

The background of the cover is a dark, semi-transparent version of Plato's Allegory of the Cave. It depicts a group of people in a dimly lit cavern, some sitting and some standing, with their backs to the viewer, looking towards a bright light source at the far end of the cave. The scene is framed by large, dark arches.

the social contract

/THE /'sōSHəl/ /'kän trakt/

noun. 1: An agreement among the members of an organized society

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Letter from the Editor

Being involved in *The Social Contract* over the past four years has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my time as an undergraduate student. Beyond, however, the skills and lessons I've learned editing hundreds of essays and engaging with contributing authors of all ages and from all disciplines, and the wonderful teammates I've had the privilege of working as a contributing author, junior and senior editor, and now Editor-in-Chief, the most rewarding part of my time with the journal has been my involvement in publishing more than 45 student essays. I found myself drawn to *The Social Contract* because of its insistence that student opinions and political participation are precious and too often overlooked.

In today's political landscape, the importance of critical thinking and rigorous academic inquiry cannot be overstated. *The Social Contract* continues to serve as a platform for undergraduate students to engage with pressing issues, innovative theories, and empirical studies within the many fields of political science. With each article, we aim to celebrate the hours of effort behind the incredible essays written by Western students.

In the following pages, you will find 20 of Western University's most incredible political science essays. This year's edition covers various topics that represent the current and emerging social, economic, and political issues that matter to students. I speak on behalf of the entire Social Contract team when I say we are excited to act as a platform for thoughtful debate and respectful analysis.

This year's journal would not have been possible without Max Livingston, whose involvement over the past four years has been instrumental in guiding *The Social Contract* to what it is today. His tireless commitment to the journal cannot be overstated, and he has been a vital part of continuing Amanda Gutzke's vision for the journal since its revival four years ago. With 25 editorial team members, including our newly established Media Content Specialist roles, and more than 70 essay submissions (the most in the journal's history), this year has proven how far the journal has come since 2020 and provided an indication of what is still to come. Next year, under the leadership of Cecilia Cai and Mathieu Paré, who will be acting as joint Editors-in-Chief, I am excited to watch their vision take shape and push the journal forward.

It is my pleasure to present the 16th edition of *The Social Contract*. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude and congratulations to all of our contributing authors for their commitment to academic excellence, which is evident in the quality of this year's essays. I would also like to thank our dedicated editorial team for their tireless efforts and dedication to shaping this year's edition. It has been my honour to act as this year's Editor-in-Chief, and I cannot wait to follow the journal's continuing successes.

Best regards,



Meghan Beswick

Editor-in-Chief, 16th Edition of *The Social Contract*

Letter from the Undergraduate Chair

As Undergraduate program chair of the department of Political Science, it is my honour to congratulate the entire team of The Social Contract on another informative and engaging issue. This initiative is so important because it is student-centered and student led. The Social Contract gives undergraduate students a taste of academic publishing and gives them opportunities to learn how the research publishing process works outside the classroom. When students get to run their own show, we see how high their standards are and how outstanding their research contributions can be. This issue continues to demonstrate what Western Political Science students can achieve when they work together to produce excellence. Developing research, editing, and project management skills is valuable for academic, professional, and personal development, which helps immensely with preparation for future employment and career paths. Getting involved with The Social Contract can help to get you get ready for the future.

Thank you to the entire team for their skill, effort, and hard work!

Best wishes,

Dr. Nandita Biswas Mellamphy

Undergraduate Program Chair, Department of Political Science, Western University.

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The Tongue-in-Cheek of Canada-US Relations: A Critical Examination of Satire's Impact on the Canada-US Relationship

Written by: Emma Hoffman

Abstract

The use of satire in Canadian media serves as a powerful tool in shaping perceptions and attitudes towards the Canada-US relationship. Satirical sketches, such as those on shows like 22 Minutes, highlight differences between the two nations and critically challenge American exceptionalism. Through humor, satire prompts Canadians to rethink their views on integration with the US and critiques politicians advocating for closer ties. Through the lens of humor, satire not only unites Canadians in their unique national identity but also stirs underlying animosities towards Americans and provokes anti-Canadian retaliations from American targets, potentially undermining the perceived alliance between the neighboring countries. Ultimately, it highlights the importance of a stable North American alliance for both parties but especially Canada, highlighting the need to protect the relationship from satirical interventions. An incisive analysis of satirical works underscores its pivotal role in shaping attitudes and consequently the dynamics of the Canada-U.S. relationship.

Keywords: Canada-US Relations, Satire, Incisive, Media, Political Discourse

INTRODUCTION

Canadians not only have a better sense of humour than Americans; they can spell it properly, too.[1] While Canada and the United States demonstrate considerable convergences; reflected in their interdependence and striking similarities, nuanced differences are often brought to the forefront from the Canadian side through the lens of satire. Satirical comments and criticisms from Canada aimed towards the United States foster divisions in the Canada-US relationship, marked by an overarching anti-Americanist sentiment. *The New York Times* even publicized, “no traditional ally has been more consistently at odds with the United States [than Canada].”[2] The role of satire in shaping attitudes towards and the trajectory of the Canada-US relationship thus warrants careful analysis. Satire embeds disdain for Americans within Canadian culture and fosters a desire for a degree of anti-American separation. It elevates the role of media and the credibility of satirical critics over politicians, influencing public opinion and policy decisions in ways that challenge traditional political authority on Canada-US relations. Consequently, it frustrates Americans and creates retaliative anti-Canadianism stances, polarizing Canada-US relations away from shared values and interdependence towards hostilities. It becomes evident that satirical humour is more than simple, harmless joking, and is rather a real disruptive tool with unfunny consequences for Canada-US relations.

SATIRE AND THE CANADIAN IDENTITY

The Canadian cultural identity often appear

ambiguously, historically perceived as insubstantial or even existentially absent. This is often attributed to American integration, with North American convergence resulting in a lack of relevant distinguishability of Canadian traits. This creates a problem for Canada that necessitates the accentuation of Canadian differences.[3] The Canadian response to emphasize its differences and assert a form of ‘punching up’ superiority over the United States often finds expression through satire. This was notably observed in 2003, when *The New York Times* issued an article on its front page declaring a unique Canadian identity had emerged with a characteristic “European sociocultural sensibility.”[4] The author cited this sensibility as the cause of an “increasingly fractious relationship with the United States.”[5] The article credited Canadian political satirist Rick Mercer with the nascency of this divergent identity.[6] Identifying what Canadians perceive to be “easily recognizable jokes” as powerful critiques of Canada-US power relations,

Mercer was accused of producing an anti-American wedge between the two nations with his jokes.

His satirical critiques create divergence by highlighting contrasts between Canada-US policies and public opinions on issues such as “sexuality, multiculturalism, militarism, drug use, and social welfare.”[7] CBC’s nationally sponsored airing of Rick Mercer’s program further demonstrates that a quintessential part of Canadian cultural bonding and identification is through American-focused satire.

As CBC's purpose is to serve as a platform for showcasing Canadian content and values, while frequently features humorous critiques of Americans demonstrates this is a large component of the Canadian identity. One of Mercer's CBC shows, entitled *Talking to Americans*, featuring interviews of Americans (often incorrectly) answering questions most Canadians would consider common-sense facts about Canada demonstrates this point well. Amid Canada's subordinate, integral position to the US, Canadian satire assumes a morally superior position to powerfully project an alternative (and typically more progressive) political stance.[8] Essentially, Canadian satire acts as a means of sociopolitical rebellion to the dominant power of the United States.[9] As Hillmer theorizes using Freudian psychoanalysis,

Canada's anti-Americanist symptoms are diagnosable as a case of narcissism of small differences.[10]

An obsessive tendency to highlight America's problems and contrast it to Canada's strengths soothes Canada's deep-rooted insecurities surrounding its own identity and legacy.[11] Canadians are quote, "small people, emphasizing because they must, their 'separateness and distinctiveness' and even their 'intrinsic political and moral superiority.'"[12] Rick Mercer has further reinforced this idea in an interview about his satirical excerpts in stating,

"I don't think there's a lot funny about being Canadian. I think one of the reasons why all of those [comedy writers] are successful is they know what's really funny about being an American. We speak the same, we look the same. Yet we're very different, so we have a good bead on America." [13]

With this quote, Mercer acknowledges that differences between Canada and the US are slight, yet he indicates the Canadian compulsion to mention and elevate any divergences. Mercer's segment *Talking to Americans* has illustrated to Canadian audiences that even the most intellectual of Americans are ignorant to the most basic Canadian facts, giving Canadians a sense of superiority for their higher knowledgeability and cultural awareness.[14] This satirical discourse does far more than just temporarily unite the Canadian community.[15] Satirical works such as this may make Canadian laugh and give them a sense of temporary superiority, but underlying this is the more permanent message to Canadians that Americans are inattentive of Canadians, which puts strain on their relationship. Satire disrupts the narrative of allied convergence, giving Canada a desire to pull away and show disdain from being too involved with or absorbed into Americanism. The Canadian cultural identity is therefore forming within it a resentment for Americans, fueled by satirical cultural elements.

SATIRE AND THE ROLE IN MEDIA

Satire plays a significant role in shaping the perspectives of the Canadian public, holding immense implications for the evolving landscape of political information sources and their impact on the Canada-US relationship. By merging political content with entertainment, satirists have managed to capture unprecedented levels of attention from the Canadian public, often overshadowing the influence of conventional actors, notably politicians.[16] Increased political integration and interdependence in North America is a primary goal for Canadian politicians, who rely on the United States economically and politically.[17]

However, this integration is often “prone to democratic deficit,” in which “[Canadian] elites are taking their citizens faster and further down the road [towards American integration] than they want to be taken.”[18] Satirists give the Canadian public an alternative leadership that goes against elitist integration with the United States, highlighting through media mockery, that becoming like the US is an undesirable outcome. Media coverage of the United States has been described as a “grand-scale traffic accident that Canadians gawk at,”[19] which satirists use as material to influence the Canadian public to diverge from American values and policies. This is often done through highlighting the Canada-US differences in policies, such as the role of government, healthcare, abortion, foreign policy, immigration, debt and taxation, and guns and gun control.[20] These issues are often framed by satirists as ‘common sense’ Canadian policies, contrasting them with US approaches that are seen as misguided deviations. Rick Mercer’s other CBC programs, including *The Rick Mercer Report* and *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* famously create mock news stories, with many episodes focused on the perceived nonsensicalness of US policies. For instance, in 2016, CBC aired an episode of *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* focused on US gun control, in which comedian Shaun Majumder played the character of *Harold Winkblatter*; fictional president of the Canadian National Rifle Association.[21] In this episode, Winkblatter delivers a message from the Canadian NRA to Americans about their ‘sleazy’ relationship with guns. By likening the United States’ approach to mass shootings- wherein more guns are seen as a solution- to trying to put out a fire with hair spray, he discredits American gun policy as a desirable option, which Canadian audiences receive as a commonsense message.

[22]

Satirical sketches like this are commonplace in Canadian media on shows like *22 Minutes*, in which American differences are ridiculed and often pointed out as radical deviants from the rest of the world. From this perspective, satire mirrors and shapes Canadian perspectives on the United States, while serving as a gauge of the present climate in Canada-US relations.[23] Satire not only shifts focus and responsibility away from critiques of Canada’s own policies and politicians, but it also steers attention towards the media as the primary source of political insight. [24] As Grey et al. (2009) argue, Rick Mercer’s comedic framing of America challenges its status, especially in relation to Canada, constantly emphasizing its outlandish exceptionalism as a path Canadians ought not follow too closely.[25] Although satire does not necessarily lead to structural transformation, it provokes Canadians to think about Canada-US relations differently, encouraging them to resist the goals of Canadian political elites to integrate too closely with the United States.[26] This can create a powerful partisan divergence between Canada and the US, in which tensions rise and divergent policy beliefs between the two countries become polarizing, vindicating that satire is a powerful tool of political intervention in the Canada-US relationship.

SATIRE AND THE RETALIATIVE STANCE OF ANTI-CANADIANISM

To grasp the detrimental impact of anti-Americanist satire on Canada-US relations, it is necessary to examine when and how satire arises in the political context. As Harrison (2007) generalizes, satirical works are typically reactions to ‘proximate causes’- the specific, decisive actions taken by the United States.[27] Harrison contends that Canadian satire is used as a “political weapon to discredit” US decisions that Canada opposes. [28]

Canada has historically been impacted by both deliberate and unintentional slights from the US and employs satire to highlight these ironies.[29] For instance, following 9/11, the US accused Canada of allowing the 9/11 terrorist suspects to enter Washington via Canada.[30] Canada's incredulosity to this accusation was sometimes expressed through satire, notably *The National Post's* publishing of an article in December 2001 entitled; "Thousands Die- Blame Canada," as a ridicule of the blame placed on Canada and its offensive policy implications.[31] Despite this, Canada maintained an intense solidarity and sympathy towards the United States upon the terror attacks.[32] Rick Mercer famously stated; "I feel that this is not a time to be making light of the differences between two nations but rather a time to offer our unconditional support..."[33] Canadian resistance emerged with a satirical tone, however, when critiquing some of the retaliative policy actions taken by the US in the post-9/11 context. The instance of the Bush administration scrambling to gather allied support for its invasion of Iraq as part of the US war on terror was met with Canadian challenges, both by serious politicians and serious jesters. While Prime Minister Chrétien formally challenged the United States to prove Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction,[34] political satirist Brian Calvert challenged the United States to think of Canada as more than "just a fancy hat you wear when you're trying to hide from a war you probably shouldn't have started." [35] In a mock US electoral campaign video, Calvert represented "the Canada Party" in which he jokingly ran for the American presidency, as clearly the United States' parties were not handling things like 'global integration' or 'immigration control' well.[36] Calvert was blatantly targeting their post 9/11 policies and declared that the US needed 'the Canada Party' to step in to fix their approach.[37]

Both formal and informal responses to anti-terrorism measures from Canada provoked the United States, but it is satire that has truly "propelled America's increasingly influential conservative media to whip out [its] verbal assault arsenal." [38] It was the Canadian critique of post-9/11 security rules that ignited Republican commentator Patrick Buchanan to describe Canada as "Soviet Canuckistan," highlighting a perception of intense polarization of Canadian views towards the left, dubbing them to be against American conservatism and the nationalist American tradition.[39] Satirical jabs and bragging about Canada's superiority on tolerance and inclusivity amid heightened ethnic tensions and the war on terror frustrated conservative Americans and created retaliative anti-Canadian stances. Shared values and interdependence were rapidly replaced by American conservatives harshly retaliating to Canadian media with their own sharp ridicules. Jonah Goldberg's remedy to Canadian divergence in security coordination with the United States was to 'Bomb Canada!', in his satirical, yet foreboding article.[40] Goldberg confronted Canadian comments with a silencing recommendation of attacking Canada, to force its ally into taking its security measures seriously. [41] Goldberg suggested America act as a military sergeant and discipline its Canadian corporal for inaction and wisecracking behaviour.[42] While clearly figurative, this essay vividly illustrated the obvious tensions between Canada-US relations, embodying sharp verbal blows towards one another.[43] Satire, inherently a form of critique, employs humorous elements like parody and exaggeration to elicit both amusement and polarization between the two nations. But, as Meredith aptly noted, the wit of satire is inherently warlike.[44] It is therefore extremely effective at diverging Canada-US relations from shared values and independence into hostility and mutual antipathy, expressed in anti-Americanism and Anti-Canadianism alike.

THE UNFUNNY IMPLICATIONS OF SATIRE ON CANADA-US RELATIONS

Tensions between Canada and the US in this current capacity are “akin to a sibling rivalry,” where Canada’s resentment stems from feeling overshadowed and ignored by its “bigger, stronger, overachieving older [sibling],” to which satire serves as a method of rebellion, not to be taken too zealously.[45] However, this rebelliousness from Canada indeed strains the North American familial dynamic, which has serious implications. Canada and the US are considered interdependent nations that must cooperate and support one another to thrive in the international sphere, yet a realistic power assessment suggests Canada is far more reliant on bilateral cooperation.[46] Canada as a smaller power has a privileged relationship with the global superpower, and relies on the United States heavily, whereas Canada’s importance to the US is declining.[47] Considering Canada’s reliance on bilateralism in all major areas; including security, defense, economy, trade, foreign policy, borders, energy and resources,[48] any strain Canadians may place on the relationship should be cautioned.

While satire may not be intentionally damaging, lighthearted jests can escalate and become erosive to the goodwill relationship crucial for future bilateral cooperation.

Attitudes about one’s trading, security, or diplomatic partner factor into the bilateral dynamics, meaning that satire may have a greater impact than it seems.[49]

It is thus imperative that Canada consider the potentially great consequences of satirical goading.

CONCLUSION

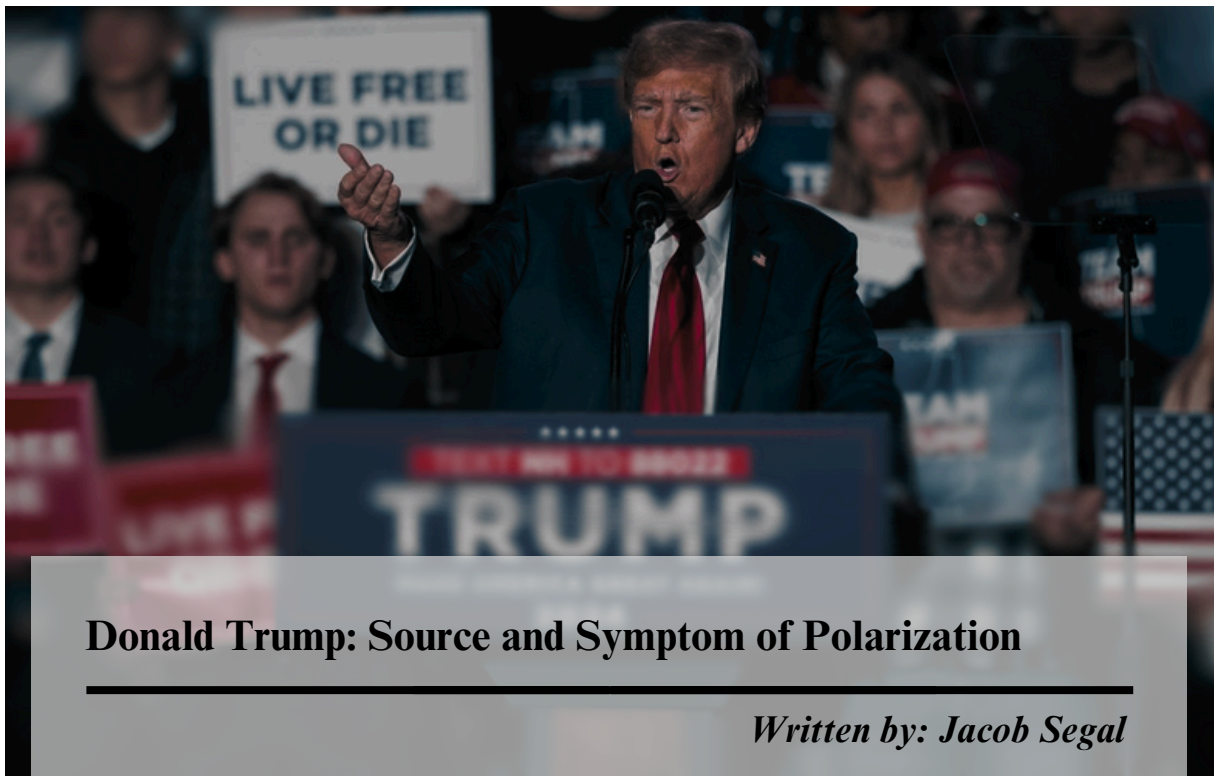
The use of satire significantly contributes to the growing sociopolitical divide between Canada and the US, complicating their relationship. Satirical works have a unifying effect on Canadians by distinguishing their national identity as decidedly separate from their American allies, mongering animosities for Americans through critiques veiled (sometimes very thinly) with humour. As demonstrated by the cases of the Canadian satirical shows *The Rick Mercer Report* and *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*, satire also heavily influences Canadian public opinion, often undermining the credibility of politicians advocating for closer ties with the US. Moreover, satire’s provocation of American targets often leads to retaliatory anti-Canadian sentiments, eroding the perceived ‘steadfast alliance’ between the two nations. Tensions between Canada and the US in this capacity clearly hold serious implications for both nations, but divisions will asymmetrically impact Canada and has potentially destructive consequences.[50] While satire is humorous, its lack of constructivism in the Canada-US relationship demonstrates that it is simply not politically efficacious.[51] A more dependable and stable North American alliance exists without the intrusion of these satirical critiques, that sour the otherwise amicable rapport between the nations. Therefore, this essay concludes that it is time to employ the shepherd’s crook and remove satirical performers from the Canadian stage. Prioritizing the stability and harmony of the North American relationship clearly indicates it; it’s time to stop joking around.

