pew Research Center, May 8, 2024), <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2024/05/08/views-of-ukraine-and-u-s-involvement-with-the-russia-ukraine-war/>.

cases holds when examining current U.S. and U.K. policies toward Israel amid the current war in Gaza, and I will make subsequent predictions as to how these policies will evolve.

### **III. Case Studies: the American-Israeli and Anglo-Israeli Relationships**

The 21st-century U.S.-Israel relationship is unique in its unparalleled support from both the American public and government, despite the absence of a common great power threat (i.e., the Soviet Union) and instances where Israel's actions could have reasonably diminished that support (i.e., the current war in Gaza). This paper examines the foundational motivations of both American society and the U.S. government to understand the reasons behind this support and why the nature of the relationship is so different from that of the U.K. Is the U.S.-Israel relationship driven mainly by geopolitical strategic concerns or a shared identity? To answer this question, I will compare America's 20th-century growing relationship with Israel, driven by both shared identity and geopolitical concerns, to its modern unconditional support for Israel, despite the absence of the Soviet threat in the Middle East. To understand whether modern U.S. support is driven primarily by ideology or geopolitical strategy, it's crucial to compare the U.S.-Israel relationship during periods when the two states confronted a shared great threat with periods when they did not. Specifically, the first American case (1967-1991) began when their relationship turned "special" and ended when the Soviet Union fell, and the relationship thus lacked a great power to balance in the region. The second case I will examine (1991-2011) is when the two lacked a common great threat but remained closely aligned during America's "War on Terror," fighting Israel's neighbor, Iraq.

This analysis additionally requires comparing the United States' relationship with Israel to that of the United Kingdom. After their turbulent colonial period, Israel and Britain had a shared Western identity and worked in tandem with the U.S. in the Cold War to balance the

Soviet Union, but their identities and interests largely diverged from there. Thus, the cases I will focus on for this extensive and complicated history are the period when the two states were at their most amicable, from the 1956 Suez Crisis to the 1967 War, and the period from 1967 to 1974 when their relationship took a long-lasting turn for the worse.

The U.S., Israel, and Britain all have relatively interconnected histories and identities, and the U.S. and Britain have always had relatively aligned geopolitical goals. So what are the differences in American and British identity or geopolitical strategy that make the U.S. such a comparatively devoted ally? The U.S. and Israel share remarkably parallel histories: British colonialism and subsequent regional expansion driven by perceived divine exceptionalism. Are these shared values and histories enough to make their relationship so different to that of their former colonizer? By analyzing these four case studies, I will examine how two independent variables –geopolitical strategy and public sympathy driven by shared identity– affect the dependent variable of the strength of cross-regional alliances. The U.S. case illustrates how these variables explain the increasing strength of its alliance with Israel, even without a great power threat, while the U.K. case highlights the decline in Anglo-Israeli relations after 1967. Comparing the impact of these variables in both cases reveals why the U.S. maintains a strong, devoted relationship with Israel, unlike Britain.

To operationalize this independent variable, I used an ordinal scale to measure alliance strength: 1 indicates weak or no support during conflict, 2 indicates international declarations of support and limited aid, 3 indicates strong economic, military, and diplomatic alignment, even during conflict, and 4 denotes unconditional alliances characterized by sustained geopolitical coordination and shared identity, regardless of external threats.

	<b>U.S.-Israel 1967-1991</b>	<b>U.S.-Israel 1991-2011</b>	<b>U.K.-Israel 1956-1967</b>	<b>U.K.-Israel 1967-1974</b>
<b>Independent variables</b>	Shared cultural identities, shared great geopolitical threat (USSR), recognition of Israel as a strategic partner	Increasing cultural ties, shared terrorist experience, lack of great geopolitical threat, Israel's inability to advance U.S. aims in the region	Primary strategic interest of Arab trade and oil, Suez Canal crisis coordination, Western cultural ties, shared great geopolitical threat	Strategic interests lie primarily with Arab states
<b>Dependent variable</b>	3- conditional but increasingly "special alliance"	4- unconditional alliance	2- declaratory, circumstantial alliance	1- weak or no support

*Summary Table*

*a. American-Israeli Relationship (1967-1991)*

Since Israel's founding in 1948, its relationship with America has been very complex. After World War Two, the American government's primary interest was appeasing the Arab world to prevent conflict, particularly with the rising power of the Soviet Union.<sup>19</sup> While President Truman heavily sympathized with the Jewish people fleeing Hitler's terror, he did not "want to see a political structure imposed on the Near East that would result in conflict."<sup>20</sup> Any support Truman gave during the founding of Israel was due in large part to frustrating domestic considerations, mainly that of guaranteeing the Jewish vote as an unelected President and the increasingly powerful Zionist lobby.<sup>21</sup> Given the clashing domestic and international interests, Truman kept a posture toward Israel defined by "impartiality."<sup>22</sup> Despite conflicting views and often apathetic policies and actions toward the Jewish state, it was the consensus among

<sup>19</sup> Michael J. Cohen, "Truman, the Holocaust, and the Establishment of the State of Israel," *The Jerusalem Quarterly* 23 (Spring 1982): 79-94. pp. 94; Michael C. Hudson, "To Play the Hegemon: Fifty Years of US Policy toward the Middle East," *Middle East Journal* 50, no. 3 (Summer 1996): 329-43. pp. 331

<sup>20</sup> Cohen, "Truman, the Holocaust, and the Establishment of the State of Israel," pp. 82

<sup>21</sup> Cohen, "Truman, the Holocaust, and the Establishment of the State of Israel," pp. 82; Elizabeth Stephens, *US Policy toward Israel: The Role of Political Culture in Defining the "Special Relationship"* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2006). Pgs. 16-18

<sup>22</sup> Cohen, "Truman, the Holocaust, and the Establishment of the State of Israel," pp. 89

American policymakers and the public in the early years of Israel's existence that it was the moral duty of the U.S. to protect Israel from its Arab enemies.<sup>23</sup> Due to America's supportive actions during this period (despite its ups and downs and varying motivations), the American-Israeli relationship from the 1948 War to 1967 receives a 2 on the alliance scale.

