THE COLLOQUIUM

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THE COLLOQUIUM

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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.

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John Bingley Garland. "'The Blood Collages of John Bingley Garland (ca. 1850–60)," https://publicdomainreview.org/collection/garland-blood-collages/

Back Cover Featuring:
Edward Quin, Historical Atlas (1830), https://publicdomainreview.org/collection/edward-quin-historical-atlas/

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Reader,

It is our pleasure to present the winter edition of Volume V of *The Colloquium: The Undergraduate Political Science Journal of Boston College*. We received an impressive number of submissions, making this edition particularly competitive. The submissions came from a wide range of universities across the United States, allowing this edition of *The Colloquium* to be the first to feature authors outside of the greater Boston area. We believe that this is important to the journal's mission of increasing political discourse and scholarship both within and outside the university, and present this as a testament to the increasing importance of political scholarship. Including a wide range of authors from around the country also allows us to publish only the highest level of scholarship, which we believe will be evident in the increasing quality of our journal.

Beyond our authors, this year's editorial staff features the most impressive undergraduate political scientists at Boston College. Our most competitive applicant pool to date, those that were selected to join the journal as copy editors represent only the most dedicated and passionate. We are extremely grateful for the hard work of our copyediting team and wish to impress upon the reader their hard work and enthusiasm.

As a short preview of the contents of the journal, we believe that this issue will offer something for everyone. As diversity in thought across college campuses — and the liberal arts education as a whole — wavers under threat, we hope to offer a wide range of perspectives on political issues.

This edition features first a review of the Geneva Conventions and comments extensively on U.S. foreign policy during the Bush Administration, raising important questions about international affairs today. Next, we turn to an analysis of Orwell's and Plato's philosophies of language, presenting both a literary and philosophical analysis of political rhetoric. "Church and State: The Political Influence of the Russian Orthodox and Polish Catholic Churches in Post-Communist Transitions" takes us on a journey to the Eastern Bloc, prompting readers to think deeply about the question of religious involvement in politics. Next, we feature a robust research article comparing the development of nuclear weapons in Asia and the Middle East, an important consideration in an increasingly hostile international arena. A semi-autobiographical paper on China's one-child policy features impressive research and a personal touch, allowing readers a unique insight into a globally important issue. Finally, "Analyzing the Brain Drain in Sub-Saharan Africa" marks a strong close to the issue, describing the factors that contribute to this phenomenon and how this emigration of professionals can be properly addressed.

Our cover art shows one of John Bingley Garland's blood collages, created through the combination of cut-outs, prints, passages from scripture, and other sources. Not only do collages as a medium lend parallels to the overlapping and intermingling globalization that has enmeshed itself into our cultural and political zeitgeist, but Garland's specific mixture

of pagan and Christian imagery challenges the idea that these religious constructs have to be diametrically-opposed and mutually-exclusive. On the back cover, Edward Quin's Historical Atlas imagines different cartographic moments in time and the clouds of obscurity that overshadowed holistic knowledge. While his works showcasing the expansion of the boundaries of maps are seeped in inherent bias towards European and Judeo-Christian worldviews, their progression translates directly into the continuous globalization increasingly intertwining different lands and cultures. These works, along with the selection of exigent articles, paint a holistic portrait of the reality of globalization and its associated benefits and costs.

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 politics and globalization abstractly but an actionable attention to the lived experiences of those whose lives are profoundly affected by ongoing crises. We hope you appreciate the research and effort evident in these works, 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

Reinterpreting the Geneva Conventions:

The Bush Administration and the Legal Framework on Torture

Iza Konings

The rules and regulations established in the Geneva Conventions serve, in theory, to protect basic human rights during times of war, and are used to punish those found in violation. The Conventions regulate "the conduct of armed conflict and seek to limit its effects" while "specifically protect[ing] people who are not taking part in the hostilities…and those who are no longer participating such as wounded…and prisoners of war." However, in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, the Bush administration sought to reinterpret the Conventions and initiated huge shifts in the way international humanitarian law was–or was not–applied to specific circumstances. These shifts radically undermined the protections enshrined in international law and allowed the U.S. government to bypass due process when dealing with the people who were caught in the military apparatus of the post-9/11 wars. This reshaping of American legal norms was not merely a response to the changing nature of warfare; instead, it constituted a calculated and deliberate project to extend executive authority and allow for the legal protection of those in the U.S. government who committed breaches of international humanitarian law. In this paper, I will argue that the Bush administration's reinterpretation of the Geneva Conventions reflected a strategic departure from traditional international norms and laws, as it sought to redefine the legal status of detainees in the War on Terror in order to expand executive power and justify enhanced interrogation tactics. This resulted in the establishment of legal gray zones in which prisoners were deprived of their fundamental human rights, and the framework surrounding lawful conduct in armed conflict was severely eroded, thereby setting deeply troubling precedents for future wars.

I. Introduction and Structure of Paper

The question of how to handle prisoners of war (POWs) during times of conflict has been asked since time immemorial. The United States, in particular, "has never approached POW policy in the same way for two consecutive wars, and practice has maintained even less continuity between conflicts separated by decades or centuries."[1] In an effort to universalize POW treatment, the international community came together after World War II to create treaties and conventions aimed at ensuring humanitarian treatment for individuals during times of war. One of these treaties is the 1949 Geneva Conventions. Since their adoption, the Conventions have served as the cornerstone for international humanitarian law. In the years since their signing, three additional protocols have been added to the Conventions, respectively in 1977 (Protocols I and II) and 2005 (Protocol III). The rules and regulations established in the Geneva Conventions serve, in theory, to protect basic human rights during times of war and are used to punish those found in violation. The Conventions regulate "the conduct of armed conflict and seek to limit its effects" while "specifically protect[ing] people who are not taking part in the hostilities…and those who are no longer participating such as wounded…and prisoners of war."[2]

However, following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, the Bush administration sought to completely reinterpret the Conventions and initiated huge shifts in the way international humanitarian law was applied or withheld in specific circumstances. These shifts radically undermined the protections enshrined in international law and allowed the U.S. government to bypass due process when dealing with the people who were caught in the military apparatus of the post-9/11 wars. This reshaping of American legal norms was not merely a

[1]Paul J. Springer, *America's Captives: Treatment of POWs from the Revolutionary War to the War on Terror*, Modern War Studies (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 204.
[2] "Geneva Conventions and the Law | ICRC." Accessed December 17, 2023. https://www.icrc.org/en/geneva-conventions-and-law.

response to the changing nature of warfare but rather a a calculated undertaking to extend executive authority and allow for the legal protection of those in the U.S. government who committed breaches of international humanitarian law. In this paper, I will argue that the Bush administration's reinterpretation of the Geneva Conventions reflected a strategic departure from traditional international norms and laws, as it sought to redefine the legal status of detainees in the War on Terror to expand executive power and justify enhanced interrogation tactics. This resulted in the establishment of legal gray zones in which prisoners were deprived of their fundamental human rights, and the framework surrounding lawful conduct in armed conflict was severely eroded, thereby setting deeply troubling precedents for future wars.

In this paper, I use legal documents, government reports, and academic articles to explain and analyze my argument. I begin with a brief explanation of the Geneva Conventions and their enforcement, with particular emphasis on how the U.S. interacted with them in the pre-9/11 era. Then, I discuss the reinterpretation of the Conventions under the Bush administration post-9/11, focusing particularly on the redefinition of detainee status and the creation of the term “unlawful enemy combatants.” I further highlight my central argument with an analysis of how these reinterpretations of international humanitarian law led to the creation and greenlighting of enhanced interrogation techniques, using the Abu Ghraib scandal as a specific case study. I also examine congressional documents, which highlight specific resolutions concerning the Geneva Conventions that show the extent of the executive overreach exercised by the Bush administration. I will also discuss some of the efforts to push back against the Bush administration's reinterpretation of the Geneva Conventions and efforts to truthfully investigate subsequent military abuses. Lastly, I conclude with a discussion of the long-term implications of

America's reinterpretation and redefinition of the Geneva Conventions and give brief recommendations for future research.

I. The Geneva Conventions: Overview and Enforcement

The Geneva Conventions comprise four separate documents which each have a distinct purpose and contain multiple articles delineating specific legalities. The first two Conventions do not specifically relate to the subject matter of this paper because they focus on the improvement of the conditions for wounded, sick, and shipwrecked members of armed forces. The third Convention explicitly outlines the treatment of prisoners of war and the conditions under which they are to be kept "with regard to the labour of prisoners of war, their financial resources, the relief they receive and the judicial proceedings instituted against them" and "establishes the principle that prisoners of war must be released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of active hostilities."[3] The fourth Convention delineates the protections that are to be afforded to civilians during wartime. It specifically "puts forth the regulations governing the status and treatment of protected persons; these provisions distinguish between the situation of foreigners on the territory of one of the parties to the conflict and that of civilians in occupied territory."[4]

According to Article 4 of Convention III, prisoners of war include several categories of individuals, such as:

a. Members of the armed forces of a party to the conflict
b. Members of other militias or members of other volunteer corps
c. Members of regular armed forces who profess allegiance to a government or an authority not recognized by the detaining power
d. Persons who accompany the armed forces without actually being members thereof

[3] "Geneva Conventions and the Law | ICRC."
[4] "Geneva Conventions and the Law | ICRC."

e. Members of crews, including masters, pilots and apprentices, of the merchant marine and the crews of civil aircraft of the Parties to the conflict

f. Inhabitants of a non-occupied territory, who on the approach of the enemy spontaneously take up arms to resist the invading forces, without having had time to form themselves into regular armed units

There are also conditions under which one is not entitled to prisoner of war status, which is of particular importance in the later discussion of the Bush administration's interpretation of the Conventions. These exempt categories include certain guerrillas, spies, and mercenaries. The latter two are categorically banned from receiving POW status, but certain guerrillas can receive POW status when they meet a list of criteria. The Bush administration applied this criterion very liberally, as will be demonstrated later in this essay. To be classified as a POW, guerrillas must display some kind of distinguishable insignia or uniform that is recognizable at a distance, be under the command of individuals who take responsibility for those under their orders, carry arms openly, and behave in accordance with the laws of war.[5] If a guerrilla does not meet any one of these conditions, they will not be afforded proper POW status, which lands them in a completely separate realm of international humanitarian law, which does not have nearly the same amount of jurisprudence dedicated to it.

The preceding explanation gives a very brief overview of some of the specific legal definitions concerning POWs. It is also important to explain that these legal classifications are difficult to follow and have frequently been left up for debate or interpretation. For example, a 2004 Congressional Research Service Report stated that "governments who may have a need to seek information from prisoners appear to rely on more flexible interpretations that take into

[5] Jahid Hossain Bhuiyan and Borhan Uddin Khan, eds., *Revisiting the Geneva Conventions: 1949- 2019* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2019), 46-47.

account military operational requirements."[6] Another important element of the Geneva Conventions is that, although torture is explicitly forbidden, it is not clearly defined. Article 3 of the third Convention outlaws "violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture" and "outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment" but does not go into much detail about what exactly that means.[7] Other significant international humanitarian law documents, such as the United Nations Convention Against Torture, give more exact definitions of torture, but some argue that they are not enough. In fact, some scholars have gone so far as to argue that these international conventions are irrelevant. John Dwight Ingram stated in the *Penn State International Law Review* that the Geneva Conventions were "woefully outdated" and that "attempts to codify and enforce [rules of war] have had little real effect on the conduct of warfare," since the primary objective of modern wars is to destroy the enemy, regardless of the damage that it inflicts.[8]

When it comes to the enforcement of the Geneva Conventions, there are various bodies that exist to punish violators. Protocol I of the GC, enacted in 1977, states that "in situations of serious violations of the Conventions or of this Protocol, the High Contracting Parties undertake to act, jointly or individually, in cooperation with the United Nations and in conformity with the United Nations Charter." Thus, signatories agree to work with the UN to prosecute violations at the moment they sign, before any violations have occurred. Interestingly, before 9/11, the United States was seen, at least nominally, as being a model of adherence to the Geneva Conventions. In Vietnam, Panama, Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia, some combatants did not meet all of the requirements to be a POW, but the American Military required strict adherence to the

[6] Jennifer Elsea, *Lawfulness of Interrogation Techniques under the Geneva Conventions* (Washington, D.C: Congressional Research Service, 2019), 7.
[7] "Geneva Conventions and the Law | ICRC."
[8] John Dwight Ingram, "The Geneva Convention Is Woefully Outdated," *Penn State International Law Review* 23, no. 1 (2004): 79.

Conventions anyway.[9] The US Army is the branch of the military that is most frequently placed in charge of large-scale detention of POWs, and as such, its code of conduct for how to treat prisoners is used by other branches of the military as well. Pre-9/11, Army doctrine "provide[d] that all combatants, lawful or unlawful, are to be treated as POWs," but contained "no guidance if another status is determined."[10] Essentially, this doctrine assumed that all treatment of detainees would be done in full accordance with the Geneva Conventions, regardless of the legal status of each prisoner. This loyalty to doctrine and to international humanitarian law, unfortunately, was wildly distorted and circumvented by the Bush administration following the events of September 11, 2001, with devastating consequences.

III. Post-9/11 Reinterpretation

The Bush administration, following the events of 9/11, made fast and extreme changes to the way the American government and military handled the treatment of enemy detainees. In the very first few days and weeks after 9/11, John Yoo, the Deputy Assistant Attorney General, issued a series of memoranda regarding how much executive authority the president could exercise in operations against perceived terrorists. These memos flagrantly reinterpreted the Geneva Conventions and popularized the term "unlawful enemy combatant." Furthermore, these memos suggested in no uncertain terms that the President of the United States had the authority, given to him by the Constitution, to assume certain wartime powers which superseded the rule of law that had been established by the Geneva Conventions and other international treaties. This was, of course, not entirely true. As time went on, the legal analysts and military high command created a "wholly result-oriented system in which policy makers start with an objective and work

[9] Thomas E. Ayres, "'Six Floors' of Detainee Operations in the Post-9/11 World," *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters* 35, no. 3 (2005): 37.
[10] Ayres, "'Six Floors' of Detainee Operations," 37.

backward."[11] Essentially, these memos argued that al-Qaeda and the Taliban did not qualify for POW status and were not entitled to any Article 3 protections that strictly prohibit torture and cruel or humiliating treatment. Greenberg and Dratel (2005) convincingly show that these arguments formed the legal scaffolding which the War on Terror would be built on and allowed the creation of a system that stripped detainees of their legal status, thereby ensuring that they could be afforded no protections from human rights abuses.

On February 7, 2002, President Bush issued a memorandum which stated that the Geneva Conventions did not apply to al-Qaeda or to the Taliban, signalling that the administration was moving from theoretically reinterpreting international humanitarian law to physically carrying it out in real-world scenarios. The Commander in Chief had accepted the memos written by his staff and members of his administration in an official capacity. Bush wrote that "'I also accept the legal conclusion of the Department of Justice and determine that common Article 3 of Geneva does not apply to al-Qaeda or Taliban detainees, because, among other reasons, the relevant conflicts are international in scope and common Article 3 only applies to 'armed conflict not of an international character.'" [12] This memorandum emphasized previous statements made by the DOD and DOJ that al-Qaeda and Taliban detainees were not to be afforded POW treatment, while also stating that, because al-Qaeda was not a High Contracting Party of the Conventions, its members would not be protected by the GC. This executive decision is seen by many scholars as a major departure from previous standard US military practice and international legal obligations.

[11] Karen J. Greenberg and Joshua L Dratel, eds., *The Torture Papers: The Road to Abu Ghraib* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), xxii.
[12] George W. Bush, "Humane Treatment of Taliban and al-Qaeda Detainees," The White House, Washington, D.C., February 7, 2002, 2.

Once fully in effect, the Bush administration's legal reinterpretation restructured the post-9/11 wars not just in terms of military strategy, but in legal doctrine. In a January 2002 memo, the President's counsel Alberto Gonzalez wrote that "the war against terrorism is a new kind of war…the nature of the new war places a high premium on other factors, such as the ability to quickly obtain information from captured terrorists…in my judgement, this new paradigm renders obsolete Geneva's strict limitations on questioning of enemy prisoners and renders quaint some of its provisions."[13] In referring to the protections afforded by the Conventions as "quaint," the Bush administration unilaterally dismissed decades of international humanitarian precedent and created a system that allowed for the suspension of basic legal and ethical norms in the name of national security. In bypassing and minimizing binding treaties that had existed for decades, Bush and his team of legal advisers were able to justify torture and allow for the establishment of legal grey zones.

IV. Legal Grey Zones: Constructing Abu Ghraib

The Bush administration, in deciding that the detainees picked up during the War on Terror were not entitled to legal status and protection, created a system of legal grey zones which permitted indefinite detainment without habeas corpus or legal representation and greenlit extremely harsh interrogation methods. Once it had been established that the president was entitled to heightened executive power, details began to emerge about the means that would be used in the execution of the War on Terror. The administration used the phrase "enhanced interrogation techniques" to describe the methods that were used to get information out of detainees. In August of 2002, a memo was sent to Alberto Gonzales which stated that "physical

[13] Mark Danner, *Torture and Truth: America, Abu Ghraib, and the War on Terror* (New York: New York Review Books, 2004), 84.

pain amounting to torture must be equivalent in intensity to the pain accompanying serious physical injury, such as organ failure, impairment of bodily function, or even death" in discussing the limitations placed on torture under U.S. Code.[14] It furthermore concluded that "the statute, taken as a whole, makes plain that it prohibits only extreme acts." This complete departure from previous definitions of torture allowed military interrogators and detention center facilitators to subject detainees to high levels of physical and psychological distress without fear of legal reprisals because they were technically not breaking U.S. or international law. Using this definition of torture, methods such as stress positions, sleep deprivation, forced nudity, and threats of sexual assault–practices that in some cases were actually carried out–became not only permissible but routinely employed.

The most widely recognized example of the devastating results that ensued from the Bush administration's redefinition of torture was the prisoner abuse scandal that happened at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. When pictures emerged in 2004 that showed the world the brutalities that had taken place at Abu Ghraib, the American general public was, for the first time, able to see the unimaginably cruel extent of the legal grey zones that had been created by their government. These photographs, which are compiled by Mark Danner in his book *Torture and Truth*, are shocking. They show prison guards, American Army soldiers, smiling and holding a thumbs-up sign in front of dead bodies. They show prisoners in the nude, forced into humiliating and degrading positions for extended periods of time. They show the horrifying juxtaposition of the smiling faces of the guards and the abject despair felt by detainees. The book also contains many testimonies given by prisoners at Abu Ghraib, which were collected by the *Washington Post*. The testimonies explain in detail the fear and humiliation felt by each detainee and describe the kinds of torture methods that were used by American soldiers, many of whom are listed by name. One

[14] Greenberg and Dratel, *The Torture Papers*, 172.

detainee, Hussein Mohssein Mata Al-Zayiadi, stated that during his imprisonment, “I was trying to kill myself but I didn’t have any way of doing it.”[15] These images and testimonies, Danner argues, were not evidence of a single example of isolated misconduct but instead “had their genesis not in Iraq but in interrogation rooms in Afghanistan and Guantánamo Bay, Cuba - and ultimately in decisions made by high officials in Washington.”[16]

The physical sites in which these atrocities took place further highlight the extent of the legal gray zones created by the legal reinterpretation of international humanitarian law. Guantánamo Bay, for example, was chosen specifically because of its perceived status as being outside the jurisdiction of U.S. courts. The Center for Victims of Torture argues that “many in the Bush administration hoped that Guantánamo would maximize secrecy and impunity for torture, by evading both the law and public scrutiny.”[17] The goal was to detain individuals in a space that was simultaneously under U.S. control but beyond the reach of legal protection and accountability. Abu Ghraib was a prison before it fell into American hands. It was used by Saddam Hussein to detain and torture political prisoners during his presidency. The physical locations of these detention centers, constructed far away from any oversight, prove to be important factors in understanding the manner in which they operated.

Although the Bush administration attempted to obfuscate responsibility for the atrocities at Abu Ghraib, many claimed that they were direct results of the pattern of human rights abuses and inhumane treatments that had already taken place in American detention facilities, rather than being primarily the fault of the administration. Sherene Razack writes in *Abu Ghraib Revisited*, “we are coached to understand that - untrained, alienated, stressed, frustrated, and

[15] Danner, *Torture and Truth*, 240.
[16] Danner, *Torture and Truth*, 27.
[17] Center for Victims of Torture. “Guantánamo Bay Detention Facility: An Overview.” Accessed May 10, 2025. https://www.cvt.org/what-we-do/advocating-for-change/legacy-of-us-torture/guantanamo-bay-detention-facility-an-overview/.

overcome by the climate - normal, wholesome American soldiers, each with his or her own dreams, soon fall apart in the hell that was Abu Ghraib."[18] Razack explains that this is a common phenomenon used by Western countries to justify atrocities elsewhere: civilized people don't torture, of course, but the horrible circumstances they find themselves in, which is objectively the fault of the "unlawful enemy combatant," make it the only option. Here we can see the extent of this legal reimagining of the international humanitarian law framework: by removing even the possibility of being legally recognized as a person worth protection, the Bush administration ensured that the victims of Abu Ghraib and other detention facilities were not seen as human by their captors.

The response to the Abu Ghraib scandal from the American government was also very telling. Prosecutions were focused only on the low-ranking soldiers who performed torture, while not implicating higher-ranking members of the military or members of the U.S. government. Names like Sabrina Harmon, Lynndie England, Charles Graner, and Ivan Frederick are commonly seen in articles and documentaries concerning the aftermath of the scandal, but the highest-ranking officers involved in the events at Abu Ghraib have not been charged. Janis Karpinski, the commanding officer at the prison, was simply demoted from brigadier general to colonel. Even among those lower-ranking soldiers who were convicted as a result of their involvement, their charges were related to dereliction of duty, and their sentences lasted only a few months. Two notable exceptions are Charles Graner and Ivan Frederick, who were sentenced to long prison terms. Graner was sentenced to 10 years and Frederick to 8, both additionally receiving dishonorable discharges. They have both been released after serving their time.

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[18] Sherence H. Razack, "'We Didn't Kill 'Em, We Didn't Cut Their Head Off': Abu Ghraib Revisited," in *Racial Formation in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Daniel Martinez HoSang, Oneka LaBennett, and Laura Pulido (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 217-245.

Even still, many reports and media outlets accepted the administration's explanation that the events at Abu Ghraib were the actions of "a few bad apples" and not indicative of the methods used by the United States as a whole. Gronke et al. showed in 2010 that while many Americans believed that torture was wrong, they thought that other Americans as a whole generally do approve of torture. In other words, most Americans believe on a personal level that torture is not justified, but they do think that most Americans think it is justified, even though that is decidedly not the case.[19] Given this information, we can see that the scandal at Abu Ghraib revealed the brutality of the techniques employed but also demonstrated that once a state begins to carve out exceptions to foundational laws like the Geneva Conventions, the descent into systemic abuse is not just a risk but almost inevitable. This pattern and tendency for executive overreach and complete disregard for international law can be seen on full display in various Congressional documents concerning the violations of the Geneva Conventions and the Iraq War.

V. Congressional Oversight

In June of 2004, the U.S. House of Representatives submitted H. Res. 640, which requested that the Secretary of Defense submit any and all related pictures, videos, and reports that were taken at Abu Ghraib within 14 days. The document, which was created with the purpose of amalgamating all of the existing information about Abu Ghraib to see if violations of the Geneva Conventions had occurred, also expressed the intention to make it clear that the prisoner abuse scandal was an anomaly. The report states that, "unfortunately, the image of the United States has been tarnished by the reprehensible pictures of prisoner abuse we have all seen. America needs to reestablish its credibility…that the events at Abu Ghraib and elsewhere were

[19] This information is displayed in a table in Appendix 1

an aberration. We must prove that cruelty and maltreatment are not the standard operating procedure for either our military or our country…that we have higher standards - that we are a nation of laws, not of men, and that we are dedicated to freedom, truth and justice."[20] Thus, even before a full Congressional investigation had been carried out, the House of Representatives was operating under the assumption that the abuses at Abu Ghraib were not the result of a systemic problem, but rather a mere fluke.

However, an analysis of other Congressional documents shows that this is not the case and was instead a result of a system that purposely and deliberately reinterpreted the Geneva Conventions to exercise executive power. For example, H. Res. 624, which, similar to H. Res. 640, requested that the President and Secretary of State provide certain documents that were related to U.S. policies about torture and the UN Convention Against Torture, did not end up leaving the House. It was proposed as a resolution and subsequently voted down by a large majority. The dissenting views of this resolution expressed high amounts of disappointment in the government for not investigating the events of Abu Ghraib and others with more veracity. In the document that accompanied H. Res. 624, the dissenting viewpoint, championed by House Democrats, argued that "it is these graphic images that are used by our enemies in Al-Qaeda and its affiliates to generate greater hostility against this country and recruit more terrorists to be used to attack us."[21] Furthermore, it argued that "the shifting interpretation of U.S. legal obligations under these various conventions as applied by the U.S. government led to confusion, with some military officers expressing their severe discomfort with the lack of standards as to what is

[20] U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, *Requesting the President of the United States and Directing the Secretary of State to Provide to the House of Representatives Certain Documents in Their Possession Relating to United States Policies under the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Geneva Conventions: Adverse Report Together with Dissenting Views (to Accompany H. Res. 624)* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2006), 7.
[21] U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, *Adverse Report Together with Dissenting Views*, 5-6.

considered "'humane.'"[22] These concerns about the shifting interpretation of the U.S.'s obligation to international humanitarian law directly mentioned Attorney General Gonzalez's declaration that the Convention Against Torture only applied within the United States, claiming that this went shamefully undisputed. These dissenting viewpoints represented an effort by Congress to reassert its constitutional oversight function and to confront the perceived erosion of international law under the executive branch's expansive interpretation of wartime powers.