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Donald Trump: Source and Symptom of Polarization

Written by: Jacob Segal

Abstract

The presidency of Donald Trump is a watershed moment in American politics, characterized by controversy, division, and transformation. This paper explores Trump's role as both a product and catalyst of the new right, building on the groundwork laid by the "Tea Party" movement. It investigates how Trump's adept use of information technology and unconventional media tactics facilitated his electoral success and exacerbated polarization in the political landscape. Furthermore, it examines Trump's embrace of anti-establishment sentiment and his mastery of communication strategies that deepened divisions within American society. Through analysis of key events such as the 2016 Republican National Convention and the 2017 Charlottesville Unite the Right Rally, Trump's capitalization on existing polarization will become clear, showing how he actively fueled divisiveness for political gain, leaving a legacy of fractured political discourse, with long-term implications for the American political spectrum.

Keywords: Donald Trump Presidency, Political Polarization, Media Tactics in Elections, Tea Party Movement Influence, Fractured Political Discourse

INTRODUCTION

In the turbulent landscape of American politics, the presidency of Donald Trump stands as a defining chapter marked by controversy, division, and transformation. This research paper will consider how Trump is symptomatic of the new right, foreshadowed by the growing popularity of the “Tea Party” movement during the previous administration. It will further examine how social media usage, combined with Trump’s unique approach to the 24-hour news cycle, made his election possible. It will, however, also argue that Trump was a direct source for much of today’s polarization throughout the country, leaning into his extreme right appeal to attract a larger audience while excluding more moderate voters. Consequently, we must ask if the legacy of polarization left by Donald Trump’s presidency is merely a reflection of contemporary societal forces, or rather, was his leadership style the driving force causing the divisions in America today?

To answer this question, this paper will examine Trump’s unconventional communication style, use of social media, and the impact of echo chambers within the digital realm. We will explore how these intertwining factors helped elevate Trump to the presidency and, at the same time, exacerbate polarization in the political landscape. Additionally, this paper will examine how Trump harnessed the growing disillusionment within the political order, aligning himself with anti-establishment sentiment and fully embracing his role as a political outsider. Finally, this research will showcase two events within Trump’s presidency that display his prowess at appealing to a unique conservative audience and inversely dispelling moderates and democrats. In 2016, his presence at the Republican National Convention significantly impacted the political scene.

Although this event falls outside the scope of his official presidency, it vividly highlights the contrast between him and earlier Republicans. It underscores their lack of readiness for his unconventional approach to politics, emphasizing a notable shift in the political landscape. Further, an examination of the 2017 Charlottesville Unite the Right Rally will highlight his handling of a critical moment involving race and extremism, which exacerbated divisions within the nation. These two events serve as emblematic examples of how Trump harnessed and deepened polarization while fundamentally reshaping the landscape of American politics. By delving into these moments and the complex interplay between political forces, media shifts, and societal changes contributing to Trump’s rise and tenure, this paper will argue that Trump was a key instigator of America’s increasing polarization that continues to define the contemporary U.S. political arena.

THE TEA PARTY

Donald Trump’s political ascent can be directly attributed to the prominence of the Tea Party movement, which gained traction during President Obama’s initial term in office.[1] The Tea Party, a conservative grassroots movement, was characterized by its opposition to what its members perceived as government overreach, excessive spending, and expansive healthcare reform.[2] The “Tea Party” movement was defined by anti-establishment sentiment, representing the frustration with traditional Republican politicians and government institutions from those in this sect. The Tea Party was primarily driven by hostility to former President Obama. It never had a singular leader of its own whose brand was a driving force in itself. [3] The Tea Party Movement lost momentum by 2016, in part because its ideas were absorbed by the more mainstream Republican Party.[4] The

Tea Party laid the groundwork for Trump by allowing him to utilize the “Party’s combination of decentralized organizing made possible by the Internet, its focus on local political races, and its general willingness to work with an established political party,” with Trump, therefore, becoming “a culminating Tea Party figure.”[5] Trump capitalized on this sentiment by portraying himself as a political outsider and a disruptor of the political establishment. He held himself out as a caretaker who would “Clean Up the Swamp” to deal with both corrupt Democrats and useless Republicans. His message resonated strongly with many who believed the Washington political elite had lost touch with the concerns of everyday Americans.[6] Trump also implemented strategies similar to those used by the Tea Party, including the utilization of populist rhetoric to criticize elites, the media, and a “liberal” agenda. Trump’s campaign slogans, such as “Make America Great Again” and “America First,” mirrored the Tea Party’s emphasis on returning to traditional values and safeguarding American interests.[7] So, Trump was able to appeal to conservative Republican ideals and play to the mass population that was not part of the established elite.

Despite his position as both an elite and media personality, Trump campaigned on promises of tax cuts, deregulation, and curbing government expenditures. These policies aligned with the “Tea Party’s” economic principles and fiscal conservative values that strongly emphasized reducing government spending. Moreover, both the “Tea Party” and Trump’s campaigns demonstrated a capacity to mobilize uniquely strong grassroots support among the Right. The Tea Party, known for its ability to organize at the local level and rally its supporters, paved the way for Trump’s successful engagement with a passionate voter base.[8] Trump’s campaign rallies, aggressive social media presence, and volunteer-driven outreach efforts were hallmarks

of his campaign strategy, harnessing the energy of his supporters much in the same way the Tea Party had. All of this shows the symptoms of polarization pre-existing at the time which allowed for Trump’s political ascendancy.

ECHO CHAMBERS CREATED THROUGH THE USE OF MEDIA

The new wave of information technology and Donald Trump’s distinct approach to the 24-hour news cycle also played a pivotal role in shaping the contemporary political landscape and contributed to his electoral success.[9] Additionally,

Trump’s unorthodox communication style, particularly his use of social media, intensified the polarization already taking root in American society and politics.

The rise and pervasiveness of information technology, particularly the internet and social media, created new channels for political discourse. This digital revolution made it easier than ever for individuals to access information and connect with like-minded peers. However, it also had a distinct downside: the algorithms utilized within these systems lead to a mass insertion of politically minded individuals into echo chambers, where one’s preexisting beliefs are reinforced, and opposing viewpoints are excluded.[10] These echo chambers are critical in the context of political polarization because they can intensify existing divisions by reducing exposure to diverse perspectives. Trump exploited these factors to gain notoriety and help his campaign.

Trump’s prolific use of Twitter helped create these echo chambers as he bypassed traditional

media outlets through this communication tool and spoke directly to his base. Trump devised a digital space where his followers could easily consume and share content that aligned with their pre-existing beliefs. His tweets, often characterized by a mix of provocative language and contentious viewpoints, resonated strongly with his supporters, perhaps because he was speaking with the same voice available to anyone with a smartphone or computer, fostering a sense of loyalty and solidarity. Furthermore, these social media algorithms played a significant role in amplifying Trump's messages within these echo chambers.[11] Platforms like Facebook and Twitter use algorithms that prioritize content based on a user's past behaviour and preferences. Trump's engagement with divisive rhetoric and controversial statements generated high levels of user interaction, leading algorithms to further prioritize and circulate his content within his supporters' digital spaces. This reinforcement mechanism helped solidify his messaging among those who were already inclined to support him. For example, while many polls suggested that Hillary Clinton was the favoured presidential candidate in the 2016 race, one area where Donald Trump had a clear lead was in Twitter followers. Specifically, as of September 2016, @realdonaldtrump had 11.9 million followers, while @HillaryClinton had 9.3 million followers. [12] As it turned out, Trump was able to leverage this opening to control the discourse and translate this support into votes.

Furthermore, Trump's use of hyperbole, repetition, and memorable catchphrases, such as "fake news," "build the wall," and "America First," served to simplify complex issues and frame them in a way that his supporters found impactful. However, this oversimplification through blunt language often presented these issues in binary terms and contributed to a polarized understanding, leaving little room for

nuanced discussions. Trump could then frequently say that he was being attacked and misinterpreted by the "Fake News" Media" and "Woke Left." [13] This cyclical process allowed Trump to develop his most loyal bases out of the right flank of the Republican party and showcase to those less informed that he was being "Censored" by the "Deep-State". He even went so far as to state that the "Deep State is a threat to democracy" [14] and that "Either the deep state destroys America or we destroy the deep state." [15] Through this process, Trump's conspiratorial campaigning lit a fire, and he was able to carry that momentum into his successful presidential bid.

Trump's utilization of the news cycle was, therefore, a source of polarization, and his manipulation and control of the narrative allowed him to quickly become a political mainstay despite, or perhaps because of his outlandish nature. Trump essentially used his time as a reality TV host to bring what he knew best to politics: entertainment value. His path to the presidency was uniquely crafted through his role as both a real estate tycoon and an entertainment personality, and he managed to use the media to appear to be both a "billionaire" and a "regular person" welcomed into voters' homes through "The Apprentice." Further, Trump's consistently provocative and often controversial statements, delivered via Twitter and other digital platforms, guaranteed his prominence in media coverage. Some distinctive examples of this include him stating that "...billions of dollars gets brought into Mexico through the border. We get the killers, drugs & crime, they get the money!" [16] and "It's the Democrats' total weakness & incompetence that gave rise to ISIS!" [17] This approach was particularly effective in captivating his base, galvanizing his supporters, as well as driving a wedge between his supporters and those who disagreed with him. [18] Trump's

confrontational style and use of social media allowed him to circumvent traditional media gatekeepers, which enabled him to communicate directly with the American public and reinforce his brand as a political outsider challenging the status quo.[19] He would even go so far as to state multiple times to his base that he was “...an outsider fighting for you.”[20] Trump’s use of this tactic throughout his candidacy and presidency played a crucial role in deepening polarization. While these statements were seen as refreshing and unfiltered to some, others considered them deeply offensive. Ultimately, Trump was garnering attention, and while many didn’t take him seriously, he was quickly gaining ground in the political arena utilizing this strategy.

Even offline, Trump’s campaign rallies and events functioned as physical echo chambers. These gatherings drew passionate supporters, establishing an environment where like-minded individuals could come together, share their enthusiasm, and affirm each other’s beliefs.

The sense of camaraderie and shared purpose at these events strengthened the echo chamber effect, fostering a collective identity among Trump’s supporters and reinforcing their loyalty.

While this is a common effect of all campaign rallies, Trump’s supporters tended to take on a more sinister tone, wherein the camaraderie was built upon a sense of exclusion of another or a common enemy instead of an agreement upon policy choices.[21] Furthermore, “the style and rhetoric selected by Trump lets him appear as a strong masculine figure, talking like every American with energy, easy to understand with a

nationalist color.”[22] Moreover, Trump’s engagement with conservative media outlets further amplified the echo chamber effect. By consistently appearing on platforms like Fox News that catered exclusively to his base, he ensured his message was delivered to an audience predisposed to agree with him. This strategic media engagement further solidified the divide between Trump supporters and those who did not share their political perspectives, allowing him to become a source of polarization.

TRUMP’S BLUNT COMMUNICATIONS HAVE MASS APPEAL

The most notable aspect of Trump’s communication style was his frequent use of blunt, populist language.[23] He ignored typical conventions surrounding the carefully crafted and measured rhetoric typical of political leaders, opting instead for straightforward, often provocative language. This resonated with a segment of the population that appreciated what they perceived as authenticity and a departure from what they considered the scripted language of conventional politicians.[24] Trump’s communication style, therefore, served as a symptom of existing polarization, reflecting and resonating with the dissatisfaction of a segment of the population with traditional politics. However, this unfiltered communication approach simultaneously functioned as a source of polarization, as his blunt and provocative statements contributed to heightened divisions by fostering an “us versus them” mentality within the electorate.

Owing to this innovative mode of communication and almost unrestricted access, many supporters saw Trump as a refreshingly unfiltered figure who spoke plainly and directly, seemingly unencumbered by the carefully crafted language and political correctness of traditional

politicians. His off-the-cuff remarks, often conveyed in an informal manner, struck a chord with voters who felt alienated by what they perceived as a distant and scripted political establishment.[25] This perceived authenticity contributed to a sense that Trump was a genuine outsider, a figure willing to break from the conventions of traditional politics and speak to the concerns of ordinary Americans.[26] Trump's genuineness was furthered by his use of social media, particularly Twitter, where he bypassed traditional media gatekeepers and communicated directly with his followers. The unpolished nature of his tweets, characterized by misspellings, exclamation points, and unconventional capitalization, reinforced the perception that he was not beholden to the norms of the political elite.[27] Supporters often interpreted these unvarnished messages as a glimpse into the unfiltered thoughts of a leader unafraid to challenge the status quo. However, critics argued that this perceived authenticity was carefully curated, emphasizing spectacle over substance and contributing to a political climate where emotional resonance often took precedence over policy details. When studying Trump within the debates, one expert on the language of politics states that "...a populist communication style – grandiose, dynamic, and informal – may have 'trumped' a carefully-reasoned platform." [28] In this context, Trump's perceived authenticity, showcased through his unfiltered communication style, serves as both a symptom and a source. It is a symptom reflecting the dissatisfaction of a segment of the population with the traditional, scripted language of politicians. Simultaneously, it functions as a source, contributing to the political climate by emphasizing spectacle over substance and prioritizing emotional resonance, thereby deepening the divide between supporters who see him as a genuine outsider and critics who view his authenticity as carefully curated.

Trump's distinct communication approach was further demonstrated by his combative relationship with the media. He frequently branded mainstream media outlets as "fake news" and "the enemy of the people" and, therefore, undermined their credibility in the eyes of his supporters. This strategy not only created an "us versus them" dynamic but also fostered an environment where distrust in established sources of information became widespread.[29] The resulting skepticism toward the media deepened the divides in public opinion, with Trump's supporters relying on alternative sources that aligned with their pre-existing beliefs. This is both a source and a symptom of polarization. It is a source in that his strategy actively promotes an "us versus them" dynamic, undermining the credibility of mainstream media and contributing to a pervasive distrust in established sources.[30] Simultaneously, it serves as a symptom, representing and reverberating existing divisions within the public, as Trump's supporters, already skeptical of mainstream media, increasingly rely on alternative sources that align with their pre-existing beliefs.[31]

2016: LAUNCH OF AN UNCONVENTIONAL CAMPAIGN

Trump's presidency and its place in the political landscape should also be approached by examining where he initially showcased his unique communication style and political persona, notably emerging during his 2016 campaign. One does not need to look any further than the initial Republican National Committee (RNC) debates to see how he outmatched the other candidates, bringing in seemingly immature debate tactics for which they were completely unprepared, allowing him to convincingly win over many Republican primary voters. His communication style, while unconventional and at times divisive, resonated with a significant

portion of the Republican base, laying the groundwork for the unapologetic and attention-grabbing approach that would go on to define his entire presidency, contributing to the intensely polarized political climate of the time.

During these initial RNC debates, Trump unveiled his signature communication style, which diverged sharply from the conventional norms of political discourse. His approach was characterized by a bold and unapologetic demeanour, punctuated by memorable one-liners and provocative statements. Trump's use of what some critics deemed "childish debate tactics" included name-calling, personal attacks, and dismissive language, leaving his rivals visibly stunned by such an unconventional challenge.[32] In a political arena accustomed to decorum and adherence to established norms, Trump's tactics stood out as a deliberate departure. His capacity to dominate the debates with a seemingly unrestrained style allowed him to connect with a segment of the electorate that felt marginalized by the perceived political elite, propelling him to be considered a notable political candidate for the first time.[33] His performances positioned him as a disruptor, someone unafraid to challenge the status quo and offered a departure from the scripted and often sanitized language of traditional politicians. The RNC debates, therefore, played a pivotal role in shaping the narrative of Trump's candidacy, setting the tone for the rest of the campaign, and his communication style during this period can be seen as both a source and a symptom of polarization. It is a source that

his unconventional tactics, including name-calling and provocative statements, actively exacerbated the heightened divisions within the political arena.

Simultaneously, it was a symptom of the political landscape, reflecting and resonating with the existing discontent of a segment of the electorate that felt disenfranchised by the perceived political elite, highlighting how Trump's approach was emblematic of a deeper dissatisfaction within American politics.

RALLY REVEALS RECEPTIVENESS TO RADICAL RIGHT

The second event that vividly illustrated Donald Trump's role in causing and utilizing polarization was the 2017 Charlottesville Unite the Right Rally. This notorious gathering united far-right groups, white nationalists, and supremacists, sparking violent clashes with counter-protesters. The event's tragic outcome arose when a white supremacist drove his car into a crowd, causing the death of Heather Heyer and injuring several others. Trump's response to the Charlottesville events provides focus on his stance regarding polarization and offers valuable insight into his psychology. Instead of delivering a forceful condemnation of the white supremacists involved, Trump's initial remarks were equivocal and hesitant. He controversially mentioned that there were "very fine people on both sides," a statement that drew sharp criticism for seeming to equate those protesting against racism with the white supremacists responsible for the violence. [34] This response predictably sparked intense debate. Supporters saw Trump as someone to stand up for free speech while avoiding being swayed by media narratives. At the same time, critics argued that his comments condoned hate groups and seemed appreciative of their efforts. Ironically, his purported "neutrality" and communication style contributed to an environment where racial tensions were high, and he was a cause for exacerbating political polarization.

Additionally, the aftermath of Charlottesville clearly showcased the power dynamics at play in Trump's relationship with his political base. By not immediately and completely condemning white supremacists, he retained the support of some far-right factions, demonstrating a willingness to tolerate or even align with certain segments of his voter base at the expense of those who were more moderate.[35] This strategic decision, consciously or not, further emphasized how Trump's approach to polarization was not merely a passive response to existing divisions but an active utilization of those divisions for political advantage.[36] This illustrated that, on the one hand, he was a symptom of the deeply polarized two-party system. However, his actions reveal a preference to appeal to the far-right extremes rather than to placate any part of the left. By stoking the fires of polarization, he could make his right-wing oriented faction more powerful and active, and utilize this opportunity to attract more support from the fringes. In summary, the incident highlighted the President's reluctance to reject the extremist elements within his base and exposed the complexities of his connection with divisive political forces. This event further fueled the heightened polarization that characterized his presidency.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Donald Trump's presidency was marked by a distinctive communication style, deliberate and strategic use of polarization, and events that both highlighted and deepened the divisions within American society. Stemming from an already polarized culture, Trump harnessed dissatisfaction on the extreme Right to capture the attention of a more moderate conservative audience. From the unconventional and attention-grabbing approach unveiled during the 2016 Republican National Committee

debates, to the pivotal moment of the 2017 Charlottesville Unite the Right Rally, Trump's tenure left an indelible mark on the nation's political landscape. His refusal to unequivocally condemn hate groups during the Charlottesville events underscored the contentious nature of his presidency, revealing a willingness to fuel and exacerbate polarization for political advantage. Consequently, while Trump was a symptom of his times, he was predominantly a driver of divisiveness, and his legacy will be a highly fractured political discourse with long-term implications for the American political spectrum.

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Housing Affordability in Canada: Will Young Canadians Ever Own a Home?