The often turbulent American-Israeli relationship took a historic turn after the 1967 War. This war demonstrated Israel's military strength, shifting U.S. perceptions from viewing Israel as a liability to recognizing it as a strategic partner against Soviet influence and Arab radicalism.<sup>24</sup> The new posture of this relationship was reinforced in 1970, when the U.S. and Israeli militaries worked together during Jordan's Black September to protect Jordan King Hussein's regime from internal instability.<sup>25</sup> From then on, with Israel's strategic position in the region and its impressive and attractive military capabilities, the U.S. and Israel had an increasingly "special" relationship, moving up to be characterized as a 3 on the summary table.

The 1967 pivot in U.S.-Israel relations reflected a strategic shift. By allying with Israel, the U.S. sought to counter both Arab nationalism and Soviet influence, particularly as the USSR deepened its ties with Egypt, the region's dominant Arab power.<sup>26</sup> The Soviets increasingly supported Israel's inherent enemies, the surrounding Arab states, making the Arab-Israeli conflict another Cold War arena. As one of the two global superpowers, the U.S. had a vested interest in protecting its Western influence in the Middle East from Soviet infiltration. Even with

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<sup>23</sup> Jerome Slater, "The Two Books of Mearsheimer and Walt," *Security Studies* 18, no. 1 (February 12, 2009): 4–57, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636410802678106>. pp. 56

<sup>24</sup> Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, "The United States and Israel since 1948: A 'Special Relationship'?", *Diplomatic History* 22, no. 2 (December 17, 2002): 231–62. pp. 232; Stephens, *US Policy toward Israel*, pp. 229; Cohen, "Truman, the Holocaust, and the Establishment of the State of Israel," pp. 334

<sup>25</sup> Bar-Siman-Tov, "The United States and Israel since 1948: A 'Special Relationship'?", pp. 241

<sup>26</sup> Stephens, *US policy toward Israel*, pp. 27

its formidable military, this was difficult to guarantee from across the Atlantic Ocean. Therefore, when the democratic, Western-oriented Israel proved it was able to balance its Arab enemies and Soviet influence, choosing to create a strong alliance with Israel became the obvious choice for the U.S.. This cultivation shows that the strategic interest to balance threats necessary in the realist hypothesis is a crucial foundation for alliance formation.

As American financial and military support for Israel grew exponentially, the aftermath of the 1973 Yom Kippur War presented the U.S. with an opportunity to de-escalate the Arab-Israeli conflict, thereby asserting its influence and protecting its interest in regional stability.<sup>27</sup> Secretary of State Henry Kissinger transitioned the regional conflict from active warfare to a process of attempted peacemaking, which ultimately culminated in the Camp David Accords of 1978 under the Carter Administration.<sup>28</sup> The agreement fostered Israeli-Egyptian recognition, solidified massive amounts of U.S. aid to both nations, and reinforced U.S. dominance over the USSR in Middle Eastern diplomacy.

Notably, the American-Israeli aid relationship transformed significantly in the 1970s, beginning with the aftermath of Black September in 1970. U.S. aid surged from \$140 million (1968-1970) to \$1.15 billion (1971-1973), plus a \$2.2 billion emergency package during the 1973 War.<sup>29</sup> Following Camp David in 1979, Israel received \$3 billion in aid.<sup>30</sup> The U.S. also began providing billions in military aid and arms to Israel.<sup>31</sup> In return, the U.S. benefited from Israel's intelligence on the Middle East, which helped reduce its regional costs, and used Israeli

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<sup>27</sup> Bar-Siman-Tov, "The United States and Israel since 1948: A 'Special Relationship'?", pgs. 246-8

<sup>28</sup> Itamar Rabinovich, "Israel's 1973 October War: A 50-Year Perspective," *Brookings Institute*, October 3, 2023.

<sup>29</sup> Martha Wenger, "US Aid to Israel: From Handshake to Embrace," *Middle East Research and Information Project*, June 1990.

<sup>30</sup> "History & Overview of U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel," *Jewish Virtual Library*, n.d., <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/history-and-overview-of-u-s-foreign-aid-to-israel>.

<sup>31</sup> Bilmes et. al., "United States Spending on Israel's Military Operations and Related U.S. Operations in the Region"

territory to stage troops.<sup>32</sup> This aid reflects the U.S. strategy of leveraging Israel to counter Soviet influence in the region, supporting realist theory.

Nevertheless, the shared identity between Israel and the U.S. was reinforced during this time. After years of prominent media portrayals of Israelis overcoming Nazism to fulfill their own Manifest Destiny, American public sympathy and shared identity with Israel grew exponentially after the 1967 and 1973 Wars.<sup>33</sup> Even during the oil embargo of 1973, Americans blamed Arab states rather than Israel, viewing it as a Western ally opposing mutual, Communist, Soviet-backed threats.<sup>34</sup> “Identification with Israel was reinforced by the ease with which Americans could associate with the victory of a state which they perceived to share their own values.”<sup>35</sup>

Like many conflicts during the Cold War, the Israeli victories over the surrounding Arab states in 1967 and 1973 were viewed by Americans as an American victory over the Soviets. During the Cold War, geopolitical concerns morphed with American identity and ideology. Feeling almost hysterically threatened by the expansionist, communist Soviet Union, the American public in the 1970s was highly supportive of the democratic state of Israel, whose citizens, in many people’s lifetimes, went from fleeing religious persecution and battling British colonialism, to helping fight for American interests against our greatest geopolitical threat yet. While geopolitical concerns were the most tangible reason for U.S. policymakers to cultivate such a strong relationship during the 1970s, the sense of shared identity that Americans felt

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<sup>32</sup> Michael J. Koplow, “Value Judgment: Why Do Americans Support Israel?,” *Security Studies* 20, no. 2 (May 26, 2011): 266–302, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2011.572690>.

<sup>33</sup> Amy Kaplan, *Our American Israel: The Story of an Entangled Alliance* (Harvard University Press, 2018). pgs. 59-60

<sup>34</sup> Stephens, *US policy toward Israel*, pp. 157

<sup>35</sup> Stephens, *US policy toward Israel*, pp. 155

toward Israel cannot be overlooked. Rooted in similar democratic values, opposition to communism, and remarkably parallel histories, American public support was critical for enabling U.S. aid during the 1970s.

Without this ideological backing, Congress would have faced greater public resistance in justifying such aid, particularly in the politically tumultuous post-Vietnam and Watergate era. Additionally, this ideology and shared identity led pro-Israeli Jews, Evangelical Christians, and other Americans to become a crucial voting bloc for U.S. politicians, and as the Zionist lobby increased in strength, for many politicians, supporting Israel became necessary to maintain power.<sup>36</sup> Thus, between the ideological aspect of shared identity, its influence as a voting force, and the coordination of their geopolitical relationship, both the realist and constructivist hypotheses of alliance formation contributed to strengthening U.S.-Israeli relations in the 1970s.