Efforts to investigate the Abu Ghraib scandal were bicameral: the Senate also generated reports about the aftermath of the Iraq War and the results of the incorrect assumption that weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) development was happening. One such report, titled *Postwar Findings about Iraq's WMD Programs and Links to Terrorism and How They Compare With Prewar Assessments*, concludes that, "a series of failures, particularly in analytic tradecraft, led to the mischaracterization of the intelligence" and led the U.S. to believe that there was WMD development happening under Saddam Hussein, which ended up not being the case.[23] These reports, at least the versions of them that are available to the public, are stringently redacted, but it is still evident that the evidence used to justify the post-9/11 wars had been massively overstated, which questions the necessity and proportionality of the detainee policies that followed.

One of the most telling pieces of information included in these Senate documents is the discussion of the treatment of a prisoner named Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi. This detainee was one of America's biggest sources of reports who claimed that al-Qaeda was receiving chemical and biological warfare (CBW) training in Iraq. During the postwar assessment, al-Libi stated to CIA

[22] U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, *Adverse Report Together with Dissenting Views*, 7.
[23] U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Report on Postwar Findings about Iraq's WMD Programs and Links to Terrorism and How They Compare with Prewar Assessments: Together with Additional and Minority Views* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2006), 6.

debriefers that when he was initially detained by the U.S. he was told that if he didn't talk, he would be sent to a foreign country for interrogation. Al-Libi stated that he "decided he would fabricate any information the interrogators wanted in order to gain better treatment and avoid being handed over to [a foreign government]."[24] He also claimed that after he was beaten by his captors, he used real names of al-Qaeda members he knew and implied that they were leading CBW training in Iraq, which was entirely fabricated, but was taken as truth by al-Libi's interrogators because he had used real names. In addition to this specific example demonstrating why torture is never an effective strategy to gain actionable intelligence, it also highlights how flawed a huge amount of the information was, which the U.S. government used to justify spreading the War on Terror to Iraq.

These Senate and House documents show in no uncertain terms how certain institutional failures extended beyond the halls of Congress to the broader governmental and military bureaucracy. While individual members of Congress, military officers, and legal advisers raised concerns internally, these concerns did not translate into meaningful action. The result was a bureaucratic system that, for the most part, enabled or ignored executive overreach and the horrific abuse of those unfortunate enough to be caught up in the American torture framework. These institutional failings, when linked with carefully crafted legal redefinitions of torture and what it means to be a POW, allowed the War on Terror to legitimize torture as an unfortunate wartime necessity rather than a massive breach of international humanitarian law and basic respect for human dignity.

[24] U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Report on Postwar Findings*, 80.

VI. The Long Term & Conclusion

In the decade after the end of the Second World War, the world's biggest and most influential powers came together to create a new global order. In the aftermath of the atrocities committed by the Third Reich and the brutal treatment of Allied POWs in Japanese internment camps, the international community established critical legal frameworks, most notably the Geneva Conventions, to ensure that such violations of human dignity and security would never occur again. Lamentably, the American reaction to the 9/11 attacks resulted in the complete redefinition—and, in some instances, complete disregard— of the Geneva Conventions and related treaties. In 2006, the Supreme Court's decision in *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld* held that "the United States is bound by common Article 3 of the Geneva Convention regarding the treatment of detainees, especially those captured in the global war on terror."[25] Despite this ruling, unlawful detention practices have continued, most notably at Guantánamo Bay, where—as of January 2025—fifteen individuals remain imprisoned, some on an indefinite basis.[26]

This redefinition of the Geneva Conventions represented a deliberate and unprecedented shift in the U.S. government's approach to international law and wartime conduct. Framing detainees who should have received POW treatment as "unlawful enemy combatants" and redefining legal categorizations enabled the executive branch to operate legal gray zones, which permitted the use of flagrantly inhumane and brutal interrogation techniques. The implications of the legal gray zones created during the War on Terror have extended and will continue to extend far beyond individual detainees, despite efforts to dismiss them as the work of a "few bad apples." They represent a rupture in the foundational nature of the international legal order,

[25] https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/548/557/
[26] Robert Colin Doyle and Arnold Krammer, *The Enemy in Our Hands: America's Treatment of Enemy Prisoners of War, from the Revolution to the War on Terror* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 331.

showing the world that the United States, historically one of the biggest champions of the Geneva system, was willing to abandon those principles in the name of national security and in the defense of the "free world."

Scholars have argued that the U.S. approach not only weakened the legitimacy and universality of the Geneva Conventions but also gave implicit permission for other states to reinterpret or ignore them under similar circumstances. They argue that "there is a real danger that…violations of international law and the rule of law more generally, and intrusions into the lives of citizens by unconstrained executives become routine and everyday events."[27] Others argue that "regardless of the amount of legal rules, there will always be a gap between a rule and its application," prophesying a concerning and sobering vision of the inevitability of prisoner abuse in future conflicts.[28]

Ultimately, the Bush administration's departure from traditional interpretations of the Geneva Conventions set a deeply troubling and dangerous precedent. To prevent history from repeating itself, it is imperative to examine the principles that the Geneva Conventions were designed to protect: the dignity and safety of all human beings, even in war, and the accountability of those who are given state and executive power. Further research into possible ways to reify wartime protections of all people has never been more pressing. With current wars, such as the ones in Ukraine and Gaza, the world is again seeing how dangerous it is to leave states to their own devices. Wars have been waged throughout human history, but modern technology is allowing for their devastating effects to spread beyond the battlefield at an exponential pace. Therefore, we must continue to update and edit those international treaties, especially the Geneva Conventions, to safeguard our collective future.

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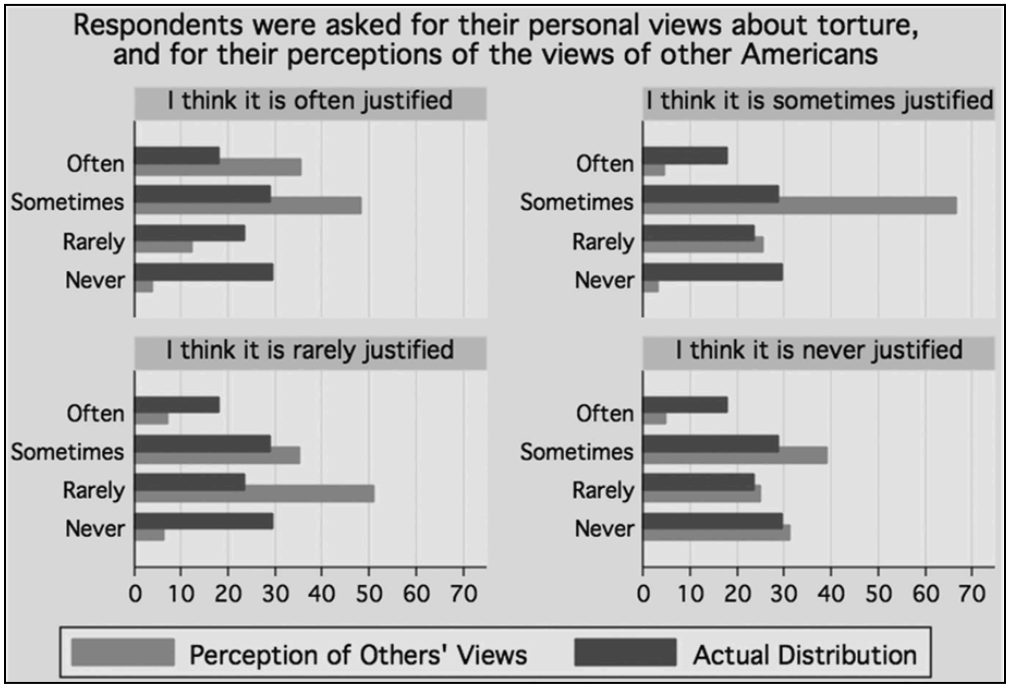
[27] Sarah Perrigo and Jim Whitman, *The Geneva Conventions under Assault*, 1st ed. (London: Pluto Press, 2010), 245.
[28] Sibylle Scheipers, ed., *Prisoners in War* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 315.

Appendix 1:

Gronke et al.'s table on "False Consensus on Torture"



Imitation as a Political Tool:

Analyzing Orwell's and Plato's Philosophies of Language

Timothy Haklar

In Orwell's "Politics and the English Language" and Plato's Republic, both thinkers discuss one of language's most problematic yet potentially unavoidable features: imitation. Orwell sees imitation as a symptom of individual linguistic practice; Plato thinks that it is inseparable from language. Orwell and Plato agree that poor use of language, particularly in the written sense, can lead others to believe certain unrealities, threatening the political stability of society. This paper will put Orwell's discussion of the political effects of good and bad writing in conversation with Plato's views of what constitutes a morally (and thus politically) good myth. While there can be positive aspects to imitation (such as imitating virtue), the imitation of vice poses great concern to both authors. Finally, the paper analyzes the proposed solutions and how Orwell and Plato both propose a methodology of virtuous imitation.

I. Introduction

Orwell's and Plato's works address the intersection of political and linguistic philosophy and the moral importance of literature, especially as expressed through imitation. In "Politics and the English Language," Orwell connects the decline in language with the decline in political institutions. For him, the copying of problematic linguistic habits (i.e., *imitation*) is correlated with the blind acceptance of dangerous political ideas and a refusal to think for oneself. Orwell believes that imitative language can aid totalitarian regimes by allowing them to justify actions through euphemisms and deceit. In his seminal work, *The Republic*, Plato develops his political philosophy by establishing a hypothetical ideal city, or polis. Plato maintains that the success of the polis is dependent on the attainment of justice, led by rulers who perceive the Good. Literary imitation–the indirect attainment of Truth through the propagation of myths and poems–can either promote virtue and harmony in a city or destroy it through vice. Although separated by a gap of 2,200 years, both thinkers arrive at the same conclusion: literary imitation can be used either for good or bad and this can affect the stability of the political state.

II. Language, Imitation, and Politics for Orwell

Orwell views language as a means of communicating political ideas. Even if the message "reinforc[es] the status quo," there is no work of language that is apolitical.[1] Literature[2] is a "recording [of] experience" that is influenced by the "fears, hatreds, and loyalties of a directly political kind [that] are near to the surface of everyone's consciousness."[3] If literature is

[1] Satta, Mark. "Goerge Orwell." In Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2022. https:/iep.utm.edu/george-orwell/, sec 5b.
[2] In *Politics* (1946) Orwell writes: "I have not here been considering the literary use of language, but merely language as an instrument for expressing and not for concealing or preventing thought" (par. 31). Nevertheless, his essay *The Prevention of Literature* expresses his belief that there are political implications to literature. *Politics* is the primary Orwellian text discussed here because of its extensive treatment of imitation. *The Prevention of Literature* identifies the causes for the restraint on author's creativity.
[3] Orwell, George. 1946b."The Prevention of Literature." The Orwell Foundation. https://www.orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell-foundation/orwell/essays-and-other-works/the-prevention-of-literature/, par. 10.

influenced by such factors, then language–as the form of literature–can be influenced by the very same factors. We do not live in a void, and language is a reflection of our interactions with others. One of Orwell's main concerns, therefore, is that language can be reflective of bad political ideologies. He suspects "that the German, Russian, and Italian languages have all deteriorated...as a result of dictatorship."[4] For example, emphasis on certain patriotic language and the tabooing of particular words, such as *capitalism,* can affect how people perceive the world. He also argues that "the decline of a language must ultimately have political and economic causes."[5] When the voice of a particular group is amplified, the language of a society often shifts in that group's favor. For instance, consider the effect of TikTok on modern language: certain slang words and phrases (e.g., *6-7*, *aura points*, *chat*, *cooked*) have seemingly become ubiquitous among the vocabulary of Generation Alpha. Some of these terms originated on TikTok while others were brought there from other platforms. In either case, TikTok *amplifies* this particular language to the point where the use of such slang influences other generations.

This raises the question: Is what we say original, or is it an imitation of some other idea or cause? Although he does not directly address the question, Orwell hopes that language can be as close to original as possible. He believes that words should be "chosen for the sake of their meaning," not automatically using commonly heard phrases for the sake of convenience.[6] Here, Orwell establishes the paradigm of thought preceding language. Originality in language is the ability to freely choose how to express one's thoughts, even if certain ideas might be influenced by other factors.[7]

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[4] Orwell, George. 1946a. "Politics and the English Language." The Orwell Foundation. https://www.orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell-foundation/orwell/essays-and-other-works/politics-and-the-english-language/, par. 25.
[5] Orwell, "Politics," par. 25.
[6] Orwell, "Politics," par. 9.
[7] Refer to Orwell, "The Prevention of Literature."

Orwell believes that the decline of language is attributable to unoriginality. Orwell calls this unoriginality *imitation*.[8] Under Orwell's understanding, imitation is a reversal of the thought-precedes-language paradigm. This reversal occurs when the linguist prioritizes the expression, or mode, of speech over the content of thought. Orwell identifies four such examples: dying metaphors, operators (verbal false limbs), pretentious diction, and meaningless words (see Fig. 1). These examples are "ready-made phrases,"[9] modular blocks of language one can use to construct a thought. Language becomes the "gumming together long strips of words which have already been set in order by someone else, and making the results presentable by sheer humbug."[10] The creative process of writing suffers because of this laziness, as language becomes a game of repeating what others say and is limited by the linguistic blocks available to form sentences. This inhibits the freedom of individual thought and is conducive to maintaining control by political regimes.

Fig. 1 The Four Imitative Tools

Tool	Examples[11]	Problem[12]
Dying metaphors (par.10)	*Ring the changes on, no axe to grind, on the order of the day*	"They save people the trouble of inventing phrases for themselves." "Many of these are used without knowledge of their meaning."
Operators/verbal false limbs (par. 11)	*Render inoperative, make contact with, exhibit a tendency to*	"They save the trouble of picking out appropriate verbs and nouns, and at the same time pad each sentence with extra syllables which give it an appearance of symmetry."

[8] Orwell, "Politics," par. 2.
[9] Orwell, "Politics," par. 17.
[10] Orwell, "Politics," par. 17.
[11] Examples compiled from "Politics." The author acknowledges that he is guilty of using these tools, including in this paper.
[12] All quotes from their respective paragraphs.

Pretentious diction (par. 12)	*Phenomenon, element, effective, eliminate*	"...used to dress up a simple statement" "...used to dignify the sordid process of international politics" "...an increase in slovenliness and vagueness"
Meaningless words (par. 13)	*Romantic, plastic, fascism, justice*	"The person who uses them has his own private definition, but allows his hearer to think he means something quite different."

Imitation limits thought, and it can also be weaponized by political agents. Orwell discusses three types of imitation utilized by regimes for political purposes: groupthink, ambiguity and euphemisms, and generalization and excessive word use. All three obscure the meaning of what someone wants to say, affecting Orwell's thought-before-language paradigm.

a. Groupthink

In ordinary language, people "may be almost unconscious of what [they are] saying,"[13] as if their minds are part of a single collective consciousness. Orwell characterizes this collective groupthink as being "favorable to political conformity."[14] If the language of a group has been reduced to a set list, then it is likely members of a political community will think in conformity with each other. This can lead to problems such as blind acceptance of a bad political proposal or ideology put forth by the government. For example, in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), the brainwashed citizens are fed the lies of the Party: War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, Ignorance is Strength.[15]

b. Ambiguity and Euphemisms

[13] Orwell, "Politics," par. 22.
[14] Orwell, "Politics," par. 22.
[15] Orwell, George. 1949. *1984*. New York, New York: Signet Classics, p. 4.

Orwell identifies contemporary phrases[16] that act as euphemisms, evoking a sense of moral rightness or ambiguity. This sort of ambiguity is particularly dangerous because it creates a disconnect between what the author intends and what the reader understands. He gives the following examples:

> Defenseless villages are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside…huts set on fire with incendiary bullets: this is called *pacification*. Millions of peasants are robbed of their farms and sent trudging along the roads with no more than they can carry: this is called *transfer of population or rectification of frontiers*. People are imprisoned for years without trial, or shot in the back of the neck or sent to die of scurvy in Arctic lumber camps: this is called *elimination of unreliable elements*.[17]

In these cases, the severity of government actions is downplayed or even given a patriotic twist. This makes it easy for people to overlook and not challenge such incidents, creating a disconnect between what they perceive and what is occurring.

c. Generalization and Excessive Word Use

Using ambiguous words contributes to the generalization of a passage, causing it to lose its meaning. The excessive use of words–which can be achieved through dying metaphors and operators (verbal false limbs[18])–adds unnecessary filler, which can result in readers becoming confused or losing the sense of meaning conveyed in the articulation. Generalized passages can be applied to a variety of ideas. The following shows a passage that Orwell quotes from Ecclesiastes and his demonstrated generalization of such a passage:

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[16] As of time of writing, i.e., 1946

[17] Orwell, "Politics," par. 23; original emphasis.

[18] Operators, also called verbal false limbs, turn a simple verb (e.g. tends) into a phrase (e.g. exhibit a tendency to) by adding on a noun or adjective (par. 11).

Fig. 2 Original and Generalized Versions of Ecclesiastes 9:11

Original Version	Orwell's Version
I returned and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth [sic] to them all (Ecc. 9:11)	Objective considerations of contemporary phenomena compel the conclusion that success or failure in competitive activities exhibits no tendency to be commensurate with innate capacity but that a considerable element of the unpredictably must invariably be taken into account.

In Orwell's generalized version, the text loses its emphasis on the author's perspective and lacks the examples given in the original. The generalized version is colder and likely to be misinterpreted by the reader,[19] while the original version is clear and invites further reflection into the reader's personal experience.

This reflection represents good use of language for Orwell–when the reader knows what the author is saying and can form appropriate judgments based on this information. In Orwell's eyes, the proper use of language can be inferred from the health of the political state: "...to think clearly is a necessary first step toward political regeneration."[20] When the author and reader (or speaker and listener) agree about the content of what is written or said, then there is a common ground from which to debate and discuss political ideas. Language is "an instrument for expressing and not for concealing or preventing thought."[21] Thus, even bad political ideas ought to be given a place in public discourse, for so long as they are clearly articulated, they can be debated. To this point, Orwell raises an interesting question: "Since you don't know what Fascism is, how can you struggle against Fascism?"[22] Good linguistic and political practice

[19] Refer to Problems with Meaningless Words (Fig. 1)
[20] Orwell, "Politics," par. 2.
[21] Orwell, "Politics," par. 31.
[22] Orwell, "Politics," par. 31.

demands that we know what we talk about, so that we agree about how the government should function.

III. Language, Imitation, and Politics for Plato[23]

For Plato, language is an attempt at communicating some unchanging, eternal Truths (i.e., the *Forms*). In *The Republic*, his linguistic focus is on poetry and storytelling. Much of Book X expresses Plato's concerns with imitation, or *mimesis.* A natural feature of language, *mimesis* is essentially a "copy of a copy" of Ultimate Reality.[24] Plato demonstrates *mimesis* in both the Allegory of the Cave in Book VII and the discussion of art in Book X. In the Allegory of the Cave, prisoners have been placed in a cave from their youth and are chained facing a wall. A fire behind them provides light, and they can see the shadows of figures carrying various things, such as statues reflecting on the wall in front of them. It is only these shadows that the prisoners are familiar with, not the real objects themselves. These objects are also imperfect representations of what they try to convey.[25] For example, Plato discusses a simple painting of a couch. There is the *eidos*, or Form, of a couch, there is what a craftsman designs into a couch, and finally, there is a painting of the couch.[26] If someone who does not have any prior experience with a couch looks at a painting of a couch for the first time, then that is all they experience about the couch. Of course, this painting is based on the physical representation of a couch—what the craftsman makes. Yet, the craftsman is not perfect, and the couch will inevitably have a few flaws within it (e.g., the proportions could be slightly off). Thus, a hypothetical perfect couch must exist, from which we get the notion of *couch*.

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[23] It should be noted that this paper is only concerned with Plato's treatment of the political implications of *mimetic Logos* in *The Republic* and not with writing or Logos generally (which would require an inquiry into *Phaedrus*).
[24] Amadi, Cornelius Chukwudi. "Art as Imitation in Plato's Philosophy: A Critical Appraisal." AMAMIHE: Journal of Applied Philosophy 20, no. 1 (2022):125-138. https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.34138.62405.
[25] Plato. The Republic of Plato. Translated by Allan Bloom. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2016. 514a–516c.
[26] Plato, *The Republic*, 595c–597e.

If what we see or experience is never perfect, then this presents serious implications: Plato believes that there are no new ideas; it is impossible for language, art, or thought to be original since it is always representational, and thereby mimetic in nature. Instead, the good Platonic student would be one who aspires to get as close as he can to knowing the Good and shares this knowledge with his fellow companions (the prisoners living in the darkness of the cave). This is the course of education prescribed by Plato for the ideal ruler.[27]

Platonic imitation presents risks for the moral and political integrity of the state through two means: insidious imitation and the discouragement of virtue. The former has already been discussed at length by Orwell when he identifies the subtle tactics of dictators in changing the meaning of words. The latter is a unique Platonic approach to political philosophy.

a. *Insidious Imitation*

Like Orwell, Plato alludes to the possibility of imitation miscoloring the Truth. Poetry and language, in general, dress up Truths. Plato compares this process of dressing up Truths to being like a painting of objective reality. This is where Plato agrees with Orwell: the painter (poet) can misrepresent what they perceive, which influences public opinion. Such imitation takes advantage of "the sight's being misled by the colors"[28] to "produce…a bad regime in the soul."[29] People can more often be swayed by emotion than by pure reason. The frightening realization for Plato is that the poets producing the imitation have no knowledge of "what way each thing is bad or good" and imitate "whatever looks to be fair to the many who don't know anything."[30] For example, Plato questions the great poet Homer, supposing that he did not understand anything he recounted, and thus he is of no use if one wants to be instructed in

[27] Plato, *The Republic*, 519b-520d.
[28] Plato, *The Republic*, 602c.
[29] Plato, *The Republic*, 605b
[30] Plato, *The Republic*, 602a-b.

virtue.[31] Still, people listen to him because of the artifice with which he speaks and not the content of the message.[32] This directly parallels Orwell's criticisms of those who use phrases because they sound appealing without any consideration as to what they mean. Yet, a distinction must be made between the two thinkers: Plato does not believe that a purely evil Master Imitator can exist[33] while Orwell says that such imitators do exist, especially among the ruling class.

Plato identifies two ways in which imitation misrepresents Truth: lies and performances. Poetry has a dualism of both truths and falsehoods.[34] These falsehoods come in two forms: noble lies and malignant lies. Noble lies are pieces of fiction that do not corrupt the soul but rather are told either for entertainment or instruction in virtue.[35] Malignant lies pervert the Truth and can corrupt the soul. For example, Plato questions the myths of the atrocities of Uranus and how Cronos took revenge on his father.[36] Is it possible for the gods to do evil? If the gods are supposedly good, then does that justify their often abhorrent actions? These stories and the questions they raise are dangerous in Plato's view because they can give a false notion of the Good, inspiring others to *do wrong*. Such an occurrence would bring disorder to the state.

The other abuse of imitation is through performances. If poetry already presents base ideas through the dialogue or behaviors of characters, then both the actors performing it and the audience are at risk of accepting this information as true or good.[37] As discussed earlier, the imitators have no knowledge of what constitutes the Good, so blind acceptance of the content of

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[31] Plato, *The Republic*, 599a-601a.
[32] Plato, *The Republic*, 599a-601a.
[33] Plato believes that if one has experienced the Good, then one will be inclined to pursue it and even "undergo anything whatsoever" to live by the truth of the experience (516a-e).
[34] Plato, *The Republic*, 376e.
[35] Plato, *The Republic*, 377a–378a.
[36] Plato, *The Republic*, 377e-378b.
[37] Pappas, Nickolas. "Plato's Aesthetics." In The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, edited by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman . Department of Philosophy, Stanford University, 2024. plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2024/entries/plato-aesthetics. §2.2

the performances as Truth is akin to the still-chained prisoners living in the cave, blissfully unaware of the darkness they live in.[38] Yet, Plato is careful to caution that performance is not always base. Rather, "human nature...is unable to make a fine imitation of many things."[39] For example, men should not imitate women, slaves, animal noises, or natural phenomena (such as the sound of thunder) because "imitations, if they are practiced continually from youth onwards, become established as habits and nature, in body and sounds and in thought."[40] This can perhaps be thought of as Plato's greatest sin: the denial of Truth by acting against one's nature.[41] As Plato's disciple, Aristotle, would explain, if one wants to become virtuous, one must *perform* virtuous (and not base) actions.[42] This will be expanded on in a later section to reframe performative *mimesis* in terms of the act of performing virtue.

b. *Discouragement of Virtue*

Plato is a proto-virtue ethicist and designs his ideal city around virtue. Plato reasons that each part of a city needs to function properly for the city to work well. Insidious imitation threatens the virtue of citizens. For example, it can provide a false notion of the Good. To fully understand this, the city must be discussed in depth.