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Abstract

This essay delves into the escalating crisis of housing affordability affecting young Canadians and its implications for their ability to achieve homeownership. This paper situates this crisis within the broader context of historical institutionalism and path dependence, arguing that past and present housing policies, shaped by these concepts, have contributed significantly to the current state of housing affordability. Through analysis of government interventions like the Home Buyer's Plan and the First-Time Home Buyer Incentive, the paper argues that while such policies aim to facilitate homeownership, they may inadvertently exacerbate affordability issues. The essay proposes a balanced approach to addressing the crisis, advocating for a combination of government intervention and market-enabling strategies, including Public-Private Partnerships and deregulation of land use policies to increase affordability. The conclusion underscores the necessity of comprehensive government action to alleviate the financial burdens on young Canadians and ensure the attainability of homeownership for future generations.

Keywords: Young Canadians, Historical institutionalism, Path Dependence, Housing policies and Federal government

INTRODUCTION

“The largest challenge we face, from my perspective, is the ability to continue moving forward so the agency will have a single mission: that is, to provide decent, safe, and affordable housing.”[1] Those were the words of Alphonso Jackson, the former 13th United States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. This mission is not unique to the United States but is a critical issue facing many countries, including Canada, where housing affordability has increasingly become a pressing concern.

Housing affordability can be broadly defined as “the cost of housing services and shelter - both for renters and owner occupiers - relative to a given individual's or household's disposable¹ income.”[2] While housing affordability can be applied to a broad demographic, there has been a growing concern regarding housing affordability for young Canadians. In many cases, their salaries are not enough to sustain adequate living standards, while also experiencing additional financial challenges, such as paying off student loans and adjusting to the rise in cost of living. A main actor throughout this crisis is the Federal government, who plays a crucial role in addressing the issue of affordability, as well as shaping current housing policies. However, the “housing affordability crisis has escalated, tarnishing Canada's global reputation as a land of opportunity.”[3] One may question how a democracy like Canada has fallen into this situation, especially in an age where economic advancements and innovation are expected to improve overall societal well-being. This begs the question: why are young Canadians struggling to achieve homeownership? As we delve into the roots of the housing crisis, this analysis brings to the forefront the pivotal causes and consequential impacts of housing policies over time, discussing the role of historical institutionalism and path

dependence in shaping current housing policies. This paper aims to not only map out the terrain of challenges faced by young Canadians in securing a home, but will also highlight the transformative potential of targeted federal intervention. In doing so, this piece aspires to contribute a meaningful dialogue to the discourse on housing affordability, offering insights and solutions to one of the most pressing issues of our time.

HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM AND PATH DEPENDENCE

Historical institutionalism serves as a useful theoretical approach that ties into the housing affordability crisis for young Canadians. Historical institutionalism can be defined as “a research tradition that examines how temporal processes and events influence the origin and transformation of institutions that govern political and economic relations.”[4] Understanding the historical context behind institutions and how they were formed plays an important role in our comprehension on why federal systems operate the way they do, and why they respond to challenges in a specific manner. In many ways, “the origins of federal systems, therefore, shape[s] the evolution of succeeding federal trajectories.”[5] In the case of young Canadians seeking homeownership, historical institutionalism has contributed to numerous regulations and policies that have influenced the current state of housing affordability in Canada.

In 1946, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) was created. It was intended to be “a vehicle for the construction of affordable rental and owner-occupied housing and for insuring mortgages in order to encourage lending by large banks.”[6] However, for the last few decades, the CMHC shifted from

affordable homes to acting as a mortgagee. After the recession in the early 1980s and the election of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, the CMHC began to deliver “housing policy outcomes through its mortgage insurance activities”, and as a result saw partial success in lowering the federal deficit during that period.[7] The implementation of zoning policies, rent regulations, along with several other developments has “ultimately set the stage for the current affordability and livability emergency in our cities.”[8] Through a historical institutionalist approach, it allows for examination into previous policies and decisions that have contributed to the current challenges in the housing affordability crisis for young Canadians. However, historical institutionalism also brings into question the actions brought forward by previous political actors, and how their decisions have impacted succeeding governments.

When looking at historical institutionalism, it is important to understand the impacts of path dependence on historical institutions. Path dependence is defined as the dynamics of processes driven by positive feedback that lead to various potential outcomes based on the specific order of events as they occur.[9] The idea of positive feedback implies that each step taken on a particular path makes the subsequent steps more likely and also raises the costs associated with returning to an option that was previously available.[10] As a result,

path dependence emphasizes that historical institutions are not only the consequence of rational design, but rather, are influenced by historical juncture.

When a certain historical arrangement is associated with positive feedback, it allows for the support of future actors who support the current established trajectory. Following the early 1990s recession, the Chrétien government took over from Brian Mulroney in 1993 and:

“disentangled and evolved from its social housing portfolios onto the provinces (most of whom were also financially strapped, and who then chose to limit or cancel new social housing commitments), discontinuing its cooperative housing program, and restructuring federal transfer payments for social welfare functions. The result was a drastic decline in the numbers of social-rental housing units built after 1993, a problem that continues to this day.”[11]

The Chrétien government’s actions following the early 1990s recession advanced the notion of the effect of path dependence on institutions. The decisions by Jean Chrétien and the Liberal Party demonstrate how previous trajectories can significantly impact subsequent policy decisions. The policies previously made by the Brian Mulroney government influenced a path-dependent process that led to Chrétien making similar housing decisions a decade later. However, the roots of historical institutionalism and path dependence continue to be embedded in the development of current housing policies in Canada, as seen through the current housing policies affecting young Canadians.

WHAT HOUSING POLICIES ARE AFFECTING YOUNG CANADIANS

While historical institutionalism and path dependency can be used to explain and analyze current policies, they can also be applied to understanding the causes of current housing policies affecting young Canadians. The causes attributing to the housing affordability crisis are widely debated, with some politicians and economists blaming urbanization, high interest rates, a lack of housing availability, and income inequality as contributing factors to the housing affordability issue. However, this analysis will argue that the primary factor hindering young Canadians from achieving home ownership is the increase in cost of living relative to one's salary. When looking at housing affordability, it typically serves “as a key indicator for the housing sector. Generally, it is defined as a person’s ability to finance the cost of home ownership in financial terms.”[12] In Canada, banks such as RBC and the National Bank of Canada provide housing affordability reports each quarter for Canadians to gauge the current housing market. According to the National bank of Canada’s latest housing affordability monitor, “affordability deteriorated in all of the ten markets covered in Q3. On a sliding scale of markets from worst deterioration to least: Vancouver, Toronto, Victoria, Hamilton, Calgary, Montreal, Quebec, Ottawa-Gatineau, Winnipeg and Edmonton.”[13] For those in Toronto, it was found that “it will take Torontonians making a median annual income of \$91,858 about 25 years to save for a down payment on a house.”[14] Many of these increases can be attributed to high interest rates and a lack of housing, with the

Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation reporting that “this decline is the current shortfall in housing construction.”[15] Since the cost of construction has increased, it is argued that “housing prices will approximate the costs of new construction, thus home appreciation will correspond to real changes in construction costs, assuming that the supply of housing is nearly perfectly elastic.”[16] For young Canadians, this rise in costs relative to their current salaries appears to make homeownership a false reality in many markets. This not only emulates the current economic condition being faced by young Canadians, but also the ongoing consequences of the decisions made by both current and previous governments.

In the years following the 2008 financial crisis, the Canadian home market, which did not face the severe repercussions that the U.S. did during the financial crisis, began to see a trend in price increases in the housing market. These increases can be attributed to the price of homes being inflated at the time, as well as various other factors such as foreign investments. Roughly a decade later, “the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) reported double digit growth in home prices.”[17] The elevated housing prices are largely attributed to the central bank’s low mortgage interest rates. However, they can also stem from rising construction or land expenses, which might be exacerbated by stricter development rules amidst growing populations.[18] In the wake of these increases, the Canadian government has mirrored strategies of previous governments to make housing more affordable, such as introducing targeted subsidy programs. During the recession of the early 1990s, the Mulroney government implemented the Home Buyers’ Plan (HBP) which “allows first-time homebuyers to borrow from their registered retirement savings plan (RRSP) for the home purchase and repay the funds over an

extended period of time.”[19] Decades later, the current government has turned to similar subsidy programs. In 2019, the Trudeau government introduced the First-Time Home Buyer Incentive (FTHBI). The incentive aims to “make home ownership more accessible for qualifying first-time buyers.”[20] However, to be qualified for the First-Time Home Buyer Incentive, “the buyer’s total annual qualifying income cannot exceed \$120,000.”[21] These incentives, while intending to make homeownership more accessible, may inadvertently affect the cost of living for many young Canadians. For those taking advantage of these incentive programs, it was found that “the income left after paying for housing (‘after-housing income’) represented an absolute indicator of housing cost burden and captures housing-induced shortfall in income.”[22] This highlights that while these programs seek to aid Canadians, it can cause a rippling effect for young Canadians hoping to seek homeownership. The increase in both housing prices and the cost of living relative to one’s salary has resulted in a complex situation for young Canadians. However, are these increases a result of current economic trends, or the result of decisions made by current and previous governments?

The implementation of the HBP and FTHBI programs are exemplary of both historical institutionalism and path dependency, following similar trajectories to shape housing policies during periods of economic uncertainty. The Mulroney government set the precedent of establishing subsidies to aid first-time homebuyers, with the Trudeau government following suit in a similar manner with the implementation of the FTHBI program. Through these actions, the Trudeau government reflects the idea of path dependence, using similar policy trajectories set by the Mulroney government decades earlier. Although, even with these

programs in place, housing prices continue to increase and young Canadians’ are still unable to achieve homeownership with their current salaries. This begs the question: even with these policies in place, what can be done to help young Canadians achieve homeownership?

WHAT CAN WE DO NOW?

While the causes of the housing affordability crisis are embedded in the roots of historical institutionalism and path dependency, future governments have the ability to provide solutions that change the trajectory of the current housing situation.

Currently, the Trudeau government has stated that “housing isn’t a primary federal responsibility. It’s not something that we have direct carriage of.”[23] However, these sentiments fail to encompass the everyday worries being felt by young Canadians. To ease the financial burdens being experienced by young Canadians, it would be practical to believe that a fundamental aspect of overturning this crisis would be through tackling the causes of the issue that were previously mentioned. However, the examples of government intervention programs such as the HBP and FTHBI program highlight that government intervention may not always be the best solution to certain issues. It has been argued that “the public sector should formulate policies and programmes based on the market-enabling approach instead of playing the role of a direct housing provider.”[24] Taking a more market-enabling approach would see an increase in Public-Private Partnerships to subsidize the construction of homes.

This enables many advantages, “such as saving taxpayers’ financial burdens and tapping on additional resources and expertise of the private sector.”[25] These advantages would allow for young Canadians to minimize the financial burdens of achieving housing while also addressing affordability issues. Although this would help alleviate financial pressures for many young Canadians, it is important to recognize that a balance between government intervention and a market-enabling approach is needed. A way to balance these approaches would be for the government to remove zoning barriers that are inhibiting land development, and give those zones to Public-Private Partnerships to develop. It has been found that “restrictive land use and building regulations have constrained affordable housing supply.”[26] By removing these restrictions, it not only increases housing supply but also allows for young Canadians to find more affordable housing while being able to financially provide for themselves and future generations.

CONCLUSION

The dream of homeownership is drifting further from the grasp of young Canadians, trapped in a housing affordability crisis that calls for a profound reshaping of government policy. This crisis is not merely a symptom of the present but an amalgamation of historical decisions, such as those illustrated under the Mulroney administration. These policies have set the stage, and have become increasingly complicated with the principle of path dependence, highlighting how decisions made decades ago continue to sculpt the housing landscape today, as evidenced during the Chrétien government. This intertwined saga of historical policies and their path dependent aftermath paints a vivid picture of this

Programs such as the Home Buyer’s Plan and the First-Time Home Buyer’s Incentive emerge as milestones that, while intended to assist, inadvertently contribute to the spiraling crisis, highlighting the complex legacy of past decisions on today’s housing market dynamics. The urgency for change cannot be overstated. A failure to act, to break the chains of passivity, threatens not just the current generation but echoes into the lives of future Canadians, transforming homeownership from a cherished milestone into a distant, unreachable dream.

The time to redefine our approach to housing policy is now, to ensure that the pursuit of a home remains an attainable dream for all, not a relic of a bygone era.

This is not just a policy challenge; it’s a pivotal moment to redefine the fabric of Canadian society, ensuring equitable access to the cornerstone of stability and community: a place to call home.

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A Common Currency Conundrum: NAMU's Benefit to Canada Critically Analyzed

Written by: Ethan da Costa

Abstract

After being given the chance to serve as a junior editor for a different Social Contract portfolio, the prospect of publishing my own work really started to intrigue me. My research papers tend to be quite accessible and 'consumable' for general readership, so I decided to submit an essay I was proud of. I aimed to emphasize the intersection of political science and economics in this piece, showcasing how policy research can foster or sometimes hinder new paths of economic integration. This piece on NAMU explores international policy options but is ultimately focused on assessing the relevance to Canada, which is one of my passions in research.

Key Words: Canadian Politics, Currency, NAMU, International Policy

INTRODUCTION

The global order currently exists in a post globalization era, where free trade is the norm and expectation amongst allied nations. These expectations extend to a higher degree between nations that collaborate to a high degree on a domestic and international economic and policy level. This synergy between domestic and international policy can be referred to as intermesticity, which has been paramount to cooperative economic relations between the United States, Canada, and Mexico.[1] Various policies have emerged to represent this norm, the most significant being the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and its successor arrangement, the United States, Mexico, and Canada Trade Agreement (UMSCA).[2]

While the nature of these agreements has facilitated unprecedented levels of interconnected trade and mutual economic benefit, there have been calls to extend this cooperation towards currency. The hypothetical North American Monetary Union (NAMU),[3] seeks to remove further barriers to trade and adopt a united currency like the policies of the Eurozone under the European Union.[4] Proponents argue that the united currency would remove barriers of exchange rate from free trade, allowing for no loss in value across borders,[5] as well as a higher level of regulation for individual nation states like Canada, who may wish to amend their current currency's position.[6] This is more prominent in recent years due to renewed discussion surrounding the USMCA. There are of course, many who refute this, as it could also mean the loss of national monetary policy to the highest power in the union,[7] as well as a potentially devastating resource and time commitment to uphold.[8]

This paper argues the flaws of the policy option and analyzes its economic implications using historical economic cases and literature underpinned by basic monetary regime framework, which is the framework that governs monetary policy's implementation. [9]

In laying out the background of the proposal, observing the supporters of the union, addressing the policy-space tradeoff, and finally critically analyzing the NAMU, a more holistic elucidation of the flaws with the union can be derived.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

At the advent of the 1994 drafting of NAFTA, spirits were high among economists that the trade agreement would usher in a new era of interdependence between the economies of Canada, the United States and Mexico.[10] One theory that started to gain traction in the latter half of the decade was a 'North American Monetary Union' like the European Union, with the "Amero" as the theoretical currency agreement. This was pioneered and popularized by Canadian economist Herbert Greubel. In *The Merit of a Canada-US Monetary Union*, Greubel writes that "The successful launch of the Euro at the beginning of 1999, the prospect of official dollarization in Argentina and the poor performance of the Canadian economy and dollar in recent years have prompted a growing interest in monetary union in North America." [11] It is important to note, however, that the support for

monetary union is not monolithic; one camp wishes to peg the Canadian loonie to⁵ the United States Dollar, known as “Official Dollarization”, [12] while the other wishes for the Grubel’s novel concept of the Amero to be developed between nation-states.[13]

The goal of monetary union is to eliminate any remnant barriers of trade due to independent currency values and monetary policies, creating more favourable conditions for trade. The European Monetary Union, or EMU, EMU or ‘European Monetary Union’ had arisen to create the Eurozone of the European Union, in which member states all shared a common currency in the Euro.[14] In the Canadian context, the prospect of monetary union is best understood by examining the historical conditions of the proposition. At the peak of NAMU’s theorization, exchange rate disparity with the United States led to declining terms for the Canadian dollar and ultimately blundered Canada’s performance in international markets. In fact, 55% of Canadian reserve deposits had to be held in USD, to leverage advantageous positioning in the intermestic, Canada-US financial market.

Calls for ‘Official Dollarization’ did not emerge until 1999, following a difficult year for Canada in terms of trade. The 2000 Bank of Canada white paper analyzing other unionized currency market reports a -0.067-market shock subperiod return, illustrating a high degree of loss in comparison to the Eurozone, which maintained a positive rate of 0.270.[15] Evidently, terms of trade between the US and Canada were declining, favouring the US. These issues had not existed in zones of monetary regulation at the supra-national level, like in the EMU. It is under these conditions that the Bank of Canada found it necessary to develop a response to the proposition, regardless there not yet being any federal policy movement regarding NAMU.

Also important for historical context, the acknowledgement that the Amero and NAMU predominantly fixate on the bilateral relationship between the United States and Canada, though assumptions are made under *ceteris paribus*, or all things remaining the same, that Mexico could be incorporated into these discussions with reasonable stability.[16]

To effectively understand the details of the policy, NAMU must ultimately be understood as an extension of existing free-trade agreements and the intermestic nature of Canadian and American economic policy. The proposition would either end independent floating exchange rates between Canada and the United States or establish a similar framework to the European Union with a highly organized and regulated shared currency.[17] It is a direct response to the existing enmeshment of both economies and is still debated to this day regarding specific implementation modes.

THE CASE FOR NAMU

Although monetary union has never been a policy on the official platform of any major Canadian or American party at any level of government, the primary support for NAMU comes from neoliberal think-tanks such as the Fraser Institute.[18] The reason for this is purely due to certain ideological alignments that are drawn from the free trade agenda of neoliberals or libertarians. Grubel, the pioneer of the Amero concept under NAMU, is a member and contributing author for the Fraser Institute, one of the primary neoliberal proponents advocating for the free-market opportunities NAMU would bring.[19] Neoliberals also utilize a post-Keynesian model in justifying monetary and/or currency unions, believing national-level internal macro-economic systems have become too dependent on globalized trade, without adapting to current market conditions.[20]

As Grubel states in the Fraser Institute study, “Flexible exchange rates have not brought Canada the macroeconomic benefits promised by advocates of such a policy. Unemployment has remained high and economic growth has remained slow.”[21] It is important to clarify that the data used by Grubel going against flexible exchange rates is from the 1990’s, and since then Canada has seen massive growth despite floating exchange rate uncertainty, as Bahmani-Oskooee had outlined in ‘World Economy’ during 2022. Canada’s imports and exports with the US have still risen 250,000 million units from the initial decline in 1999 based on Direction of Trade Statistics by the IMF.[22] Such discrepancies will arise due to the age of most literature concerning the Amero, however these will be redressed and remedied in the next section.

To continue with the theoretical benefits of the policy proposal, it is important to address the immediate benefits and statistical data that justify the policy from a foundational perspective. Proponents of NAMU argue that the bilateral trade between Canada and the United States currently occurs between disparate dyads,[23] with Canada getting fractional returns due to a dual-floating exchange rate.[24] Other solutions to floating exchange rates on external-domestic currency uses will be addressed in the following section, but it is also imperative to develop the foundations of the various schools of thought to do so. One argument is that due to the pre-established cultural and economic enmeshment between the United States and Canada, Canada should be able to transcend its status as a small economy and achieve the same bargaining power as the United States, ultimately reversing the Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) between the two states. A Statistics Canada report from 2016 analyzing the historical context between Canada’s PPP and the US found that, “beginning in 2014

Q2 through to 2016 Q1, the U.S.–Canada PPP declined. This coincided with part, but not all, of the period during which the Canadian dollar depreciated. As of 2016 Q3, similar to the exchange rate, the PPP had returned to a level similar to that in 2004.”[25] This gives relatively modern data to support claims of floating exchange rate potentially harming the Canadian economy directly due to declining terms of trade with its largest trading partner.[26]

The EMU remains a primary example, lending credence to NAMU theorizers though the Eurozone and European Monetary Union have had several negative shocks and inflationary difficulties, reports from ‘Pew Research Centre’, a survey think tank, demonstrate that an overwhelming majority of Europeans who live within the Eurozone view the EU and its monetary initiatives positively, with 64% of Western Europeans holding the union in high regards.[27] This is indeed important,

as when taking a step back from pure statistical and economic data, public opinion is a litmus test for real-world success, by whatever metric the public who benefits from the policy initiative deems correct to measure it by.