As the U.S. public continued to strengthen its cultural ties to Israel, the Reagan administration continued to recognize Israel as a strategic ally in the 1980s. To increase his momentum as a presidential candidate, Reagan “defined Israel as a strategic asset and the only reliable friend of the United States in the Middle East because of its democratic values and military power.”<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, as president, Reagan offered unseen levels of military and economic assistance and formally recognized Israel’s “special status” in the 1981 Memorandum of Understanding on Strategic Cooperation, furthering its intentions to cooperate militarily on the threat of the Soviet Union.<sup>38</sup> Through the occasional ups and downs in the early to mid-1980s, the relationship was able to overcome challenges because of its strong cultural bond and shared geopolitical interests.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Koplw, “Value Judgment: Why Do Americans Support Israel?”

<sup>37</sup> Bar-Siman-Tov, “The United States and Israel since 1948: A ‘Special Relationship’?,” pp. 252

<sup>38</sup> Bar-Siman-Tov, “The United States and Israel since 1948: A ‘Special Relationship’?,” pp. 253

<sup>39</sup> Meaning here Israeli attacks on the PLO and Lebanon and Reagan’s subsequent temporary suspension of the MOU; Bar-Siman-Tov, “The United States and Israel since 1948: A ‘Special Relationship’?,” pp. 255

*b. American-Israeli Relationship (1991-2011)*

The fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 transformed the entire landscape of international relations. Yet, the relationship between Israel and the United States remained increasingly unconditional. If balancing the threat of the Soviet Union's influence was the driving factor behind the strength of this alliance, in its absence, under the realist hypothesis of alliance formation, this relationship would weaken. Undoubtedly, the U.S. still had major interests in the region; however, without a major common threat for the U.S. and Israel to balance, there must be another explanation behind the continued strength of the U.S.-Israel relationship.

Beyond maintaining its influence as the world's sole remaining superpower, the threats and interests the U.S. had in the Middle East following the fall of the Soviet Union included oil, rogue states, and terrorism—most notably constituting the containment of Iran and U.S. “wars on terror” in Afghanistan and Iraq. In the 1990s, one argument was that Israel could protect these U.S. interests by filling the power vacuum left by the Soviet Union to deter radical Arab regimes that threatened U.S. access to oil, broader American interests, and regional stability.<sup>40</sup> After the first Gulf War, the George H. W. Bush administration used its relationship with Israel—and the new regional and international conditions—to advance the American strategic goal of peaceful regional stability.<sup>41</sup>

While Israel did take part in the short-lived, Clinton-brokered Oslo Accords, Israel was wholly unhelpful in America's conflicts in the Middle East and also partially contributed to them. During both the 1991 and 2003 Iraq wars, the U.S. discouraged Israeli involvement, recognizing that any military support from Israel would pose greater political risks than strategic

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<sup>40</sup> Koplou, “Value Judgment: Why Do Americans Support Israel?”

<sup>41</sup> Bar-Siman-Tov, “The United States and Israel since 1948: A ‘Special Relationship’?,” pp. 257

benefits.<sup>42</sup> In the aftermath of the U.S. military retaliation against the September 11 terrorist attacks, “Israel was sometimes seen as a hindrance rather than a help,” with Osama Bin Laden citing the strength of the U.S.-Israeli relationship as one of the motives behind the attacks.<sup>43</sup> As argued by realists Mearsheimer and Walt, while Israel could have been considered a strategic asset during the Cold War, the view that it continued to be one during the U.S.’s post-Soviet Middle East conflicts is “at best outdated and at worst simply wrong.”<sup>44</sup> As shown in the summary table, because of America’s increasingly unconditional support of Israel—despite Israel’s inability to help advance American interests in the region—the American-Israeli relationship moved from a 3 to a 4 on the alliance scale.

Despite this contradiction, public support held strong, and after a dip in support at the beginning of the Second Intifada, the shared identity between the U.S. and Israel was reinforced by the September 11 terrorist attacks.<sup>45</sup> “Identification with Israel sharpened the sense that the two countries shared a unique position in the world.”<sup>46</sup> The portrayal of Israelis as resilient victims of terrorism resonated deeply, offering Americans a framework to process their own losses and a model of military vigilance against threats. This shift in public sentiment is evident in polling data: between August and September 2001, sympathy for Israel rose significantly, from 41% to 55%, while support for Palestinians dropped from 13% to 7%.<sup>47</sup> The American public was now able to understand and sympathize with the Israeli plight more deeply than before, as both nations had been viciously and directly attacked by the “evil” forces of Islamic

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<sup>42</sup> Slater, “The Two Books of Mearsheimer and Walt,” pp. 34

<sup>43</sup> Stephens, *US policy toward Israel*, pp. 233; “US Support for Israel Prompted 9/11 Attacks, Says Bin Laden Video,” *France 24*, September 14, 2009, <https://www.france24.com/en/20090914-us-support-israel-prompted-911-attacks-says-bin-laden-video->

<sup>44</sup> John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007). pp. 50

<sup>45</sup> “Middle East,” *Gallup*, October 16, 2024. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/1639/middle-east.aspx>.

<sup>46</sup> Kaplan, *Our American Israel: The Story of an Entangled Alliance*, pp. 239

<sup>47</sup> “Middle East,” *Gallup*.

extremism. Thus, not only did 9/11 further merge the identities of the Israeli and American public, but “America’s war on terror merged with Israel’s war against the Palestinians both in rhetoric and practice, with each legitimating the other.”<sup>48</sup>

Amidst the ill-fated wars on terror in Iraq and Afghanistan, President George W. Bush supported Israel’s superiority “as a strategic American tool, and as a deterrent to regional powers which sought to play major roles in the region and threaten American and Western interests,” continuing to give Israel billions of dollars in military and economic aid.<sup>49</sup> However, in critical retrospect, this logic did not hold. If Israel was supposed to be playing a major role in advancing our interests, why was it counter-effective in the multiple wars the U.S. was fighting with its neighbors? Why would the U.S. government keep giving Israel billions of dollars in military aid to protect American interests, when it was spending billions of more dollars fighting a losing war in part driven by its alignment with Israel? Although the alliance was initially strengthened to balance shared threats, that original major threat no longer existed. However, by the time the U.S. was engaged in the War on Terror in 2001, amidst so much instability and fear, the shared identity between the American public and government with Israel had become so strong and overwhelming that their ideological sentiments of the public and government officials reinforced each other, solidifying an unconditional, inescapably powerful relationship with Israel.