In the city, Plato establishes a hierarchy of roles: the Guardians (ruling class), the Auxiliaries (military), and the Artisans (producers and consumers). This hierarchy corresponds to the soul. Plato identifies three motivations of action within a soul: wisdom, courage, and desire.[43] A properly ordered and virtuous soul mirrors the hierarchy of the city: wisdom rules over courage and desires. Courage, the "preservation…of the right and lawful opinion about

[38] Plato, *The Republic*, 516a-e.
[39] Plato, *The Republic*, 395b.
[40] Plato, *The Republic*, 395c-396b.
[41] Sin is used in the analogical sense (lit. *shortcoming within nature*).
[42] Aristotle. 1999. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by Terence Irwin. Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett. 1103a-1103b.
[43] Plato, *The Republic*, 435a-436b.

what is terrible" motivates the soul to choose the Good.[44] Desires, when kept in check, supply the basic needs of an individual (e.g., food, shelter, drink). Uniting the three in harmony is moderation.[45] In this way, the soul is much like the city: it has a Guardian (Wisdom) who rules in accord with virtue, Auxiliaries (Courage) to protect the soul from being corrupted by what is terrible (vice), and Artisans (Desires) who keep the individual functioning.

If the soul were to experience corruption of virtue from disordered *mimesis*, then the city's virtue would be corrupted too. The virtue of a city is to seek its own good (self-preservation).[46] This is not possible when the citizens cannot seek the good of their own souls. Plato, after all, designs the ideal city based on having ideal souls.[47] So, without the ideal souls, there is no ideal city.

IV. Orwell's Solution: Thoughtful Writing

In "Politics and the English Language," Orwell puts the onus of solving the language problem on his readers. If English "is full of bad habits which spread by imitation," they can be countered "if one is willing to take the necessary trouble."[48] Orwell offers two sets of advice: a list of six questions the "scrupulous writer…will ask himself," and six style and grammar rules.[49] The questions will first be considered to develop a summative understanding of Orwell's text, and then the style and grammar rules will be used to develop a linguistic categorical imperative.

a. *The Six Questions*

Each question is a reflective guide for authors during the entirety of the writing process. It must be noted that questions five and six must also be asked after the fact (i.e., once the author

[44] Plato, *The Republic*, 430b.
[45] Plato, *The Republic*, 430e.
[46] As demonstrated by the natural order of a city: Guardians rule wisely, Auxiliaries defend, and commonfolk sustain the city.
[47] Plato, *The Republic*, 435b.
[48] Orwell, "Politics," par. 2.
[49] Orwell, "Politics," par. 17.

has written something and prior to publication), indicating that no writer is perfect and will inevitably make mistakes, even if they scrupulously follow Orwell's rules. Plato and Orwell agree that disordered imitation must constantly be fought off to develop a virtuous writing ethic.

1. *What am I trying to say*? Because of the imitative nature of language, people can become "almost unconscious of what [they are] saying."[50] The worst writing practice is for someone to write something without knowing its meaning, so that the bad habit can be spread to someone else. Thus, the first step in properly expressing one's thoughts is to formulate the idea within the mind.
2. *What words will express it?* This goes back to Orwell's thought-before-language paradigm. Since writing communicates political ideas and someone's perspective of truth, words are contingent, dependent on one's thoughts. In asking this question, the writer actively acknowledges that their goal is to express an idea as accurately as possible so as to be understood by as many people as possible. Writing is transformed from a passive writing down of ideas to active engagement with these ideas.
3. *What image or idiom will make it clearer?* Orwell does not completely object to the use of literary devices, only those that do not represent the author's "mental image of the objects he is naming."[51] He also notes that "the sole aim of a metaphor is to call up a visual image,"[52] strengthening the reader's understanding of the author's intent. Still, it must be considered that certain devices—particularly dying metaphors and pretentious diction—are so overused or superfluous that they can have the opposite effect, creating confusion or making the text bland.

[50] Orwell, "Politics," par. 22.
[51] Orwell, "Politics," par. 17.
[52] Orwell, "Politics," par. 17.

4. *Is this image fresh enough to have an effect?* Fresh, vivid words stand out to the reader because they do not conform to the same constrained use of words all too common in ideological regimes.[53] Such images act contrary to the issues of generalization and excessive word usage discussed previously; they make the linguist's idea clear and can enable mutual understanding between the communication partners.
5. *Could I put it more shortly?* Ideas can get lost in particularly lengthy passages. The art of linguistics is a creative process: saying just enough to get the idea one wants to express across, but not so much that other unintended ideas can be perceived. Using an excessive number of words can create an excessive number of interpretations for a text. Additionally, Orwell advises using words with fewer syllables.[54] Word count is not the only issue. The longer the word, the greater the difficulty exists in comprehending its meaning.[55]
6. *Have I said anything that is unavoidably ugly?* Satta (2022) interprets Orwell as believing that literature possesses aesthetic value.[56] Additionally, it appears that Orwell considered the subjectivity of the individual such that "literary merit can be assessed either in terms of artistic merit or in terms of subjective appreciation and that these two forms of assessment need not generate matching results."[57] Orwell does not give a clear indication as to what constitutes artistic merit,[58] yet it appears that the framing of this question suggests we have an innate capacity to evaluate what is aesthetically pleasing. Furthermore, the phrase *unavoidably ugly* suggests that some works of literature can be

[53] Refer to pgs. 1-2
[54] Orwell, "Politics," par. 17.
[55] See Augustine. (1998). *Confessions* (H. Chadwick, Trans.). Oxford University Press. Book IV, Ch 10, §15.
[56] Satta, "George Orwell," §5a.
[57] Satta, "George Orwell," §5a.
[58] Satta, "George Orwell," §5a.

agreed upon to be unaesthetic (if it is unavoidable then it is necessary and thus universal to that work). Language ought to be good, true, and beautiful, so that the political systems operating are good, true, and beautiful.

b. *A Linguistic Categorical Imperative*

Kant's categorical imperative for ethical action may seem unrelated to Orwell's political writing. Yet, as discussed, writing has serious moral implications. People act based on how they interpret a piece of writing; hence, the content must be understood by both parties. Orwell provides the following six rules for ethical writing:[59]

1. Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech that you are used to seeing in print.
2. Never use a long word where a short one will do.
3. If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.
4. Never use the passive where you can use the active.
5. Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
6. Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

Rules 1-5 can be thought of as the First Formulation of the Imperative.[60] By giving universal rules, Orwell suggests that ethically and politically moral writing is possible and is incumbent on each person. It is thus possible to achieve "political regeneration."[61] Orwell remarks that it only took the "jeers of a few journalists" to kill phrases such as "*explore every avenue* and *leave no stone unturned.*"[62] In this sense, imitation can be self-defeating. We can

[59] Orwell, "Politics," par. 29.
[60] See Johnson, Robert, and Adam Cureton. 2022. "Kant's Moral Philosophy." In *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Stanford University. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-moral/. §5.
[61] Orwell, "Politics," par. 2
[62] Orwell, "Politics," par. 27.

influence others not to commit certain violations (Rules 1-5) while the way each person expresses thought is unique to them. People will imitate our lack of imitation.

Rule 6 is akin to the Humanity Formula of the Categorical Imperative.[63] Conceding that it is possible that "one could keep all [the rules] and still write bad English,"[64] Orwell's main intention is to prevent the further degradation of political thought. Thus, "say[ing] anything outright barbarous"[65] can be compared to Kant's prohibition against not viewing the humanity of moral subjects as an end in itself.[66] Proper language is respectful, and not decadent, nor inviting "mental vices."[67] In the struggle for excellent writing, writing becomes an act of virtue. This virtue also requires us to acknowledge that we are prone to flaws and must actively work to change our habits[68] Still, Orwell remains hopeful that a proper imitation of writing virtue can lead to "some worn-out and useless phrase [sent]...into the dustbin, where it belongs."[69]

V. Plato's Mythological Solution

Plato's response to the concerns of imitative writing is his state-censorship program. Using the imitative nature of language to his advantage, Plato devises an education program for the citizens. Although imitation cannot be eliminated in its entirety, if certain myths that promote virtue or vice are removed from the public consciousness, then at least some of the problematic effects of imitation can be reduced, i.e., the distortion of the Truth. Further, Plato believes it is possible to experience the Truth. He calls philosophy "that ascent to what *is"*[70] and prescribes for the future rulers of the city "to go to the study which we were saying before is the greatest, to see

[63] Johnson, Robert, and Adam Cureton, "Kant's Moral Philosophy," §6
[64] Orwell, "Politics" par. 30.
[65] Orwell, "Politics" par. 29.
[66] Johnson, Robert, and Adam Cureton, "Kant's Moral Philosophy." §6
[67] Orwell, "Politics," par. 3.
[68] Orwell, "Politics," par. 31.
[69] Orwell, "Politics," par. 31.
[70] Plato, *The Republic*, 521c; emphasis mine.

the Good and to go up that ascent...[and] not to permit them...to remain there."[71] The Guardians' knowledge of the Truth is only useful if it can be shared (imitated) through governance. He writes:

> …it's not the concern of law that any one class in the city fare exceptionally well, but it contrives to bring this about in the city as a whole, *harmonizing the citizens* by *persuasion and compulsion*, making them share with one another the benefit that each is able to bring to the commonwealth. And it produces such men in the city not in order to let them turn whichever way each wants, but in order that it may use them in *binding the city together*.[72]

The political integrity of the state (*harmonization*) is of paramount concern to Plato. Additionally, *persuasion and compulsion* can refer to the propagation of myths. Myths are first taught to children before any other form of education because they contain elements of both truth and fiction and can be easier to digest.[73] With this in mind, and knowing the imitative nature of language, Plato believes that mythologies are an easy way for the instruction of virtue among the citizens. His mythology-censorship plan has three parts: (a) banning false myths about the gods, (b) banning myths which might discourage virtue, and (c) encouraging myths to promote virtue.

a. False Myths About the Gods

These myths have already been partially addressed in a previous section of the paper. Certain myths about gods portray them as bloodthirsty or base beings that seek domination and power. As previously mentioned, one of the problematic issues with this is that it can encourage the *imitation* of such behavior (e.g., rape). Plato's other concern is for an accurate depiction of

[71] Plato, *The Republic*, 519c-d.
[72] Plato, *The Republic*, 519e-520a; emphasis mine.
[73] Plato, *The Republic*, 377a.

Truth: "The god must surely always be described such as he is, whether one presents him in epics, lyrics, or tragedies."[74] The Truth is a realization of the Good; knowing the Good enlightens the mind to see truth.[75] Turning away from the Truth is not choosing what is good. The pursuit of Truth then becomes a moral act insofar as one prefers a lesser good over a greater good.[76] The Guardians, as philosopher-kings, must be "god-revering and divine insofar as a human being can possibly be."[77] The Guardians are to imitate the gods, who are the cause of all that is good.[78] This rightly-ordered imitation will produce fruit in the city, such that the "laws are going to be well observed."[79] The people will look to the Guardians as god-imitators and thus imitate their virtue, preserving the integrity of the city.

b. Myths Which Might Discourage Virtue

Plato recognizes that certain myths, while true, would discourage virtue. A soldier who goes into battle should not be told about Hades because this might cause him to be "fearl[ful] in the face of death."[80] One cannot read that Achilles or Priam, relatives of the gods, were in lament because it would be unbecoming of a Guardian to show such emotional vulnerabilities.[81] Plato confirms his belief that poetry can be dangerous because its imitative nature can cultivate vice within people. Even if they do not directly lead to vice and are "sweet for the many to hear," they should not "be heard by boys and men who must be free and accustomed to fearing slavery more than death."[82] Plato recognizes that emotion mediates perception of the *Logos* (i.e., the Truth),

[74] Plato, *The Republic*, 379a.
[75] Plato, *The Republic*, 508de.
[76] It must be noted that Plato does not consider Truth to encompass the entirety of the Good. The Good also includes "existence and being" and much more (509b). Still, if the Good "provides the truth to the things known" (508d-e) then not to pursue Truth is not to pursue the Good.
[77] Plato, *The Republic*, 383c.
[78] Plato, *The Republic*, 379bc.
[79] Plato, *The Republic*, 380a-c.
[80] Plato, *The Republic*, 386a–b.
[81] Plato, *The Republic*, 388a-d.
[82] Plato, *The Republic*, 387b.

which can corrupt virtue. Thus, we see the performative aspect of *mimesis* and how emotions can be transferred from myth to the listener. For this reason, Plato prefers "a man [who] appears hard to bewitch and graceful in everything, a good guardian of himself and the music he was learning, proving himself to possess rhythm and harmony on all these occasions."[83] On a practical level, having stoic leaders and soldiers would enable rule by reason rather than simple emotion.

c. Myths to Promote Virtue

The first two pillars of Plato's plan involve the redaction of certain myths from the public record, particularly those that promote vices, even if they are true. If Plato wants to construct an ideal city, then it would make sense for him to endow the city with a mythology, as nearly all civilizations have their own unique anthologies of tales. This mythology differs from the others, however, in that it is specifically directed towards governance of the city through the rightly-ordered imitation of virtue. Here, the paper will consider the Myth of the Metals.

The Myth relies on Plato's assumption that, as physical characteristics are hereditary, so too are characteristics of the soul. Thus, he proposes telling the citizens that "the god, in fashioning those of you who are competent to rule, mixed gold at their birth...in auxiliaries silver; and iron and bronze in the farmers and the other craftsmen."[84] One cannot help but wonder if these conditions of the soul were taken from Hesiod's *Works and Days*.[85] Yet, Plato turns the tale of *Works and Days* around: unlike the progressively worse ages of humanity, the different types of metal-based souls represent the different capacities for virtue. He warns against being upset if a child is born with a bronze or iron soul: this simply means that the person's virtue is to be a craftsperson or a farmer.[86] Also, unlike *Works and Days*, Plato's Myth of the

[83] Plato, *The Republic*, 413d-e.
[84] Plato, *The Republic*, 415a.
[85] See Hesiod. 1988. *Theogony and Works and Days*. Translated by Martin L West. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
[86] Plato, *The Republic*, 415a-c.

Metals enables multiple types of souls to exist at once rather than each generation of soul dying out and begetting a new one and emphasizes the importance of each metal-type. Silver souls for auxiliaries are needed as much as gold souls are needed for Guardians.[87]

The Myth also seems directed toward persuading individuals to perform their functions within the city. Plato worries citizens would not perform the task for which they are suited,[88] and this reimagining of Hesiod's tale is his attempt enough to convince them otherwise. Plato's other concern is ensuring there are enough gold-souled individuals. He acknowledges that while a gold child can be born from a silver or even bronze or iron parent, a silver or bronze child can be born from a gold parent.[89] As a result, he turns to hunting dogs for inspiration. Just as hunting dogs are bred to elicit the best offspring, Plato believes that "there is a need for the best men to have intercourse as often as possible with the best women and the reverse for the most ordinary men with the most ordinary women."[90] This creates an issue: it would seem almost impossible to regulate citizens' sexual habits. Plato proposes a few different solutions: holding marriage festivals and sacrifices, fabricating lots (so that the best man will always end up with the best woman), and creating a rewards system so that access to intercourse is based on performance in war.[91] By ritualizing procreation, Plato endows a ceremonial and perhaps even mythological element to it (as it is seen as a sacred event). Tales told about the rituals certainly would be imitative, but in the sense that they aim at producing virtue.

[87] The proper ordering of the city requires all three levels to be in harmony with each other.
[88] Plato, *The Republic*, 420b-421c.
[89] Plato, *The Republic*, 415a-c.
[90] Plato, *The Republic*, 459a-460b. One prevalent interpretation of Book V is that Plato is not being serious and instead is joking. Nevertheless, this paper takes the position that Plato was serious in his dialogue.
[91] Plato, *The Republic*, 459e-460b.

VI. Conclusions

This paper considered the positive and negative political effects of language, as expressed by Orwell and Plato. Both authors agree that language expresses imitative qualities. The paper argued that imitation is morally neutral and is the process whereby virtues or vices are copied. Orwell thinks that imitation, when used as a means of not thinking for oneself, is a cause of poor writing and can be fixed with some effort. Yet, he also believes that just one person's shunning of a meaningless phrase or word can influence others to do the same. Plato, meanwhile, sees imitation as intrinsic to language because language seeks to describe a higher reality that cannot be fully understood. Although imitation puts a constraint on language, it should not be seen as something completely immoral, but only as a limitation. Both authors develop strategies that direct imitation, either in its capacity as a morally neutral feature of language or as a limitation in our ability to express reality, to inspire virtuous habits. For Orwell, this virtue is the ability to write and express one's thoughts clearly and accurately. Readers can then evaluate and make judgments on the content of the political message. This would help prevent people from mindlessly absorbing certain beliefs that allow for morally abhorrent political regimes to essentially control thought. For Plato, these virtues enable the proper functioning of a well-ordered society by directing its citizens toward a unified end: the good of the state.

While both Orwell and Plato agree on the importance of virtuous imitation, their solutions stand in stark contrast. Orwell criticizes the very remedy Plato proposes (i.e., state-censorship) and links censorship and political control over language to the effects of poor imitative practices. Still, Orwell would not be opposed to telling tales that promote virtue. His opposition would be to the absolute control of the government over such stories. Thus, one way to reconcile the two's beliefs is via educational programs that promote moral values through

stories and allow students to think for themselves, helping them attain Truth. Both beliefs invite further reflection on the role that writing has in political stability and on the extent to which writing or storytelling can be considered a moral act.

Church and State:

The Political Influence of the Russian Orthodox and Polish Catholic Churches in Post-Communist Transitions

Elizabeth Kane

The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union fundamentally reshaped the political and religious landscapes of the region, allowing once-suppressed religious institutions to reassert themselves as powerful political actors. This paper investigates the post-1991 influence of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Polish Catholic Church, analyzing how their distinct historical legacies shaped divergent roles in politics and society. The Russian Orthodox Church, historically accustomed to collaboration with centralized authority, reestablished a close alliance with the Kremlin, reinforcing authoritarian governance through appeals to Orthodoxy, nationalism, and traditional family values. In contrast, the Polish Catholic Church, a symbol of resistance and moral authority, entered the democratic era as an independent but deeply influential institution, shaping national debates over education, reproductive rights, and constitutional identity. While both churches employ similar strategies—moral authority, cultural symbolism, and political alignment—their influence reflects the political contexts in which they operate: authoritarian consolidation in Russia versus contested but polarizing authority in democratic Poland. By tracing the churches' roles in shaping identity, public policy, and state legitimacy, this paper demonstrates how religion remains a decisive force in post-communist transitions while also confronting the limits of ecclesiastical authority amid generational change, secularization, and social resistance.

I. Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the communist regimes of Eastern Europe was one of the biggest global shifts of the 20th century. Countries across Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union faced the challenge of rebuilding their political systems with changing social and religious landscapes. Among the most influential institutions in this transformation were the Russian Orthodox Church and the Polish Catholic Church. These religious organizations, deeply rooted in their respective national histories, emerged as powerful actors in shaping government policies and political decision-making in the post-communist era. The Russian Orthodox Church, with its historical ties to the state, leveraged its position to influence domestic and foreign policies, promoting conservative values and nationalistic agendas. Similarly, the Polish Catholic Church, a symbol of national identity and resistance, played a crucial role in Poland's political transformation, advocating for social justice and human rights. This paper examines how these churches have shaped government policies and political decision-making in Russia and Poland since 1991, focusing on their roles in intertwining religion with state power, influencing national identity, and shaping social policies.

II. Religion Under Communism

The Russian Orthodox Church has always been closely tied to the political history of Russia, acting at different times as a key supporter of autocracy, a suppressed institution during Soviet rule, and a powerful force in post-Soviet nationalism. Under the Tsars, the Church functioned as an extension of the government, bound to the ideology of "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality." It held a special place within the autocracy, with the emperor acting as its main protector, but after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, the Soviet government wasted no time stripping the Church of its power by enforcing the separation of church and state and

nationalizing all church property. “These administrative measures,” writes historian John Burgess, “were followed by brutal state-sanctioned persecutions” of clergy and widespread destruction of churches.[1] During World War II, Stalin took a small step back by allowing the election of a patriarch in 1943 and reopening some religious institutions, but this period did not last long. By the late 1950s, Khrushchev ramped up ecclesial persecution again, pushing the Church back into the margins, where it stayed politically quiet until the last years of the Soviet Union. Only under Gorbachev’s reforms in the late 1980s did the Church begin to reemerge publicly. By the 1990s the relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and the organs of state power was closer than in perhaps centuries, following a short-lived post-Soviet experiment with church-state separation.[2] After the failed 1991 coup, President Boris Yeltsin formed a close relationship with Patriarch Aleksii II, the leader of the Russian Orthodox Church, marking the beginning of what analysts have referred to as a "church–state partnership" that enabled the Church to reclaim a powerful public and political role.[3]

The Polish Catholic Church, on the other hand, emerged from the 20th century not as an institution tainted by its ties to state power, but as a strong symbol of national identity and resistance. During the interwar Second Republic (1918–1939), the Church regained its influence after years of oppression, becoming a major force in both cultural and political life. Even under communist rule after World War II, facing state surveillance and pressure, it was not subdued in the same way religious institutions were in much of the Eastern Bloc. After Stalin’s death, the communist regime reached a de facto truce with the Church, allowing it to operate relatively

[1] John P. Burgess, *Holy Rus': The Rebirth of Orthodoxy in the New Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 22.
[2] Christopher Marsh, *Religion and the State in Russia and China: Suppression, Survival, and Revival* (London: Continuum, 2011).
[3] Nadieszda Kizenko, “The Russian Orthodox Church and Civil Society: Is There a ‘Third Way’?” *Religion, State & Society* 30, no. 4 (2002): 267.

freely as long as it refrained from open political opposition. Over time, however, the Church positioned itself as a space of spiritual and social refuge. As sociologist Robert Froese explains, "the Polish Church increased its mass following under communism because it consistently acted as a vehicle of opposition to the Communist Party."[4] In the 1970s and 1980s, the Church played a key role in backing the Solidarity movement, a social and labor movement that pushed back against communist rule, while also giving spiritual support to the fight for democracy. According to political historian Melissa Wilde, the Church "paved the way for a movement [Solidarity] that transcended social boundaries," becoming "the symbol of a solid nation against an atheistic communist regime."[5] The election of Pope John Paul II in 1978 amplified the Polish Church's authority both domestically and abroad, cementing its status as a moral compass in national politics. Following the collapse of communism, the Church remained deeply embedded in Polish public life, actively shaping debates over education, reproductive rights, and constitutional values.

While both the Russian Orthodox Church and the Polish Catholic Church reemerged as influential institutions following the collapse of communism, they did so through markedly different trajectories rooted in their distinct historical experiences with the state. The Orthodox Church, long accustomed to collaboration with centralized power—from the Tsars to the Soviets—embraced a renewed partnership with the post-Soviet Russian state. As sociologist Dmitry Pospielovsky notes, "the Russian Orthodox Church from 1721 to 1917 had been the handmaid of the tsars, and under Soviet rule had adapted itself to the service of atheist, even atheizing, masters."[6] Thus, after 1991, it was well-positioned to align with President Vladimir

[4] Robert Froese, *The Plot to Kill God: Findings from the Soviet Experiment in Secularization* (University of California Press, 2008), 147.
[5] Melissa Wilde, *Vatican II: A Sociological Analysis of Religious Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 129.
[6] Dmitry Pospielovsky, *The Russian Church Under the Soviet Regime 1917–1982*, vol. 2 (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 400.

Putin's regime and became instrumental in crafting a vision of Russian identity centered on Orthodox values and conservative nationalism. In contrast, the Polish Catholic Church, shaped by decades of resistance and moral authority, entered the democratic era in a more independent state. Yet despite its formal autonomy, the Church exerted considerable influence over political discourse and public policy, particularly through its alliance with the Law and Justice (PiS) party in the 2000s and 2010s. As Froese notes, the Church continued its "increasing role as a vehicle of moral and cultural opposition," even within democratic institutions.[7] Thus, while both churches regained influence in their respective states, Russia's Orthodox Church largely reinforced authoritarian tendencies through partnership with the Kremlin, whereas Poland's Catholic Church maintained a more contested but powerful presence in democratic society.

III. Post-1991 Revival of Religion and Church-State Dynamics

The post-communist era witnessed the resurgence of religion in both Russia and Poland, although the legal and constitutional frameworks governing church-state relations evolved in different ways. In Poland, the 1993 Concordat between the Holy See and the Polish state was a landmark agreement in formalizing the Catholic Church's role in the newly democratic state. As Kulska notes, the agreement was "a clear acknowledgment of the Catholic Church's central role in shaping Polish national identity" post-USSR, particularly in terms of moral authority and public policy.[8] This legal framework allowed the Church to remain a powerful player in Polish political life, with significant influence over education, cultural values, and public discourse. Similarly, the 1997 Russian federal law on religion, which granted the Russian Orthodox Church a privileged position, marked a significant shift in the church-state relationship post-Soviet Union. As Papkova observes, the law "effectively positioned the Russian Orthodox Church as a

[7] Froese, *The Plot to Kill God*, 148.
[8] Joanna Kulska, "Bridging the Nation and the State: Catholic Church in Poland as Political Actor," *Politics and Religion Journal*, 2020, 113.

central institution in the nation's political life," solidifying its status as a state-supported entity.[9] Legal recognition of the Church in both countries allowed for institutional expansion, though the implications were different: Poland's democratic model incorporated the Church into a pluralistic framework, whereas Russia's semi-authoritarian model leaned heavily on the Church to promote conservative values and bolster state legitimacy.