The Bank of Canada also stated the benefits of the European example briefly in their millennium white paper heralding the Euro as an “anchor and intervention currency.”[28] The idea of a universal reserve currency is one that economists often toy with, however, with the United States increasing hegemony globally, similar to the centralization around Germany in the EU, it has become the de facto reserve currency for every nation.[29]

Trade is conducted in USD, therefore, it is only logical for Canada to gain a piece of that pie by integrating monetary and currency systems, as a NAMU faithful would like to argue. It is feasible to assume that the trade-off between policy space, [30] and seigniorage,[31] (government profit from issuing their domestic currency) is well worth the stability and status of holding a high international reserve currency, or even being backed by the de facto reserve currency through official dollarization. It removes barriers of trade, ameliorates declining trade terms, and allied nations become even more integrated. The risks of private sector dollarization,[32] also loom over the head of the Canadian government, as not only has the USD become the reserve currency of foreign powers but is now also uniquely oriented as the international currency of business, though pushback in recent years from BRIC's (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) nations has been noted. [33] It is apparent that most of the hype around the Amero came from a time of Canadian financial instability, where the Euro was still a novel concept and had not shown signs of failure yet. From this, it is only reasonable to begin to assess the reasons why NAMU would not be viable, especially in today's global economic system.

THE CASE AGAINST NAMU

Despite enamored neoliberal economists, NAMU and the Amero are simply not viable nor actualizable as modern-day policy options. Outlined below will be the alternatives, its necessity, the obstacles surrounding a potential implementation of NAMU, real world case studies of monetary unions, and finally a verdict on the subject.

To begin, NAMU simply does not make sense when weighed against the plethora of alternatives in existence today. One such option is through

implementing a fixed exchange rate with the US. [34] If economists like Grubel and Harris view the floating exchange rate as a prime enemy of the Canadian market, then it is reasonable to suggest that current trade deals can be renegotiated.

Bahmani even argues that amid exchange rate uncertainty, asymmetric trade can be rectified through the trading industries themselves, which can hedge for exchange shocks, or the relative spiking of currency value in a given time and ease the macro-economic impact.[35] Another option is similar to the gold standard; if a currency needs to be pegged at all, why not use finite resources, such as a precious metal standard, which has been demonstrated by Kunkler's 30 year data review to provide positive currency footing (stability).[36] These are policy alternatives that remedy the same problems that NAMU seeks to without giving up seigniorage, monetary sovereignty, or any of the resource drains that NAMU would. Though, it will also be argued that these alternatives and NAMU are also not necessary at this current time and economic era for Canada.

As Helleiner concludes in *Towards North American Monetary Union?*,

Canada is fixated with floating exchange rates for a reason, despite the theoretical challenge to their negative impact on the Canadian economy.

This is due to the allowance for Canada to provide the United States with favourable terms of trade willingly. It is not a policy failing, but rather a monetary tool unique to Canada due to the disparate dyads, or unfair spheres of trade.

To have a fighting chance of trade, a floating exchange rate which favours the more powerful economy is beneficial to maintaining any trade relations at all.[37] It is also evident from the previously presented data, that Canada has significantly scaled its import and exports with the US (350,000 million units since 1999), a marked improvement facilitated solely under NAFTA and the USMCA.[38] However, there are even more reasons why a unionized currency is difficult to swallow for North America, and that lies amidst a large amount of current day evidence demonstrating that monetary unions are potentially destined for failure.

The Euro, which Grubel had based the Amero on, has seen its fair share of dilemmas since its instatement.[39] In fact, many economists view it is a monetary policy failure. As Stephanie Walter writes in *The Politics of Bad Options*, the Eurozone has led to a significant decrease in individual domestic modes of monetary options for the 14 nations. The global financial crash of 2008 created shocks which have led to a crisis in which policy is too centralized and cannot be remedied at national scales in the EU.[40] The Eurozone crisis saw further shocks throughout the financial system, and high unemployment in nations across the union.

When looking at Foreign Direct Investment or FDI, it is apparent that the Western-European nations of the Eurozone see significantly higher FDI, while smaller nations tend to suffer. Greece, for example, saw a negative variate coefficient of -1.51 serving as a Eurozone crisis dummy model. [41] Nations with lower GDP weight like Greece tend to suffer more and are unable to respond. To apply this logic to a North American example, when considering the economic impact of the 'Dutch Disease', or the disproportionate growth of a currency based off one sector to the detriment of other nations, it was found that NAMU could not prevent the disease from ever

This is due to the lack of stabilization policies nations would have access to, as monetary policy had been forfeited to NAMU.[42] To further extend the negatives of integration, unlike the EU, Canada and the United States are not united by common political institutions, having entirely separate banking and finance infrastructure, and NAMU as a framework would not be able to remedy that alone.[43] The EU has that privilege, and it still seems that the Eurozone is not as effective at international monetary regulation as previously speculated.

CONCLUSION

The outcome of this critical analysis has yielded significant reasons to doubt the benefit and overall viability that NAMU would hold for Canada. Though it may be nice to realize the dream that one need not worry about currency exchange at an individual level,[44] the macro-economic struggle to hold up under scrutiny, regardless of PPP differentials.[45] Losing monetary sovereignty is far too great a risk to consider the potential benefits of playing second fiddle to the United States in an even further enmeshed financial landscape. Canada is a good neighbour, with strong policy relationships, it should not consider conceding this spot to the potential of further trade advantages.[46] There is no reason to suggest that the United States would agree to something that sees no apparent benefit to them directly. It would in fact weaken their internal sovereignty if official dollarization is not the option chosen. The safest option is to strengthen the terms of the USMCA, as it is still a novel free-trade agreement, which could see Canada throw its weight around a bit more, punching up to the US.[47] The risk is too great to consider NAMU, and with current day data, it is unreasonable and unlikely a union would ever be spoken of in parliament, as previously

discussed. It will most likely remain a dream of pseudo-libertarian thinkers who wish for border elimination in a systematic formulation. As the National Post wrote, “The status quo thus remains Canada's better option. We should face this fact and get on with policies that will make it easier to cope with continuing pressures from world commodity markets.”[48] Adaptability in regard to internal policy is evidently the most logical path forward, NAMU need not exist.

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Democracy at the Crossroads: Electoral Institutions and the Rise of Populism in Contemporary Politics

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Abstract

The rise of populism over the last half century has been linked to the wave of democratic backsliding affecting many of our world's longest standing democracies, eroding long established norms and institutions. The following paper explores the link between populism's rise and the design of electoral systems, examining the ways in which they interact to either curb or encourage the spread of populist movements. Through an examination of the cases of France, the United Kingdom, and the United States, it demonstrates the crucial role that institutions play, influencing whether populism will either become a disruptive force or integrate itself within an existing party system. This analysis highlights the importance of institutional design on democratic health, with a focus on threats to democratic norms and the erosion of public trust in political institutions. Ultimately, the paper argues for the importance of understanding the relationship between electoral systems and populism for the sake of protecting and strengthening democratic resilience against such challenges.

Keywords: Populism, Electoral Institutions, Democracy

INTRODUCTION

Populism has slowly but surely become a prominent feature of the contemporary political arena in a multitude of democracies across the world. Its proliferation over the last two decades has prompted an immense amount of literature regarding the effects of populism and its implications for democracy and legitimacy, its tendency to cause democratic backsliding, and its impacts on a country's democratic institutions. However, scholarly literature has only recently begun touching on the institutional factors that work to facilitate the rise of populism worldwide.

This paper will begin by providing contextual background for the recent rise of populist rhetoric, primarily in the Western world, as well as a brief discussion of its features and sources. It will then analyze the ways in which the ideology interacts with different types of electoral institutions to assert that no matter the type of system, this institution plays a pivotal role in shaping the dynamics of populist movements. Through an examination of existing literature, as well as case studies of France, the United Kingdom, and the United States, the paper contends that electoral structures influence the success and strength of populism's appeals. In doing so, these institutions work to determine whether the ideology will thrive within the confines of established party systems or emerge as a disruptive force capable of eroding democratic norms and institutions. It will then conclude with a brief discussion of populism's broader implications for political institutions, civil society and consequences for a nation's democratic health.

UNNATURAL BEHAVIOUR

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THE MODERN RISE OF POPULISM

The third and most recent wave of democratization occurring from the 1970s through to the early 2000s prompted a general belief in what Francis Fukuyama referred to as the “end of history.” Under the impression that Western liberal democracy was the final form of human government, Fukuyama believes this to be the end point of mankind’s ideological and political evolution. Yet, only a decade after the universal high point of democracy, the ascendance of populist appeals across Latin America and Eastern Europe began to appear, triggering a wave of democratic backsliding in many countries.[1] The overarching trend of this wave of backsliding was unique from previous ones throughout history: now democracies are more likely to decay gradually, rather than dying all at once. This is what has since prompted scholars to refer to our time as the “age of populism,” where the main threat to democracy is coming to power through legitimate means, namely, through the ballot box.[2] Political scientists have since been scrambling to explain the sources of this troubling rise in populist autocracies, as they are newly reminded that classical liberal democracy is not the natural outcome of history, but is a system that requires great effort to maintain.[3]

Though countless scholars have provided definitions of populism, one of the most commonly accepted in the field of political science comes from Cas Mudde’s ideational approach, in which he defines it as “an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite,’ and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the

people.”[4] Though seemingly lengthy, it works to define populism as more of a political strategy, rather than an ideology, considering that it lacks intellectual refinement and is dependent on a ‘host’ ideology from either the far left or right – one that has most often come from a class or nation-based cleavage. Further, it places the essence of the division on morality, in which the elite are fixed *ex negativo*, exclusively working in their own interest, and inherently in opposition with a homogenous will of ‘the people’ – who are pure, authentic, and homogenous.[5] As they are frequently paired with other ideologies, their position on the political spectrum varies, with most Latin American populist parties existing along an economic cleavage, with the end goal being the mobilization of the working class in order to push forward more left-leaning, socialist policies. On the other hand, those in Northern Europe and North America have typically been on the right wing of the political spectrum, usually with attempts to mobilize support using issues such as immigration and ethnonationalism. The latter is more common, and many definitions of populism have included nativism as one of its defining features.[6]

These definitions have so far failed to explicitly identify why populism is so detrimental to democracy, especially considering that it aims to advance the will of those who have historically felt overlooked by the political process. Populist leaders typically claim that they are in fact the most democratic of the options on the ballot, with much of their rhetoric based on the idea that they are fighting for those who have been ignored and neglected by conventional elites. However, this understanding defines democracy in majoritarian and illiberal terms, creating a paradox that has prompted Mudde to further describe it as “an illiberal democratic answer to problems created by ¹⁶ undemocratic liberalism.”[7] This lies partially in the deliberately divisive and antagonistic rhetoric used by populist leaders.[8]

More notably, populists frequently express disdain for many of the basic norms and institutions of liberal democracy – including but not limited to free speech, freedom of the press, recognition of legitimate opposition, and an acceptance of their political system’s checks and balances on the power of the executive.[9] This is why Mudde argues that populist logic inherently supports authoritarian tendencies, most notably the undermining of legitimate opposition – under the guise that only the populist leader has the ability to truly represent the will of the people. [10] Populist leaders claim to have a mandate from the people, one which allows them to actively undermine the other branches of their government, consolidating power within the executive and attacking the legitimacy of institutions that do not explicitly support them. [11] This paper will conclude with a further examination of the specific ways in which populism has been linked to the decay of democracy – especially within the United States, a country frequently credited as being the world’s longest-established democracy.

Naturally,

the rise of the ideology, combined with its detrimental effects on liberal democracy, has prompted much scholarly literature with the goal of determining exactly what has caused populism’s rapid proliferation.

Most research has located populism’s roots in the forces of globalization and automation, specifically with regard to the levels of inequality that it has perpetuated. Further, its emphasis on individualization has created increased electoral

volatility, where the percentage of swing voters is rising with each election – making the electorate available to vote for newly established parties as a result of their weakened partisan identification. [12]

Sheri Berman’s 2020 literature review further provides an immensely helpful analysis in which she divides populism’s causes into demand and supply-side explanations. Demand side explanations, also referred to as ‘bottom-up’ explanations, accredit populism’s rise to the growing grievances and demands from citizens. These include both sociocultural and economic grievances, which work to make citizens angry and resentful of their established governments. [13] Globalisation’s contribution to the worldwide growth in inequality has sparked anger towards elites on behalf of the working class, as they watch their jobs disappear or move offshore. High-paying jobs that remain available require social skills rather than physical strength, threatening men with a loss of status and exacerbated by the degree to which women now outpace men in college graduation rates. In the case of Latin American left-wing populist movements, this anger has come from rising corruption and levels of organized crime, which has sparked a similar resentment of the elite class. [14] Supply-side explanations, or top-down reasoning, find the cause to be the nature of our democracy itself, where institutions and elites are increasingly unwilling or unable to supply effective responses to their citizens’ demands. These explanations locate the main cause of the decline of the effectiveness of political institutions, where trust in our conventional political parties has been undermined, causing citizens to become disenchanted and seek out alternative forms of representation.[15] This works to make citizens more willing to vote for politicians and political parties with anti-establishment and anti-status quo messaging.

This all goes to say that the two types of explanations go hand in hand, where the demand side explanations are only problematic when the supply side leans into populist appeals: the more upset and disenchanted citizens become, the more susceptible they become to populist appeals, especially as established institutions refuse to recognize their demands.[16] Other literature has focused more specifically on the political facilitators of populist success, especially when it comes to populist radical right-wing parties, which are the most common form throughout Western Europe. Rooduijn found that these parties tend to be far more successful when mainstream parties have gradually converged around centrist policy positions, as this works to create an opening of ideological space for parties on the extremist ends of the political spectrum. Further, this allows the extremist parties to express the populist sentiment that their system's pre-established parties can no longer be distinguished from each other, furthering their anti-establishment and anti-elite narratives.[17]

ELECTORAL INSTITUTIONS

Italian political scientist Giovanni Sartori famously stated that electoral systems are “the most specific manipulative element of politics.” Changes in electoral laws have long been observed to alter political outcomes, as both voters and elites must adjust their behaviour to these new rules of the game of democracy. Further, electoral systems are also often regarded as one of the most historically entrenched and path-dependent mechanisms of a country's political institutions, with virtually unrivalled staying power. This is because the system of incentives they create leads to their perpetuation – in other words, an incumbent has very little incentive to get rid of the system that facilitated their rise to power.[18] Though there are

countless types and countless variations across these types, democratic electoral systems tend to be sorted into two overarching categories: proportional representation (PR) and majoritarian or first past the post (FPTP) systems. Proportional representation aims to allocate legislative seats in proportion to the overall vote share that each political party has received, fostering a more accurate reflection of diverse voter preferences. On the other hand, majoritarian systems prioritize winners in individual constituencies with the goal of achieving a large, stable governing coalition. Both are based on different conceptions of what an ideal democracy looks like and what representation is meant to look like, and both have a broad range of potential effects on their country's political systems.

Perhaps the most well-observed of the implications of electoral institutions is how their incentives work to shape the size and dynamics of a country's party system. First proposed by French sociologist Maurice Duverger in the 1960s,

‘Duverger’s Law’ states that countries with PR systems will lead to multiparty systems, while majoritarian single-ballot plurality elections with single-member districts have a tendency to favour a two-party system.

This is because majoritarian systems actively penalize minority parties that do not have a geographically concentrated base of support, with proponents arguing that this works to prevent extremist groups from acquiring representative legitimacy, in turn avoiding a fragmented parliament.

Meanwhile, advocates for PR argue that the system provides a fairer outcome for minority parties, a better representation of minority voices, and places necessary checks and balances on the party government. This concept is based on a series of both mechanical and psychological effects, with the mechanical being those that change the party size at the legislative level through a closer translation of vote share to seat share. This then influences the psychology behind electoral behaviour, as voters and elites must adjust their behaviour to these incentives. Under a majoritarian system, voters are expected to strategically abandon parties that have no realistic chance of gaining representation.[20] So, with high disproportionality that primarily works to disadvantage smaller parties, the theory states that the size of the party system will gradually decrease until only two major parties remain. Perhaps one of the most glaring examples of Duverger's law at work comes from the rare case of electoral reform that occurred via New Zealand's 1993 switch to a proportional mixed-member system. Despite the country historically having only two major parties, their first election under this new system saw 34 parties compete, with six of them managing to gain seats in the legislature.[21]

PROPOSITIONAL SYSTEMS AND POPULIST PARTIES

With electoral institutions having such a severe effect on the incentives that shape the dynamics of a given democracy's political system, it is clear that these systems have inevitably played a role in facilitating the rise of populism worldwide. However, very little scholarly literature has touched on these institutional factors, and that which does exist has produced mixed results. Further, natural experiments are difficult to come across as a result of the staying power of electoral

systems. Regardless, the rise of each individual populist movement has been critically shaped by its nation's electoral system.

Considering that proportional representation systems directly benefit smaller parties through their more accurate translation of vote share to seat share, and the fact that radical parties tend to be relatively small, it has long been a general assumption that extremist parties can or will encounter success at the polls under PR. As early as 1941, economist Ferdinand A. Hermens famously claimed that Germany's breakdown of democracy throughout the 1930s – and their subsequent rise of an authoritarian dictatorship – is directly attributable to their PR electoral system.[22] Thus, the rules of the game are widely recognized as critical in determining ballot success for minor parties.[23] This has led critics of PR to even claim that it creates a 'breeding ground' for radical parties, while majoritarian systems act as a check against the growth of extremist parties.[24] Other studies have simplified this argument to state that the larger the district magnitude and the more seats that are allocated in upper tiers, the smaller the percentage of votes required to win the last district seat, and the more likely extremist parties are to win seats.[25] By only requiring a small vote share to break into the legislature, politicians are additionally more freely able to embrace radical viewpoints.[26] Many studies have since validated these results, finding that multi-partyism increasingly fosters parties on the extreme right with growing electoral proportionality. When the electoral system is proportional, the electoral thresholds necessary to enter the political arena are lower, facilitating both party fragmentation and extremism.[27]

THE CASES OF FRANCE AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

Katz's well-known empirical analysis compared the ideological positioning of all competitive parties in established democracies under a variety of electoral systems and further found that PR was consistently associated with more extreme parties and ideological parties.[28] The case of France also supports this claim, with their far-right populist party, the Front National, gaining no seats in their 1981 election under majoritarian rules. However, when the country briefly experimented with a proportional system in 1986, the party was able to gain 35 of the 491 seats. This reform was repealed in time for their next election in 1988, where the party dropped back down to just one legislative seat. Throughout these three elections, there was no major change in their vote share.[29] As the first right-wing populist party to obtain such a large vote share, it has often been theorized that the Front National would have become a major party in France's political landscape long ago if the country had continued to operate under a PR system.[30] The same book further found that under European majoritarian plurality systems, authoritarian populist parties won, on average, 6.8% of the vote but only 0.2% of legislative seats. Meanwhile, countries that utilized proportional systems averaged 11.9% of the vote, but this translated into 12.3% of legislative seats. Further, under mixed member systems in both Germany and Hungary, authoritarian populist parties gained almost all of their seats from the party list side of the ballot – demonstrating diffuse support that would not have translated to seats under a direct FPTP system.[31]

John Malone's 2014 empirical analysis further examined the dynamics of Europe's right-wing populist parties by comparing their representation

in the EU parliament, which uses a PR system, to their representation in the national parliament under an FPTP system. Both the National Front and the UK Independence Party have little representation in their own parliaments but frequently gain seats in the EU. In European countries that do use PR for their national legislatures, parties typically obtain similar vote shares in both national and European elections. Knowing this, it is reasonable to assume that if France and the UK operated under PR nationally, these parties would likely receive a much higher vote share.[32] Though his overall findings state that cultural motivations are by far the largest predictor of success for these parties, he concludes that a country's electoral system must be based on PR in order for a right-wing populist party to successfully translate their support into electoral success.[33]

Becher et al. similarly examined the UK Independence Party and their representation in the EU before and after the country's European Parliamentary Elections Act of 1999. The 1999 act replaced plurality voting in single-member districts with a closed list PR system in eleven multi-member districts. In the election following this reform, the party increased its vote share more than seven-fold, despite only a marginal increase in its vote share for national elections. [34] Although support for right-wing populism was already on the rise across Europe, this drastic increase was not seen anywhere else. The authors further estimate that this reform can account for approximately half the growth in votes for the party in the following years, with the party now one of the largest in the European parliament. This estimate is based on SCM and DiD methods and aligns with existing theory, demonstrating that the introduction of a PR system relaxes the incentive of voters to coordinate on one of two dominant parties.[35] This reform minimized

concerns of wasted votes, and lowered the barrier to entry, allowing for the party's support to manifest itself in a way that was not previously possible. These findings align with those above, asserting that

while there are a whole host of factors that contribute to the proliferation of populist parties, it is primarily the electoral institutions that influence the extent to which the parties support is evident on election day.