The lack of strategic factors isolates the fact that America’s relationship with Israel has always been in the context of the American public’s shared identity and the subsequent need for elected officials to appeal to the Jewish and Evangelical Christian vote, many for whom support

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<sup>48</sup> Kaplan, *Our American Israel: The Story of an Entangled Alliance*. pp. 244

<sup>49</sup> Osama Anter Hamdi, “American Foreign Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict: Strategic Transformations,” *Insight Turkey*, The Gulf on the Verge Global Challenges and Regional Dynamics, 20, no. 2 (Spring 2018): 251–72. pp. 252

of Israel was a deciding factor in their vote.<sup>50</sup> Over the years, Americans were able to identify the parallel history between the founding of the American state and that of Israel—independence of British colonialism and subsequent “settler colonialism expressed in biblical narratives of exceptionalism”—the common ideology of liberal democracy, and the common threats both faced.<sup>51</sup> American government officials aroused this ideological sympathy to guarantee support for Israeli aid to protect its geopolitical interests in the region—a balance of power logic that ordinary Americans might not always understand. Subsequently, American voters (and lobbyists) ensured that any anti-Israel elected official would either change their views or get voted out.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, in the absence of the Soviet threat, ideological sympathy through shared identity was the primary factor behind unconditionally supportive U.S. policy toward Israel in the 21st century. Moreover, when determining the driving factor of unconditional, devoted cross-regional alliances in the abstract, the U.S.-Israeli relationship is a prime source of evidence that it is ideological. However, to prove this abstract question with certainty, it is necessary to examine the Anglo-Israeli relationship and why it is not as strong as America's.

*c. Anglo-Israeli Relationship (1956-1967)*

Even though British interest in the Palestine mandate was originally driven by a strategic interest in the Suez Canal, by the time the British left in 1947, they had created a somewhat hostile relationship with the soon-to-be state of Israel, and its relationships with their Arab allies—crucial to their geopolitical strategy and oil access—were harmed immensely.<sup>53</sup> As Britain fled its failed colonial project, it had to determine how to re-strategize and regain hold of its interests. Approximately 85% of British petroleum came from the Middle East during this

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<sup>50</sup> Koplow, “Value Judgment: Why Do Americans Support Israel?”

<sup>51</sup> Kaplan, *Our American Israel*, pgs. 4-5

<sup>52</sup> Koplow, “Value Judgment: Why Do Americans Support Israel?”

<sup>53</sup> Jonathan Spyer, “An Analytical and Historical Overview of British Policy Toward Israel,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 8, no. 2 (June 2004). ; David Fromkin, “The Settlement of the Middle Eastern Question,” in *A Peace To End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East*, 1989.

period, and the British had robust trade relationships with Arab states, so it had to cultivate a strategy that balanced these interests.<sup>54</sup> As briefed in the summary table, this included recognizing Israel and incorporating it into the Western order against the Soviet Union threat on one hand; but on the other hand, it maintained a relatively weak relationship, with many Israelis still resentful of the British and the British concerned with Arab interests, thus characterized as 1 on the alliance scale.<sup>55</sup>

Because of Britain's complex and clashing interests, the main goal of its presence in the Middle East has always been to maintain the fragile peace, particularly preventing the Arab-Israeli conflict from erupting.<sup>56</sup> Despite this, the British-initiated Suez Crisis was a rare instance of major Anglo-Israeli geopolitical coordination, especially in the face of U.S. opposition. It began when Egyptian President Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal in 1956, detrimentally harming Britain's ability to trade in the region. To regain access to the Suez, the British Foreign Minister proposed a top-secret plan for British "intervention" if Israel invaded Egypt, with the central Israeli demand that the British destroy the Egyptian air force as soon as possible after war had broken out."<sup>57</sup> Thus, the Israelis invaded and the British and French "intervened" while U.S. President Eisenhower planned to impose sanctions on Israel in the UN.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Spyer, "An Analytical and Historical Overview of British Policy Toward Israel"

<sup>55</sup> "UK's Inconsistency over Arms Sales to Israel Could Make It Complicit in Gaza Deaths and Destruction-Oxfam," *Oxfam*, April 12 2024, <https://www.oxfam.org.uk/media/press-releases/uks-inconsistency-over-arms-sales-to-israel-could-make-it-complicit-in-gaza-deaths-and-destruction-oxfam/>.

<sup>56</sup> Moshe Gat, "Britain and Israel Before and After the Six Day War, June 1967: From Support to Hostility," *Contemporary British History* 8, no. 1 (August 5, 2006): 54–77, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1361946042000217301>. pp. 55

<sup>57</sup> McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East 1952-67*. pp. 55

<sup>58</sup> McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East 1952-67*. pp. 55 and 75

The British decision on the sanction vote was indicative of its situation in the region after the Suez Crisis. On the one hand, if Britain voted on the side of the Arabs, it would be seen as a sell-out to the Egyptians for the Suez, show their subservience to the U.S., and cause conflict with Israel which could expose them for initiating the plan; however, on the other, voting for Israel would harm Britain's relationship with Arab nations crucial to their political and economic wellbeing.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, the British abstained from the vote.

Nevertheless, in the wake of this collaboration and regional developments in 1956, "Israel and Britain enjoyed a warm and friendly relationship characterised by Britain's absolute commitment to Israel's survival."<sup>60</sup> After Israel's stunning performance in the Suez conflict, it was clear to Britain that Israel was the strongest fighting force in the region. Hence, it was in British strategic interest to ensure Israel's strength to prevent the "further toppling of traditional and halting the spread of anti-Western Pan-Arab nationalism" which harmed crucial British oil and trade access in the region.<sup>61</sup>

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Britain's support for Israel manifested in two key ways: public declarations of Israeli support and the establishment of a limited arms trade. First, Prime Minister Macmillan explicitly backed Israel's right of passage through the Straits of Tiran in a speech to the House of Commons in early 1957.<sup>62</sup> Second, the British lifted its 1953 arms embargo on Israel in 1958.<sup>63</sup> While this did not include the sale of top-of-line Chieftain tanks that Israel requested—due to Britain's Arab interests—it did include the slightly less sophisticated

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<sup>59</sup> McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East 1952-67*. pp 75

<sup>60</sup> Gat, "Britain and Israel Before and After the Six Day War, June 1967: From Support to Hostility." pp. 54

<sup>61</sup> Spyer, "An Analytical and Historical Overview of British Policy Toward Israel."