Alongside these legal frameworks, the institutional resurgence of both churches was accompanied by an increase in their symbolic authority in national life. In Poland, the Catholic Church's influence extended beyond the political sphere into daily life. Church buildings were restored, and religious education in schools became an increasingly debated issue in the post-1991 period. According to Ochman, "The Church became the symbol of moral authority, teaching values of social justice while also influencing government policy on abortion and family law," positioning itself as an institution that bridged the gap between public life and individual morality.[10] Poland's Catholic hierarchy played an instrumental role in pushing back against the growing secularization of European politics, with its strong stance on issues such as abortion and LGBTQ+ rights reflecting the Church's enduring influence in public life. In contrast, the Russian Orthodox Church's resurgence was also tied to its symbolic role in re-Christianizing Russian society, which had endured decades of state-sponsored atheism under Soviet rule. As Borowik observes, the re-Christianization narrative promoted by the Russian Orthodox Church emphasized the restoration of Russia's "spiritual heritage" and national identity, positioning Orthodoxy as a counter to Western liberalism and secularism.[11] The Church's involvement in state ceremonies, such as national holidays and commemorations of

[9] Irina Papkova, "The Orthodox Church and Russian Politics," *Wilson Center*, 2017, 34.
[10] Natalia Ochman, "Religion, Politics, and Oppression in Poland: A Call to Action," *Columbia Social Work Review* 19, no. 2 (2018): 213.
[11] Irena Borowik, "Religiosity, the Catholic Church, and Politics in Poland" (Springer, 2019), 145.

Russian historical events, further cemented its role in the cultural and political resurgence of post-Soviet Russia.

IV. Religion as National Identity: Politics and Culture

In Russia, the Russian Orthodox Church has become a central institution in promoting a vision of "spiritual security" that aligns national identity with Orthodox Christian values. As Vladimir Putin's government sought to reassert Russia's role on the global stage, the Orthodox Church was strategically positioned as a key pillar. Orthodox imagery has become increasingly prominent in Putin's rhetoric, underscoring a vision of Russia as a unique, spiritually grounded civilization standing apart from the West. Blitt argues that "Putin's use of Orthodox Christianity […] has been employed not only as a marker of Russian exceptionalism but also as a political tool to legitimize his rule" in the post-Soviet era.[12] This rhetoric was reinforced by the adoption of laws that enshrined traditional values, with the Church playing a significant role in advocating for policies that emphasize family values, traditional morals, and national unity. The Russian government's promotion of "Russian civilization" is tightly linked to its embrace of Orthodoxy, framing it as a foundation for both domestic policy and foreign diplomacy, particularly in opposition to perceived Western secularism. Kolodiy suggests that "the political use of Orthodoxy by the Kremlin has not only consolidated power internally but also provided a moral framework for Russian foreign policy," as seen in the state's stance on issues like marriage and gender roles, which align closely with Orthodox teachings.[13] The strategic use of the Church in this way has given the Kremlin a powerful symbol of national unity and an ideological counter to Western liberalism.

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[12] Jan Hetman, "Catholic Church's Role in Polish Society Post-World War II," *Columbia Social Work Review* 15, no. 3 (2019): 90.
[13] Robert C. Blitt, "Russia's 'Orthodox' Foreign Policy: The Growing Influence of the Russian Orthodox Church in Shaping Russia's Policies Abroad," *University of Pennsylvania Journal of International Law* 33, no. 2 (2011): 247.

In Poland, Catholicism has long been intertwined with the nation's identity, particularly as the country navigated its post-communist transition. After the fall of communism in 1989, the Catholic Church was instrumental in defining Polish-ness and forging a sense of cultural and national continuity. The Church's role in shaping Polish identity was particularly salient as Poland integrated into the European Union in 2004. Kowalczyk notes that "Catholicism served as a cultural cornerstone in defining what it meant to be Polish in the wake of communist rule, and this role was only strengthened as Poland moved into the EU," where the Church became a voice for defending Polish heritage in the face of globalizing forces.[14] The Polish Church's continued protection of cultural Catholicism has been marked by the celebration of religious holidays, public displays of Catholic symbols, and state-sanctioned rituals. Kolodiy emphasizes that "the post-communist role of the Church has been one of actively preserving Polish Catholic traditions in the public sphere, especially through religious education, the protection of family values, and maintaining the prominence of Catholic rituals in the state calendar."[15] These symbols and rituals have become key elements in the Church's assertion of its moral and political authority, ensuring its continued influence over national debates—particularly on issues such as abortion, LGBTQ+ rights, and religious education in schools.

V. Policy Influence

A. Education and Moral Legislation

One of the clearest areas of religious influence in both Russia and Poland is the shaping of public education and moral policy. In Poland, the Catholic Church has consistently played a pivotal role in influencing national policies, particularly those related to education and

[14] Krzysztof Kowalczyk, "The Role of the Catholic Church during Political Transformation in Poland (1989-2011)," *JSTOR*(2011): 102.
[15] Olena Kolodiy, "The Evolution of the Political Role of the Russian Orthodox Church (1991–2021)," *Universidade Católica Portuguesa* (2021): 65.

reproductive rights. The Church's influence over the Polish school curriculum is well documented, especially through compulsory religious education in schools. As Kulska notes, "The Catholic Church's involvement in education has long been a cornerstone of its influence in Polish society, particularly as the Church has worked to ensure that Catholic values permeate both the content and structure of education."[16] The inclusion of religious education as a mandatory subject in Polish schools, along with the Church's role in defining moral values for young people, has been a point of both praise and controversy. This influence extends to abortion legislation as well, where the Church's powerful stance on pro-life policies directly contributed to the tightening of abortion laws in the country. Kulska argues that "the Church played a critical role in the passage of restrictive abortion laws in Poland, especially with the rise of the Law and Justice (PiS) Party, which aligns closely with Catholic teachings on family and life."[17] The alliance between the Church and the PiS Party has been integral in shaping Poland's stance on reproductive rights, with the episcopate (the body of bishops) consistently advocating for stronger protections for the unborn and against liberalization of abortion policies.

The Polish Catholic Church's advocacy for social justice and human rights further strengthens its influence on policy. As Ochman observes, the Church has been a vocal proponent of human rights in Poland, particularly during the transition from communism. "The Catholic Church in Poland has continuously used its moral authority to advocate for social justice, human rights, and the dignity of individuals, often providing a voice for marginalized groups," she writes.[18] This moral leadership extends beyond issues like abortion, reaching into debates over poverty, immigration, and the rights of the LGBTQ+ community. Specific instances of

[16] Joanna Kulska, "Bridging the Nation and the State: Catholic Church in Poland as Political Actor," *Politics and Religion Journal* (2020): 114.
[17] Kulska, "Bridging the Nation," 118.
[18] Natalia Ochman, "Religion, Politics, and Oppression in Poland: A Call to Action," *Columbia Social Work Review* 19, no. 2 (2018): 215.

church-state collaboration are evident in government-backed initiatives to promote Catholic teachings in schools and social policies, particularly those centered around traditional family structures. As Kulska points out, “The political and moral teachings of the Church have been key to shaping Poland’s cultural and social policies, especially as they pertain to family life and education.”[19]

In Russia, the Orthodox Church has similarly leveraged its position in shaping moral and educational policies since the collapse of the Soviet Union. One of the most significant areas of influence has been in the promotion of patriotic education in schools. According to Papkova, “The Russian Orthodox Church has worked closely with the state to influence the curriculum in schools, emphasizing national pride, the preservation of Russian cultural values, and Orthodox Christian teachings.”[20] This collaboration has enabled the Church to become a powerful force in shaping Russian youth and instilling values centered around Orthodox Christianity and Russian nationalism. The Orthodox Church has also been a vocal supporter of the anti-LGBTQ+ laws passed in Russia, aligning itself with the state’s conservative stance on issues of sexuality and gender. Papkova notes that “The Orthodox Church’s vocal support for Russia’s anti-LGBT policies reflects its commitment to promoting traditional family values and its alignment with the state in resisting what it views as Western moral decay.”[21] The Church's role in shaping public discourse around family values, as well as its involvement in creating moral laws, has grown increasingly significant as Russia's political landscape has become more conservative under Putin's leadership. The Orthodox Church’s influence on school curricula, particularly in

[19] Joanna Kulska, "Bridging the Nation and the State: Catholic Church in Poland as Political Actor," *Politics and Religion Journal* (2020): 114.
[20] Irina Papkova, "The Orthodox Church and Russian Politics," *Wilson Center*, 2017, 56.
[21] Irina Papkova, "The Orthodox Church and Russian Politics," *Wilson Center*, 2017, 59.

promoting these moral frameworks, has empowered it to sustain a strong presence in Russia's education system.

B. Political Alignment and Party Support

Beyond education and morality, both the Russian Orthodox Church and the Polish Catholic Church have strategically aligned with political parties to shape legislative agendas and retain institutional privileges. The Russian Orthodox Church has formed a key alliance with the Kremlin under the leadership of Vladimir Putin, consistently supporting his conservative policies. This alignment has not only helped solidify Putin's political legitimacy but has also provided him with moral authority through religious endorsement. As Kolodiy notes, "The Russian Orthodox Church has leveraged its institutional weight to maintain an alliance with the state, backing Putin's conservative messaging, which includes support for anti-LGBT policies and the preservation of traditional family values."[22] The Church's involvement in political campaigns and elections has been central to its influence; it has endorsed Putin and United Russia during elections, offering religious legitimacy to their conservative rhetoric. Papkova suggests that the Church's endorsement is strategic: "By backing Putin, the Orthodox Church has become an integral partner in consolidating power, pushing for moral policies that reflect the Church's vision of Russian civilization."[23] The Russian Orthodox Church's support extends beyond ceremonial endorsements, as it has actively shaped political decisions on a variety of issues, including education, family values, and gender laws. Case studies such as the anti-LGBTQ+ legislation and the Church's role in promoting patriotic education reveal how deeply intertwined Church and state are in shaping Russian policy.[24]

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[22] Olena Kolodiy, "The Evolution of the Political Role of the Russian Orthodox Church (1991–2021)," *Universidade Católica Portuguesa* (2021): 67.
[23] Irina Papkova, "The Orthodox Church and Russian Politics," *Wilson Center*, 2017, 58.
[24] Dmitry Pospielovsky, *The Russian Church Under the Soviet Regime 1917–1982* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 303.

The Polish Catholic Church has similarly aligned itself with the Law and Justice Party (PiS), advocating for policies that reflect Catholic Social Teachings. According to Kowalczyk, "The Church's strategic partnership with the PiS has been crucial in shaping Poland's social policy, particularly regarding abortion laws and religious education in schools."[25] The Church has been actively involved in political campaigns, publicly endorsing PiS candidates and participating in political debates. Bishops have played a significant role in shaping the party's agenda, especially on issues like reproductive rights and family law. The alliance has led to significant collaboration between the Church and the state, with PiS adopting a more conservative approach to education and social policy, often reflecting the Church's values. As Kulska explains, "The Catholic Church's ability to influence PiS's policies is rooted in its moral authority."[26] However, this close collaboration has sparked significant backlash, particularly from youth movements advocating for more liberal policies on abortion and LGBTQ+ rights. As Ochman highlights, "The Church's influence over PiS has caused divisions within Polish society, with growing youth protests calling for a separation of religion from state and progressive policies on issues like reproductive rights."[27] Despite the backlash, the Church has maintained a prominent role in Poland's political landscape, actively shaping national discourse and influencing political leaders.

VI. The Limits of Religious Authority

In both Poland and Russia, religious influence has met resistance, revealing the limitations and evolving role of the Church in post-communist society. In Poland, the growing resistance to the Catholic Church's influence is most clearly seen in the context of the Black

[25] Krzysztof Kowalczyk, "The Role of the Catholic Church during Political Transformation in Poland (1989-2011)," *JSTOR*(2011): 103.
[26] Joanna Kulska, "Bridging the Nation and the State: Catholic Church in Poland as Political Actor," *Politics and Religion Journal* (2020): 115.
[27] Natalia Ochman, "Religion, Politics, and Oppression in Poland: A Call to Action," *Columbia Social Work Review* 19, no. 2 (2018): 217.

Protests of 2016 and 2020. These protests, which opposed the government's restrictive abortion laws, highlighted a stark divide between the Church's moral authority and the more liberal segments of Polish society. As sociologist Janina Jasińska observes, "The Black Protests represented a powerful backlash against the Church's dominance in Polish political life, particularly its role in shaping abortion policies. The Church's repeated attempts to impose its moral views on reproductive rights collided with the demands of women's rights activists."[28] This opposition was not confined to women's groups but also encompassed broader segments of youth who felt increasingly alienated from the Church's conservative stance. A study by Kamil Szymanski revealed that "among young Polish people, church attendance has been declining, and the youth protest movements have become central to resisting the Church's involvement in policymaking."[29] The decline in church attendance, particularly among younger generations, signals a shift in Polish society, where traditional Catholic values are being challenged in favor of more secular and progressive views.

The Russian Orthodox Church has similarly faced dissent, particularly from artists and oppositional figures who resist the state's close relationship with the Church. The rise of state-promoted Orthodoxy under Putin has sparked a counter-response from those who view it as an imposition of religion into public life. As Svetlana Alexievich notes, "In Russia, artists and intellectuals have long been at the forefront of challenging the intertwining of Church and state. Many see the state's embrace of Orthodoxy as a method of maintaining control over cultural and political expression, stifling dissent."[30] These critics argue that secularism is under pressure in Russia, where government policies increasingly use Orthodox Christianity as a tool for national

[28] Janina Jasińska, "The Black Protest and the Catholic Church in Poland: A Feminist Rejection of Church Authority," *Journal of Gender Studies* 23, no. 1 (2021): 56.
[29] Kamil Szymanski, "Youth and Religion in Poland: Changing Patterns of Church Attendance," *Polish Sociological Review*42, no. 3 (2020): 112.
[30] Svetlana Alexievich, "Voices from the Frontlines: Artists and Intellectuals in Post-Soviet Russia," *Russian Review* 72, no. 4 (2019): 545.

unity, sidelining the pluralistic values of a modern society. Furthermore, the state has cracked down on opposition figures who challenge the Kremlin's close ties with the Church. As Oleg Kozlovsky points out, "The Russian government frames its suppression of dissent as a defense of Orthodoxy, using religious language to justify its actions against opposition figures, portraying them as threats to national unity."[31] This tension between the state's embrace of religion and the growing resistance to its influence highlights the challenges the Russian Orthodox Church faces in staying politically relevant without alienating large segments of the population that seek a more secular government.

VII. Similar Tools, Divergent Outcomes

Although both the Russian Orthodox Church and the Polish Catholic Church use similar strategies—moral authority, cultural symbolism, and political alignment—the outcomes differ dramatically due to divergent political regimes. In Russia, the Church's support has been instrumental in consolidating authoritarian rule under Putin, with the Russian Orthodox Church aligning closely with the state to reinforce the Kremlin's authority. As Lena Slezkina notes, "The Church's active endorsement of Putin has helped to solidify his power, using religious rhetoric to promote a unified national identity and to justify the authoritarian consolidation of power."[32] This partnership has allowed the Church to remain an essential part of the state infrastructure, functioning as a key player in shaping Russia's national policies on family values, nationalism, and morality. The Church's alignment with the Kremlin strengthens its own institutional legitimacy, while providing the state with a powerful tool to enforce cultural conformity and promote national pride. In contrast, the PolishCatholic Church's overreach into political life has

[31] Oleg Kozlovsky, "Secularism Under Pressure: Russian Politics, Orthodox Christianity, and Nationalism," *Post-Soviet Politics* 18, no. 2 (2020): 233.
[32] Lena Slezkina, "The Russian Orthodox Church and Political Power in Putin's Russia," *Journal of Political Religion* 22, no. 3 (2020): 185.

led to political polarization on issues such as abortion rights, LGBTQ+ rights, and education. As Andrzej M. Kuczynski observes, “While the Church's influence on political debates has been undeniable, its increasing intervention in national politics has caused significant backlash, particularly among the youth and more liberal segments of Polish society, leading to polarization rather than political unity.”[33] The Church's close relationship with the Law and Justice Party (PiS) has contributed to the deepening divide between the conservative and liberal factions of Polish society, highlighting how religious influence can exacerbate political rifts in a democratic system.

The long-term legitimacy of these churches has also been shaped by their political roles. The Russian Orthodox Church has become a pillar of the authoritarian state infrastructure, with its endorsement of Putin's regime directly tied to its institutional survival. Katerina Sidorova argues that “The Orthodox Church’s role in supporting the Russian state’s authoritarian framework has cemented its place as a pillar of state legitimacy, ensuring its continued relevance in Russian political life.”[34] This partnership has allowed the Church to retain its influence within the political sphere, despite the secularization of global politics. However, in Poland, the Polish Catholic Church’s overreach into the political sphere has resulted in reputational costs, particularly as younger generations increasingly reject the Church's authority on various issues. As Magda Goribinska notes, “While the Catholic Church continues to wield influence in Poland, its reputation has been tarnished by its close association with the Law and Justice Party and its conservative stance on issues like abortion and LGBTQ rights, leading to a decline in trust among a significant portion of the Polish population.”[35] These contrasting outcomes underscore

[33] Andrzej M. Kuczynski, "The Polarizing Role of the Catholic Church in Post-Communist Poland," *East European Politics and Societies* 36, no. 4 (2019): 567.
[34] Katerina Sidorova, "The Russian Orthodox Church and Authoritarian Governance," *Russian Political Review* 18, no. 2 (2020): 102.
[35] Magda Goribinska, "The Decline of Catholic Influence in Poland’s Democracy," *Polish Sociological Review* 43, no. 1 (2021): 94.

the importance of the political context in shaping the influence of religion in post-communist societies.

VIII. Conclusion

The post-1991 revival of religion in Russia and Poland has transformed both the Russian Orthodox Church and the Polish Catholic Church into major political actors, but in deeply context-specific ways. Both churches have used similar tools—moral authority, cultural symbolism, and political alignment—to shape government policies and influence national identity. However, the outcomes of their influence have diverged sharply due to the contrasting political regimes in each country. The Russian Orthodox Church, firmly aligned with the Kremlin, has played a central role in consolidating the state's power, using its influence to promote conservative family values and national pride. In contrast, the Polish Catholic Church has aligned itself with the more democratic but polarized PiS government, where its expanding influence has sparked significant resistance from civil society and youth movements, further intensifying political polarization.

Both churches have acted as national identity-makers, shaping the cultural and moral fabric of their respective societies. They have also influenced policy, particularly in areas such as education, reproductive rights, and LGBTQ+ rights, where their teachings directly informed legislative agendas. Their roles as political allies to their respective governments have granted them institutional privileges, but these alliances have not come without costs. In Russia, the Church's partnership with the authoritarian regime has ensured its continued prominence, while in Poland, the Church's entanglement with the Law and Justice Party has raised questions about its legitimacy in a polarized democracy.

Looking forward, several factors will shape the future of church-state relations in both countries. The secular backlash and generational change in Poland suggest that younger generations may distance themselves from the Church's influence, particularly on social issues like abortion and LGBTQ+ rights. In Russia, the close relationship between the Church and the state may continue to strengthen, but dissent from secular and oppositional figures could challenge the Church's role in governance. As both countries continue to evolve, religion's role in politics remains a critical area of study, offering insights into the ongoing transitions of post-communist societies. The Church's involvement in political life is likely to continue shaping national identities and cultural values, but its influence will also face increasing pressure as secularism and resistance grow. The future of church-state relations in Russia and Poland will depend on how these religious institutions navigate the changing political landscapes in each country.

A Divergence in the Peninsula:

Why has North Korea Developed Nuclear Weapons, yet South Korea has Refrained?

Predicting Iran's Nuclear Future Using a Comparative Case Study

Kathleen Heverin

This paper analyzes the conditions under which states develop nuclear weapons. North and South Korea present cases of similarly situated states going in opposite directions concerning nuclear weapons development. By analyzing the climactic moments in North and South Korean history of nuclear weapons development, I have determined that states need two necessary conditions to develop nuclear weapons: motivation and means. States are motivated by a security concern. When this is coupled with means in the form of state capability, either from sufficient domestic economic advancement or foreign aid, nuclear weapons development occurs. This issue has modern policy implications in security and regional stability. In the case of Iran, nuclear weapons development is likely, as both conditions of security concern, and state capability are present. Identifying these conditions can help determine how to shape policies to prevent nuclear proliferation and restrict a regime that is widely considered unstable from gaining this type of potential for destruction.

I. Introduction

After the defeat of Japan in World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union drew a line across the Korean Peninsula. North of the 38th parallel, the Soviet Union established the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), a communist government under Kim Il-Sung. In contrast to the Soviet-established communist government in the North, the United States established the Republic of Korea (ROK) as the governing system in the South, led by President Syngman Rhee.[1] As these once unified nations developed, they diverged on all fronts, ranging from regime type to economic systems.[2] I will investigate another key difference that has emerged in these two states, asking: "Why has North Korea developed nuclear weapons since gaining statehood, yet South Korea has not?"

Investigating the factors that allowed North Korea to develop nuclear weapons and South Korea to ultimately abstain from development efforts will give insight into Iran's nuclear weapons development. Iran has agreed to several treaties prohibiting their development, including the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). However, it is suspected that Iran is not fully abiding by these commitments, and its recent rapid acquisition of highly enriched uranium has sparked concern of a breakthrough, potentially serving as a catalyst for the United States' recent attacks on Iranian nuclear facilities.[3] There are significant similarities between pre-nuclear North Korea and present-day Iran, notably the commitment to treaties limiting nuclear development and

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[1] Sarah Pruitt, "Why Are North and South Korea Divided?," History.com, February 9, 2018, https://www.history.com/articles/north-south-korea-divided-reasons-facts.

[2] John West, "Poverty and Prosperity in North and North Korea," *Asian Century Institute*, June 8, 2014, https://asiancenturyinstitute.com/development/650-poverty-and-prosperity-in-north-and-south-korea#:~:text=In%20the%20terms%20of%20Acemoglu%20and%20Robinson%2C%20South%20Korea%20had,of%20their%20talents%20and%20skills.

[3] Claire Mills. "What Is the Status of Iran's Nuclear Programme and the JCPOA?" *UK Parliament*, October 4, 2024. https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9870/; Kari A. Bingen and Clayton Swope, "Why the United States Acted Now Against Iran," CSIS, June 25, 2025, https://www.csis.org/analysis/why-united-states-acted-now-against-iran.

subsequent failure to abide by those treaties, resulting in a tense relationship with the United States. Exploring which factors in the case of North Korea were most influential in encouraging the development of nuclear weapons as well as which factors in South Korea discouraged it are relevant to current foreign policy surrounding Iran's nuclear plans.

Establishing a theory on what causes the development of nuclear weapons is essential to understanding which non-proliferation efforts will be most effective in the modern international climate. Therefore, I will investigate the conditions under which states develop nuclear weapons. A state that is "developing nuclear weapons" is one that has either expressed intent or taken action to enrich uranium or separate plutonium beyond the level needed for benign purposes. A state that has "developed nuclear weapons" is one that has successfully launched a test of any bomb or missile that uses a nuclear reaction for destruction.

I will begin by outlining two theories of conditions under which states develop nuclear weapons, exploring the impacts of state capability and security. Then, I will conduct a comparative case study of post-independence North and South Korea to explore the pertinence of these two conditions in the development of nuclear arms in North Korea, and the lack of a nuclear weapons program in South Korea. Studying these cases supports the conclusion that there are two necessary conditions for nuclear weapons development: motivation and means. Using this theory, I will predict the development of an Iranian nuclear weapons program in the near future and propose general policy aims to prevent this outcome.

II. Implications of State Capability and Security on Nuclear Weapons Development

I will explore two arguments explaining states' development of nuclear weapons, with one emphasizing economic capability, and the other emphasizing security motivations. While neither of these arguments alone provides sufficient conditions for nuclear weapons

development, the most favorable conditions occur when an economically capable state is motivated by a security threat.

a. State Economic Capabilities

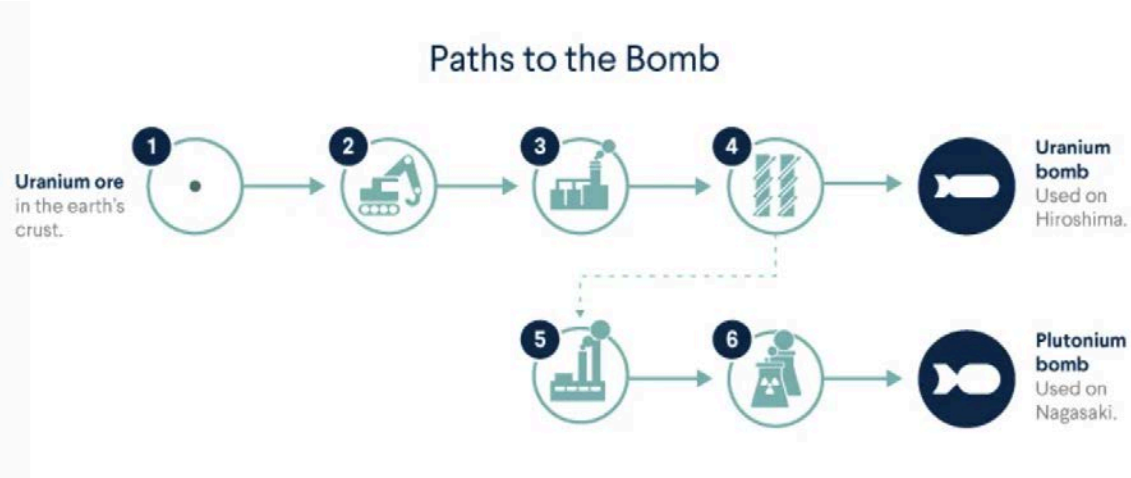
The first fundamental argument about the conditions under which states develop nuclear weapons is that states with more economic capabilities are more likely to pursue development of nuclear weapons.[4] Economic capabilities are measured by a country's gross national income (GNI) per capita in alignment with the World Bank's World Development Report (WDR), which classifies thresholds for low, middle, and high income countries.[5] While GNI per capita does not directly correlate to the level of funds allocated to a state's nuclear weapons program, high, and to a lesser extent middle income states have a greater capacity to absorb the high costs of nuclear weapons development than low income states.