MAJORITARIAN SYSTEMS AND POPULIST APPEAL

While it has been definitively proven that proportional systems inspire the existence of smaller and more radical parties, this finding has been debated when it comes to the success of populist appeals more generally. Much of the literature on this side of the debate asserts that because majoritarian systems work to block the entry of extremist parties, political entrepreneurs with populist motivations are incentivized to instead capture one of the country's mainstream parties. This argument is typically articulated using the case of the 2016 American election. Further, when populist appeals are first present and then eventually successful under majoritarian rule, democracy faces its most dire of threats.

This is due to the system's distortion of representation and its 'winner-takes-all' arrangement, which actively works to silence those who are not represented by one of the country's major parties. This distortion aims specifically to limit the representation of geographically dispersed minorities. This leads to

Increased frustrations, disenchantment, and a higher likelihood of citizens succumbing to a populist leader who claims to represent them.[36] With a system that is built for majority rule, electoral institutions additionally work to increase the likelihood of a single group governing exclusively and to the detriment of others. This means that when a high degree of polarisation is present, majority-rule democracies are far more vulnerable to the perils of populism, as the system fails to manage competing social pressures.

This argument frames proportional systems as necessary for managing political extremism and populist appeals by giving them a voice rather than forcing these voters to align with a major party that likely does not adequately represent their interests.[37] This effect is exacerbated by the system's centripetal tendencies, in which the country's two major parties are incentivized to move toward the ideological centre of their policy positions in order to capture the median voter.[38] In doing so, they become less and less attentive to the interests of those on the periphery of the political spectrum and, therefore, less responsive to rising inequality. This can then further legitimize arguments that the system is rigged against certain groups, aligning with populism's anti-establishment rhetoric, and contributing to a lack of faith in the party system. In this sense, majoritarian systems actively work to strengthen or incentivize both the demand and supply sides of the populist appeal.

Van der Meer and Rijkema articulate these dangers through what they have described as the minority-to-majority effect, which occurs when political minorities are granted majoritarian power. This dynamic has been blamed for much of the Western world's democratic backsliding over the last several decades. Whereas a PR system offers disgruntled voters an alternative choice on election day, majoritarian systems do

not. These sentiments still exist within majoritarian democracies; they simply go unheard.[39]

THE CASE OF TRUMP

In examining the effects of populist appeals under majoritarian electoral institutions, it is impossible not to pay immense attention to the case of Donald Trump's 2016 presidential victory. The United States is frequently looked to as the cornerstone of democracy, and it is known for its two-party majoritarian system. Because of this long history of stability for the past century, there was little fear among political scientists that the country would – or even could – succumb to populist appeals. However, throughout the campaign period leading up to the 2016 election, it became increasingly evident that Trump was exploiting the system's representation gap and vulnerability. His political communication consistently framed US politics as a struggle between the will of the people and a 'self-serving governing class.' Analysis of his campaign speeches has also shown rhetoric that inspires anti-elitism, collectivism, and ethno-nationalism.[40]

This case not only exemplifies the ease with which a misrepresented electorate can be swayed by populist appeals but additionally demonstrates the democratic backsliding that is likely to follow a populist's rise to power. The Freedom House ranking saw the US decline in political rights and freedom by three points throughout Trump's first year in office – an unusually short timeframe for such a drastic shift, especially in the context of a well-established democracy.[41] Additionally, Trump's time in office saw the American government utter frequent expressions of contempt for many of the country's long-established institutions – specifically with regard to the free press, which Trump described as 'the

enemy of the American people.'[42] Further, Trump's primary expression of populism lay in his consistent rejection of the democratic rules of the game through his denial of the legitimacy of any political opposition – the danger of which has since been exemplified with the January 6th, 2021 storming of the US Capitol. Surveys done throughout his time in office further demonstrate that a shocking 80% of Americans distrust their government, and 30% believe that a third party would be beneficial to the American political system, higher numbers than ever before.[43]

Overall, Trump's continued use of populist rhetoric contributed to an immense decay of public support for basic democratic principles and political norms throughout the United States, as well as the civility and public trust that go alongside them.[44]

FURTHER IMPLICATIONS

The United States is just one in a plethora of cases of populism-inspired democratic backsliding in the last several decades. Countless pieces of scholarly literature have delved into populism's effects on political institutions and civil society, two key contributors to a country's overall democratic health. Weyland famously claimed that the most detrimental threat to liberal democracy comes from the corrosion of party systems via the disaggregation and corrosion of unity. He asserts that populists have never successfully turned into organized,

institutionalized parties that can work to undermine existing partisan structures.[45] Further, as Sheri Berman articulated, both the supply and demand side causes of populism are self-reinforcing. She quotes American political scientist Samuel Huntington in saying that “the larger, more complex, more complicated and diverse” the demands emanating from society, the more political stability “becomes dependent on the existence of strong political institutions” capable of responding to them.[46] With the next US election set to happen in November 2024 and the possibility of another of Trump’s populist campaigns, this will be a phenomenon to watch out for.

CONCLUSION

The global rise of populism poses a multifaceted challenge to the long-established norms and institutions of democracy – a concerning statement, considering democracy’s newfound place as a defining feature of our contemporary political landscape. Following an introduction to populism’s features and sources, this paper provides an examination of the ways in which populist appeals interact with different types of electoral systems. In doing so, it has articulated the ways in which electoral institutions play a critical role in the dynamics of populist movements, serving as a crucial factor in whether or not such movements are successful. It has long been acknowledged in the field that each form of electoral system comes with its own set of unique benefits and drawbacks for the functioning of democracy, and this paper works to expand on that notion. Thus, the significance of institutional design in shaping democratic outcomes cannot be understated. The paper then concluded with a discussion of the negative impacts of populism on democratic health, including the legitimacy of core governing institutions. As we navigate the

the complexities of contemporary democracy, a nuanced understanding of how these systems interact with populist forces becomes imperative for fortifying democratic resilience and protecting the foundations of liberal governance.

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Divergence in Gun Regulation in North America

Written by: Alec Gelz

Abstract

This essay explores the divergence in gun regulation between Canada and the United States. It illustrates the complex interplay between freedom and safety that frames the contentious debate on gun control. The essay argues that the differing cultural and policy approaches to firearms in Canada and the United States are deeply rooted in their unique historical narratives, revealing stark contrasts in national identity and societal values. The United States, with its Second Amendment, treats firearms as a symbol of liberty and resistance against tyranny, a sentiment stemming from its revolutionary origins. Canada, in contrast, has historically pursued strict gun regulation to ensure public safety and order, reflecting a national identity less entwined with firearms. This divergence is further highlighted by Canada's recent legislative actions, such as Bill C-21, which significantly tightens gun control. The paper discusses how these policy differences not only reflect divergent historical and cultural identities but also how these policies impact bilateral relations and perceptions of safety and freedom across the longest undefended border in the world.

Keywords: Divergence, Canada-US relations, Gun Control

INTRODUCTION

A Toronto gang bust in 2006 demonstrated that 60% of illegal guns could be successfully traced back to the United States.[1] Two-thirds of all guns used by the gang members were shown to have been purchased across the border in the United States and were all illegal weapons under Canadian legislation.[2] This statistic demonstrates the fundamental crossroad of freedom and safety that lies at the centre of the contentious issue of gun control, a topic that elicits passionate debates in both Canada and the United States. Although the two nations are similar linguistically, culturally, and geographically, they have followed diverging historical paths regarding gun control regulation, presenting a compelling case study in how deeply ingrained identity and historical narratives can drive policy decisions. This essay argues that cultural and policy differences between Canada and the United States, rooted in their unique histories, reveal deep contrasts in national identity and societal values. It will explore how these distinctions shape the nations' approaches to firearm legislation, which are emblematic of their differing views on safety and freedom. Delineating how differences in historical trajectories, cultural attitudes, and specific firearm policies collectively lead to the stark differences in gun laws observed between the two countries, especially along their common border.

DIVERGING HISTORIES, DIVERGING POLICY

The United States became a sovereign state after it led a revolutionary war against the British Empire, and the founders wrote the Constitution; the bedrock of values the nation was to be built on.[3] As firearms were paramount in the war for independence for minutemen, regular settlers who America rose against the crown to establish their

own sovereignty, guns were written into the constitution as the second Liberty on the Bill of Rights because the Founding Fathers wanted an armed citizenry that could revolt against any government that became too tyrannical.[4]

The Constitution honoured the weapons used in the revolution by the minutemen to preserve their freedoms, further solidifying the place of firearms in America's identity of itself. Canadians stand in stark contrast to America's cultural and historical linkage to guns.

The Canadian identity sharply diverges from America's deep cultural and historical association with firearms. Canada's move towards confederation was primarily motivated by a defensive strategy that aimed at uniting the provinces against a potential invasion by the United States, as well as railroad trading.[5] Prior to the good relations that Canada and the United States share today, Canada had very real fears that the United States would annex their territory to clear British presence in the Americas. While the United States' national identity is deeply entrenched in their revolution and a strong opposition to taxation, Canada's confederation was driven by a combination of defensive strategies and economic considerations. Unlike the United States, Canada did not experience moments that unified its national identity around a singular, defining struggle for independence.

Instead, Canada's path to nationhood was characterised by a pragmatic approach to unite its provinces against potential external threats and to facilitate economic prosperity.

However, the birth of the confederation in Canada was not the beginning of gun regulation in the region. Unification of the British North American Colonies in Confederation in 1867 brought together multiple ethnically diverse groups: the English Protestants, Indigenous peoples, the Metis, and the French Catholics, with many of these groups having strained relations. [6]6 The threat of social upheaval between these groups pushed the Crown to enact strict gun regulations before unification even occurred.[7]7 Regulation of firearms in Canada has deep roots, influenced by the need for social stability in a diverse and conflict-prone society. These colonial laws restricting guns stayed in place after Confederation because of the persisting strain between the provinces. To this day, the need for stability is a key component of Canadian attitudes towards gun regulation.

Canada has historically restricted firearm possession within its borders to reinforce political stability and ensure peace, order, and good governance. For example, during the Second World War, the War Measures Act was employed, granting the government extensive authority in times of crisis or war to uphold order, albeit at the cost of certain civil liberties.[8]8 This Act saw the implementation of stringent measures such as mandatory gun registration and strict control over gun sales. This temporary intervention aimed to diminish the potential arsenal available to citizens to mitigate the risk of internal unrest during the war.[9]9 Remarkably, Canadians largely complied with firearm registration due to their predominant view that guns were tools for hunting rather than for self-defence.[10]10 As such, how Canadians view their freedom is divorced from gun ownership. On the other hand, the American identity of freedom is contingent upon their unimpeded ability to do what they desire, including but not limited to owning guns and aggressive resistance

against restrictions on gun ownership.

IDENTITY & FIREARMS: ANTI-AMERICANISM INTERTWINING WITH IDENTITY

The historical foundation of gun legislation in North America represents a broader understanding of each nation's identity. The Canadian identity is often difficult to distinguish from the American because they have many overlapping qualities.[11]11 Differentiating between Canada and the United States can be challenging, as both nations share a colonial past under British rule, leading to similarities in language and accents. However, their dissimilar histories pave differing paths to firearm regulation that are also reflected in each country's ultimate culture. Discussions surrounding gun control evoke critical conversations surrounding the exact values, identity, and history of the nation born from citizens using violence with weapons to achieve sovereignty.[12]12 The Second Amendment has a historical rooting in America's culture that makes many American citizens hesitant to give up their cherished weapons. The role of guns in Canada is more closely associated with the simple pastime of hunting than it is with a core identity of freedom. As such, regulations do not significantly restrict sport hunters' slow-firing-guns, meaning most of the gun-owning population in Canada does not feel negatively towards regulations.[13] For a Canadian to own a firearm, the individual must pass time-consuming background checks to demonstrate that their ownership of a gun is for a "just cause."[14] With the many barriers that came with gun ownership in Canada, most of the desire for gun ownership can be attributed to the cultural influence stemming from the

neighbouring United States, rather than from a deeply rooted Canadian identity.[15]

In this cultural context, registering firearms is seen as a minor inconvenience rather than an encroachment on the Canadian identity. Contrastingly, any changes made to the Second Amendment are often received with adverse reactions. The positioning of the right to own firearms in the Second Amendment of the American Constitution solidified the importance of guns in American culture and is a core part of the American identity.[16] Perceptions of the constitutional order are deeply divided, and minor changes to the founding document provoke extreme hostility.[17] Americans cannot separate themselves from firearms because of their historical reliance on guns and the strong ties between firearm access and freedom. These contrasting perspectives on gun ownership reflect the deep-seated values and historical narratives that define what it means to be Canadian and American.

Additionally, Canada's restriction on firearm ownership underscores a deliberate governmental attempt to counter American gun culture, forming a stance of political and cultural anti-Americanism.

In Canadian politics, Anti-Americanism refers to Canada's deliberate attempt to differentiate its policies and national identity from those of the United States, particularly in contentious areas. Canada's global identity is often overshadowed by the global superpower presence of the United States, resulting in a tendency for actors to equate the Canadian identity with the American one on the international stage.[18]

A prominent example of Canada's departure from American policies surrounding firearms is highlighted in Bill C-21, Canada's recent legislative action.[19] This bill was the most stringent gun control bill in the past 40 years, making it illegal to purchase handguns and marking a significant shift away from the American ideal of gun ownership.[20] Bill C-21 also expanded on the foundations of the 1995 firearm regulation attempt, Bill C-68. These bills set Canada apart from its southern neighbour through strict gun control measures under the Canadian ideals of Peace, Order, and Good Governance (POGG).[21] Bill C-21 further cements Canada's stance against the American ideology of minimal firearm restrictions. In Canada, limitations on these weapons stemmed from the emergence of the "handgun generation" between ~1987-2002.[22] This generation grew up alongside rises in concealable handgun violence, especially within impoverished neighbourhoods composed primarily of juvenile groups, a reflection of similar problems in America. These events increased domestic hostility towards the Second Amendment, driving the Canadian government to proactively mitigate firearm-related violence.

Under the guise of POGG, Canada's prioritisation of public safety through curbing firearm possession helps the country distance itself from the American image of regulatory negligence. This echoes anti-American sentiment by creating infrastructure that positively promotes societal safety through politics, which stands in stark contrast to the trend in America where safety is left to individual armament.[23] Canada's adherence to POGG underscores its commitment to public safety by curtailing gun violence and essentially acknowledges the dangers present when there is an absence of regulatory laws.

Reingard Nischik states that without a framework to guide and control behaviour, communities may face increased incidents of violence and instability.[24] Nischik highlights the critical role of regulations in maintaining public safety and order, suggesting that effective governance is essential for mitigating the dangers inherent in unregulated environments. An example of such regulations in place is the requirement for Canadian firearm owners to possess an active, up-to-date gun licence;[25] Bill C-21 demonstrates a proactive approach to moderating firearms which also garnered the support of the public.[26] Contrasting identities surrounding firearms changes each country's attitudes towards gun control. In Canada, firearm regulation is desired by its citizens to ensure public safety and reduce gun violence, which is grounded in a broader societal consensus that prioritises communal well-being.[27] However, the American identity is closely tied to the notion of individual freedom and self-reliance, with firearms symbolising resistance against tyranny and the protection of personal liberties.

Policy deregulation serves only to strengthen the constitutional right to own guns, as less government oversight leads to less rigorous rules. Efforts to implement gun control in the United States are often faced with severe backlash due to clashes with deeply entrenched American notions of the freedom to bear arms.[28] For example, in 1993, President Bill Clinton attempted to introduce the Brady Bill after Reagan's press secretary, James Brady, was seriously wounded by a gunshot after a failed assassination attempt on Reagan in 1981. This bill sought to limit the sale of guns to individuals with criminal histories and extreme mental health problems.[29] Its core objective was to increase the difficulty of obtaining firearms in order to enhance public safety. Clinton's bill was met with intense

opposition from both lobbying groups and the American people. Influential gun advocacy groups like the National Rifle Association (NRA) lobbied heavily against the federal government because of the bill's attempt to regulate nationwide gun sales.[30] This resistance to the 'Brady Bill' diluted the bill's intended impact and resulted in increased private gun ownership and a decline in state official gun certification.[31] In response, many purchased firearms to protest the legislation and affirm their sense of freedom.[32] Such circumvention of governmental processes undermined the bill's intended purpose of bolstering public safety in the United States, where accessibility to firearms is widespread. Thus, using Nischik's framework,

the ideological philosophy underscoring gun control debates is deeply rooted in the contrasting historical and cultural identities of Canada and the United States.

Comparatively, Canada's strict gun regulation has the explicit goal of curbing violent crime rates and taking weapons out of the hands of minorities. Canada has a proactive response to firearm governance to ensure internal safety, driven by fear that alarming crime rates in the United States could be mimicked in Canada if no action was taken.[33] Notably, the stark disparity in crime rates between the two nations, with the United States experiencing over three times more violent crime and homicides, is closely linked to the prevalence of firearms.[34] Handguns alarmingly contribute to a staggering 75% of all homicides committed with firearms, underscoring a critical public safety issue.[35]

The United States and Canada present a study in contrasts regarding their gun control policies, deeply rooted in their unique national identities and historical contexts. In the United States, the Second Amendment safeguards the right to bear arms, a principle fiercely protected and celebrated as a symbol of personal freedom and resistance against tyranny. Whereas Canada has pursued a markedly different path with recent legislative actions like Bill C-21, tightening gun control in a bid to prioritise public safety and collective well-being over individual firearm rights. Grounded in the principles of POGG, these measures reflect Canada's efforts to forge a distinct national identity that prioritises governance and safety above the unrestricted freedoms associated with gun ownership.[36] This fundamental divergence in policy and philosophy not only underscores the cultural and historical differences between the two neighbours but also amplifies Anti-American sentiments within Canada. As these diverging approaches to gun control reverberate along the shared border, they highlight the complexities of bilateral relations and the deep-seated influences of each nation's internal cultural, historical, and societal factors on their domestic policies.

BEYOND BODERLANDS: THE CONSEQUENCES OF DIVERGENCE

This divergence in gun policies is reflected in Canada and the United States' respective approaches to border security. Border regions between Canada and the United States serve as microcosms that exemplify the variations in gun control policies. While American border guards display large firearms to discourage unauthorised crossings and the potential use of force.[37] This visible show of firepower intensified after 9/11, reflecting heightened American security concerns. In contrast, Canada maintains a less

overt display of firearms in its border security which reflects its emphasis on POGG and a less confrontational approach to border management.