<sup>62</sup> McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East 1952-67*. pp. 76

<sup>63</sup> In the context of a bettering relationship, the lifting of the embargo was a direct consequence of the 1958 Iraqi Revolution; Gat, "Britain and Israel Before and After the Six Day War." pp. 56 ; "UK's Inconsistency over Arms Sales to Israel Could Make It Complicit in Gaza Deaths and Destruction-Oxfam," *Oxfam*, April 12 2024.

Centurion tank.<sup>64</sup> Thus, starting after the Suez Crisis, the Anglo-Israeli alliance could be moved up to a 2 on the alliance scale.<sup>65</sup>

Although Britain and Israel shared elements of a Western, democratic identity in their opposition to Soviet communism, British officials emphasized that their support for Israel was driven by strategic interests rather than ideological alignment. Rather, as said by the British Ambassador to Israel Michael Haddow, “We do not give the Israelis arms because they are pro-western or because we admire their achievement. We give them arms because our interests in the Middle East are to keep the place quiet, and to prevent war. Anything which makes war in the Middle East more likely is against the interests of the Western powers.”<sup>66</sup> Further, in 1958 as the UAR was forming, Israel Prime Minister Ben-Gurion wanted to enter a “tacit alliance similar to its alliance with France,” and the British declined for “obvious reasons.”<sup>67</sup> These reasons were that while supporting Israel was beneficial for the time being, Britain knew that, especially given their complex and vested interests in the region, this could change, and they did not want to get into a commitment that would harm their interests in the future. Even more, in 1966, Haddow stated clearly that while the British were the closest thing Israel had to “family,” this was a position the British were very reluctant to accept as it came with many disadvantages.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Simon C. Smith, “Centurions and Chieftains: Tank Sales and British Policy towards Israel in the Aftermath of the Six-Day War,” *Contemporary British History* 28, no. 2 (June 20, 2014): 219–39, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13619462.2014.930348>. pp. 220

<sup>65</sup> At the time of the Suez Crisis in late 1956, this relationship fits the criteria of a 3 since they were in direct conflict and Britain provided declared and physical support; however, since this was a brief and standout period in the Anglo-Israeli relationship, I am operationalizing their bettering relationship as a 1 to a 2.

<sup>66</sup> Spyer, “An Analytical and Historical Overview of British Policy Toward Israel.

<sup>67</sup> McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East 1952-1967*. pp. 131

<sup>68</sup> Arie Kochavi, “George Brown and the British Policy Towards Israel in the Aftermath of the Six-Day War,” *Israel Studies* 22, no. 2 (Spring 2017): 1–23, <https://doi.org/10.2979/israelstudies.22.1.0>. pp. 3

This low-level, non-devoted alliance from 1956 to 1967 was driven primarily by geopolitical interests of balancing the regional threats of Arab nationalism and the global threat of Soviet expansion. Some could classify this as evidence for the realist hypothesis of alliance formation; however, a final analysis of this evidence cannot be determined until compared to the factors leading to the relationship's demise in 1967.

This short period of improving Anglo-Israeli relations came to a halt after the 1967 War. As established in 1957, the British explicitly supported free Israeli passage through the Straits of Tiran, and, per the 1957 Settlement, Israelis had free passage of the Gulf of Aqaba.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, when Nasser announced over the radio these waterways were closed, war became inevitable.<sup>70</sup> “Not only was Nasser challenging Israel, but he was challenging those Western powers, including Britain, that had pledged to defend the right of free passage in the Straits.”<sup>71</sup> Eventually acknowledging that there was no possibility of a diplomatic resolution—or one that involved the British—Britain was hoping for an Israeli victory, but couldn't do much to aid them in it.<sup>72</sup> A victory for the Arab states would increase Nasser's prestige, Soviet support, and the possibility that the UAR would be consolidated and British oil and trade interests in the region would be harmed; however, “the harm that such an open identification with Israel might do to British political and economic interests in the region was clear.”<sup>73</sup> So, following their interests to the best of their ability, the British watched Israel invade Egypt and Syria's airfields from afar on June 5, 1967, and win a decisive victory in just six days.

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<sup>69</sup> McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East 1952-67*. pp. 245

<sup>70</sup> Jonathan Isacoff, “Writing the Arab-Israeli Conflict: Historical Bias and the Use of History in Political Science,” *Perspectives on Politics* Vol. 3, No. 1 (2005) pp. 79

<sup>71</sup> McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East 1952-67*. pp. 245

<sup>72</sup> McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East 1952-67*. pp. 249- 251

<sup>73</sup> McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East 1952-67*. pp 254; Gat, “Britain and Israel Before and After the Six Day War.”; Spyer, “An Analytical and Historical Overview of British Policy Toward Israel.”

*d. Anglo-Israeli relationship (1967-1974)*

After 1967, Britain shifted its stance against Israel to regain Arab favor and protect its interests, responding to accusations of collusion, the closure of the Suez Canal, and an oil embargo.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, with this decisive victory and the subsequent increase in U.S. support, Britain knew that lessening its support to regain Arab trust would not put Israel in any serious danger.<sup>75</sup>

Thus, in the days and weeks following the war, Britain began its appeals to Arab states claiming it had not supported Israel during the war, it demanded Israel withdraw from occupied territories, and that it sympathized with the suffering, displaced Arab population.<sup>76</sup> The British government saw that Israel had become overly confident and refused to consider the interests of its allies, with its extremism and expansionism increasingly radicalizing the Arab world.<sup>77</sup> Britain's aim in the Middle East was to maintain a peaceful status quo to protect its interests of oil, trade, and investment with the Arab world, and Israel was a major threat to these interests. Further, the British believed that the Soviet strategy for regaining influence in the region after the defeat was eliminating Western influence by identifying the U.S. and Britain with Israel. While the U.S. strategy to counter this was drawing closer to Israel and exacerbating support, Britain wanted to make its divergence with the U.S. strategy clear, as the Foreign Office was determined to keep as much influence as possible with the Arabs.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Gat, "Britain and Israel Before and After the Six Day War." pp. 62