Developing nuclear weapons is a highly technical process that requires vast resources, knowledge, and funding. There are two paths to acquiring a nuclear weapon, as outlined in Figure 1 below. States need either weapons-grade highly enriched uranium (HEU) or irradiated plutonium. The largest challenge in uranium enrichment is in developing the technology to enrich in the first place, but once a breakthrough is made, the process to achieve HEU can accelerate. The other path to the acquisition of nuclear weaponry is the use of plutonium.[6] Plutonium can be obtained through irradiating uranium in a nuclear reactor. In a highly difficult

[4] Sico van der Meer, "States' Motivations to Acquire or Forgo Nuclear Weapons: Four Factors of Influence," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, (2016) https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2018-02/States%E2%80%99_Motivations_to_Acquire_or_Forgo_Nuclear_Weapons%20_August_2016.pdf, 211-214.
[5] Divyanshi Wadhwa and Espen Prydz, "Classifying Countries by Income," *The World Bank*, September 9, 2019, https://datatopics.worldbank.org/world-development-indicators/stories/the-classification-of-countries-by-income.html.
[6] "How Do Countries Create Nuclear Weapons?," *Council on Foreign Relations*, July 27, 2023, https://education.cfr.org/learn/reading/how-do-countries-create-nuclear-weapons.

and complex process, usable plutonium is then separated from the spent fuel leftover.[7] In practice, these processes of either uranium enrichment or plutonium separation require the government to devote extensive funding to a nuclear program.

Figure 1: Paths to the Bomb[8]



If a state does not have the indigenous capability to develop nuclear weapons, capability can be provided by other states. Countries with more developed economies and research investment—or nuclear aid from another state—are more capable, and therefore more likely to develop nuclear weapons. Some scholars argue that this is possible for any government, and capability is irrelevant because it only reflects the willingness to divert funds from other programs rather than the inherent ability to develop nuclear weapons altogether.[9] However, in some cases, it is not in a government's interest to divert funds from other programs to nuclear weapons development, as the funds required are so extensive that the reallocation would create significant backlash and threaten the legitimacy of the government itself. Therefore, there exists a level of economic and technological capability under which a government is unlikely to

[7] "Fissile Materials Basics," *Union of Concerned Scientists*, July 18, 2009, https://www.ucs.org/resources/fissile-materials-basics.
[8] "How Do Countries Create Nuclear Weapons?"
[9] Sico van der Meer, "States' Motivations to Acquire or Forgo Nuclear Weapons: Four Factors of Influence," 214.

develop nuclear weapons. It is, at the same time, clear that development of nuclear weapons is not directly proportional to a country's GNI. There are wealthy countries with the economic capability to produce nuclear weapons who choose not to, including Japan, Germany, and Australia, proving that capability cannot be the sole necessary condition for nuclear weapons development.[10]

b. State Security

There are several factors beyond capability that influence development of a nuclear arsenal. State security is widely regarded as a major factor. Nuclear weapons have not been used for harmful purposes since 1945, when the United States bombed Japan to ensure its defeat in WWII. In an age where nuclear weapons are never used, the advantage to obtaining nuclear weapons is not to destroy an opponent, but to provide defense in the form of deterrence. Using a nuclear weapon against a second-strike capable state essentially ensures self destruction, making gaining second strike capabilities valuable to discouraging a nuclear attack. A state that has "second-strike capability" is one that can withstand a nuclear attack from another state, then launch their own in retaliation. Scott Sagan discusses security motivations as one of his three models of why states develop nuclear arms. His "security model" suggests that states will seek to develop nuclear weapons when they are "falling behind" in terms of relative strength in the international system.[11] The development of nuclear weapons leaves all states without second-strike capabilities comparatively vulnerable. Sagan's other hypothesis under the security model is that states develop nuclear weapons when faced with a security threat. Sharing a border

[10] Peter Dizikes, "A Look at How Countries Go Nuclear - and Why Some Do Not," *MIT News*, (January 11, 2022): https://news.mit.edu/2022/how-countries-go-nuclear-and-why-some-do-not-0111#:~:text=And%20many%20wealthy%20countries%2C%20including,not%20to%20pursue%20weapons%20programs.
[11] Scott Sagan, "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?," *International Security* 21 (February 18, 2011): 232–39, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203422144-37, 57.

with an enemy state or having an enemy with nuclear power makes a state more likely to develop nuclear weapons.

Within the broader security argument, there also exists the argument that the fewer nuclear equipped allies a state has, the more likely it will be to develop nuclear weapons itself.[12] For the state to feel secure enough in their alliance to forgo nuclear weapons, it must believe it has collective security under extended deterrence. Collective security means that an ally of the state is willing to respond to an attack on the state with nuclear force against the aggressor. When an aggressor state believes that a nuclear power will retaliate on behalf of its ally, the deterrent effect of mutually assured destruction extends to that ally. Ultimately the conditions under which a state would develop nuclear weapons in the security model are a perceived lack of relative power in the international system due either to shortcomings in its own security or to a lack of credible extended deterrence from nuclear allies.

c. Measuring Arguments in a Comparative Case Study

Ultimately, motivation, provided by security concerns, and means, given by capability, are the conditions that cause a state to develop nuclear weapons. This conclusion is supported by evidence of nuclear weapons development existing only when both of these factors are present, and lack of development when one or both of these conditions are missing.

The cases of North and South Korea after the 1950s present interesting considerations for these two theories. The capabilities argument alone would predict that South Korea would have been more likely to develop nuclear weapons after its economy rose above the threshold of "low income" in the 1980s.[13] The security argument would predict that North Korea would have been more likely to develop nuclear weapons when its relationship with its largest threats, the United

[12] Scott Sagan, "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons?," 57.
[13] Sungchul Chung, "Excelsior: The Korean Innovation Story," Issues in Science and Technology, 2007, https://issues.org/chung/.

States and South Korea, were least cooperative. I will investigate the accuracy of these theories through a focus on pivotal moments in North and South Korean nuclear history.

III. A Comparative Case Study: What Made North Korea Nuclear?

In order to investigate the motivations for developing nuclear weapons, I will examine the cases of nuclear North Korea, and non-nuclear South Korea, from their independence in the 1950s to present-day.

After the Russo-Japanese War, Korea was overtaken as a Japanese colony.[14] Following their divide, the tension between the military government in South Korea and the communist regime in North Korea culminated in the destructive Korean War, quickly involving UN forces on behalf of South Korea, as well as Chinese and Russian forces opposing the UN. After many deadly battles that resulted in two million North and South Korean civilian casualties, an armistice in 1953 ended the violence. However, this same agreement cemented a division between the North and the South, leading them down very different paths.[15]

These cases present a strong contrast due to the two countries' long shared history, similar cultural makeup, and near identical geographic positioning, making it easier to isolate where they differ. Additionally, North Korea is a valuable case study in that it experiences complex security considerations due to alliances with large nuclear powers of Russia and China, but tense relations with the nuclear United States.

North Korea is also valuable in predicting Iran's nuclear future as they share characteristics that contribute to their international designation as "rogue states." A rogue state is a state that defies the norms and threatens the stability of the international system. North Korea has a history of totalitarian rule, state-sponsored terrorism, economic failure, and human rights

[14] Sarah Pruitt, "Why Are North and South Korea Divided?"
[15] "Korean War," National Army Museum, accessed May 11, 2025, https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/korean-war.

violations that contribute to a negative view of both state legitimacy and state actions.[16] Iran has engaged in many similar "rogue" behaviors, including kidnapping, sponsoring terrorist organizations, and supporting foreign revolutions.[17] For these reasons, North Korean nuclear motivations may be able to provide insight into Iranian intentions concerning nuclear weapons.

The case of South Korea allows for exploration of similar elements, including capability and security. It is somewhat paradoxical that South Korea, despite having greater capability to develop nuclear weapons, refrained from using it. South Korea is also faced with the large and often unpredictable security threat of North Korea, bringing into question why this security motivation has not translated into nuclear arms development.

a. Post-independence North Korea

The origins of a North Korean nuclear program began in 1952, when President Kim Il Sung established the Atomic Energy Research Institute and the Academy of Sciences. This initial program was heavily supported by the Soviet Union, giving North Korea the necessary scientific knowledge and resources.[18] Scientists were sent from North Korea to the Soviet Union to be trained in nuclear energy in the mid-1950s. Most importantly, the Soviet Union aided North Koreans in building a nuclear reactor, which is necessary to produce plutonium.[19] This supports the argument that a state with more capability will be more likely to pursue nuclear weapons development.

In the post-independence 1950s, "[t]he greatest threat, in the view of both Koreas, was that each might remain weak and underdeveloped and fail to secure the future of the Korean

[16] Kirk Spitzer, "5 Reasons North Korea Is a 'Rogue Regime,'" USA Today, January 6, 2016, https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2016/01/06/5-ways-north-korea-rogue-regime/78349910/.
[17] Barry Rubin, "US Foreign Policy and Rogue States," *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, (September 1999): https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/olj/meria/meria99_rub02.html.
[18] North Korea and the NPT, accessed May 11, 2025, https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/pdfs_koreachapt2.pdf.
[19] "North Korea's Nuclear Program: A History," *Korean Legal Studies*, accessed April 8, 2025.

nation against aggression from the other side and its patron."[20] North Korea possessed weaker military strength than UN-backed South Korea during the Korean War, even when relying on the two powerful allies, the Soviet Union and China. This provides evidence that despite technological support from the Soviet Union, North Korea could not rely on its allies for defensive purposes, providing motivation to develop nuclear arms itself. Ultimately, in the 1950s, North Korea gained a capability to begin development of nuclear weapons from the Soviet Union, and it had a security motivation from losing the battle to become the stronger half of the Korean Peninsula.

North Korea continued to require foreign economic and technological support due to its low-income economy. In 1962, the Soviet Union cooperated with the United States during the Cuban Missile Crisis, which sparked doubt in North Korea about its positive relationship with the USSR.[21] Aligning with the security theory of motivations for development, despite initial technological support, North Korea perceived the Cuban Missile Crisis as a shift in Soviet allegiance, questioning the support the Soviet Union could provide against a US threat. Two years later, North Korea requested China's assistance with nuclear technology, however, China refused, representing yet another instance of a weakening of North Korean nuclear alliances that increased security concerns. Growing uncertainty around alliances led North Korea to have an increased motivation to develop nuclear weapons.[22]

North Korea continued to require aid in developing nuclear power. However the Soviet Union would only continue to share technology if North Korea joined the NPT, which commits parties to stopping the development and spread of nuclear weapons. North Korea acceded to the

[20] Sheila Jasanoff and Sang-Hyun Kim, "Containing the Atom: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and Nuclear Power in the United States and South Korea," *Minerva* 47, no. 2 (June 2009): 119–46, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11024-009-9124-4.
[21] "North Korea's Nuclear Program: A History."
[22] "North Korea's Nuclear Program: A History."

treaty in 1985. While this action may be viewed as a step back from nuclear weapons development, there is evidence that, despite joining this treaty, North Korea continued to make efforts to produce weapons-grade plutonium, and their ability was enhanced by Soviet technology.[23] Counterintuitively, signing the NPT gave North Korea greater capability to continue development of bomb fuel.

A condition of the NPT was that North Korea must allow inspections from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), however, North Korea raised suspicion by evading these inspections. The Soviet Union had been an influence in North Korea's decision to join the NPT in the first place.[24] By violating it, North Korea encountered an increased security risk of international attention to its nuclear program during an era of nonproliferation, in turn, alienating the Soviet Union and increasing its need to develop nuclear weapons. In this way, the initial security motivator of South Korea, beginning after the Korean war, led to North Korea's development of nuclear weapons, which in itself created more security concerns on an international scale that further motivated nuclear weapons development.

In October of 1994, three months after Kim Jong Il took power in the DPRK following his father's death, the United States and North Korea signed the Agreed Framework.[25] This agreement froze North Korean nuclear weapons development in exchange for the United States providing two proliferation-resistant nuclear power reactors. It also stated that "both sides commit not to nuclearize the Korean Peninsula," and "the United States must 'provide formal assurances' not to threaten or use nuclear weapons against North Korea."[26] This agreement marked a turning point in North Korean nuclear advancement as it was now provided with

[23] "North Korea's Nuclear Program: A History."
[24] "North Korea's Nuclear Program: A History."
[25] "North Korea's Nuclear Program: A History."
[26] Kelsey Davenport, "The US-North Korean Agreed Framework at a Glance," Arms Control Association, accessed May 11, 2025, https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/us-north-korean-agreed-framework-glance.

assurance that the United States, its primary nuclear threat, would not launch a nuclear strike. This guarantee removed the security motivation for developing nuclear weapons, which explains the lack of progress in the development of nuclear bomb fuel while the Agreed Framework was in effect.

A final pivotal moment in North Korean nuclear history is the resurgence of nuclear arms motivation that led to the detonation of a North Korean nuclear bomb. 2001 marked a major shift in North Korean-US relations when George W. Bush became the US President. In the aftermath of 9/11, Bush began publicly referring to North Korea as part of an "Axis of Evil," also including Iran and Iraq in this description.[27] Additionally, despite no official indications that North Korea had violated the Agreed Framework, Bush put off negotiations with North Korea on the grounds that its compliance with the Agreed Framework could not be verified.[28] This created a concern of North Korean vulnerability as it was called into question whether the United States would uphold its assurance to not use force against North Korea, and North Korea was also painted as a state threatening global peace. In 2003, North Korea officially withdrew from the NPT. That same year, Pyongyang made its first admission to possessing nuclear weapons. Just three years later, North Korea conducted its first nuclear test, officially reaching the point of nuclear weapons development.[29]

Figure 2: North Korea Nuclear Program - Technical Focus[30]

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[27] "North Korea's Nuclear Program: A History."
[28] Alex Wagner, "Bush Puts N. Korea Negotiations on Hold, Stresses Verification," Arms Control Association, April 2001, accessed May 11, 2025, https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2001-04/press-releases/bush-puts-n-korea-negotiations-hold-stresses-verification.
[29] "North Korea's Nuclear Program: A History,"
[30] Elliot Serbin, Robert Carlin, and Siegfried Hecker, "A Comprehensive History of North Korea's Nuclear Program and Lessons Learned," (Standford, CA *Center for International Security and Cooperation:* May 23, 2018),https://fsi9-prod.s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/Korean_War1.pdf. Figure 2 provides a visual representation of the shift toward nuclear weapons development seen in the years following 2001. The green cells represent a shift away from nuclear development, and the red cells a shift toward, with the darker colors representing a more intense shift.

North Korea Nuclear Program– Technical Focus (Stanford University CISAC)
3 shades of green (dark best), **3 shades of red** (dark worst) –Hecker/Carlin/Serbin

Year	US Diplomacy	DPRK Diplomacy	Yongbyon Presence	Plutonium	U enrich.	Tritium/Li-6 (H-bomb fuel)	Weaponize Design/build/test	Nukes (Summary)	Missiles	Imports	Exports
1992	G1	G1	G1	G2	G1	G1	R1	R1	R1	R1	R1
1993	G2	G2	G1	G2	G1	G1	R1	R1	R1	R1	R1
1994	G3	G3	G1	G2	G1	G1	R1	R1	R1	R1	R1
1995	G3	G3	G3	G3	G1	G1	R1	G3	R1	R1	R1
1996	G3	G3	G3	G3	G1	G1	R1	G3	R1	R1	R1
1997	G2	G2	G3	G3	R1	G1	R1	G3	R1	R2	R1
1998	G2	G2	G3	G3	R1	G1	R1	G3	R1	R2	R1
1999	G3	G3	G3	G3	R1	G1	R1	G3	G1	R2	R3
2000	G3	G3	G3	G3	R1	G1	R1	G3	G1	R2	R3
2001	R2	G2	G3	G3	R1	G1	R1	G3	G1	R2	R3
2002	R3	G2	G3	G3	R1	G1	R1	G3	G1	R2	R3
2003	R2	R2	R3	R3	R1	R1	R2	R2	G1	R2	R3
2004	R2	R1	R3	R3	R1	R1	R2	R2	G1	R2	R3
2005	R1	R1	R3	R3	R1	R1	R2	R2	R1	R2	R3
2006	R1	R2	R3	R3	R1	R1	R2	R2	R1	R2	R3
2007	G2	G1	G3	G1	R1	R1	R1	R1	R1	R1	R3
2008	G2	G1	G3	G1	R1	R1	R1	R1	R1	R1	R2
2009	R1	R1	R2	R1	R2	R2	R2	R2	R1	R2	R2
2010	G1	R1	R3	R1	R2	R2	R2	R2	R1	R2	R2
2011	G1	G1	R3	R1	R2	R2	R2	R2	R1	R2	R2
2012	R1	R1	R3	R1	R2	R2	R2	R2	R1	R2	R2
2013	R2	R1	R3	R2	R2	R2	R2	R2	R1	R2	R1
2014	R2	R1	R3	R2	R3	R3	R2	R2	R1	R2	R1
2015	R1	G1	R3	R3	R3	R3	R2	R2	R2	R2	R1
2016	R1	R3	R3	R3	R3	R3	R3	R3	R2	R2	R1
2017	R3	R3	R3	R3	R3	R3	R3	R3	R3	R2	R1

This shift—from a pause in plutonium production under the Agreed Framework to an outright effort to develop nuclear weapons beginning in 2001—is marked primarily by increased security concerns due to harsh US foreign policy beginning after 9/11. North Korea already had an established capability to develop nuclear bomb fuel acquired through foreign assistance beginning in the 1950s; however, it was the shift in political climate into one of increased uncertainty about US actions that provided the final motivation to see nuclear arms development through to success.

b. South Korea since 1950

There have been periods in South Korean history when it has attempted to develop a nuclear bomb before abandoning these efforts. Looking into these periods and the influences that

caused the state to ultimately abandon development efforts will be valuable in determining the relevance of each theory.

Initial interest in a nuclear weapons program in South Korea began in the 1950s. The atomic bomb became viewed as a valuable asset for many South Koreans due to its role both in defeating the Japanese, who had a long history of occupying Korea, and as a source of leverage used by the United States to deter China and North Korea during the Korean war.[31] In 1959, South Korea established the Atomic Energy Research Institute, which, for official purposes, developed nuclear power, but, from public perception, worked towards the development of a nuclear bomb.

During this time, a serious nuclear weapons program in South Korea did not emerge, only a modest step towards nuclear energy aided by the United States. The motivation for acquiring nuclear weapons originated from the motivation of remaining more powerful than North Korea.[32] In the aftermath of the Korean War, both states were vulnerable and economically devastated.[33] Their main concern was gaining relative power over their enemy. The Korean Armistice Agreement resulted in a ceasefire, but no formal end to the war. South Korea had received aid from UN forces during the war that helped them achieve a military advantage. In the aftermath of the armistice, the ROK viewed nuclear arms as a necessary step to gaining power over the DPRK. Despite security concerns that would have motivated the development of nuclear weapons, the lack of capability, due largely to post-war fragility, resulted in failure to yield

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[31] "Imaginary Savior: The Image of the Nuclear Bomb in Korea, 1945-1960"," *Teach311*, March 14, 2014, https://www.teach311.org/2014/03/11/article-imaginary-savior-the-image-of-the-nuclear-bomb-in-korea-1945-1960-2008/; William Burr, "Stopping Korea from Going Nuclear, Part I," National Security Archive, March 22, 2017, https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/henry-kissinger-nuclear-vault/2017-03-22/stopping-korea-going-nuclear-part-i.

[32] Sheila Jasanoff and Sang-Hyun Kim, "Containing the Atom: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and Nuclear Power in the United States and South Korea."

[33] Jong Wong Lee, "The impact of the Korean War on the Korean economy," *The International Journal of Korean Studies* 5, no 1 (Spring 2001), https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/journals/ijoks/v5i1/f_0013337_10833.pdf.

concrete efforts towards building a nuclear program. This furthers the theory that motivation is not enough for a state to produce nuclear weapons; it must be coupled with economic capability to provide the means to fulfill this motivation.

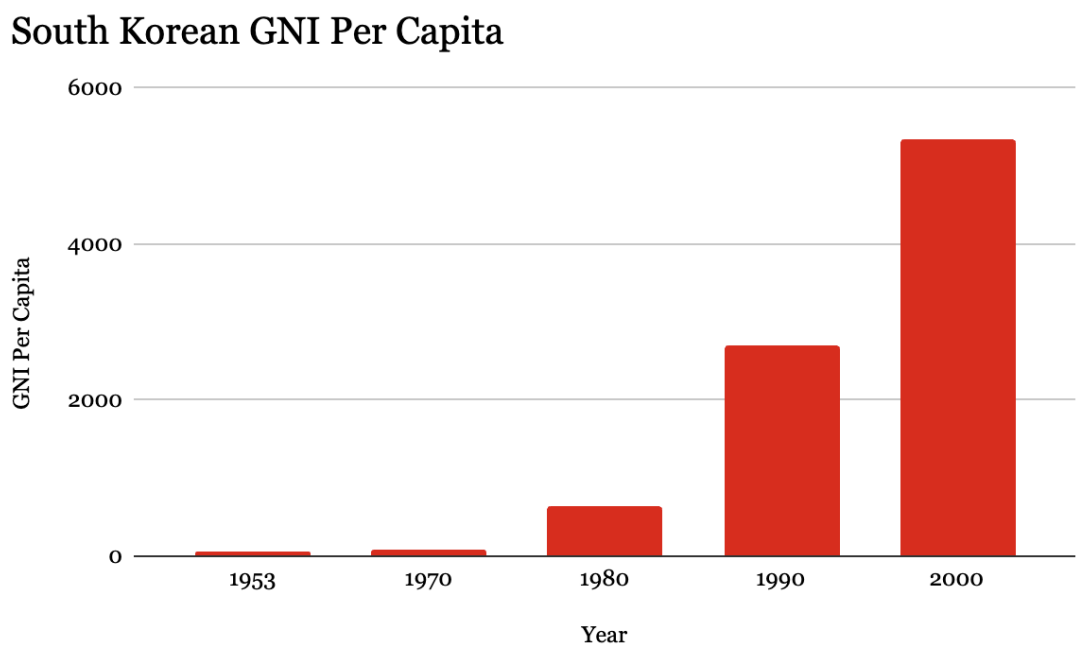
South Korea once again set its sights on obtaining nuclear weapons in 1973 due to expanding security motivations. Beginning in 1968, South Korea faced increasingly frequent military clashes on the border with North Korea and several larger DPRK aggressions.[34] This aggression is exemplified in the Blue House Raid of 1968, when 31 North Korean soldiers went undercover in an attempt to assassinate President Park Chung-Hee. This failed attempt, along with North Korea's strike on a US navy reconnaissance plane in 1969, led to increased security concerns. The United States chose not to retaliate against North Korean aggression due to the recently elected Nixon administration's emphasis on pulling back from direct military intervention.[35] This inspired doubt in South Korea about the extended deterrence provided by the United States. If the United States would not intervene militarily when faced with direct aggression from North Korea, how likely would it be to intervene militarily on behalf of another state?

South Korea also attempted to expand its nuclear capability by making deals with France to buy a reprocessing plant. However, these deals fell through after the United States negotiated with France to prevent proliferation.[36] The motivation for nuclear weapons in this instance was a security threat, but was not coupled with capability. Figure 3 details the growth in South Korea's economy measured using GNI. Its economy was on the rise, but it was still classified as low

[34] Kwanghoon Han, "The Secret History of South Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program | Geopolitical Monitor," *Geopolitical Monitor*, September 24, 2024, https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/the-secret-history-of-south-koreas-nuclear-weapons-program/.
[35] Mac Bishop, "N. Korea Sent an Assassin to Kill South's President. Here's His Story.," *NBC News*, January 26, 2018, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/north-korea/north-korean-ex-assassin-recalls-1968-year-mattered-most-n840511.
[36] Kwanghoon Han, "The Secret History of South Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program | Geopolitical Monitor."

income in the 1970s. In 1978, the WDR considered any country to have a GNI of under $250 per capita to be below the threshold of a middle income country.[37] South Korea's GNI per capita in 1970 began at $81, placing it well below the threshold of even a middle income country.[38] Low income countries had low economic capability, meaning that, under the capabilities model, the South Korean economy in the 1970s was not advanced enough to support a nuclear weapons program. South Korea sought capability in the form of foreign aid from France, but was denied, limiting the progress it could make on nuclear development, leading to the abandonment of nuclear efforts.

Figure 3: South Korean GNI from 1953-2000[39]



Lack of capability played a large role in halting the development of nuclear weapons in South Korea in the 1970s despite strong incentives for nuclear development. This pivotal

[37] Divyanshi Wadhwa and Espen Prydz, "Classifying Countries by Income."
[38] "The Korean Economy – the Miracle on the Hangang River," *Korean Cultural Centre,* accessed May 11, 2025, https://kccuk.org.uk/en/about-korea/economy/the-korean-economy-the-miracle-on-the-hangang-river/#:~:text=The%20country's%20GNI%20per%20capita,to%20USD%2032%2C115%20in%202019.&text=South%20Korea%20established%20an%20export,of%20insufficient%20capital%20and%20resources.
[39] "The Korean Economy – the Miracle on the Hangang River."

decision to abandon nuclear weapons development due to a lack of capability demonstrates that the economic capability of a state is a necessary condition of nuclear weapons development. A South Korean ally, the United States, played a crucial role in undermining South Korea's nuclear development in the 1970s. The United States received intelligence of ROK nuclear ambitions in 1974, and, due to the US strategy of non-proliferation, it took immediate steps to prevent deals that would give South Korea nuclear capabilities.[40] South Korea signed the NPT, similar to North Korea, not to commit to abandoning development of nuclear weapons, but because foreign technical aid, in this case from Canada, was conditional on ratification of the NPT.[41] The United States collaborated with Canada in order to prevent Seoul's acquisition of nuclear technology and took further steps after South Korea signed the NPT in 1975. Ultimately, during this time period, South Korea came closer than ever to developing a nuclear weapon, as it was facing increasing security threats from the North, as well as a decline in trust of its allies. Similar to the first push in the 1950s, South Korea was still not economically advanced enough to carry out its nuclear desires and was unable to gain nuclear arms capability from foreign states due to US intervention. The result was abandonment of nuclear development efforts due, once again, to a lack of means.