After 9/11, the United States began to view Canada as a leaky border due to false reports of terrorists entering the country through the Canadian border, prompting security increases.[38] Since then, guns have increased in volume and display as Americans perceived a strong need to increase border security.[39] Americans have intensified their inspection of Canadian goods entering the United States. This increased scrutiny is partially due to drugs such as marijuana being legal in Canada.[40] While Americans believe that guns demonstrate the country's sovereignty and security, they are often perceived by other actors and nations as a sign of potential aggression. Opposingly, Canadians primarily use background checks to deter illegal activity on its border, also reflecting the contrast between Canada's POGG values and America's emphasis on gun ownership. Unlike the American display of weapons at the border, Canadian border security personnel maintain a more subdued approach; this aligns with the Canadian emphasis on guns being used as tools for sport and hunting rather than as a symbol of national security.[41] This strategy signifies Canada's effort to balance security through a less intimidating force, highlighting their diverging approach to the American perception of guns as assertive, rather than violent, symbols.

However, Canadian border officials struggle to exert enough of a presence to halt the flow of illegal weapons through their border with the United States.[42] This contributes to the escalation of gun-related crimes within Canada, with many high-profile gun-related crimes in Canada being traced back to the United States.[43] Notably, a substantial percentage of

homicides in Canada—69% to be exact—involving firearms are related to the United States in some way.[44]

Canada has attempted to take measures since the 1960s to adequately deal with these issues of illegally imported firearms with little success.[45] Legislation was introduced to curb the rise in foreign weaponry by adding penalties such as an additional year in federal prison for those in possession of illegal firearms.[46] Yet a definitive solution remained elusive as gun-related homicides are still on the rise decades later. This surge in homicides since 1991, representing a 50% increase, signifies the grave impact of firearms arriving illegally from the United States. While legal importers face hurdles, the larger concern lies with illegal distributors, amplifying the challenges faced by Canadian authorities in controlling the flow of illicit weapons without using those very same weapons as tools of deterrence at the border. Canada's image and identity are tied to its POGG values, making it hard to balance the illegal flow of guns across its border and personal security.

As illicit firearms and their associated violence persist, Canadians have had growing concerns and resentments toward their Southern neighbour.

homicides in Canada—69% to be exact—involving firearms are related to the United States in some way.[44] Gun control reforms by Canada to limit the gun problem can only be so effective when the problem stems from another state, yet the consequences are felt domestically. The United States does not intend to export crime to Canada, but it does so anyway, unwilling and unable to change because guns are such an

integral part of its identity. The ATF (Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms) is an American government sector that is actively engaged in tracing the origins of firearms used in criminal activities across both countries.[47]

This group has been investigating the illicit flow of firearms, with hundreds arrested every year in connection with the northbound trade.[48] Even though this ongoing effort reflects the United States' commitment to recognizing the issues their Second Amendment produces internationally, the domestic identity of guns prevents effective legislation from taking hold. Due to this, Canadians' anti-American sentiment continues to grow.

CONCLUSION

The divergence in gun control policies between Canada and the United States is deeply ingrained in historical, cultural, and political factors. Canada's proactive approach to gun regulation is driven by its commitment to public safety and understanding that firearms should be used for sport and not identity. Yet in the United States, the nation's enshrinement of guns into the Second Amendment has made any attempts at comprehensive gun control deeply divisive. The divergence is heavily exemplified in border regions, which has significant implications for both states. Canada aims to minimise the flow of firearms and the violence associated with them, which has led to anti-American sentiments because of the fundamental differences in how Americans view guns, namely, as a fundamental aspect of their national identity. Efforts to address the challenges guns create in modern society have resulted in political division domestically within the United States and internationally with its most trusted partner. As the two countries grapple with these issues surrounding gun regulation, it is clear the problem goes beyond mere legislation.

Divergence in Gun Regulation in North America

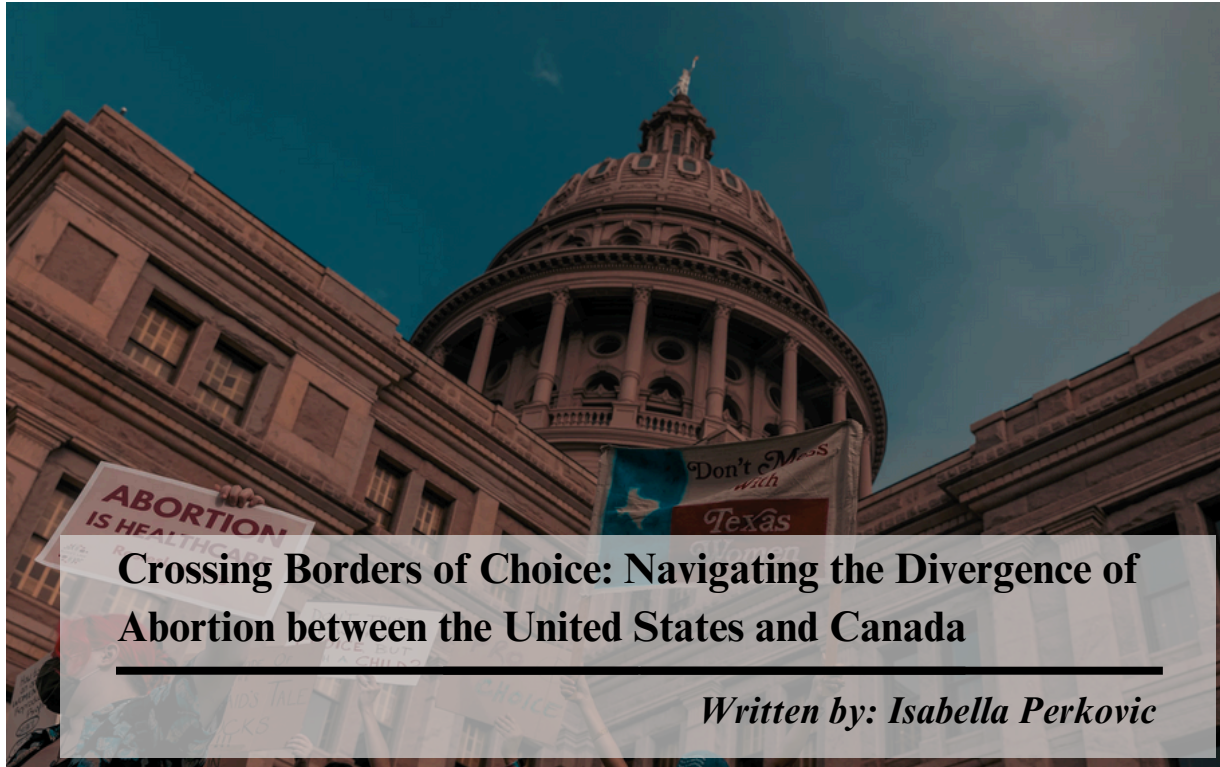
Differing historical and cultural identities shape each state's respective perception of firearms and liberty. Understanding these differences is fundamental to understanding the complex relationship between the two neighbours.

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Crossing Borders of Choice: Navigating the Divergence of Abortion between the United States and Canada

Written by: Isabella Perkovic

Abstract

*This essay delves into the divergence in abortion policies in the United States and Canada by analyzing the interplay of the rise of right-wing political ideologies, the role of the media, and the level of decentralization in shaping political and societal perspectives. In the United States, the resurgence of conservative politics, amplified by media polarization, has led to a decentralized approach, with states regaining control over abortion regulations after the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. Contrastingly, Canada has maintained a more centralized position, bolstering reproductive rights and accessibility to abortion services. While media narratives and political ideologies play significant roles in both nations, the key factor driving this divergence is the level of decentralization in the two countries. This paper explores the pivotal role of decentralization in shaping the disparate trajectories of abortion policies between the United States and Canada.*

Keywords: Canada-US relations, abortion, divergence.

INTRODUCTION

Canada is often seen as the United States little brother: someone who follows and supports the United States on the global stage. Yet despite this, Canada differs greatly from its superpower neighbour in their abortion policies. Currently, there are total bans on abortion in various states. But if someone were to travel across the border to Canada, they would be able to receive the abortion services needed. From the diverse perceptions between conservative and liberal agendas, abortion is a topic that ignites a substantial clash of values, beliefs, and governing ideologies. This paper defines abortion as an operation that ends a pregnancy by removing the fetus, either through the use of medication or a surgical process. The verdict to allow or prohibit women from accessing this practice necessitates an examination of legal, social, and political landscapes. In recent years, the various policies and discussions surrounding abortion have resulted in distinctive responses in the United States and Canada. Policies around abortion are either initiated by the federal government or the provincial/state legal systems. The United States has seen an increase in fragmented abortion rules after *Roe v. Wade* was overruled in June of 2022. This diminished federal power over standard abortion laws and resulted in decentralization by giving states the autonomy to decide their own regulations. Meanwhile, Canada has taken a federal uniform approach to decriminalizing and providing access to abortion services. This paper contends that the United States and Canada exhibit divergent paths regarding abortion due to differences in the rise of the right, the role of the media, and the dominant approach of decentralization.

THE RISE OF THE RIGHT POLITICAL IDEOLOGY

Although both countries have seen recent increases in right-wing activity, the American right-wing ideology has become more mainstream, gained traction, and used its newfound voice to oppose abortion access. The rise of the right refers to the increased dominance of right-wing political views across a country, which are usually composed of conservative-leaning groups. While some proponents of right-wing politics hold more moderate views on social issues, most resist rapid transformation and support traditionalist ideals, such as preserving previously established customs and norms. This ideology primarily condemns abortion chiefly on religious and moral foundations.[1] In the context of the two countries mentioned above, the rise of the right also encompasses conservative efforts to amplify their political attitudes and push forward their preferred policies on this issue.

Within the United States, the right-wing has deep historical roots, with popular examples being the KKK, with value systems tied to ultra-religious beliefs. The United States Republican party, which encompasses intense Catholic religious values, influences policies around pressing issues according to such a belief system. [2] To illustrate, during the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, when the Supreme Court was deciding whether to legalize abortion services at the federal level, the Republican party members retaliated with a pro-life doctrine. States with conservative chief executives began to worry that the autonomy they held concerning abortion would be dismantled and transferred to the federal government.[3]

During this period, the American party system became increasingly polarized on religious and ethical concerns in response to the legalization of abortion at the federal level.

[4]

After abortion was embedded in the constitution, many pro-life politicians and regions increased mobilization since they felt that this new law, which forced all states to comply, went against their moral beliefs and should be reversed.[5] The right-wing ideology stresses the traditional moral convictions on the sanctity of life, which plays a powerful role in abortion politics and policy implementation.[6] Because American conservatism also endorses the Christian right, it aims to preserve traditional social values and institutions, and as such, the right often paints terminating pregnancies as a morally repugnant act to lawmakers and the public alike.[7] In addition, since the 1970s, the right began long-term efforts to reallocate funding and attention from Planned Parenthood and other pro-choice franchises to pro-life organizations, to further enhance the support for the Christian right political perspective.[8]

Moreover, with the 2022 repeal of *Roe v. Wade* in the *Dobbs v. Jackson* case, the rise of the right further gained superiority over the pro-choice stance. Eradicating federal standards to abortion services further intensified the salience of this issue. Overturning such a consequential decision strengthened conservative influence by rousing the pro-life constituency and moulding judicial power in support of these republican ideals. The case turnout led numerous conservative regions to enforce laws that fit their values, reflecting the polarization across the United States.

States regaining legislative power over this procedure can now emphasize and reinforce right-leaning regions' moral values of the importance of unborn lives, allowing for stringent rules, such as gestational constraints and outright prohibitions. For instance, Alabama and 14 other states have banned abortion in all circumstances, while Florida and Utah have 16 to 18-week gestational limits.[9]

Moreover, with the 2022 repeal of *Roe v. Wade* in the *Dobbs v. Jackson* case, the rise of the right further gained superiority over the pro-choice stance. Eradicating federal standards to abortion services further intensified the salience of this issue. Overturning such a consequential decision strengthened conservative influence by rousing the pro-life constituency and moulding judicial power in support of these republican ideals. The case turnout led numerous conservative regions to enforce laws that fit their values, reflecting the polarization across the United States.

In all, the rise of the right is the direct result of the United States' two-party political system, which tends to polarize political discourse on issues including abortion. There is the Republican Party, which is considered to be a right-leaning entity, and the Democratic Party, which embraces a more liberal agenda.[10] The pressure of Republican values heightened in the nation, since their political structure gives this party more power to influence society. Such a non-diverse system provides Republicans with a greater ability to emphasize Christian morals, as voters are presented with only two polarizing options and no middle ground.[11] In its entirety, there has been an increase in Republican influence in the public and political realms of society, both historically and today. This is the result of the United States' two-party political system, allowing the parties to distribute their ideological beliefs in a higher manner.

The Divergence of Abortion between the United States and Canada

For many years across Canada, both right- and left-wing ideologies around abortion have been apparent. However, Canada has seen a shift in its beliefs from a conservative approach to one that embraces a more liberal framework. Historically, there were many right-wing, pro-life groups that formed across the country to display their disagreement with induced miscarriages. As a case in point, in 1967, Paul Fromm and Leigh Smith, students from the University of Toronto, created an ultra-conservative group that opposed many societal issues, including abortion.[12] It was called the Edmund Burke Society, where over a thousand individuals performed thefts and other violent actions, to show the public their dismay at the lack of religious morals in society. [13] Such groups embraced conservative traditional norms and evangelical Christian religious advocacy, advertising the inhumane act of this procedure taking an innocent life.[14] These individuals wanted the public and policymakers to recognize the criminality of abortion, and that the conservative ideology should dominate the ruling over it.[15]

Nonetheless, in the years following the 1988 *R v. Morgentaler* case, which resulted in the decriminalization of abortion, Canada saw an evolution of positive attitudes towards this act, mostly due to legal and cultural transitions.[16] Legally speaking, the 1988 case provided strong federal legal protections for abortion, and Canadian society became more accepting as a result, with concepts such as bodily autonomy and medical importance at the forefront of the abortion discussion.[17] Although some right-wing, anti-abortion movements still existed, the conservative ideology has transitioned to encompass the anti-woman, rather than anti-abortion, mindset.[18] As opposed to focusing on re-criminalizing abortion through legal reform, the contemporary Canadian anti-abortion argument avoids extreme religious references and

instead highlights principles around how this procedure harms women. To illustrate, the Campaign Life Coalition (CLC) is an organization that has shifted its conservative religious anti-abortion stance to emphasizing the procedure's negative impacts on women's health and safety, such as how abortions can heighten risks of breast cancer, affect emotions negatively, and lead to future pregnancy complications.[19]

Compared with the United States, Canada's right flank has not become more conservative with the decriminalization of abortion. Contrarily, since abortion was decriminalized, there has been widespread support for the availability of these services. The liberal discourse has taken dominance, with many citizens believing that reproductive rights are critical for women and should be based on choice rather than force.[20] In addition to the shifting cultural attitudes around abortion in Canada, the nation's political structure also explains the divergence in abortion policies compared to the United States. Canada has a parliamentary and multi-party system, which aids in moderating the influences of extremist ideologies on either side of the spectrum.[21] The parliamentary system in Canada allows for the New Democratic Party, the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party, the Bloc Québécois, and the Green Party to acquire seats in the legislature, which encompasses diverse ideologies on abortion. Such diversity acts as a moderating force, as members need to compromise and negotiate abortion policies together to pass legislation. This leads to conservative movements finding it more challenging to dominate the agenda and instigate radical regulations that fit with their anti-abortion perspective.[22]

Utilizing the rise of the right approach aids in distinguishing abortion divisions between these countries. As it gained acceptance in Canada after

the criminal code surrounding it was repealed, the debate around abortion instead ignited further controversy in the United States.[23]

Unlike Canada, Republicans in the United States increasingly influenced public perceptions regarding abortion as an act going against religious and moral ideals, both historically and recently.

When *Roe v. Wade* was legislated, there was an increase in right-wing movements, and when it was overturned, this influence grew even more, with conservative views affecting many states to ban this practice.[24] Such characteristics distinguish the American case from the Canadian one on this issue. Canada has experienced the rise of right-winged movements, but society has primarily shifted to a liberal stance due to the multi-party political structure evident in this nation, as opposed to the two-party system the United States encompasses.[25] While America remains caught in the debate, Canada has held a progressive outlook; such differences continue to fuel the divide between these nations.

THE ROLE OF MEDIA

The role of the media is another factor contributing to the fork in the road in the two nation's reactions towards abortion. Media is important because it plays a critical role in forming and replicating perceptions around different issues for the general public, influencing political judgments, and the formation of regulations.[26] As expressed by Marshall McLuhan's theory of the media, states that as the coverage of matters rises, the debate around it also inclines.[27] Almost all press industries frame national and polarized views around

problems by selecting specific narratives and languages to influence certain communities' and policymakers' perspectives.[28] In the context of abortion, it is typically presented either through a pro-choice lens, which embraces reproductive rights, or the pro-life perspective, which emphasizes the need for limitations or bans on the practice. Essentially, the media influences policy implementations by promoting various value systems and facilitating the public outlook on abortion.[29]

The media in the United States plays a significant role in presenting the nation's conflicting viewpoints towards abortion. This country holds two opposing views on this matter: pro-life and pro-choice.[30] Within these standpoints, the pro-life perspective appears to be more evident in many states. This prominence is characterized by heightened moral and religious viewpoints reflected in local reports, exacerbating the divide in public discourse.[31] These discrepancies in perceptions often emerge when outlets take advantage of the polarized system and cater to specific demographics to increase media engagement. For instance, during the *Dobbs v. Jackson* case, where the court ruled in favour of redistributing abortion autonomy back to states from the federal level, the media worsened bipartisan tensions through its extensive media coverage.[32] While some publications went against this, embracing the pro-choice side of the quarrel, others highlighted the importance of this decision allowing state power to embrace pro-life conservative policies.[33] Such political attitudes in the media accentuate schisms and portray this procedure as a reproductive issue. Journals, newspapers, and other platforms embraced polarizing ideas, mainly by only providing limited information that aligned with their beliefs, leading many readers to have fragmented perspectives on abortion.[34]

When examining the impact of media concerning this procedure in Canada, the majority portray it as a reproductive right bestowed upon all. The Fourth State, which refers to the press and news, has gradually shaped a progressive liberal narrative toward abortion. Now, Canadians view abortion as an act in which women have the free will to decide what is best for them without the threat of prosecution. To illustrate, the press had a part in altering the general portrayal of abortions since the Supreme Court decriminalized it in the *R v. Morgentaler* decision. This case attracted the attention of various news platforms. Primarily, Dr. Morgentaler, the appellant who was charged with terminating pregnancies outside the criminal code, gradually gained extensive supportive coverage from the media as a spokesperson for abortion rights.[35] The inclusion of individuals from both sides of the debate aided in constructing a balanced narrative. Such media coverage led to the transition to a more liberal ideology, the values of abortion accessibility, bodily autonomy, and the benefits this option produces for women. Since then, the press has predominantly highlighted women's abortion experiences and mirrored pro-choice beliefs, which has helped shift the opinion on the subject as well.[36] Broadcasters reflecting on and altering cultural values in Canada are extensive, and it has contributed to an increased community that supports this measure by promoting the liberties of its accessibility.

In general, analyzing the media's role in formulating and shaping opinions reveals the diverse approaches to abortion in these countries. This topic has been highly politicized and controversial for decades, and news coverages continuously reflect the ideological divisions across the United States. Especially with state governments regaining autonomy on abortion, policymakers are more attentive than ever to the public's opinions, which are influenced greatly by

by the media.[37] In contrast,

the Canadian media has predominantly adopted and redistributed a rights-based approach towards abortion, especially since it was decriminalized. Undoubtedly, the media is more than a messenger; it is a sculptor of public views, guaranteeing that the discourse echoes beyond the headlines.