<sup>75</sup> Gat, "Britain and Israel Before and After the Six Day War." pp. 63

<sup>76</sup> Gat, "Britain and Israel Before and After the Six Day War." pp. 64

<sup>77</sup> Gat, "Britain and Israel Before and After the Six Day War." pp. 64

<sup>78</sup> Kochavi, "George Brown and the British Policy Towards Israel in the Aftermath of the Six-Day War." pp. 2, 4

Between 1967 and 1973, British policy shifted toward pro-Arab positions to safeguard oil supplies and trade, even as Israel's security concerns intensified, underscoring its prioritization of geopolitical interests over ideological alignment.<sup>79</sup> While arms sales to Israel did not cease until the embargo of 1973, the Arab states were also major clients of British arms sales and trade. Further, as Israel fought the low-grade war of attrition with Egypt, skirmishes with Syria, and operations against the PLO, British Middle East policy favored Arab states. Thus, starting with Britain's posture toward Israel in the 1967 War, as outlined in the summary table, the relationship decreased to a 1 on the alliance scale.

When Egypt and Syria invaded Israel in 1973, the British government decided the best course of action was to impose an arms embargo on both the Arabs and Israelis to not sacrifice its ability to influence future regional peace initiatives and Arab oil policy.<sup>80</sup> Even further, the USSR supplied Arab states with weapons, making the embargo effectively one-sided.<sup>81</sup> The U.S. pushed Britain to reconsider supporting Israel, but the British refused to condemn the aggression against Israel or allow the U.S. to resupply Israel from British bases.<sup>82</sup>

This is not to say that public opinion and many Labour MPs in Parliament did not have ideological sympathies toward Israel— the Foreign Office and the ruling Conservative Party faced a major domestic backlash that factored into their 1974 election loss.<sup>83</sup> Nevertheless, because of the relative weakness of this ideological support and shared identity, the insulation of the Foreign Office from public opinion, and the strength of British geopolitical interests in maintaining

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<sup>79</sup> Geraint Hughes, "Britain, the Transatlantic Alliance, and the Arab-Israeli War of 1973," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 10, no. 2 (Spring 2008), <https://muse-jhu-edu.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/article/237150>.

<sup>80</sup> Smith, "Centurions and Chieftains." pp. 231

<sup>81</sup> Smith, "Centurions and Chieftains." pp. 231

<sup>82</sup> Smith, "Centurions and Chieftains." pp. 231; Robert Philpot, "The Yom Kippur War and British Politics," *Fathom Journal*, June 2020.

<sup>83</sup> Philpot, "The Yom Kippur War and British Politics."

relations and influence with Arab states, ideological sympathy played little to no role in influencing the British's increasingly hostile relations toward Israel.

The situation following the 1973 War continued on the path of rocky, weak relations between the two countries. Most, if not all, British support toward Israel has been pushed by its alignment with the U.S. Additionally, both the British public and government have followed the European mood of increased sympathies toward the Palestinians and increased hostility toward Israel.<sup>84</sup> This evolution proves once more that if there are any vestiges of ideological sympathy or shared identity in Britain, they have not shaped foreign policy decision-makers to cultivate a devoted alliance with Israel. Instead, Britain's weak relationship with Israel stems primarily from its regional geopolitical interests. Moreover, contemporary policies that diverge from U.S. positions reflect ideological apathy toward Israel and growing sympathy for the Palestinians.<sup>85</sup>

The Anglo-Israeli relationship weakened due to shifting strategic interests, while the American-Israeli relationship strengthened into an unconditional alliance, even in the absence of a shared strategic threat, due to its shared identity. This contrast helps answer the question of *what causes devoted cross-regional alliances*: shared identity, ideological alignment, and the support of an ideologically driven voter base. Importantly, this does not suggest that ideology alone drives alliances. Instead, the key distinction between the U.S. and U.K. relationships with Israel lies in the U.S.'s shared identity with Israel, which fosters a devoted alliance, unlike Britain's more tenuous connection through the United States.

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<sup>84</sup> Spyer, "An Analytical and Historical Overview of British Policy Toward Israel."; BenLevi, Raphael, Amnon Cavari, and Lesley Terris. 2019. "Global Public Opinion toward Israel: Mapping and Assessing the Determinants of Public Attitudes in 45 Countries." *Israel Affairs* 25 (6): 1006–25. doi:10.1080/13537121.2019.1670442.

<sup>85</sup> Stephen Castle and Mark Lander, "U.K.'s Policy on Israel, Long Aligned With America's, Veers Away," *New York Times*, July 25, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/25/world/europe/uk-israel-gaza-war-policy.html>.

*e. Current postures toward Israel*

Amidst Israel's current assault on Gaza, this argument still holds but has nonetheless shifted in the U.S. case. Following the October 7, 2023 invasion of Hamas—which killed 1,200 and made 250 hostages—the Israeli military invasions into the Gaza Strip and subsequently the West Bank have killed over 40,000 Palestinians and wounded almost 100,000.<sup>86</sup> Israel's destruction of Palestinian territory would not have been possible without Western support, particularly the controversially high levels of aid and weapons from the U.S.

Since then, as of September 2024, the U.S. government has approved at least \$17.9 billion in security assistance for Israeli military operations in Gaza and elsewhere.<sup>87</sup> On top of that, the U.S. has approved billions of dollars of weapons transfers, much of the reporting of which is decentralized or classified.<sup>88</sup> This monstrous amount of money and weapons is unlike any aid the U.S. has provided to Israel or any other nation. High levels of U.S. support in 2023 were initially driven by reinforcing, ideological U.S. government and public support; however, the American public's unprecedented decline in support toward Israel complicates this argument.

When Hamas attacked Israel and subsequently invaded, Israeli support amongst the American public was relatively high: an Economist/YouGov poll just a week after the invasion marked 48% of Americans more sympathetic to Israel, only 10% more sympathetic to Palestinians, and 23% sympathetic to both.<sup>89</sup> Further, a few months into the war, 58% of

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<sup>86</sup> "Israel/OPT: One Year on from 7 October Need to Ensure a Ceasefire and Release of Hostages More Pressing than Ever," *Amnesty International*, October 7, 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/10/israel-opt-one-year-on-from-7-october-need-to-ensure-a-ceasefire-and-release-of-hostages-more-pressing-than-ever/>; "41,788 Palestinians Killed in Gaza Offensive since Oct. 7," *Reuters*

<sup>87</sup> Blimes et. al. "United States Spending on Israel's Military Operations and Related U.S. Operations in the Region."