Since the 1970s, South Korea's economy has significantly advanced, and the security threat posed by North Korea has grown due to its acquisition of nuclear weapons in 2006.[42] The main factor contributing to the lack of South Korean nuclear development since the 1970s has been a guarantee of protection under its alliance with the United States. In 1978, the ROK and US governments established the "Combined Forces Command," with the overall goal of

[40] William Burr, "Stopping Korea from Going Nuclear, Part I."
[41] Se Young Jang, "Bringing Seoul into the Non-Proliferation Regime," *Wilson Center*, September 20, 2017, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/bringing-seoul-into-the-non-proliferation-regime.
[42] "The Korean Economy – the Miracle on the Hangang River."

protecting South Korea from North Korean threats.[43] This is one example of a US assurance of South Korean protection. In 2023, President Biden assured South Korea that it is still protected by the United States, saying "look, a nuclear attack by North Korea against the United States, its allies or partisans… partners… is unacceptable and will result in the end of whatever regime were to take such an action."[44] Biden and ROK President Yoon Suk-Yeol came to an agreement known as the "Washington Declaration." This agreement expanded the ROK's role in nuclear consultations with the United States, providing another layer of collaboration and assurance of collective security under the US nuclear umbrella.[45] Despite North Korean acquisition of nuclear capability, the strong commitment of the United States to provide South Korea with defence against an attack from North Korea gives South Korea strong enough deterrence to provide security, meaning that nuclear weapons development is now prevented by a lack of motivation.

IV. Conclusion

Ultimately, the conditions under which a state develops nuclear weapons are twofold. A state must have motivation to develop nuclear weapons, which stems from a threat to security. This motivation must be accompanied by state capability, either in the form of an economy able to divert large amounts of funds to developing nuclear technologies, or foreign economic or technological aid. In North and South Korea, a combination of capability and threatened security was seen during periods of nuclear weapons advancement, and absent during periods where advancement was not made. Taking away one or both of these factors will be key to nuclear non-proliferation efforts.

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[43] Thomas Duval, "Combined Forces Command Underlines Ironclad Commitment during Ceremony," *US Indo-Pacific Command*, November 8, 2023, https://www.pacom.mil/Media/NEWS/News-Article-View/Article/3584546/combined-forces-command-underlines-ironclad-commitment-during-ceremony/.

[44] David Sanger and Peter Baker, "In Turn to Deterrence, Biden Vows 'End' of North Korean Regime If It Attacks," *The New York Times*, April 26, 2023, https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/26/us/politics/biden-south-korea-state-visit.html.

[45] David Sanger and Peter Baker, "In Turn to Deterrence, Biden Vows 'End' of North Korean Regime If It Attacks."

In North Korea, both of these conditions were present throughout the period of nuclear weapons development, beginning with an initial capability provided by the Soviet Union's assistance, combined with the motivating factor of competition with South Korea for legitimate control of the Korean peninsula. These conditions continued beyond the 1950s, in North Korea's acquisition of nuclear technologies through signing the NPT. This agreement both allowed North Korea to gain nuclear weapons technology from foreign states and decreased security due to its failure to comply with IAEA inspections. When North Korea signed the Agreed Framework, nuclear weapons development paused due to the assurance from the United States that it would not threaten North Korea, eliminating its main security concern. In the end, this cooperation was broken by a shift in US foreign policy following 2001 that threatened North Korea's relationship with the United States and, therefore, its overall national security. This was the final push necessary to lead North Korea to successful nuclear arms development in 2006.

In South Korea, nuclear development did not occur due to the simultaneous lack of security motivations and economic capability. South Korea did not have the economic capability to build a nuclear weapon until its economy advanced in the 1980s. Before then, it was shut down in its multiple attempts to obtain the foreign aid it needed to supplement its lack of indigenous capability. After the 1980s, the nuclear security threat against South Korea posed by North Korea was effectively neutralized due to US action to assure South Korea of protection under US nuclear power. Therefore, South Korea never had both elements necessary to create the conditions conducive to nuclear weapons development.

This framework can provide insight about present-day Iran. Beginning with capability, Iran's economy was considered upper-middle income as of 2023, meaning that it has funds to

divert into a nuclear weapons development program.[46] It also received initial technological support for uranium enrichment capability from China and Russia in the 1980s and 90s.[47] Iran's own economic ability to fund a nuclear weapons program, as well as initial technical support from Russia and China, provide evidence that capability is present. In order to determine whether nuclear development will occur, security must also be taken into consideration. The United States poses one of the largest security threats to Iran, as it sponsors forces that oppose the Iranian government and has labeled Iran as part of an "Axis of Evil," revealing hostility towards the state.[48] Despite being Iran's strongest nuclear ally, Russia cannot provide Iran with security against the threat of a US attack, as it is unlikely to retaliate with nuclear force against the United States on Iran's behalf. This is reinforced by Russia's recent condemnation of, but lack of action against the United States after the strikes on Iran.[49] Accordingly, Iran and Russia do not have a notion of collective security.[50] This lack of security from Iran's principal nuclear ally, coupled with increasing security threats posed by the United States, gives Iran sufficient motivation to develop nuclear weapons. Therefore, both conditions—threatened security and economic capability—necessary for the development of nuclear weapons are present in the case of modern-day Iran.

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[46] Shwetha Eapen, Kathryn Young, and Eric Metreau, "World Bank Country Classifications by Income Level for 2024-2025," *World Bank Blogs*, July 1, 2024, https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/opendata/world-bank-country-classifications-by-income-level-for-2024-2025.
[47] "A History of Iran's Nuclear Program," *Iran Watch*, December 19, 2023, https://www.iranwatch.org/our-publications/weapon-program-background-report/history-irans-nuclear-program.
[48] Robert Hunter, "The Iran Case: Addressing Why Countries Want Nuclear Weapons," *Arms Control Association*, accessed May 11, 2025, https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2004-12/iran-nuclear-briefs/iran-case-addressing-why-countries-want-nuclear-weapons.
[49] Robyn Dixon and Natalia Abbakumova, "Russia Condemns U.S. Strikes on Iran but Takes No Concrete Actions," *The Washington Post*, June 23, 2025, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2025/06/23/iran-russia-alliance-strikes-nuclear/.
[50] Nikita Smagin, "Will Moscow Help Washington 'Solve' the Iranian Problem?," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, April 2, 2025, https://carnegieendowment.org/russia-eurasia/politika/2025/04/russia-usa-iran-relationship?lang=en.

One or both of these conditions could be eliminated. The June 2025 US strikes on three Iranian nuclear sites affected capability, but it is unclear to what extent. The White House asserts that these sites were "completely obliterated," setting the Iranian nuclear program back by years, and that the United States will be able to destroy any nuclear facility Iran may build. A leaked assessment from the US Defense Intelligence Agency states that these strikes set the program back by just months, as there are intelligence reports that Iran both still has intact nuclear centrifuges and possibly removed large amounts of HEU from the targeted facilities prior to the attacks. The United States has attempted to negotiate a deal with Iran to prevent uranium enrichment, but Iran has refused, claiming peaceful intent.[51] While it is unclear to what level Iranian capability was reduced by these strikes, it is likely that its security motivations increased. Being directly attacked by a nuclear power provides more incentive for Iran to develop nuclear weapons to deter future attacks. Iran does not have a history of cooperation with the United States, and making a deal with the United States at this point may cause the Iranian government to appear weak to its citizens. Overall, Iran has capability supported by an upper-middle income economy, and some degree of a nuclear program, though the extent of this is ambiguous due to the unknown effects of the recent strikes. These strikes also provided Iran with increased security motivations. Based on the framework established in this study, Iran is likely to achieve nuclear weapons development in the coming years unless one or both of these conditions is eliminated.

Ultimately, I have established the conditions, namely the motivation of security, and the means of capability, under which nuclear weapons development occurs. By identifying these fundamental factors, action can be taken to determine in which states both of these factors are

[51] Warren P. Strobel et al., "U.S. Initial Damage Report: Iran Nuclear Program Set Back by Months, Not Obliterated," *The Washington Post*, June 25, 2025, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2025/06/24/us-iran-bomb-assessment-nuclear-sites-not-destroyed/.

present, and to form policies around eliminating the influence at least one of them to reduce the likelihood of international instability as a result of nuclear proliferation.

BLURRING BORDERS:

A Breakdown of China's One-Child Policy and International Adoption Between the United States and China

Katherine Tan

Since 1992, China has opened its doors to international adoption. In just 32 years, over 160,000 children have been adopted by families from countries worldwide. Yet, in September 2024, the country announced that it would be halting foreign adoption work, the only exception being "[...] the adoption of a child or stepchild of blood relatives of the same generation who are within three generations of foreigners coming to China to adopt [...]." According to records from the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. has been the largest receiving country of Chinese adoptees. This paper will first explore the history of Chinese domestic policy, which has resulted in a consistently high number of adoptions from China to the U.S., including the role of Malthusian theories, family planning campaigns in the 1970s, and the one-child policy. Then, the focus will shift towards the implications of China's recent decision to stop foreign adoption work on U.S.-China relations. Specifically, the second section will explore how the process of intercountry adoption has produced an unforeseen connection between the U.S. and China, and the consequences of terminating that connection. It will demonstrate how the connection between these countries began with individuals and gradually trickled up to leaders at the national level, ultimately softening the reputations of the U.S. and China to each other's citizens.

I. Introduction

The inspiration for this paper stems from personal experience. In September 2007, my twin sister and I were adopted from an orphanage in Guangzhou, China at 13 months old. Growing up listening to stories of our adoption and the role the one-child policy played in our journey to the U.S. sparked an interest in learning more about the over 82,000 Chinese children adopted into American families.[1] It was these stories that gave me a first glimpse into how adoption, on an individual level, connects people across cultures. Whether it was the mandatory three-week stay in China to bring us home or the incorporation of Chinese traditions into our daily lives, our family has undoubtedly formed a connection with China. The connection that many adoptive families form with the country of adoption can be applied on a larger scale, one where intercountry adoption connects the two disparate countries of the U.S. and China. The relationship begins with people (adoptive parents who research China's adoption process and children who become "ambassadors"[2] for their country of origin) and slowly incorporates larger forces of international laws and individual governments.

Before elaborating on the impact of international adoption on U.S.-China relations, this paper will focus on China's domestic politics that produced the country's high rate of adoption. Many sources credit the one-child policy for the rapid increase of adoptable Chinese children, particularly girls, but that policy is just one layer. Factors such as a deep-rooted fear of overpopulation from the espousal of Malthusian theories and a strict family planning campaign in the 1970s,[3] all contributed to the creation of the one-child policy and high rates of adoption. The abundance of adoptable children coupled with American families' desires to adopt

[1] BBC News, *China Ends Foreign Adoptions*, *YouTube*, 2024, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4mywE8aXzvI.
[2] Sara K. Dorow, "Client, Ambassador, Gift: Managing Adoption Exchange," in *Transnational Adoption: A Cultural Economy of Race, Gender, and Kinship* (New York University Press, 2006), 113–152.
[3] James Z. Lee and Wang Feng, "Malthusian Myths," in *One Quarter of Humanity: Malthusian Mythology and Chinese Realities, 1700-2000* (Harvard University Press, 1999), 18–21.

internationally laid the groundwork for a budding relationship between the U.S. and China, which lasted over three decades. This paper will examine the ways in which intercountry adoption connected the U.S. and China, and the consequences of severing that connection now that China has halted foreign adoption work.

II. Chinese Politics and the Development of China's One-Child Policy

A. *An Overview of China's One-Child Policy*

The one-child policy was a form of family planning created by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to address the rapidly rising population in China. The restrictions were meant to be temporary (the policy was relaxed in January of 2016 when couples were legally able to have two children) based on the belief that a curbed population would lead to economic growth.[4] While the one-child policy was officially implemented in 1979, the Chinese government had been suggesting one child per couple as early as the 1970s.[5] This family planning program was communicated to the public via an Open Letter by the CCP in September 1980. The goal of the Open Letter was to colloquially explain the reasoning behind such a restrictive family planning program and address possible reservations. It was crucial that the letter be concise and not overly scientific in tone, as the efficacy of the one-child policy would depend on how well it was received and internalized by the people. Multiple drafts were written by the renowned scientist Song Jian. However, Jian was replaced by demographer Liu Zheng, who with government propagandists, created a document that appealed to the masses.[6]

One of the most interesting facts about the one-child policy was that it was never uniformly enforced; the government always had exceptions written into the legislation that

[4] Wang Feng, Baochang Gu, and Yong Cai, "The End of China's One-Child Policy," *Studies in Family Planning* 47, no. 1 (March 2016): 83, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24720399.
[5] Hanibal Goitom, "Formulation of the One-Child Policy in China," Library of Congress Blogs, November 19, 2013, https://blogs.loc.gov/law/2013/11/formulation-of-the-one-child-policy-in-china/.
[6] Susan Greenhalgh, "Scientific Policymaking in Zhongnanhai," in *Just One Child: Science and Policy in Deng's China* (University of California Press, 2008), 295–297.

allowed certain couples to have more than one child. Groups who qualified for the exceptions included minority populations and rural families.[7] Rural families had a softer version of the policy because they often required more labor to maintain their livelihoods. For them, an exception known as the "1.5 Child Policy" was created, which allowed couples to try for a son if their first child was a girl.[8] The 1.5 Child Policy reflects the demand for boys, partly due to the patrilineal nature of Chinese society. While there are exceptional cases of families placing a higher value on girls, the 1.5 child policy disproportionately left girls abandoned.[9] The consequences of male preference became magnified once the one-child policy was put into effect, and China continues to struggle with the ramifications today. To form a more comprehensive understanding of the one-child policy, it is crucial to unpack the role Malthusian ideologies and the 1970s birth-planning campaigns had in its creation.

B. *Malthusian Ideology and the Club of Rome's Limits to Growth Publication*

The roots of the birth-planning campaigns in the 1970s and the one-child policy can be traced back to Thomas Malthus' theories on population. Malthus was an English economist in the 18th and 19th centuries who theorized that the trend of population growth would lead to shortages in natural resources.[10] Malthus recognized that trends in expanding populations could be curbed via a "preventative check"[11] (restricting nuptiality) or a "positive check"[12] (rising mortality). He associated the former with the Western world and the latter with the non-Western world.[13] Although Malthusian ideologies predated the beginning of China's family planning

[7] Erika Platte, "China's Fertility Transition: The One-Child Campaign," *Pacific Affairs* 57, no. 4 (Winter 1984–1985): 651, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2758713.
[8] Leslie K. Wang, "Survival of the Fittest," in *Outsourced Children : Orphanage Care and Adoption in Globalizing China* (Stanford University Press, 2016), 38.
[9] Lee and Feng, "System," in *One Quarter of Humanity: Malthusian Mythology and Chinese Realities, 1700-2000* (Harvard University Press, 1999), 107.
[10] "Thomas Malthus," History, 2014, https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/malthus_thomas.shtml.
[11] Lee and Feng, "Introduction," 3.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Lee and Feng, "Introduction," 4.

campaigns by nearly a century, his theories had a resurgence around the mid-20th century as populations across the globe began growing at an unprecedented rate. Economist and demographer Ma Yinchu was an early advocate of Neo-Malthusian ideology, calling for population restrictions in China as early as 1953. The fear of overpopulation gained more traction after a national census in China revealed a population of around 600 million. Yet, formal plans for population regulation would not be implemented until the political situation in China subsided following Mao Zedong's Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution.[14]

Two reasons for the resurgence of Malthus' ideas in the 20th century come from Mao's Great Leap Forward and a shift in focus towards economic growth. Broadly, the goal of the Great Leap Forward was to quickly transform China from an agrarian society to an industrialized one. Lasting from 1958 to 1962, this period was a time of political unrest, flawed agricultural practices, and natural disasters. The combination of these events led to a nationwide famine the memory of which was fresh in people's minds. [15] Although the Great Chinese Famine was not necessarily caused by overpopulation, the principle that populations could be regulated by increasing mortality rates (as a result of events like famines) is reflected in Malthus' theories. The 1970s were also a period in which the government focused on improving the country's economic situation. When publications such as the Club of Rome's *Limits to Growth* began gaining popularity, the government turned to population reduction as a mechanism for economic growth. Written by a group of international scientists, this report called for a reduction in population, among other solutions, to sustain natural resources. The report also asserted that China's optimal population circa 2080 was 700 million or less.[16] The validity of the report has

[14] Platte, "China's Fertility Transition," 649.
[15] Clayton D. Brown, "China's Great Leap Forward," Education About Asia, Winter 2012, https://www.asianstudies.org/publications/eaa/archives/chinas-great-leap-forward/.
[16] Martin King Whyte, Wang Feng, and Yong Cai, "Challenging Myths About China's One-Child Policy," *The China Journal* 74, no. 74 (July 2015): 154, https://doi.org/10.1086/681664.

since been called into question. Still, the popularity of the report contributed to the formulation of the draconian one-child policy even after the 1970s birth planning campaign. In summary, both Malthus' ideas and the *Limits to Growth* publication spread fear of naturally occurring population growth, and provided support for population limitation to achieve economic growth.

C. *Birth Planning in the 1970s*

Across publications in both China and the U.S., the one-child policy is often credited as the policy that led to a significant decrease in population and subsequent increase in the number of adoptable children. While the latter statement may hold true, the former is not quite accurate. A commonly cited statistic suggests that the one-child policy prevented around 400 million Chinese births, but many aspects of the study are questionable. The authors of the study took the declining birth rate between 1950 and 1970 and predicted what the crude birth rate would have been in 1998. Noticing that the observed birth rate after 1970 fell below their predicted rate, "the authors calculated the number of births attributed to the difference between the predicted and the observed birth rates as the number of births 'averted'".[17] While the study found that 338 million births were averted, the number reported was changed to 400 million. Yet, the larger issue at hand is that the predicted 338 million births reflects the period since 1970, rather than 1980 when the one-child policy was put into effect.[18] These errors demonstrate the significant impact that birth planning in the 1970s had on China's efforts to reduce population growth.

The main movement during the 1970s was the "later, longer, and fewer"[19] campaign. The "later" portion was reflected in a push for women to get married later (at least 25 for women and 27–28 for men). The "longer" portion pushed couples to wait at least four years between each

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[17] Wang Feng, Yong Cai, and Baochang Gu, "Population, Policy, and Politics: How Will History Judge China's One‐Child Policy?," *Population and Development Review* 38 (2012): 120–121, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23655290.
[18] Feng, Cai, and Gu, "Population, Policy, and Politics," 121.
[19] Wang, "Survival of the Fittest," 32.

birth. The "fewer" portion advocated that couples limit the number of children they planned to have (two for urban families and three for rural families).[20] Although this birth planning program set a limit of two or three children per family rather than one, it was nevertheless strictly enforced. In fact, the methods of persuasion and coercion during the one-child policy had their origins in this "later, longer, fewer" campaign.[21] Victims of coercion have testified in front of Congress that Family Planning agencies in China were responsible for forced contraception, forced abortions, group punishment (punishing family members for unapproved pregnancies), and mandatory checkups in places of employment to ensure that women were not pregnant.[22] These invasive methods speak to the government's method of implementing birth planning policies. Ultimately, it was local governments and officials that were tasked with ensuring birth quotas were met within their region.[23] Whether or not such quotas were met could determine if an official would receive a promotion or get fired. Thus, officials resorted to these drastic measures to ensure that people were following government-issued policies.

D. *Transition to the One-Child Policy and High Adoption Rates*

Despite achieving a significant decrease in population with the 1970s birth planning campaigns, China continued their efforts with the creation of the one-child policy. The Open Letter may have called on the masses to restrict birth planning, but it was local governments once again that were responsible for implementing the one-child policy. For example, following the announcement of a new one-child policy in June 1979, individual regions (Shanghai, Beijing, Tianjin, Sichuan, Shandong, Hunan, Anhui, Gansu, and Guangdong) began to create rules and

[20] Whyte, Feng, and Cai, "Challenging Myths About China's One-Child Policy," 149.
[21] Whyte, Feng, and Cai, "Challenging Myths About China's One-Child Policy," 150.
[22] *China's One-Child Policy: The Government's Massive Crime Against Women and Unborn Babies: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, One Hundred Twelfth Congress, First Session, September 22, 2011* (Washington: U.S. G.P.O. : For sale by the Supt. of Docs., U.S. G.P.O, 2011), 8, 12.
[23] Mara Hvistendahl, "Has China Outgrown the One-Child Policy?," Science, September 17, 2010, https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.329.5998.1458.

incentives for residents to obey.[24] In subsequent years, the government continued to revise legislation that supported this new birth planning policy. It naturally followed that the longer the policy was in effect, the faster the rate of adoptable children in China grew. In order to deal with this situation, China developed a network of Social Welfare Institutes (SWI) across the different provinces where children, predominantly girls, were placed. This unique system began around 1949 when China transitioned from public orphanages to state-run SWI. State-run orphanages prioritized the collective well-being of the children in their care, and were often found in the major cities of the province/region. As China transitioned to a market economy under Deng Xiaoping, SWI fell under the control of local governments rather than the national government.[25] This shift caused larger disparities in resources between the SWI, and an increase of migrant workers at the orphanages.

Under Deng Xiaoping's leadership, China saw massive economic growth as demonstrated by the country's 1980 GDP quadrupling by 1995.[26] The contradiction between a booming economy and high rates of adoptable children can be explained in part by China's demographic situation. Two prominent demographic features rooted in Chinese history are patrilineal ancestor worship and bureaucratic state autocracy.[27] A full explanation of these features is outside of the scope of this paper, but Chinese society (in general) places a higher value on boys than girls. Men can bring in additional family members (via their spouse) and are responsible for caring for their parents. So, when the one-child policy was instituted, many couples abandoned daughters in hopes of trying for a son. The expectation that children are responsible for caring for their parents also contributed to the higher abandonment of girls, rather

[24] Platte, "China's Fertility Transition," 650-651.
[25] Wang, "Introduction," 15-16.
[26] Feng, Cai, and Gu, "Population, Policy, and Politics," 125.
[27] Lee and Feng, "Introduction," 9

than boys, because sons were seen as better financial providers for parents. While some abandoned children were left at SWI, the majority were not for fear of being punished by local authorities. A solution was created where parents would be able to legally leave their children in "baby hatches" and ensure their child would be taken to the SWI. The legalization of these "baby hatches" had a positive correlation on the number of children abandoned. A hatch in Guangdong Province had to suspend its services in January 2014 after it had received 262 babies in less than two months.[28]

E. *Implications of the One-Child Policy on China's Society*

Retrospective analysis demonstrates that the one-child policy may have been more detrimental than helpful, as the country now faces demographic issues that are difficult to solve, including an aging population and a skewed sex ratio at birth. As previously mentioned, China started discussing regulations and informally implementing policies for family planning as early as the 1950s, but regulations increased drastically around the 1970s. Consequently, a disparity exists in the number of people between generations. The current working-age population is smaller than the generation before them.[29] This has a twofold effect where the economy has a smaller workforce, and the generation of only-children (as a result of family planning policies) bear a larger responsibility. Economic principles can explain the negative consequences of a smaller workforce on economic growth, but the weight of responsibility to care for family is tied more closely to Chinese culture. Because children are expected to support parents and grandparents financially, these only-children are stuck with the so-called "4-2-1 problem"—where an only-child is tasked with providing for two parents and four grandparents.[30]

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[28] Wang, "Survival of the Fittest," 39–40.
[29] Feng, Gu, and Cai, "The End of China's One-Child Policy," 84.
[30] Jing-Bao Nie, "China's One-Child Policy, a Policy Without a Future," *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics* 23, no. 3 (July 2014): 281–282, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0963180113000881.

The one-child policy was relaxed in 2016 to allow couples to have two children. Despite these efforts, studies show that couples are now choosing to have fewer children than they did before the policy. The driving force behind this trend seems to be economic rather than government-instituted policy.[31]

The second issue that China faces is a gender imbalance, demonstrated by a skewed sex ratio at birth (SRB). For most countries, infant SRB falls around 103-107 boys per 100 girls. However, China's 2010 census showed an SRB of 118 boys per 100 girls, and ratios have risen to 130 boys per 100 girls.[32] As these children have grown older their generation has suffered from lower marriage rates due to the uneven ratio of women and men. Interestingly, the architects of the one-child policy had foreseen China's current issues of aging populations, labor shortages, and a skewed SRB; these exact concerns were addressed in the CCP's Open Letter. So, why did the Chinese government decide to go through with the one-child policy even after birth rates decreased during the 1970s campaign? They believed that the benefits of a reduced population would outweigh any "secondary" concerns of population aging, labor shortages, or distorted sex ratios.[33] Looking back, these "secondary" concerns have proved to be more burdensome to deal with and slow to reverse.