THE DOMINANT ASPECT OF DECENTRALIZATION

When further examining the divergence of abortion between these two nations, decentralization is the primary component to illustrate how the United States and Canada distinctly address this issue. Decentralization refers to the political dispersal of authority within a nation rather than the concentration of power under a single governmental body. In a federal system, this is rather prevalent as the system incorporates multilevel governance, with two tiers of government: the central (federal) and state (regional) levels, forming a dynamic where management and power are shared.[38] The devolution of control between these two entities is consistent with a nation's constitution, specifying obligations for the federal government while leaving others to regional administrations. [39] Essentially, decentralization affects how districts can execute their own regulations in aspects such as trade, education, and criminal codes.[40] In relation to abortion, the differences in governance models have led to continuous

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variations between policy outcomes in the United States and Canada.

The decentralization of abortion autonomy is apparent in the United States. As a federal republic, it is organized as a union of sovereign states with a central government, and its constitution specifies their split control. Historically, abortion was not regulated before 1821, when Connecticut was the first to ban women from partaking in it, with other states following suit.[41] Through this period, there were no constitutional precedents that recognized abortion, leading states to hold the power to legislate this procedure in any manner they saw fit. However, in 1973, *Roe v. Wade* led to the Supreme Court declaring that according to a clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution, pregnancy termination fell under the privacy sector.[42] It was pronounced as a practice that should be accessible to all with no state penalties within the first trimester. The leading element to this legalization was the privacy doctrine articulated in the *Griswold v. Connecticut* case.[43] The court, drawing upon this explicit aspect, laid the groundwork that certain personal decisions are protected constitutionally. This was then expanded in *Roe v. Wade*; a woman's right over her reproductive decisions is encompassed within the broader context of privacy.[44] However, such a centralized settlement aggravated the dispute on abortion by threatening regional control around this procedure.[45] It impacted political dynamics, with many individuals viewing this decision as overstepping on the part of the federal government when abortion should fall under the jurisdiction of state administrations.[46]

Nevertheless, after years of states battling to reclaim autonomy from the federal government, their abortion decision-making authority was restored in June 2022, with the reversal of *Roe v. Wade* through the *Dobbs v. Jackson* case.

The ruling in *Dobbs* considered that the initial federal standards were a misuse of sovereignty as the constitutional protection of this practice was not previously ingrained in America's customs or history.[47] Having this reintroduced improved subnational legislative control, allowing each region to customize policies on this act, aligning with their various social, political, and cultural ideologies.[48] This plainly illustrates decentralization; by regranteeing states this control, there will be diverse laws around abortion procedures, illuminating the power decentralization has in shaping policymaking. The result of this is that across the United States, certain administrations can impose regulations restricting abortion access, with gestational limits or bans, while others can opt for more permissive policies on reproductive rights. Given that the constitutional right to privacy no longer protects the freedom to access this service, such a decentralized shift places the nation in a difficult position to decriminalize or have a cross-national protocol towards it.[49]

In terms of abortion regulations in Canada and their similarity in structure to the United States, Canada has a stronger central government that can enshrine stricter constitutional changes. Before 1988, the Criminal Code Section 251 governed abortions and declared that they could only be conducted in hospitals and with the approval of the Therapeutic Abortion Committee (TAC).[50] However, in 1988, this practice experienced a pivotal shift, as its criminalization was ruled out by the Canadian Supreme Court's decision in *R v. Morgentaler*. [51] This case marked a major milestone for abortion being interpreted within the constitution by directing the court to view the criminalization of it as an infringement of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, primarily regarding security.[52] Due to this decision provinces cannot pass

legislation making this service illegal or inaccessible since it must align with the federal regulation. While governors in each province and territory can administrate how individuals can access these services, they cannot refuse any woman seeking this operation. Due to Canada maintaining a robust federal government that holds authority over abortion policy, the right to abortion has not been challenged seriously since 1988.

The divergence on abortion between the United States and Canada is primarily driven by differences in their governmental systems and levels of decentralization.

Since the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, the United States has become more decentralized, with states regaining authority to regulate abortion after the Supreme Court's decision. In contrast, Canada displays a more centralized approach, where federal control ensures that abortion remains protected and accessible across the country. This distinction, the United States allowing regional jurisdiction and Canada maintaining federal authority, is the key factor behind the differing approaches to abortion in these countries.

CONCLUSION

Thus, it is crucial to examine the rise of the right, the role of the media, and decentralization to better understand the divergence between the United States and Canada's attitudes in addressing abortion. While all three elements are vital to analyze, this paper emphasizes that the decentralization approach is the leading factor of this disparity. Across the United States, the rise of the right-wing has regained mainstream relevance, especially in affecting regulations

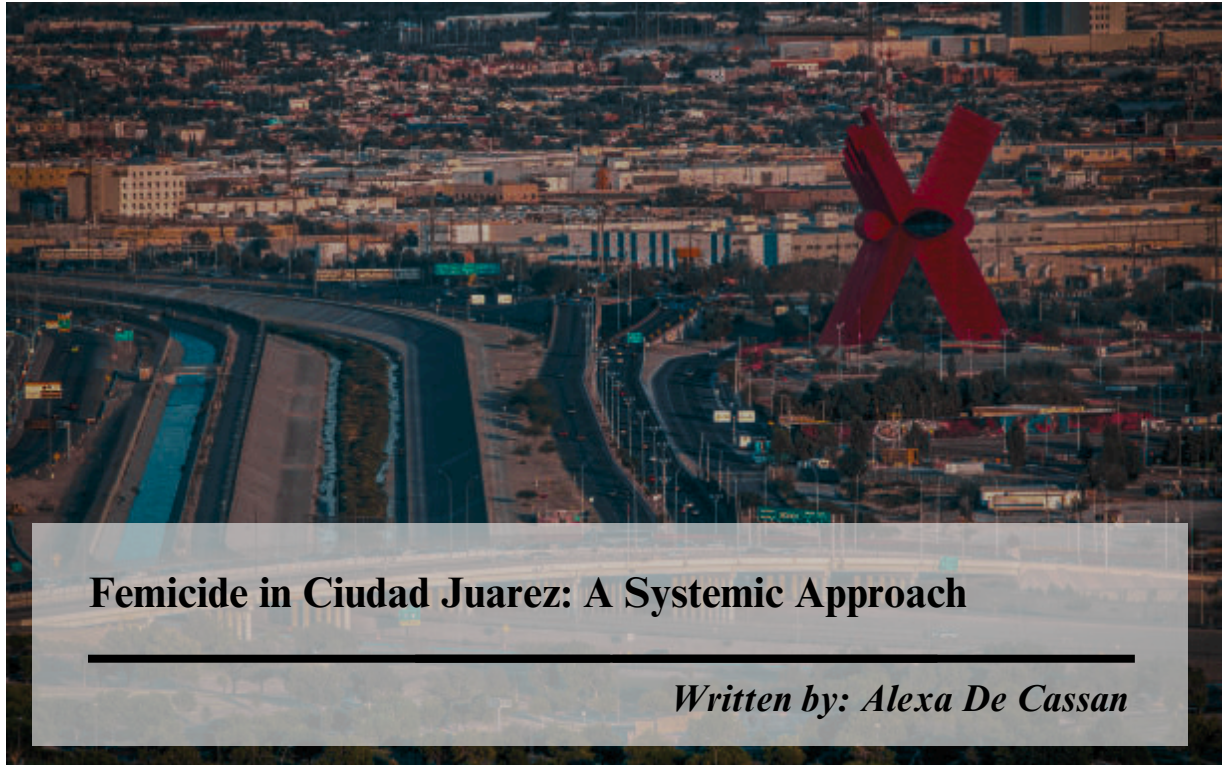
around abortion practices. The media also plays a significant role in replicating and influencing a lack of diverse perceptions through polarization. However, it is ultimately the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* that has had the most impact in driving the variation between the two countries. In contrast, Canada has supported a more progressive approach, avoided a large right-wing influence, and maintained a more balanced narrative in the media. With that said, while decentralization is increasing in the United States, with regions enforcing various restrictions on abortion accessibility, Canada has commenced a more centralized approach through the power of the federal government. In all, the gap in abortion between these nations will endure, shaped by the complex, divergent trajectories of right-wing ideologies, the influence media holds on beliefs, and the distinct divisions of authority over this practice.

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Femicide in Ciudad Juarez: A Systemic Approach

Written by: Alexa De Cassan

Abstract

Femicide, the deliberate killing of women or girls, is a sharp reflection of systemic issues rooted in economic, cultural, and social inequities. This article investigates these issues, utilizing Ciudad Juarez as a case study to demonstrate the systemic origins of the global problem. Macho culture, which is prominent in Ciudad Juarez, increases women's vulnerability to violence by upholding rigid gender standards and glorifying male superiority. This cultural paradigm normalizes violence against women, promoting harmful stereotypes and making society insensitive to the gravity of gender-based violence. Media representation supports this normalcy, influencing society's views and responses to femicide. Economic exploitation, notably in the maquiladora sector, exacerbates gender inequities and reinforces institutional hurdles for women. Intersectionality emphasizes the interdependence of many types of oppression, highlighting the importance of comprehensive structural remedies. This essay contends that femicide reflects broader systemic challenges that are deeply established in societal institutions and must be addressed successfully through institutional reform and international cooperation.

Keywords: Femicide, Ciudad Juarez, Gender-based violence, Economic exploitation, Intersectionality, Structural gender inequality, Institutional reform.

INTRODUCTION

Femicide is broadly defined as the deliberate killing of a woman or girl.[1] However, femicide is more than just a series of individual tragedies; it is a sharp representation of deeper systemic challenges strongly founded in economic, cultural, and social inequality. This essay delves into the complexity of such challenges, using the city of Ciudad Juarez as a pivotal case that highlights the structural components of this global crisis. Ciudad Juarez's embodiment of macho culture, which was defined by rigid gender standards and the veneration of male supremacy, exacerbates women's vulnerability to violence. This culture promotes an environment in which women are excluded, and their lives are undervalued, which contributes to the region's high rate of femicide. This essay shines a light on the varied nature of femicide in Ciudad Juarez and its broader ramifications within the greater societal framework by investigating the interaction of macho culture, economic exploitation, and intersectional vulnerability of marginalized women. This paper argues that femicide reflects larger systemic issues deeply embedded in societal structures, proven by multiple occurrences in Ciudad Juarez. This will be accomplished by looking into culture, media, and the normalization of violence, the root causes of structural gender inequality as well as intersectionality and systemic methods of prevention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A thorough examination of femicide literature shows numerous definitions, forms, and contextual distinctions. These emphasize the complex interplay of gender, power, relations, and socio-cultural elements in femicide.

In 1992, Diana H. Russel and Jill Radford originally defined femicide as “the killing of females by males because they are female”.[2] Despite subtle changes over time, the substantive of this concept has remained stable and consistent. For example, a definition released in a 2012 UN paper echoes Russel and Radford's, stating that “femicide is the killing of a female because she is a female”.[3] Additionally, Marcela Lagarde y de los Rios' idea of “feminicidio” closely aligns with Russel and Radford's definition.[4] Lagarde's concept presents a theoretical framework with impunity included as a vital concept for the heinous deaths of women in Ciudad Juarez.[5] As a result of state authorities' failure to pursue and punish perpetrators, femicide becomes a state crime accepted by public institutions and officials, a form of gender discrimination, and grounds for international accountability of governments for human rights abuses. This becomes useful when going deeper into the forms of femicide defined by these concepts. This including domestic violence murder, honour killings, torture, dowry-related murder, sexual orientation murder, and other sorts of femicides associated with gangs, organized crime, drugs, human trafficking, targeted group killings, and possession of weapons.[6] It is evident that researchers approach this topic from diverse angles, capturing the numerous facets of femicide.

Authors such as Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Michelle Carrigan claim that forms of femicide are inextricably linked to systemic difficulties firmly established in societal institutions. Their writings investigate the political, cultural, and structural components of gender-based violence, illuminating how femicide is frequently the result of greater social injustices.

Shalhoub-Kevorkian argues that the political, social, and economic conditions in which femicide incidents occur influence the social relationship to them.[7]

Analyzing femicide as a cultural or traditional practice indicates that it is part of a sociopolitical and economic history that depicts a hidden machinery of oppression.[8]

Furthermore, Michelle Carrigan contends that there is no one reason for these acts of femicide but that establishing the context of violence against women requires a comprehensive, inclusive analysis of issues such as victim demographics that vary by country.[9] Common themes appear throughout various scholarly viewpoints, highlighting the linkages of patriarchy, power inequalities, and cultural norms that lead to the recurrence of femicide as a reflection of greater systemic concerns.

While the dominant narrative stresses femicide as a reflection of larger system difficulties rooted in societal institutions, individual actions must be considered as a counterargument. One may argue that femicide is largely regarded as an individual act rather than a reflection of cultural institutions. The viewpoint admits that, while systemic factors influence societal norms and behaviours, femicide can also be motivated by specific circumstances and individual motives. Personal experiences, mental health concerns, special relational dynamics, or how they are nurtured can all be considered. However, it is crucial to note that this viewpoint is not frequently accepted in scholarly literature. This narrative is avoided by authors because it fails to account for the repeated and systematic character of these crimes.

These patterns are not accidental, and a careful investigation of the Ciudad Juarez cases exposes systemic factors that highlight the deliberate nature of these crimes.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The historical background of femicide in Ciudad Juarez is connected to the city's fast industrial boom and the ingrained socioeconomic difficulties. In 1993, the remains of young women with evidence of rape, beatings, and mutilation began to surface in the desert on the outskirts of Ciudad Juarez.[10]

This event was the beginning to a series of rapes and murders targeting women in Ciudad Juarez.

Specifically, From 1993 to 2003, more than five hundred young women were brutally killed by their spouses, boyfriends, and, more typically, unknown killers.[11] These trends are linked to the city's rapid industrial boom which created a complicated context in which economic inequalities and social injustice led to women's vulnerability. Specifically, in the mid-1960s, Mexico developed the Border Industrialization Program to attract foreign investment and job creation in what began as feminine assembly-line production.[12] Women made up around 80% of the assembly-line workers in the start, raising worries about gender norms, possible dangers, and instances of male opposition that have occurred.[13] The drug-related violence in Ciudad Juarez generated these sorts of conditions, increasing the likelihood of femicide. Powerful organized criminal syndicates such as the New Juarez Cartel and the Sinaloa Cartel have a strong presence in the city.[14]

Over seven hundred cops had been co-opted by drug gangs and were kidnapping and killing women.[15] The city's justice system is failing because few people have been punished for these crimes, which are murders that thrive in a society where everyone knows you can murder a woman with impunity.[16] In the following sections, this essay digs deeper into these systemic viewpoints, investigating the complicated links between femicide and social institutions, the culture of Ciudad Juarez, and the consequences of understanding and resolving gender-based violence.

CULTURE, MEDIA, AND THE NORMALIZATION OF FEMICIDE

Femicide has become a normalized practice in Ciudad Juarez through cultural norms and media portrayals that shape societal attitudes. This argument examines an overview of macho culture and how it goes against media depictions of femicide that deviate from accepted gender roles.

Ciudad Juarez's macho culture fosters an environment of gender-based violence by perpetuating a terrible cycle of harm and impunity. Machismo is a societal construct of masculinity that consists of a collection of principles and beliefs that reinforce the assumption that males are superior to women.[17] This "role" presumes that the male is always sitting at the head of the table, both metaphorically and physically, as a defender of the family, exhibiting power, and controlling political and economic institutions.[18]

As a result, women have been driven into increasingly subordinate roles in society for generations.[19]

Girls are taught from a young age to behave femininely and avoid engaging in male hobbies. [20] These deeply ingrained views have a significant impact on how parents nurture their children. Even though many parents are attempting to change their attitudes and beliefs, macho notions may be disseminated and taught to children unknowingly.[21]

The cultural paradigm, which is perpetuated by established gender standards, leads to the normalization of violence against women, impacting both individual and societal perspectives.

This normalizing process exacerbates gender disparities and systemic barriers faced by women, continuing a cycle of violence and oppression. As a result, femicide can become embedded in the communal unconscious, perpetuating damaging stereotypes and desensitizing the public to the severity of gender violence. The ubiquitous influence of macho culture impacts responses to media material, revealing the complicated interplay between cultural norms and attitudes to storylines that differ from traditional gender roles.

The depiction of media frames in newspapers, articles, and journals helps to normalize violence. Given that the media is so pervasive, it is a tremendous instrument for shaping how we think. Print media frames, in this way, can arrange and add meaning to femicide news coverage.[22] Since the mass media can impact public opinion by choosing to cover an important subject, journalists may incorporate popular views toward one side of the issue into their coverage. El Diario, for example, is Ciudad Juarez's largest newspaper known for its persistence in investigative journalism to actively expose Mexico's violence.[23]

Exposing such work, however, poses a danger and weakens the macho culture, in which males use murder to silence the press to guarantee the tale of femicide is never revealed. This can be seen in 2010, when at least 22 Mexican journalists were killed in the last four years, and among them, were El Diario's female reporters.[24] An investigation of structural gender inequality in the workplace delves further into the many layers of systemic obstacles encountered by women, specifically in the workplace.

STRUCTURAL GENDER INEQUALITY AS A CATALYST FOR FEMICIDE

Femicide is facilitated by structural gender inequality, which creates situations in which women are economically marginalized and vulnerable to violence. This argument demonstrates how societal structures maintain discrimination by limiting economic opportunities, lacking adequate legal safeguards, and generating power imbalances, all of which increase the chance of femicide.

The maquiladora industry in Ciudad Juarez contributes significantly to economic exploitation, proving how femicide reflects larger systemic concerns embedded in societal institutions. This is visible through practices such as low-wage labour, where women make up 40% of the maquiladora's workforce and get unequal pay for equivalent work.[25] However,

NAFTA's introduction in 1994 brought more foreign-owned firms and a greater demand for female labour based on basic gender norms.[26]

In the following years, gender roles in Mexico evolved, with women pursuing work outside the house as possibilities expanded.

Despite this, women earn around USD \$6 per day, which is insufficient to cover basic needs, and work more than twelve hours each day, which causes physical and mental stress.[27] This differs significantly from male wages, which earn around USD \$11 per day.[28] The employment conditions within the maquiladora industry reflect that of macho culture, in which the same institutional structures generate vulnerability for these women.

The employment conditions in Ciudad Juarez are more than just economic parameters; they are also poignant reflections of the deeply ingrained macho culture, in which patriarchal norms dominate the workplace. In this way, a lower remuneration for women's employment is not seen as discriminatory because this lower income for women is socially acceptable.[29] Women also face harassment from their employers or while on their way to work, putting them in extremely vulnerable positions.[30] Many of these young ladies would be abducted/kidnapped on their way to and from employment because of these situations.[31] The instance of Nancy Villalba-Gonzalez highlights some of the hazards that these young women face.[32] Nancy, a fourteen-year-old worker at Motores Electricos, accused the bus driver who brought her home of raping her and leaving her to die in 1999.[33] She was discovered in the desert a few days after escaping beneath the pile of concrete to a nearby home where they contacted authorities.[34] Femicide, in this context, is not solely an individual act; rather, it emerges because of systemic norms and practices that prolong gender-based discrimination. The city plagued by a deep-seated macho culture supports traditional stereotypes and frequently generates an environment in which harassment can occur and be accepted. The industry's structure, currently defined by many female workers, presents substantial power imbalances, which is a threat to the macho culture.

Therefore, males use their abusive positions to harass vulnerable female workers who are reliant on their jobs. In the maquiladora business, weak or weakly implemented norms and regulations lead to a lack of responsibility for harassment, allowing abusers to act with impunity. The economic fragility of female workers in this area can be exploited by harassers since victims may be discouraged from reporting events due to fear of job loss or other negative effects. After investigating economic exploitation and harassment in the maquiladora industry, a closer examination through intersectionality reveals a deeper understanding of the multifaceted challenges faced by women.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality highlights the interconnectedness of many types of oppression. This argument considers how femicide is a result of intersecting elements such as race, class, and gender, necessitating a comprehensive, systemic approach to prevention.