<sup>88</sup> Blimes et. al. "United States Spending on Israel's Military Operations and Related U.S. Operations in the Region."

<sup>89</sup> David Montgomery, "What Americans Think About the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" (The Economist/YouGov, October 4, 2024), <https://today.yougov.com/politics/articles/50639-what-americans-think-about-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict>

Americans said Israel's reasons for fighting Hamas were valid, compared to 22% for Hamas.<sup>90</sup> This support was evidence of a continuation of the narrative of shared identity and ideological solidarity, as there was little strategic reasoning for such astronomical U.S. support. As it has been historically, the common notion after the invasion was that the U.S. needed to protect Israel from its Islamic terrorist neighbors. This initial, ideologically-driven public sentiment allowed for such strong support from the U.S. government.

Nevertheless, as Israel continued killing tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians, American public support for Israel decreased dramatically. In the same Economist/YouGov poll that has continued since the outbreak of the war, as of November 16, 2024, American sympathy for Israel has dropped to 31%, while sympathy for both has risen to 30% and sympathy for Palestinians has risen to 16%.<sup>91</sup> This shift was particularly prominent among members of the Democratic Party, a plurality of which (34%) sympathized with Israel in the October 2023 Economist/YouGov poll, with a minority (15%) sympathizing with Israel in the subsequent November 16, 2024 poll.<sup>92</sup> The failure of the U.S. government, the Biden Administration, and the Democratic Party to reflect this ideological shift, continuing to give billions of dollars in aid and weaponry, some argue, contributed to the Democratic Party's loss in the 2024 election.<sup>93</sup>

Compared to the United States, the U.K. has provided significantly less support for Israel. In the 21st century, influenced by European postcolonial public opinion and greater sympathy toward Palestinians, the U.K.'s declaratory stance has been neutral, emphasizing respect for

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<sup>90</sup> Laura Silver et al., "Majority in U.S. Say Israel Has Valid Reasons for Fighting; Fewer Say the Same About Hamas" (Pew Research Center, March 21, 2024), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep58485>.

<sup>91</sup> Montgomery, "What Americans Think About the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict?"

<sup>92</sup> Montgomery, "What Americans Think About the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict?"

<sup>93</sup> Peter Beinart, "Democrats Ignored Gaza and Brought Down Their Party," *New York Times*, November 7, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/07/opinion/democrats-israel-gaza-war.html>.

international law.<sup>94</sup> As of October 2024, a majority of the British public (60%) believes Israel's military actions in Gaza have gone too far, compared to just 12% who view the response as appropriate.<sup>95</sup> Further, when asked about responsibility for the conflict, the British public slightly favored blaming the Israeli government over Hamas by a margin of 2%.<sup>96</sup> Reflecting this public sentiment, the U.K. has provided Israel with only a fraction of the military support given by the U.S., accounting for less than 1% of Israeli defense imports in 2022 and even less in 2023; moreover, as of September 2024, the U.K. suspended 30 arms export licenses to Israel, including components for F-16 aircraft and targeting systems.<sup>97</sup>

Britain's lack of ideological sympathy for Israel continues to shape its foreign policy, driven instead primarily by geopolitical interests and a degree of postcolonial apathy. In contrast, the U.S. faces unprecedented polarization in public and government attitudes toward Israel. In the face of such fragmented ideology and lack of strategic interest in providing mass amounts of support to Israel, what is driving this unconditional, unprecedented American support to Israel? Given the factors that have shaped U.S. policy toward Israel to date, the only explanation for America's resource-depleting, interest-harming, international law-defying, devoted, support toward Israel in 2024 is the remnants of such potent ideology and shared identity that have tied the U.S. and Israel together.<sup>98</sup> Despite the shifts in American public opinion, support for Israel is still strong, especially compared to that of our Western allies like the U.K. and EU. That potent

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<sup>94</sup> Efraim Sicher, "The Image of Israel and Postcolonial Discourse in the Early 21st Century: A View from Britain," *Israel Studies* 16, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 1–25, <https://doi.org/10.2979/isr.2011.16.1.1>; Raphael BenLevi, Amnon Cavari, and Lesley Terris, "Global Public Opinion toward Israel: Mapping and Assessing the Determinants of Public Attitudes in 45 Countries," *Israel Affairs* 25, no. 6 (October 1, 2019): 1006–25, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537121.2019.1670442>.

<sup>95</sup> Kelly Beaver, Gideon Skinner, and Keiran Pedley, "UK Attitudes toward the Conflict in Israel and Gaza" (Ipsos, October 4, 2024), <https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/uk-attitudes-toward-conflict-israel-and-gaza>.

<sup>96</sup> Beaver et. al., "UK Attitudes toward the Conflict in Israel and Gaza"

<sup>97</sup> Louisa Brooke-Holland, "UK Arms Exports to Israel," *UK Parliament*, October 23, 2024, <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9964/>.

<sup>98</sup> Jon Hoffman, "Israel Is a Strategic Liability for the United States," *Cato Institute*, March 22, 2024, <https://www.cato.org/commentary/israel-strategic-liability-united-states>.

ideology of shared identity and sympathy, and the belief that it will be a make-or-break issue for voters still evidently holds strong within the American government, even if it is irrational and came at a political cost to President Biden and Vice President Harris in the 2024 election.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Britain's weakening relationship with Israel after the 1967 War, driven by strategic interests and a lack of shared identity, contrasts with America's strengthening alliance, even as Israel's strategic value diminished after the Cold War. This demonstrates that while alliances require a strategic foundation, a sense of shared identity makes them truly devoted. This has profound implications for the future of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the broader discussion of alliance formation and longevity.

America and Israel are in unprecedented, some might say irrational, times, and since the Trump administration is a staunch supporter of Israel, it is unlikely that this support will slow.<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, the international community continues to condemn Israel's human rights violations, and the U.S. public is becoming increasingly critical of such. In the short term, as the Trump administration takes the reins on the conflict, it is unlikely America's general support toward Israel will wane or the relationship will become any less special.