III. Intercountry Adoption's Impact on U.S.-China Relations

A. *Adoption as a Method of Connection*

The process for intercountry adoption varies between countries, but a common thread is the connection between the receiving state and the providing state. Intercountry adoption creates families from people across countries drawing in numerous political systems, international

[31] Zheng Zhenzhen et al., "Below-Replacement Fertility and Childbearing Intention in Jiangsu Province, China," *Asian Population Studies* 5, no. 3 (December 21, 2009): 329–347, https://doi.org/10.1080/17441730903351701.
[32] Wang, "Survival of the Fittest," 36.
[33] Greenhalgh, "Scientific Policymaking in Zhongnanhai," 300.

norms, and actors that would not necessarily cooperate otherwise. The U.S. and China have vastly different political systems and ideologies, yet they have collaborated on micro and macro levels through their international adoption program. The U.S. has been a leader in receiving Chinese adoptees since the country first opened its doors in the early 1990s. Since 1992, more than 82,000 Chinese children have been adopted by American families, with many having to wait years to finally meet their child.[34] Whether it was American foreign service officers in consular offices approving adoptions,[35] officers from the China Center for Children's Welfare and Adoption (CCCWA) sifting through thousands of American adoption applications, tour guides leading families through China, or legislators participating in subcommittee meetings to improve the adoption process, each adoption depended on cooperation from people at all levels of government across both countries. This section of the paper will first dive deeper into the process of adoption and its implications on U.S-China relations. Then, it will take a step back to examine the national-level processes that contributed to successful adoptions and a dynamic relationship between the two countries.

B. *The U.S.-China Adoption Process*

The process of adoption, especially from China, was complex and lengthy. Walking through the steps that adoptive parents went through, from researching different countries to travelling to China to meet their children, reveals layers of connection that parents inevitably formed with the country. The first step in the adoption process is deciding whether to adopt domestically or internationally. International adoption became more prevalent than domestic adoption during the 1970s because of the increased demand for infants, a greater number of

[34] Amy Qin and Vivian Wang, "An Era of Chinese Adoption Ends, and Families Are Torn Over Its Legacy," *The New York Times*, September 15, 2024, https://www.nytimes.com/2024/09/15/world/asia/chinese-american-adoption-program.html.
[35] Interview with Sameer Sheth, U.S. State Department

adoptable children abroad, and the higher maximum age for adoptive parents in foreign countries.[36] There are many reasons why couples decided to adopt from China. Some prospective parents were connected to the culture as second or third generation Asian Americans, while others had family that had visited China. Regardless of the specific reason, people who chose to adopt from China took steps to deepen their understanding of the country. For example, parents often reached out to Asian-American families and community members to learn more about Chinese culture before formally starting the application process.[37] Individuals might not have the power to truly shape global relationships between the U.S. and China, but they can serve as advocates and educators in their communities.[38] An angle that will be discussed later is the role of the adoptees in bridging the divide between these disparate cultures.

The next step in the adoption process is the application, which involves a host of administrative paperwork that is sent to the CCCWA. Officials in China review the paperwork to ensure that parents meet the country's standards and that the home environment will be safe. Factors that contribute to a lengthy application and approval process include determining the availability of children, status of parties, consents, identification of post-adoption rights, and suitability of parents.[39] This phase of adoption arguably demonstrates the importance of cooperation in the adoption process most clearly, because these approvals are dependent on Chinese agencies and officials. First, the Chinese government works with SWI across the country to identify adoptable children, with the number of adoptable children depending on the number of orphanages that are chosen to participate in international adoption.[40] Then, the suitability of parents is assessed by evaluating whether they meet the list of requirements

[36] Dorow, "Why China? Identifying Histories," 50-53.
[37] Dorow, "Why China? Identifying Histories," 42.
[38] *Somewhere Between*, film (United States, 2011), https://tubitv.com/movies/312542/somewhere-between.
[39] Kerry O'Halloran, "The Adoption Process, Human Rights and the ECtHR," in *Adoption Law and Human Rights | International Perspectives* (Routledge, 2018), 93.
[40] Dorow, "Matches Made on Earth: Making Parents and Children for Each Other," 73.

outlined by the Chinese government. Initially, China had a more relaxed policy regarding the acceptability of single women, homosexual couples, and older individuals. As demand for children abroad increased, the country became more restrictive; one example was the lowering of the maximum age of adoptive parents from 35 to 30 in April 1999.[41] These changes ultimately made it more difficult for international families to adopt from China and aligned with international norms that began favoring domestic placements over international placements. American families and adoption agencies emphasized the importance of following China's rules not only because they hoped to be approved but also because there was a risk that China could shut down their program if they found out applicants had violated their rules.[42]

Once approved, families began preparing for their trip to China. These trips were long, as parents were given time to adjust to the new setting and were tasked with completing adoption paperwork and acquiring a visa for their child. Interestingly, there are also many cases of families signing paperwork promising to expose their children to Chinese culture as they grow up.[43] Realistically, there was no way to ensure that adoptive parents would keep this promise, but it does demonstrate how China attempted to promote its values through its adoption process. During the three-week period, the Chinese government subsidized heritage tours for adoptive families to explore famous tourist destinations (e.g., the Great Wall, Forbidden City, and Terracotta Warriors). Many families were also allowed to visit the CCCWA headquarters and orphanages. As Leslie K. Wang notes in her book *Outsourced Children*, all of this built stronger relationships between the PRC and Western adoptive families.[44] The effort tour guides put into

[41] Wang, "From 'Missing Girls' to America's Sweethearts," 67.
[42] *Hague Convention on International Adoptions: Status and Framework for Implementation: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights, and International Operations of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, One Hundred Ninth Congress, Second Session, November 14, 2006* (Washington: U.S. G.P.O. : For sale by the Supt. of Docs., U.S. G.P.O, 2006), https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.cbhear/fdsysafkw0001&collection=congrec, 18-19.
[43] *Somewhere Between*
[44] Wang, "From 'Missing Girls' to America's Sweethearts," 73-75.

exposing families to their child's culture and providing the option to tour the orphanage sites presented China as "a country of origins with clear, uniform procedures that are transparent to adoptive parents and their representatives."[45] Although adoption is just one aspect of China's international activities, the country was garnering a reputation for organization and transparency at the national level in the U.S..

In summary, these reflections speak to the concept of soft power within the field of political science. Coined by Joseph Nye in the 1980s, soft power is "a country's ability to influence others without resorting to coercive pressure. In practice, that process entails countries projecting their values, ideals, and culture across borders to foster goodwill and strengthen partnerships."[46] On a micro level, families begin to process Chinese values through their extensive engagement with the country during the application process. Consequently, individuals begin to paint a picture of China that is separate from the one portrayed in American news. On a macro level, the program's popularity among American adoptive families had forced legislators to take a vested interest in cooperation with China. The connection between adoption and soft power is further shown through China's ability to benefit from the U.S. without resorting to force or coercion. One previously mentioned example is the promise adoptive families made to promote Chinese culture in their homes.

Another example is that adoption allowed Chinese officials to enhance the nation's image abroad while also funding the local welfare system.[47] Naturally, the role of money in adoption has often been a taboo subject. At the same time, international adoption began to grow in China due to the substantial income it generated from fees and generous donations. Even though the

[45] *Asian Adoptions in the United States: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, One Hundred Ninth Congress, Second Session, June 8, 2006.* (Washington : U.S. G.P.O.; For sale by the Supt. of Docs., U.S. G.P.O., 2007), https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.cbhear/cbhearings92285&collection=immigration, 8.
[46] "What Is Soft Power?," CFR Education, May 16, 2023, https://education.cfr.org/learn/reading/what-soft-power.
[47] Wang, "Introduction," 14.

money often went to orphanages and SWI to improve conditions for the children, orphanage directors and other actors were undoubtedly benefiting from the increased flow of funds.[48]

C. *Adoptees as "Ambassadors" of China*

So far, cross-cultural exchange has occurred for future adoptive parents, functioning as a bridge between two global powers. Yet, underlying this strong relationship are the adoptees themselves, who are central to the system. Sara Dorow is a Professor of Sociology at the University of Alberta who has written extensively on the subject of Chinese adoption. In her book, *Transnational Adoption: A Cultural Economy of Race, Gender, and Kinship*, she explains the role of adoptees as client, ambassador, and gift.[49] Dorow describes how "adoption is read as creating positive relations between nations and cultures that might otherwise be rightly suspected of reproducing a global order of nations."[50] At its core, adoption is the desire to help children, a goal that transcends any ideological differences that may exist between China and the U.S.. In other words, Chinese adoptees inadvertently act as ambassadors between the U.S. and China, fostering cooperation and strong relations despite fundamental differences between the two nations. This language of "ambassador" is also seen in U.S. congressional roundtable discussions. Mary Landrieu (U.S. senator from Louisiana) notes, "[...] these children become the most effective ambassadors for these countries when they come to the U.S. without saying or doing anything. The children's presence softens and opens up America's eyes to China [...]."[51]

These examples demonstrate how intercountry adoption has often worked in China's favor, but adoption also reveals the strength of the U.S.' image in China. In the first announcement from China's Foreign Ministry on the decision to halt adoption, spokesperson

[48] Wang, "From 'Missing Girls' to America's Sweethearts," 65.
[49] Dorow, "Client, Ambassador, Gift: Managing Adoption Exchange," 113.
[50] Dorow, "Client, Ambassador, Gift: Managing Adoption Exchange," 127.
[51] *Asian Adoptions in the United States*, 24.

Mao Ning told the press, "We are grateful for the desire and love of the governments and adoptive families of relevant countries to adopt Chinese children."[52] Her language paints the U.S. in a favorable light as a nation that has cared for China's children. Adoption has a twofold reputation, with advocates praising the ability to create families from across the world and critics comparing it to past colonial iniquities. Still, people who facilitated international adoptions (orphanage workers, volunteer nannies, and ordinary citizens) often viewed adoptees as incredibly lucky because of their chance to live in America.[53] Sentiments of nationalism remain among Chinese citizens, contributing to the decline in popularity and eventual end of intercountry adoption. At the same time, during the height of U.S.-Chinese adoptions, there existed a general feeling that life in the U.S. was something to be envied.

D. *National Cooperation on International Adoption: The Hague Conventions*

Stepping away from the individual level, intercountry adoption has impacted U.S.-China relations on a national scale, incorporating government officials from both countries to create international norms. The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Convention) is a document that loosely "governs" intercountry adoptions globally. At the time this paper is written, 127 countries have signed their name to the Convention.[54] At its core, the Convention's purpose is to ensure that "intercountry adoptions are made in the best interest of the child and with respect for his or her fundamental rights and to prevent the abduction, the sale of, or traffic in children."[55] To achieve this goal, the document consists of 48 articles that protect the rights of the child, the birth parents, and the

[52] Nectar Gan, "China Is Ending Foreign Adoptions of Its Children. That Leaves Hundreds of American Families in Limbo," CNN, September 6, 2024, https://www.cnn.com/2024/09/06/china/china-ends-foreign-adoptions-children-intl-hnk.
[53] Dorow, "Client, Ambassador, Gift: Managing Adoption Exchange," 128.
[54] "Apostille Countries – What Countries Have Signed the Hague Apostille Convention?," International Documents Canada, December 11, 2024.
[55] *Hague Convention on International Adoptions: Status and Framework for Implementation*, 1.

prospective parents to ensure that each adoption is legal. The Convention outlines that birth parents must not be bribed or compensated, and that transfer of legal parental status must be given freely. The Convention provides prospective parents with the peace of mind that their child has not been abducted, sold, or trafficked. Birth parents are also assured that adoptive parents are eligible and suited to adopt. Suitability is determined by the sending country, which makes its preferences on marital status, age, and financial status known.[56]

Thus, a natural cooperative relationship is created between China and the U.S., whereby the U.S. is forced to abide by China's suitability requirements. Testimony from Christopher H. Smith (Chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations, Committee on International Relations) notes, "There are people who play the system and lie and deceive about their homosexuality that do so to adopt in China. I can conceive of the Chinese Government shutting down in whole or in part their adoption mechanisms if they think people have improperly exploited their local requirements."[57] While China's requirements may not align with social norms in the U.S., the goals of creating families and helping children are causes that are shared between the two nations. These roundtables demonstrate that legislators were primarily concerned with keeping the program alive, rather than trying to force China to adopt Western norms.

As a leading country in international adoption, especially to the U.S., China's signing of the Hague Conventions is one bridge between countries that are otherwise vastly different. While China and the U.S. have at times cooperated on matters such as mutually beneficial trade, contentions between the two nations arise in areas such as human rights. In the past, the U.S. has leveraged its power to coerce China into addressing and amending human rights violations. A

[56] *Hague Convention on International Adoptions: Status and Framework for Implementation*, 2.
[57] *Hague Convention on International Adoptions: Status and Framework for Implementation*, 18–19.

prime example of this was China's potential accession to the Trans-Pacific Partnership. China's signing of the Hague Conventions can be viewed as a step in the right direction in terms of improving its image and reputation surrounding human rights. The goal of intercountry adoption to place needy children first ties the U.S. and China together rather than one that creates division. In a way, China's cooperation in the Hague Conventions is a result of its use of soft power, as China has ultimately been persuaded into working on a human rights issue. The U.S. projected its values onto China and was successful in getting China to adopt this issue. With China's decision to halt foreign adoption work, that common goal no longer holds the countries together. Although adoption is only one small subsection of foreign relations, severing this connection can only hurt ties that have been incredibly strained in the past few years.

E. *National Cooperation on Intercountry Adoption: Aid & NGOs in the One-Child Policy*

One final point of connection created by foreign adoption on the national level is the impact of aid and investment resulting from the one-child policy. Financial gain during adoption was a topic that was touched on earlier in this paper, especially the individualized gains of orphanage directors and specific SWI. However, the one-child policy has impacted U.S.-China relations on a macro level via the flow of aid from the work of nongovernmental organizations into China. The introduction of NGOs into China coincided with the start of the country's international adoption program in the early 1990s.[58] These organizations have provided both physical resources and human capital. Yet, aid during the one-child policy often "embodied a wide range of meanings and thus had to be seen as religious, economic, political, and social all at once, both creating and transforming social relations."[59] One example of this is the role of

[58] Wang, "Introduction," 12.
[59] R. L. Stirrat and Heiko Henkel, "The Development Gift: The Problem of Reciprocity in the NGO World," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 554 (November 1997): 71, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1049567.

international volunteers working with NGOs. Often expats who had moved with their spouses, these volunteers regularly came into conflict with Chinese nannies who had different methods of child-care from the Western, intensive style that the expats were familiar with.[60] As the adoption program grew, more parents of adoptees became champions of philanthropy. These advocates were able to generate a large volume of donations, while also operating with the goal to spread certain religious ideas to their international partners.[61] Thus, on a macro level, NGOs were able to shape a nuanced relationship between the two countries through the aid they provided. On one hand, physical resources and volunteers were critical to maintaining proper orphanage standards, and subsequently served to strengthen relations. Even so, tensions on the micro-level surrounding standards of care and religious ideas reflected the larger unpredictability of U.S.-China relations.

IV. Conclusion

In closing, the one-child policy was not created in a vacuum. Birth planning advocacy was first advertised in the 1950s, around the time that China's post-war population boom began. The one-child policy was the fourth in a line of birth planning efforts in China that succeeded because of fear created by the rise of Neo-Malthusian ideology and improvements made from the antecedent "later, longer, fewer" birth planning campaign of the 1970s. Without these two factors, the one-child policy might not have resonated as strongly in the minds of China's citizens or been as strictly enforced. In the end, both the 1970s program and the one-child policy contributed to the rise of international adoption. Furthermore, cultural and demographic characteristics of a patrilineal society and the responsibility to care for elders resulted in the disproportionate abandonment of girls and children with special needs.

[60] Wang, "The Limits of Outsourced Intimacy," 122.
[61] *Somewhere Between*.

To address the growing number of adoptable children, the government opened its doors to international adoption in 1992. Generally, intercountry adoption gained popularity due to an increase in demand for infants, a greater number of adoptable children abroad, and a higher maximum age for parents in other countries. Still, China's program gained distinction among American families for its reputation for organization and transparency. Prospective parents engaged with China and Chinese culture throughout every stage of the adoption process, and continued to stay tied to their child's country of origin long after the process was completed. China was able to benefit from the increased flow of foreign aid into the country, and Western ideas of proper childcare and religion were introduced to orphanages across China. Cooperation eventually trickled up to the highest officials in both China and the U.S., with the drafting of international norms, such as the Hague Conventions.

From people to larger institutions, international adoption between China and the U.S. brought two countries that often hold antithetical beliefs together. Their common cause to help children superseded firmly held biases, making Chinese adoptees into unwitting ambassadors between the two superpowers. International adoption softened the reputation of each country among its citizens, and often allowed the countries to project their values without force. China's image began to change first in the minds of prospective parents. This softer reputation was ultimately passed on to the adoptees, who formed a natural curiosity for their homeland. As these children grow up, many are exposed to their culture through their parents, who have made a conscious effort to instill Chinese values in the home. The U.S.' reputation was also strengthened through intercountry adoption because of its role as a caregiver of China's children. Adoptees were often envied by orphanage nannies and locals alike for the quality of life they would be

afforded. Finally, the U.S. was able to subtly project its values through the involvement of NGOs and partnering volunteers.

With China's halt on foreign adoption, there no longer exists a connection at the micro and macro levels between the U.S. and China. American citizens no longer have the opportunity to be exposed to Chinese culture, and thus China's image is largely dictated by what is said in the news. In China, orphanage directors and volunteers are no longer cooperating on work with American volunteers, meaning values are not being shared between these representatives. Perhaps of larger consequence is the lack of discussion between higher officials in the U.S. and the Chinese governments. In the U.S., roundtables on the topic of international adoption and human rights have taken a backseat, as more pressing issues have taken precedence. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs has no reason to cooperate with American adoption agencies and governments on international adoption. In summary, without international adoption, there are fewer paths to understanding between the two countries, and both governments have less incentive to work together. In a time when relations are strained between countries worldwide, a lack of understanding will only serve to hinder any future U.S.-China relations.

ANALYZING THE BRAIN DRAIN IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Anya Pulluru

This paper examines the phenomenon of the brain drain in sub-Saharan Africa through economic, historical, and theoretical lenses, highlighting its relationship to globalization and global inequality. It traces how colonial legacies, underdevelopment, and limited educational infrastructure have made many African nations particularly vulnerable to the emigration of skilled professionals. Using Everett Lee's push-pull theory, the paper analyzes the motivations driving highly educated individuals to seek opportunities abroad and the subsequent economic, social, and health-related consequences for their countries of origin. The discussion incorporates neoliberal, nationalist, and globalization frameworks to assess divergent interpretations of the brain drain and its implications for sovereignty, development, and labor markets. Case studies from Ghana, Zimbabwe, and Nigeria illustrate how these dynamics operate in practice. The paper concludes that mitigating the brain drain requires coordinated domestic and international action such as strengthening higher education systems, improving labor conditions, and fostering equitable global cooperation to prevent the continued outflow of skilled talent from the region.

I. Introduction

Migration has always played a significant role in human history, but the patterns of movement and their consequences have changed over time. When people move, especially across borders, they bring their money, talents, and labor—leading to widespread material impacts that extend beyond individuals and families. The "brain drain," a term first coined by a British newspaper in 1963, refers to "the transfer of human knowledge, experience, skill, and expertise from one area, region, country, or geographic location to another."[1] Originally, the phrase was used to describe the migration of scientists from the United Kingdom and other European countries to the United States. In the decades since, the phrase has become primarily associated with the exodus of highly trained professionals, especially those with tertiary degrees, from the global south to the global north.[2] The brain drain is one of many effects of the growing economic, political, and social interconnections between various parts of the world—a phenomenon known as globalization. In the era of nation-states, taxes, and citizenship, skilled migration is a critical political issue. Multiple frameworks, including neoliberalism, nationalism, and globalization can be used to analyze the complexities of the brain drain and offer diverse potential solutions. Yet, resolving this issue requires collaborative efforts between sending and receiving nations.

The brain drain occurs in nearly all regions of the world in some capacity, but sub-Saharan Africa is particularly affected. European colonialism in Africa left much of the continent underdeveloped, unstable, and dependent on foreign capital, making it difficult to

[1] G.J. Sefa Dei and A. Asgharzadeh, "What Is to Be Done? A Look at Some Causes and Consequences of the African Brain Drain," *African Issues* 30, no. 1 (2002): 31-36, https://doi.org/10.2307/1167087
[2] Sefa Dei and Asgharzadeh, "What Is to Be Done?" *African Issues* 30, no. 1 (2002): 31-36, https://doi.org/10.2307/1167087

establish robust higher education institutions.[3] The ten most populous African countries have a combined ratio of 740 universities to 660 million people, while the United States has about 5,300 universities for half that population.[4] This causes a systemic shortage of highly educated citizens, creating challenges in finding university research and education staff. The issue is compounded when many students who do successfully graduate from college choose to leave the region entirely. This trend started soon after decolonization, as post-independence patriotism gave way to disillusionment with poverty, violence, and high unemployment.[5] By the mid-1980s, Africa had lost about one-third of its skilled workers, primarily to wealthier regions.[6] Currently, about 85% of the sub-Saharan African diaspora is in countries that are a part of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), with the United States, France, and the United Kingdom collectively accounting for 50% of all sub-Saharan migrants. The reasons for this mass emigration of the educated class are complex and vary across regions.[7]

II. Causes and Impact

In 1966, scholar Everett Lee used the terms “push factors” and “pull factors" to explain his theory of migration.[8] Push factors are unfavorable conditions that drive people away from their home countries, and pull factors are favorable conditions that draw them to foreign countries. The primary motivation for migration is economic opportunity, which acts as both a push and a pull factor. Wealthier countries in the global north offer far greater opportunities and

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[3] Sefa Dei and Asgharzadeh, "What Is to Be Done?" *African Issues* 30, no. 1 (2002): 31-36, https://doi.org/10.2307/1167087

[4] "The Struggle to Find High-Quality Education in Africa," *University of the People*, accessed December 2, 2025, https://www.uopeople.edu/blog/the-struggle-to-find-high-quality-education-in-africa/

[5] Luc Ngwé, "African Brain Drain: Is There an Alternative?" *UNESCO Courier*, January 24, 2018, updated January 31, 2025, https://courier.unesco.org/en/articles/african-brain-drain-there-alternative

[6] Abel Chikanda, "Medical Migration from Zimbabwe: Magnitude, Causes and Impact on the Poor," *Development Southern Africa* 24, no. 1 (2007): 47-60, https://doi.org/10.1080/03768350601165850

[7] Jesus Gonzalez-Garcia and Montfort Mlachila, “A Sea Change: The New Migration from sub-Saharan Africa,” *IMF Blog*, November 2, 2016, https://www.imf.org/en/blogs/articles/2016/11/02/a-sea-change-the-new-migration-from-sub-saharan-africa

[8] Everett S. Lee, “A Theory of Migration,” *Demography* 3, no. 1 (1966): 47–57, https://doi.org/10.2307/2060063

earning potential for highly educated professionals than most countries in the global south.[9] For example, the average doctor in Kenya earns about $256.20 USD monthly, which is forty times less than what they would make in the United States.[10] The higher salary, combined with better working conditions and opportunities for advancement, presents an alluring path for migrants.