However, in the long term, as the Trump administration implements a stance that will swell American frustration, if and when the ideology of shared identity subsequently weakens, the "special relationship" will likely fall through. If that time comes, Israel will not have unconditional support from the great U.S. power, and it will be forced to adapt militarily and politically. Although the United States has always wanted to be the peace broker of the

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<sup>99</sup>Liam Stack, "Trump Has History of Strong Support for Israel," *The New York Times*, November 6, 2024, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/06/world/middleeast/trump-israel-support.html>.

Arab-Israeli conflict, without the encouragement and economic and military support from the world's strongest power, Israel—, facing a lack of resources and international support—will be forced to cultivate a peaceful solution to its conflicts with the Palestinians and neighboring Arab states. On the other hand, if American public backlash subsides and the U.S. government continues on its current trajectory, the consequences for the Palestinian population will continue to be detrimental. Nevertheless, the question remains, how did the American public get tasked with the role of constraining its increasingly irrational and harmful foreign policy establishment? Will Americans step up to the task? Only time will tell.

To predict the future, we must look at the past. The relationships between Britain, the United States, and Israel provide some of the most valuable insights into great powers and alliances in recent centuries. Notably, the former and current great powers, the U.K. and the U.S., share a "special relationship" of their own. As a former British colony, the U.S. and Britain had a close but sometimes rocky relationship until the World Wars of the twentieth century.<sup>100</sup> Amid shifting power dynamics in the twentieth century, they forged an unconditional alliance based on strategic interests and a shared identity. Reflecting on this history in the context of Israel's rise to power raises a key question: how might these past patterns influence the future of their alliances with Israel?

Outside of this particular conflict, this explanation of alliance endurance and formation has a unique place within international relations scholarship. Instead of emphasizing one theory over another, my argument constitutes that as alliances evolve and strengthen, the application of realist alliance theory gives way to constructivist theory. This unique approach begs further questions: outside of the context of America's robust, often ideologically-driven alliances, do

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<sup>100</sup> "The Evolution of US-UK Relations," *Geopolitical Futures*, July 3, 2020, <https://geopoliticalfutures.com/the-evolution-of-us-uk-relations/>

other states behave this way? As rising powers have the increasing ability to make their threats global, and ideology becomes more potent and polarized across the world, will alliances like that of the U.S. and Israel continue to form? Here I encourage one to research and cultivate scholarship that examines constructivist theories of alliance formation that do not include the United States to isolate whether this is an international phenomenon caused by the U.S., or if it just constitutes multiple strong examples.

No matter the conclusion to these questions, this analysis shows that in the ever-changing world of international relations and alliances, with the force of ideology increasing, policymakers and citizens alike must critically examine whether the alliances they devote so much time and resources to are accomplishing their initial strategic objectives or if ideology has taken over and is doing both states more harm than good. It is human nature to align with those who share our histories and values, but doing so while disregarding other crucial factors is a process we must learn to control for the sake of our country and our allies.

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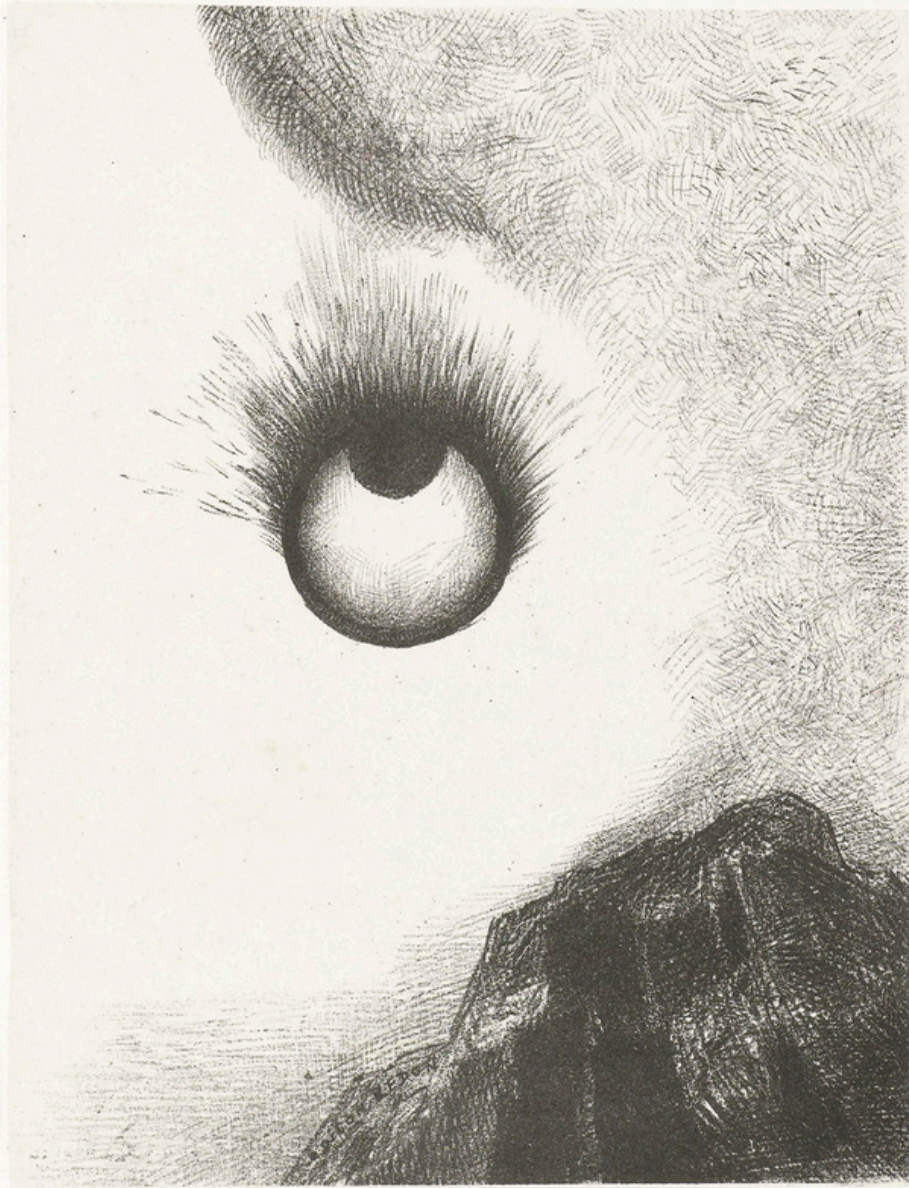
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Pl. IX.