This was demonstrated in a 2015 study conducted in Ghana that surveyed youth about their interest in migrating.[11] The researchers found that the lack of job opportunities and poor living conditions were cited as the main reasons for choosing to leave. In Ghana, the connection between higher education and employment prospects is weak, and the high unemployment rate drives many students to look elsewhere. The perception of working in Ghana is so negative that a student with no previous travel experience stated, "In Ghana, even people who are employed earn salaries that are far lower compared to countries like Canada and USA. When I travel to Canada, I can relax and enjoy recreational activities and have fun after a hard day's work . . . in Ghana, the cost of living is high so people cannot have fun."[12] Despite having never left Ghana, this student had strong convictions about how life would be better abroad. The difference in socioeconomic conditions between sub-Saharan African countries and highly developed ones like the United States is so significant that it acts as a powerful pull factor. For example, another student in the study of Ghanaian youth noted that when she stayed in the United States, she "did a home care job and earned $50 per day without paying for food or accommodation. In Ghana, even professional nurses do not receive that much income."[13] Beyond the employment benefits,

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[9] Sefa Dei and Asgharzadeh, "What Is to Be Done?" *African Issues* 30, no. 1 (2002): 31-36, https://doi.org/10.2307/1167087

[10] D. E. Agbiboa, "Offsetting the Development Costs? Brain Drain and the Role of Training and Remittances," *Third World Quarterly* 33, no. 9 (2012): 1669–1683, https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2012.720847

[11] M. Dako-Gyeke, "Exploring the Migration Intentions of Ghanaian Youth: A Qualitative Study," *International Migration & Integration* 17 (2016): 723–744, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-015-0435-z

[12] Dako-Gyeke, *Exploring the Migration Intentions of Ghanaian Youth*, 723–744, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-015-0435-z

[13] Dako-Gyeke, *Exploring the Migration Intentions of Ghanaian Youth*, 723–744, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-015-0435-z

the infrastructure, healthcare systems, and education in these countries make them extremely appealing for migrants, especially those with children. Finally, the prevalence of Western—especially American—culture worldwide even acts as its own pull factor, as multiple students in the Ghanaian youth study cited movies and television shows as inspirations for their choice to move to the United States.[14]

The economic impact of the brain drain on sending countries is significant, though whether this impact is beneficial or harmful is heavily debated. At its core, migration leads to a transfer of human and financial capital. People who are educated by African institutions with African funding then spend the money abroad and serve foreign citizens and governments without contributing tax money to their home countries.[15] This widens the already large gap between the global north and south as top scientists, engineers, doctors, and educators in sub-Saharan Africa leave for more developed nations such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. Those countries benefit greatly from the migration because many of them are faced with an aging population, which means that recruiting labor from the more youthful sub-Saharan African countries is a cheaper way of filling their vacancies.[16] But for those African countries, this can cause a problematic cycle; instability and underdevelopment push the highly educated out, reinforcing those issues and preventing the development of a solid middle class.[17] Another consequence is the loss of innovative ideas and research that could improve the sending

[14] Dako-Gyeke, *Exploring the Migration Intentions of Ghanaian Youth*, 723–744, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-015-0435-z.
[15] Sefa Dei and Asgharzadeh, "What Is to Be Done?" *African Issues* 30, no. 1 (2002): 31-36, https://doi.org/10.2307/1167087
[16] Sefa Dei and Asgharzadeh, "What Is to Be Done?" *African Issues* 30, no. 1 (2002): 31-36, https://doi.org/10.2307/1167087
[17] Sefa Dei and Asgharzadeh, "What Is to Be Done?" *African Issues* 30, no. 1 (2002): 31-36, https://doi.org/10.2307/1167087

countries' technological abilities, though some argue that the lack of adequate equipment or infrastructure is a bigger obstacle than skilled emigration.[18]

The healthcare industry, in particular, suffers from the exodus of trained medical officers. For example, between 1995 and 2002, 64.9% of medical officers in Ghana migrated abroad.[19] Studies have also found that over half of Ghanaian-educated doctors work outside of Ghana. While this has saved the United Kingdom over 65 million pounds in education costs, the infant mortality rate, maternal mortality rate, and nurse-to-patient ratio have substantially worsened in Ghana, and the doctor-patient ratio there is 1 to 16,000, compared to a 1 to 430 ratio in the United States.[20] Doctors are especially challenging to replace.The health systems in many sub-Saharan countries continue to suffer as they leave, increasing the workload and burnout rates of those left behind. It is estimated that Zimbabwe also loses about 20% of its healthcare workers annually, which has made it extremely difficult for the country to handle the HIV/AIDS crisis.[21] This issue is compounded by the fact that HIV is a leading cause of death and absenteeism among healthcare workers. Although Africa bears 24% of the global disease burden, it has only 2% of the global supply of doctors,[22] and it is home to 36/57 of the countries with the greatest healthcare shortage.[23] Replacing these workers is no easy task; Africa as a whole spends an estimated 4 billion dollars recruiting more expensive expats to replace locals, often on

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[18] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *The Brain Drain and Negative Social Effects: When is the Home Country Hurt?* in *Policy Coherence for Development 2007: Migration and Developing Countries* (2008): 65-78, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264026100-en.

[19] OECD, *The Brain Drain and Negative Social Effects*, in *Policy Coherence for Development 2007: Migration and Developing Countries* (2008), 65-78, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264026100-en

[20] Daniel Egiegba Agbiboa, "Offsetting the Development Costs? Brain Drain and the Role of Training and Remittances," *Third World Quarterly* 33, no. 9 (October 2012): 1669–1683, https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2012.720847

[21] Chikanda, "Medical Migration from Zimbabwe," 47–60, https://doi.org/10.1080/03768350601165850

[22] Edward J. Mills et al., "The Financial Cost of Doctors Emigrating from Sub-Saharan Africa: Human Capital Analysis," *BMJ* 343 (2011): d7031, https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.d7031

[23] Agbiboa, "Offsetting the Development Costs? Brain Drain and the Role of Training and Remittances," https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2012.720847

limited-term contracts.[24] Some experts argue that due to these trends, brain drain is a solely harmful phenomenon. However, the flow of capital is not unidirectional, and remittances play a significant counterbalancing role.

III. Remittances and Structural Effects

Remittances are funds migrants send back to their families in their home countries. In 2010, remittances to Africa added up to 440 billion dollars, excluding informal exchanges.[25] Remittances enormously help many low-income families, who use the funds to educate other children and increase their quality of life. This flow of money also provides a substantial economic benefit for sending countries, to the point that some are reliant on it. For example, 26% of Liberia's GDP and 35% of Somalia's GDP are from remittances.[26] Some analysts claim that remittances effectively offset the losses from brain drain and further argue that skilled migration is not a significant problem for developing countries. However, this argument overlooks that while remittances may help individual families and communities, they cannot fully address the structural problems exacerbated by the brain drain. Remittances cannot provide more doctors, adopt new technologies, or educate students. The skills and knowledge of a person who leaves their home country cannot be entirely replaced by the money they send back. Nonetheless, their family's reliance on that money provides a strong motivation to migrate.

In many sub-Saharan African countries, such as Senegal, families or even entire villages will sponsor one of their most capable young men's education and migration to receive remittances that support the community. These planned migration efforts are called risk-spreading livelihood strategies. They are often considered to be an alternative to the

[24] Chikanda, "Medical Migration from Zimbabwe," 47–60, https://doi.org/10.1080/03768350601165850
[25] Agbiboa, "Offsetting the Development Costs? Brain Drain and the Role of Training and Remittances," https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2012.720847
[26] Agbiboa, "Offsetting the Development Costs? Brain Drain and the Role of Training and Remittances," https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2012.720847

insurance and credit programs used in industrialized countries because remittances tend to be stable sources of income.[27] These strategies were first explained by economists Oded Stark and David Bloom in their New Economics of Labor Migration theory. They note that the decision to migrate is often made at the family level rather than by an individual since both the costs and benefits are shared within the household.[28] One result of this strategy is that the brain drain is often a gendered phenomenon, in which husbands, sons, and fathers have greater labor mobility and are therefore given access to more opportunities abroad than women. This is not universal, as many women also migrate abroad; women, however, are more likely to do so for low-skilled care work.[29] The effect this has on community roles at home is complex and varies based on cultural differences. In some places, the money provided allows children to stay in school longer and enables the women left behind to become more independent and active in the community. However, the children are also more likely to be raised in single-parent households, and sometimes, women are forced to take on a greater burden by both working and taking care of their family alone.[30] Another result of this strategy is that these patterns of migration create social networks. Immigration by one person establishes a path for later bringing other family members over as well. Social networks are extremely important for choosing destination countries because they can "reduce the costs and risks of movement, enhance the potential for future income, and increase the expected net returns to migration."[31] In the United States, ¾ of migrants are relatives

[27] Agbiboa, "Offsetting the Development Costs? Brain Drain and the Role of Training and Remittances," https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2012.720847

[28] Oded Stark and David E. Bloom, "The New Economics of Labor Migration," *The American Economic Review* 75, no. 2 (1985): 173–78, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1805591

[29] Stark and Bloom, "The New Economics of Labor Migration," 173–78.

[30] OECD, *The Brain Drain and Negative Social Effects*, in *Policy Coherence for Development 2007: Migration and Developing Countries* (2008), 65-78, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264026100-en

[31] M. Dako-Gyeke, "Exploring the Migration Intentions of Ghanaian Youth: A Qualitative Study," *International Migration & Integration* 17 (2016): 723–744, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-015-0435-z

of previous migrants, and a similar pattern exists in many other developed countries.[32] In essence, migration operates as a self-perpetuating cycle where the emigration of one individual serves as a catalyst for others, creating pockets of entire migrant communities in developed countries and continuing the effects of the brain drain.

IV. Differing Theories on Potential Solution

Analyzing the brain drain through the lenses of neoliberalism, nationalism, and globalization offers different understandings of the issue and different ideas about how to "solve" it. Those who subscribe to the neoliberal, international, or cosmopolitan approach prefer to view the brain drain as a "brain bank."[33] They argue that it is nothing more than the mutual exchange of labor and capital; people will go wherever they can receive the greatest return for their services.[34] This lens focuses on the fact that migrants usually choose to move and that it is inherently positive because their choice is voluntary. It also characterizes the brain drain as an inevitable consequence of globalization rather than something preventable.[35] However, this perspective ignores the structural and institutional factors that drive people to migrate and largely overlooks the social and economic costs of migration. These shortcomings lead some to turn to the nationalist approach, which labels the brain drain as a form of exploitation by wealthier countries.

People who use the nationalist lens argue that each nation should be able to use its own human capital, and the recruitment of skilled migrants from the global south by the global north reflects neo-colonialism and the declining terms of trade between the two regions.[36]

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[32] Agbiboa, "Offsetting the Development Costs? Brain Drain and the Role of Training and Remittances," https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2012.720847

[33] Esi E. Ansah, "Theorizing the Brain Drain," *African Issues* 30, no. 1 (2002): 21–24, https://doi.org/10.2307/1167085

[34] Dako-Gyeke, "Exploring the Migration Intentions of Ghanaian Youth," 723–744.

[35] Ansah, "Theorizing the Brain Drain," 21–24

[36] Ansah, "Theorizing the Brain Drain," 21–24

Neo-Marxists often fall into this category. They point to the historic socio-economic differences between core and peripheral countries and see the brain drain as an example of lasting unequal relationships. A point that they often emphasize is the idea of "brain waste," where professional degrees from developing countries are not consistently recognized by developed countries, forcing people who move to take lower-skilled jobs than what they were educated for.[37] Nationalists argue that the brain waste is an example of Western countries purposely devaluing degrees and experience from non-Western nations. While this perspective can be a useful way to deconstruct colonialist mindsets, it is highly structuralist, and it neglects the importance of personal agency and freedom of movement. In Ghana, the students who stay in the country are often exploited by employers who pay far below the value of their degree because unemployment is so high.[38] For Ghanaian youth, leaving is not succumbing to exploitation; it is the best way to prevent it. The nationalist view also fails to recognize that brain drain occurs not only between countries but also within them; almost universally, people from rural or less developed areas move to places with greater economic opportunity, which complicates the claim that the brain drain is solely exploitative.

A third approach combines neoliberal and nationalist theories into a more nuanced globalization view. The globalization view recognizes the benefits and drawbacks of the brain drain for different actors, and it seeks to evaluate how circumstances can shift the net effect of skilled migration. It also considers the relationships between global inequality, market liberalization, instability, and migration.[39] This lens is compelling because the brain drain, along with its causes and effects, is inherently intertwined with globalization and its transformative

[37] Frédéric Docquier and Hillel Rapoport, *Globalization, Brain Drain and Development*, IZA Discussion Paper No. 5590 (March 2011), https://docs.iza.org/dp5590.pdf
[38] Dako-Gyeke, "Exploring the Migration Intentions of Ghanaian Youth," 723–744.
[39] Ansah, "Theorizing the Brain Drain," 21–24

influence on the world. One of the primary functions of states is controlling movement, and some point to skilled migration as evidence of states losing control over the global flow of people. There is some truth to this view, as the brain drain moves talent and money across borders in a way that can undermine state stability.

However, analyses of the brain drain in the context of globalization sometimes ignore that as flows of people grow, so do the barriers to those flows. A simple fact that is often minimized is that migration is not easy. It is expensive, restricted heavily by destination states, and psychologically complex. Furthermore, like many other aspects of globalization, it does not affect people or states equally. Thus, a comprehensive examination of the brain drain must also evaluate the international context that drives the push and pull factors previously mentioned. Weak economies with poor living conditions and limited opportunities do not exist in a vacuum, and the plight of many sub-Saharan African countries can be traced back to policies imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) through structural adjustment plans (SAPs).[40] For example, Zimbabwe's standard of living fell sharply after the implementation of SAPs, likely exacerbating their systemic healthcare issues that still drive each of the major hospitals to lose twenty-four senior nurses and three doctors monthly.[41] The involvement of organizations like the IMF also forcibly exposed many of these countries to the international market, allowing transnational corporations (TNCs) to recruit local talent to move abroad.[42] The World Bank played its own role in imposing on African economies by forcing drastic university budget cuts in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1986, some members of the bank argued that "Africa has no need for universities," preferring that African governments allocate more public spending towards paying

[40] Sefa Dei and Asgharzadeh, "What Is to Be Done?" *African Issues* 30, no. 1 (2002): 31-36, https://doi.org/10.2307/1167087
[41] Chikanda, "Medical Migration from Zimbabwe," 47–60, https://doi.org/10.1080/03768350601165850
[42] Silvia Federici, "African Roots of US University Struggles," *Transversal Texts*, January 1989, https://transversal.at/transversal/0112/federici/en

off foreign debts and financing primary education.[43] They insisted that students who were motivated enough could privately fund their tertiary education, seemingly ignoring that the vast majority of the population in many African countries would not be able to afford it, especially after the implementation of structural adjustment.[44] While the economic and political conditions of sub-Saharan African countries are the primary drivers of high-skilled migration, the role of international agents in forming those conditions highlights how globalization has contributed to the brain drain. Given that globalization does not appear to be decreasing in the near future, countries in sub-Saharan Africa are faced with the necessity of confronting their fleeing skilled labor.

Addressing the brain drain and alleviating the problems it causes are very complex tasks, in part because there is debate over who is responsible for doing so. Some, such as economist Jagdish Bhagwati, argue that professionals who emigrate ought to pay an extra tax to their home government to compensate for the loss of skills. His appeal is both financial and ethical, as he explains that emigrants should have a moral obligation to help those who did not have the same economic opportunities.[45] Others, especially nationalists, insist that developed nations themselves have a responsibility to help mitigate the effects of the brain drain.[46] After all, the data indicates that developed countries benefit greatly from the brain drain at the expense of developing countries to the point that they are often described as "poaching" talent.[47] However, in most cases, it is developing country governments that are expected to address the issue, given that their citizens are the ones experiencing the harmful effects.

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[43] Federici, "African Roots of US University Struggles," *Transversal Texts*, January 1989.
[44] Federici, "African Roots of US University Struggles," *Transversal Texts*, January 1989.
[45] Jagdish N. Bhagwati, "Taxing the Brain Drain," *Challenge* 19, no. 3 (1976): 34–38, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40719435
[46] Docquier and Rapoport, *Globalization, Brain Drain and Development*, IZA Discussion Paper No. 5590.
[47] Docquier and Rapoport, *Globalization, Brain Drain and Development*, IZA Discussion Paper No. 5590.

There are a few general strategies that are often proposed to address the problem, including incentivizing people to return from abroad, creating more favorable conditions to prevent people from leaving, and determining ways for sending countries to still benefit from talent abroad. Given that the brain drain is a global phenomenon, many countries have already attempted to address it. In 2008, China launched "The Thousand Talents Plan," which was designed to attract Chinese scholars with expertise in science, technology, and entrepreneurship who were living abroad. They offered permanent and short-term contracts with significant benefits to encourage expatriates to return to China.[48] India also created programs better to connect members of their diaspora to Indian culture and offered educational scholarships for foreign nationals of Indian origin.[49] These examples are government-sponsored actions that sub-Saharan African countries could use to persuade their expatriates to return. South Korea also successfully "lured" back 75% of its US-educated nationals with doctorates in science and engineering by transforming workplace culture to be more appealing.[50] Some reforms included implementing a "robust reward system, opportunities for advancement, availability of public resources, and a merit-based culture with reduced corruption and nepotism."[51]

However, while these initiatives were effective there, South Korea has the advantage of being a highly developed country with economic opportunities that rival the West. Sub-Saharan Africa would require more systemic changes not just to the workplace, but also to the economic and political conditions of the countries overall. A clear problem with using similar programs to

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[48] Abdoulaye Gueye, "From Brain Drain to Brain Gain: Countries Engaging Their Diasporas," AWS, accessed December 1, 2023, https://production-carnegie.s3.amazonaws.com/filer_public/e9/77/e9770ee4-f63c-423e-8876-edbe7a8f5c01/african_diaspora_forum_2019_gueye.pdf

[49] Gueye, "From Brain Drain to Brain Gain," AWS, accessed December 1, 2023.

[50] Agbiboa, "Offsetting the Development Costs? Brain Drain and the Role of Training and Remittances," https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2012.720847

[51] Agbiboa, "Offsetting the Development Costs? Brain Drain and the Role of Training and Remittances," https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2012.720847

those used in India, China, and South Korea is that they require the allocation of funds for incentives—funds that less developed countries may not have. For example, Zhengzhou University in China offers $85,000 as a starting salary for STEM professors, and the South China University of Technology promises over $800,000 in research grants.[52] When the financial compensation is comparable to or even greater than the equivalent position in the United States, it is much easier for a country to convince people to return. Other incentives that could be more feasible for lower-income countries include promotions, exemptions from certain tax laws, and special services for children and families. However, the reality is that these programs on their own may not be enough. Once expatriates emigrate to more prosperous countries, the vast majority of them prefer to stay, and the amount of resources required to attract someone who is accustomed to Western compensation may be too great.[53] Therefore, it may be more worthwhile for sub-Saharan African countries to focus on retaining the talent they currently have.

V. Conclusion

In order to persuade skilled workers to remain, African governments must address underdevelopment, political and economic instability, and lack of opportunity across many different sectors. They also must invest heavily in university education and support. While it may be difficult for African countries to establish strong research institutions on their own, multiple countries could pool their resources to create several institutions dedicated to different fields, as francophone African countries did in the 1970s and 1990s.[54] However, a limitation of this strategy is that it requires international cooperation and stability, which may not always be feasible.[55] Economic approaches are usually the central focus of policymakers, but symbolic

[52] Gueye, "From Brain Drain to Brain Gain," AWS, accessed December 1, 2023.
[53] Gueye, "From Brain Drain to Brain Gain," AWS, accessed December 1, 2023.
[54] Gueye, "From Brain Drain to Brain Gain," AWS, accessed December 1, 2023.
[55] Gueye, "From Brain Drain to Brain Gain," AWS, accessed December 1, 2023.

measures could be a useful supplement. An aspect that nationalists emphasize is African pride, as they believe that if people are taught to value African culture, they will be more motivated to contribute to African society.[56] This critique reflects the argument that brain drain upholds colonial hierarchies in which the West is idealized as a site for opportunity and modernity, encouraging migrants to leave rather than investing in their home countries.[57] However, it is unclear how much of an impact cultural approaches like this would have without the necessary improvements in development.

A major challenge for these countries is attracting investment for economic development without sacrificing the welfare of the people. In order to persuade TNCs to invest, many governments engage in a "race to the bottom" by establishing lower wages and restrictive labor laws. However, this practice prevents quality of life improvements that could improve retention of educated labor.[58] The importance of labor rights and support cannot be overstated. A case study of the University of Calabar in Nigeria found that policies such as "addressing pay and terms and conditions differentials, workers' rights and strengthening the power of collective representation and bargaining through strengthening trades unions" are essential for retaining staff. The study also supports "investing in research and teaching, infrastructure, expanding and promoting academic freedom."[59] These policies could improve job satisfaction for academics and incentivize them to stay and educate the youth in their home country. But even if sub-Saharan

[56] Ansah, "Theorizing the Brain Drain," 21–24
[57] Sefa Dei and Asgharzadeh, "What Is to Be Done?" *African Issues* 30, no. 1 (2002): 31-36, https://doi.org/10.2307/1167087
[58] Rob Clark and Roy Kwon, "Taking Stock of Flow: Revisiting the Link between FDI and Human Rights," *Social Development* 4, no. 4 (2018): 346, https://online.ucpress.edu/socdev/article-abstract/4/4/346/83403/Taking-Stock-of-FlowRevisiting-the-Link-between
[59] Anokye, Okri, and Adie, "Retention and Brain Drain of Academic Staff in Higher Institutions in Nigeria: A Case Study of University of Calabar."

countries retain more personnel, without the accompanying infrastructure, such as proper equipment, associations, autonomy, and political freedom, the benefit will be limited.[60]

Considering the difficulty of bringing skilled labor back and retaining it, some have instead proposed a kind of knowledge sharing that would preclude the necessity of professionals like scientists and engineers being physically present in their home country. This solution proposes new communication channels through the diaspora and rejects the nationalist system entirely, envisioning a global "brain bank" where advances in technology and science benefit everyone.[61] It also appeals to neoliberals who claim that "the concentration of human capital in the most advanced economies can stimulate technological progress across the world and trickle down to the less advanced economies."[62] Theoretically, developing countries could benefit from their most talented having access to the best resources, though in practice, this is not always the case. People who see globalization as a process that unilaterally entails the decline of states and an increase in "weightlessness" are likely to support this solution. However, even though knowledge may not be tied to a nation, employment, income, and taxes are, which means state sovereignty remains important. Considering the role of wealthy states in recruiting talent, many argue they should pay a form of compensation to the developing countries the professionals are coming from.[63] Currently, states such as Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia offer varying forms of support to many African nations, but further research would be needed to determine how this aid measures up to the losses incurred by African financial investments in education that is used abroad.[64] Increased global communication and cooperation could alleviate some of the deficiencies created by the brain drain, but the competitive nature of

[60] Ansah, "Theorizing the Brain Drain," 21–24
[61] Ansah, "Theorizing the Brain Drain," 21–24
[62] Docquier and Rapoport, *Globalization, Brain Drain and Development*, IZA Discussion Paper No. 5590.
[63] Docquier and Rapoport, *Globalization, Brain Drain and Development*, IZA Discussion Paper No. 5590.
[64] Mills et al., "The Financial Cost of Doctors Emigrating from Sub-Saharan Africa: Human Capital Analysis."

scientific and technological advancements may prevent countries from committing to it. Therefore, retaining skilled workers is still imperative for developing nations. Due to their reliance on remittances, not all states prioritize reducing the brain drain. But unless they invest significant time and resources into preventing the exodus of talent from their borders, the problems of development, disease, and inequality will continue to grow as the people educated enough to solve them leave.

Even though there is no consensus on the framework for studying brain drain, a thorough analysis of the trends in sub-Saharan Africa reveals that just as the causes are complex, the remedies must be multifaceted. The acceleration of globalization means that these migration patterns are not controlled by any lone state or actor. As global markets become more connected and information spreads, people's desire to seek greater economic opportunities abroad will only grow. Ultimately, multi-pronged, collaborative efforts from sending countries, destination countries, and international organizations could be the best way to combat the shortage of scientists, engineers, educators, and especially healthcare workers in sub-Saharan African countries.

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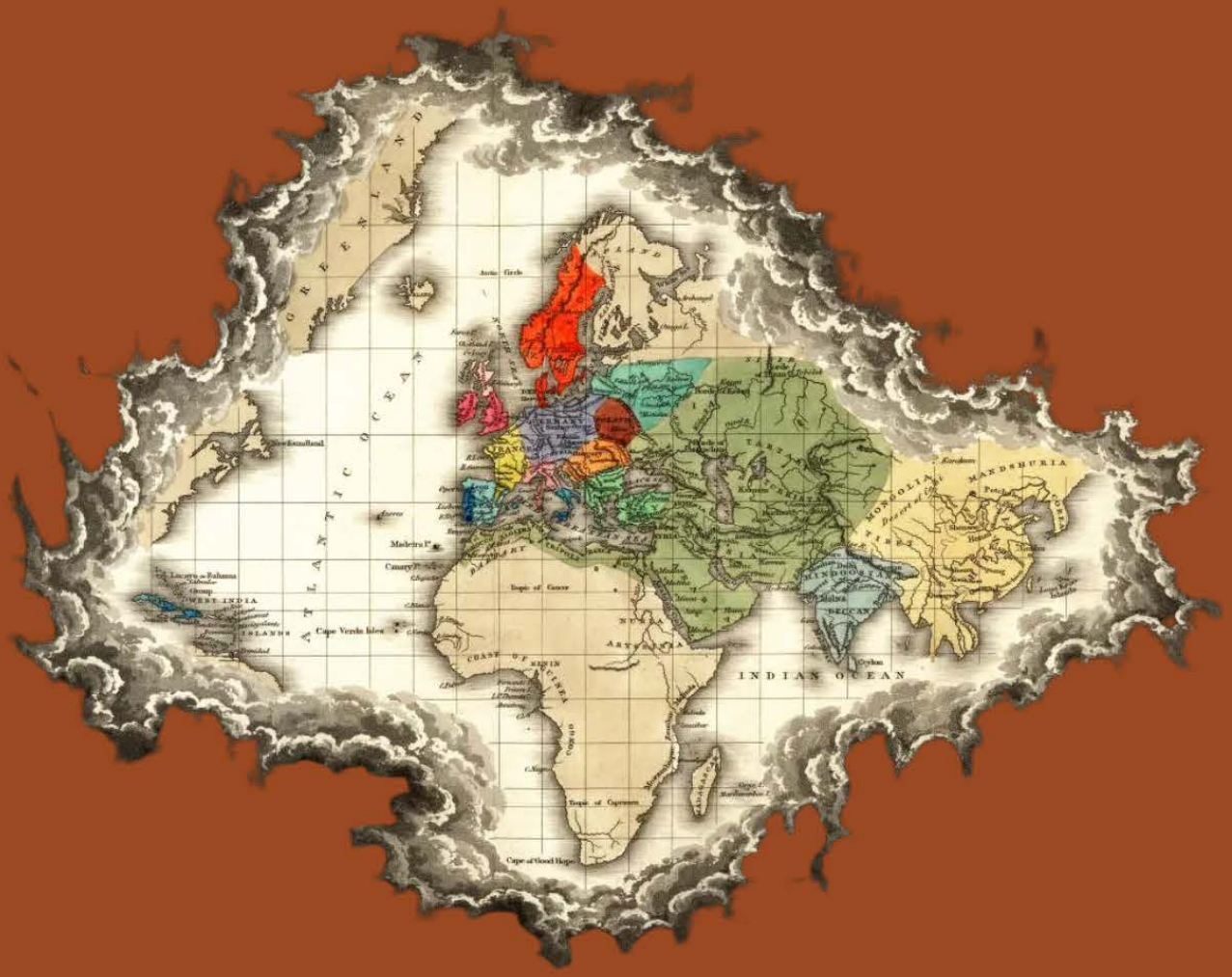
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