Intersectionality is the interaction of several social identities and their impact on risk and safety, such as age, disability, rurality, and so on. [35] An intersectional approach to femicide would therefore acknowledge that all operations concurrently, and that operations categories mutually build with one another to produce distinct experiences of violence for women and girls.[36] For example, one of the most common ways this is occurring in Ciudad Juarez can be seen through the level of poverty women. As previously discussed, the bulk of occupations in Ciudad Juarez are extremely low paying, with 65% of the city's 1.2 million citizens living in poverty.[37] Women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more vulnerable because of limited access to resources, education, healthcare, and economic possibilities.[38]

Women from disadvantaged groups may face additional challenges in seeking assistance or fleeing violent situations, such as the effects of globalization, insufficient legal procedures, and cultural norms. This combination of issues emphasizes the need for comprehensive structural solutions.

CONCLUSION

Femicide, as seen through Ciudad Juarez, transcends individual acts by reflecting deeper structural difficulties rooted in economic, cultural, and social inequality. This paper has delved into the complexities of these issues, stressing the city's economic exploitation, ingrained macho culture, and the intersectional vulnerability of underprivileged women as critical components of a world catastrophe. Overall, this essay argued that such complexities helped to explain the root causes of femicide through structural gender inequality, culture, media, and the normalization of violence, as well as intersectionality of prevention. Ultimately, this study advocates for a concerted effort to eliminate social inequalities through institutional reform and international court prosecution. Revamping institutions is one of the most effective ways to address structural inequalities in femicide because it involves changing legal frameworks, law enforcement, processes, and cultural norms to foster an atmosphere in which femicide is unambiguously denounced and vigorously tackled.

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Missing Mothers: Causes of Increased Maternal Mortality of Black Women in the United States

Written by: Kathrina Goodwin

Abstract

Despite its resources, the United States is failing to mitigate their national maternal mortality rate (MMR). While the United Nations has adopted reducing maternal deaths as part of its Sustainable Development Goals, The United States continues to see a rise in the rate of maternal deaths, especially amongst Black women. In 2020, the average maternal mortality rate in the United States was 23 deaths per 100,000 live births. In Black communities, the maternal death rate was 55. Via analyzing empirical data and academic sources through an intersectional framework, the causes of the high maternal mortality rate among US Black women are evaluated. Key factors include increased rate of comorbidities, socioeconomic barriers to quality medical care, medical discrimination, and increased levels of stress. As the root causes of high maternal mortality among Black women continue to be understood, effective policy can be enacted to quell the crisis.

Keywords: Maternal Health, United States, Public Health, Black Women, Intersectionality, Minority Women

INTRODUCTION

For countless children, especially those born into minority communities, one of their first experiences in life is the loss of their mother during childbirth. While the rate of maternal mortality has generally decreased worldwide over the past 100 years, not every country has followed that trend.

Despite its wealth, the United States continues to have a disproportionately high and increasing maternal death rate which cannot be attributed to a recent change in data procurement policies.

The maternal mortality rate in the United States, defined as the number of mothers dying per 100,000 live births, is more comparable to a developing country as opposed to an economic counterpart. The disparity is especially pronounced when assessing the maternal mortality rate among Black women, which is almost triple that of their white peers. There are several factors that disproportionately impact Black women in childbirth. Black women in the United States experience an increased rate of comorbidities, which carry a higher risk of death during childbirth. Socioeconomic barriers to care in the United States healthcare system disproportionately impact Black populations as they are less likely to be privately insured, impeding their access to quality care. Medical discrimination and stereotyping by healthcare professionals also place Black women in more danger during childbirth.

Furthermore, the unique intersectional oppressions faced by Black women add stress to their bodies, causing a detrimental impact and leading to a higher risk of developing comorbidities that could negatively impact them during pregnancy. The combined factors of a higher rate of comorbidities, socioeconomic barriers, and discrimination in medical care, as well as unique forms of discrimination leading to stress, all synergize to drastically increase Black maternal mortality in the United States

LITERATURE REVIEW

A combination of government and NGO reports, medical studies, and academic journals were analyzed via an intersectional theoretical framework. Among the reports, there is an evaluation of improved data collection methodologies conducted by the CDC, indicating an increase in maternal mortality rates as more accurate data was collected, yet not accounting for the continued disparity over recent years between Black and white mothers.[1] The previous inaccuracy of maternal death counts exposes the limits of older journal articles as they were not working with verifiable data. To better understand the disparities, more recent articles from medical social science journals such as *Social Science and Medicine* and *Maternal and Child Health Journal* were synthesized for a comprehensive political analysis. Empirical data from the United States Census, the World Bank, and National Vital Health statistics were utilized to authenticate numerical assertions made in various journal articles to further analyze data. It is important to note that most cis women were the majority of subjects within the datasets. In consequence, the experiences of birthing individuals of colour could not be adequately synthesized.

Along the lines of intersectionality, the theoretical framework is informed by Kimberlee Crenshaw's writings from 1989 to 1991, where she first laid the foundation of intersectionality and subsequently expanded the theory. Intersectionality is especially applicable in this case as the theory originated through understanding the oppressions of Black women. In dissecting the unique risks Black women face in the United States, intersectionality is used as a guide, as well as journal articles, reports, and reputable data sources.

BACKGROUND ON DATA

In the United States, the collection of data regarding maternal death rate has been largely unregulated and inconsistent between states which has impeded analysis efforts. While there are a few metrics to measure the deaths of women during childbirth, the maternal mortality rate or ratio is the most widely used. Maternal mortality rate (MMR) is calculated as the number of deaths of the mother per 100,000 live births.[2] From the 1980s to the 2000s,

The US Maternal Mortality rate has increased while most of the world has declined. [3]

However, some increase can be attributed to the country's shift in data collection methodology. In 2003, the Health and Human Services Secretary included a check box on the standardized death certificate indicating the deceased individual's pregnancy status.[4] As states implemented the checkmark, the maternal mortality rate continued to increase. As the variance in state data collection rendered the datasets invalid, the NCHS halted the publication of MMR reports between 2007 and 2018, when all 50 states had adopted the new death certificate standard.[5]

As the collection methods have changed, data regarding maternal mortality in the United States before 2018 is unreliable, which has posed challenges when assessing long-term trends. Nevertheless, short-term trends can still be ascertained from data collected over the past four years. According to the CDC, the total MMR in 2018 was 17 deaths per 100,000 live births. In 2020, the number had jumped to 23 deaths per 100,000 births. For Black women in the US in 2018, there were 37 deaths per 100,000 births, which rose to 55 deaths per 100,000 in 2020.[6] Although data collection has remained consistent over the past half-decade, the rate of maternal deaths in the United States continues to increase.

As most of the world continues to raise their standards of living and medical care quality, the maternal mortality rate in the wealthiest country in the world is rapidly increasing, especially the rate amongst Black women. Despite many nations striving to improve maternal health as part of the United Nations Millennium Development and Sustainable Development Goals, the United States continues to see an increase in maternal deaths, even with consistent data collection methods.[7] According to the World Bank, the average maternal mortality rate for countries with a high GDP in 2020 was 12 deaths per 100,000 births.[8] Countries such as Canada reported 11 per 100,000, while the United Kingdom reported 10. Meanwhile, the overall maternal mortality rate in the United States in 2020 was 23 deaths per 100,000 live births, which is similar to the MMR of Lebanon and Iran in the same year.[9] Without accounting for disparities within the pregnant population, the MMR of the US is already twice that of most developed countries. Worsening the matter, the maternal mortality rate of Black women in the United States is more akin to the maternal mortality rate in Mexico or Samoa than their wealthy counterparts that possess more medical resources.[10]

The United States maternal mortality rate is disproportionately high when considering the nation's wealth and resources, especially the rate among Black women.

FACTORS OF MATERNAL MORALITY

One of the driving factors of maternal deaths in the United States is comorbidities, which have a higher occurrence among Black Americans. A large number of maternal deaths are caused by cardiovascular-related incidents such as cardiomyopathy, conditions including preeclampsia, and other emergencies such as hemorrhage or stroke.[11] Many of the risk factors that lead to the above conditions include diabetes, obesity, asthma, kidney disease, thyroid issues, and hypertension.[12] According to a study from the University of Calgary, these morbidities have been increasing in all demographics of pregnant women, yet at varying rates. From 1993 to 2012, the rate of Black women with one or more comorbidities rose from 9.9% to 17.3%. Meanwhile, white women only experienced a 5.6% rise from 6.0% to 10.3%.[13] The higher rate of comorbidities in Black women in the United States corresponds to an increase in the maternal death rate.

Furthermore, The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these problems as the disease disproportionately impacted Black women, heightening their risk factors during the course and aftermath of the disease.[14]

In the US, Black women have a higher rate of developing comorbidities, which heightens their risk for maternal death. The COVID pandemic has made this problem more apparent as comorbidity rates continue to rise.

Comorbidities, while dangerous in all birthing demographics in the United States, are especially perilous for Black women as they face various forms of social, political, and economic barriers to care. Due to these inequalities delaying or reducing access to adequate and comprehensive medical care, the maternal mortality rate has increased. The bulk of these barriers stem from the United States healthcare system, as the country operates under a private or single-payer healthcare model, meaning that health insurance is obtained through employee or individual payment plans. If unable to obtain medical insurance through the private system, limited safety nets exist with basic necessary coverage. As Black Americans experience reduced employment opportunities as a result of socioeconomic barriers such as high college tuition, there is a lower rate of privately insured Black individuals compared to their white counterparts. According to the 2020 United States census, 74.2% of white Americans have private healthcare plans compared to 55% of Black Americans.[15] This disparity in medical insurance coverage impacts mothers' quality of care, as public medical insurance plans cover medical costs deemed necessary. In consequence, Black women experience delays in accessing prenatal care and are induced less often compared to their white counterparts.[16] The delay in preventative measures places Black mothers at a higher risk of experiencing adverse effects from comorbidities during pregnancy. Problems such as preeclampsia that can be caught and addressed early are overlooked.

Social and economic factors in the US have led to a variation in health coverage between Black and white Americans, increasing the risk of comorbidities for pregnant Black individuals.

Along with socioeconomic barriers and comorbidities, medical discrimination from healthcare providers is a major contributor to the excess maternal deaths of Black women.

Medical racism has deep historical roots, particularly in the field of women's health.

Much of the early findings in obstetrics and gynecology in the United States were “discovered” as a result of the slave-owning white population’s desire to secure the fertility of Black women in order to maintain the slave population after the importation of enslaved people from Africa was banned in 180.[17] In efforts to raise infant survival rates, invasive experiments on Black women were conducted, yielding procedures such as the cesarean section. [18] As these practices formed the foundation of the field, discrimination did not cease to exist; it only changed in form. Along the line of unconsenting procedures, women of colour were routinely sterilized without their consent in the 1900s as the goals of maintaining a slave population shifted to maintaining a white nation. [19] During the Jim Crow era, Black women were relegated to lower-quality hospitals and experienced substandard levels of care.[20] Built on a historical foundation, legacies of invasiveness and mistrust have persisted into the present. In consequence, Black women are more likely to decline medical intervention during birth compared to their white counterparts, opting for more natural births instead.[21]

Black women who decline unnecessary medical interventions are more likely to be labelled as “non-compliant,” and experience reduced quality of care.[22] Even “compliant” Black women who enter hospitals for childbirth are unfairly stereotyped based on their other attributes, such as age, marital status, or socioeconomic background. In a survey of young Black mothers, participants reported being labelled as “ghetto,” less intelligent, and presumed drug users.[23] These assumptions towards Black women in medical care, especially during critical periods such as childbirth, significantly increase the risk of harm to both the mother and child as they are not receiving the adequate care necessary for a smooth delivery. Addressing medical discrimination and stereotyping is a critical part of reducing the maternal mortality rate among Black mothers in the United States.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Black women in the United States face a unique form of oppression as they experience discrimination against both their gender and race, increasing their levels of stress before and during pregnancy. This double axis of oppression is described by Kimberlee Crenshaw as “Intersectional Oppression,” and it is greater and different than the sum of multiple oppressions. [24] In subsequent works, she elaborates on how intersectionality impacts structures, politics, and representation for Black women as they are not adequately advocated for by women or racialized groups.[25] Such oppressions can manifest as the community lacking the specific resources necessary for vulnerable Black mothers, few initiatives being promoted in the political sphere as women and racialized groups prioritize the issues of privileged members within the group, and missing media representation which perpetuates negative stereotypes by the medical community.

Studies have evaluated the impact of intersectionality in Black birthing mothers and have found stress plays a critical role in the development of the fetus and the wellbeing of the mother as "stress is associated with poorer health practices that affect birth outcomes, such as unhealthy eating, inactivity, and substance use." [26]

Repeated encounters of racism, misogyny, and intersectional oppression contribute to an overall "weathering" of the mother, which increases her risk of developing comorbidities such as hypertension, cardiovascular issues, and diabetes, as discussed earlier. [27]

As previously discussed, a higher rate of comorbidities increases the chances of adverse outcomes in pregnancy, such as death to the mother. Intersectional oppression experienced by Black women in US society drastically raises the level of stress the individual experiences. Higher stress levels cause a detrimental physical impact on the birthing body, which increases the chances of maternal death.

CONCLUSION

Despite being the wealthiest nation in the world, the United States experiences a disproportionately high maternal mortality ratio in comparison to its economic counterparts.

While some of that increase over the past two decades can be attributed to reforms to death certificate guidelines which more accurately account for maternal death, it is not relevant for the continued increase over the past five years as all states have implemented the new death certificate standards. The excess maternal death rate among Black women can be traced back to an increased rate of comorbidities among the population, socioeconomic barriers to care, an unequal and discriminatory medical system, as well as increased levels of stress due to continuous encounters with intersecting oppression. In combination with each other, these factors play an undeniable role in the increase of Black women dying in pregnancy and childbirth in comparison with their white counterparts in the United States. To address these problems, it is crucial to listen to and work with Black mothers and their community to implement effective policy solutions to mitigate their maternal death rate.

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Deficient to the Core? Analyzing Democratic Deficiency in the Primary Institutions of the European Union

Written by: Joshua Kogutek

Abstract

In studies of the European Union, a growing body of literature has sought to explore the issue of if the EU has a 'democratic deficit,' in what ways such a deficit manifests, and if such a concern can or should be resolved. After justifying a nation-state model for the EU, and the significance of resolving deficiencies, this paper argues deficiencies can be found due to a lack of citizen input in the EU executive, an opaque Council of Ministers, and European Parliament elections being 'second-order.' Finally, a brief speculative section finds that the prospects of resolving each deficit varies greatly between cases.

Keywords: European Union, Democratic Deficit, European Council, European Parliament, Council of Ministers

The issue of democracy and its role in the European Union (EU) has become increasingly central in discussions for citizens, politicians, and academics alike. Far from the EU's origins, where neither the formative Paris nor Rome treaties even mentioned the word 'democracy', the democratic obligations of the EU have become increasingly central, as seen in changes brought about in the 2007 Lisbon Treaty.[1] Yet for many, these changes have still not been enough, with critics claiming that the EU still has a fundamental 'democratic deficit.' However, whether this deficit exists, and in what ways it can be solved, remains an open topic of debate, which this paper seeks to contribute to. After noting the forms of democratic deficit this paper is concerned with, why a model of democracy based on the nation state should be used, as well as the significance the issue holds, this paper will argue that a clear democratic deficit exists in the EU's institutions. Specifically, this is due to the lack of citizen input in the makeup of the EU executive, a lack of transparency and accountability in the makeup of the Council of the EU (hereafter referred to as the Council of Ministers), and the issue of European Parliament (EP) elections being 'second-order' as compared to elections within member states. This paper will then go on to briefly note the possibility for these specific issues to be resolved, noting that the chance for success largely varies across the specific deficits given.

DEFINING THE DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT

The democratic deficit generally refers to various perceived failures of EU institutions to adopt and implement given democratic standards in their practices.[2] According to Sorace, specific critiques tend to largely include, but are not

limited to, the following six specific categories: "(1) The EU has an opaque institutional design and ends up being dominated by technocrats, (2) the EU has led to 'deparliamentarisation', (3) the EP does not have sufficient influence, (4) there is no European 'demos' and hence no European democracy is possible, (5) EU elections are 'second-order': they do not convey sufficient information to European voters or make it possible to hold legislators to account and (6) the EU does not represent its citizens because of its pro-capital bias." [3]

While each of these critiques are deserving of in-depth discussion individually, this paper seeks to analyze those that can be more readily tied to the makeup and actions of EU institutions themselves. Thus, discussions on say, pro-capital bias, or a lack of European 'demos', will be left as areas for further study on the EU's democratic deficit.

Duina and Lenz cite three necessary 'normative ingredients' of democracy that international organizations require. Firstly, fair representation for those affected by said organizations; secondly, procedures in policy and law that are accessible and understandable; and thirdly, that local self-determination not be violated.[4] While these democratic principles are not in dispute, arguments remain as to whether the EU's democratic standards should be based on the standards of the representative democracies already in the EU, or using entirely new conceptions.[5] This article, however, argues that a standard should be used that seeks to emulate what would be expected of member state democracies as much as is feasible, for three significant reasons. Firstly, the EU itself makes explicit promises to uphold the values of representative democracy. As written in Article 10 of the Treaty of the European Union, as

amended by the Lisbon Treaty of 2007: “10A, 1. The functioning of the Union shall be founded on representative democracy...10A, 3. Every Citizen shall have the right to participate in the democratic life of the Union.”[6] Secondly, such a conceptualization would be closer to that which constituents of the EU would find most immediately understandable. As Mair and Thomassen note, European citizens presented with models of EU government having norms outside those they would accept domestically, can find the EU politically alienating as a whole.[7] While this point may seem as though it confuses the need for an international organization to be ‘understandable’ with that of it being ‘familiar’, given the concerns the EU faces in terms of Euro-skeptic groups in member states (elaborated shortly), these functionally can be considered one and the same. Thirdly, is that EU influence in state governments is pervasive enough to be a major concern in everyday legislation. While estimates vary, as much as 50 percent of domestic regulation is affected by EU law, with the result being that it clearly limits the laws member-state politicians can pass in a wide array of policy areas. In turn, it means that EU law factors into nearly every facet of the decisions domestic legislators can make.[8] While it has been noted that this compliance is done rather willingly by states, as centralized control in the EU is lacking, [9] it nonetheless stands that the EU plays a key role in citizen life regardless. Given this clearly limits the influence domestic citizens can have on their own states’ laws, this more than any other factor,

necessitates a normative basis according to which the EU must be held to similar democratic standards as its member states.

IS THE DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT A TRUE CONCERN?

But this conception fails to consider a broader issue, which is whether the existence of a democratic deficit in the EU would even be a concern in the first place. To understand this, the model of input, output, and throughput legitimacy must be given. Input legitimacy has to do with the legitimacy gained by the involvement played by political participation in a political system. Output legitimacy rests on the ability for the system to be governed effectively and to produce desirable results.[10] Adding onto this, Schmidt adds ‘throughput’ legitimacy, which stems specifically from the efficacy, accountability, and transparency EU institutions present to civil society.[11] A large contingent of academic work on the subject has seen output legitimacy as largely sufficient for the legitimacy of the EU as a whole, such as a large body of the work of prominent author Giandomenico Majone.[12] Indeed, some, like Neyer, have argued that common conceptions of democracy are so demonstrably difficult to achieve in the EU that the entire discussion on democratic deficit should be shifted to a model focusing on legitimacy through EU justice instead.[13]

However, issues with input legitimacy, of which democratic deficits are perhaps the main focus, stand as demonstrable challenges to the EU at this time for several notable reasons. Firstly, gaps in democratic legitimacy and their consequences have played a key role in the platforms of several Euro-sceptic parties in Europe, with the most notable consequence of these being the successful ‘Leave’ campaign in the 2016 Brexit referendum. [14] This gives stakes to the democratic legitimacy of the EU far beyond perceived lapses in ideals, but rather as a key factor in whether states and their constituents may support the EU

going forward. Secondly, output legitimacy can only be relied on if the EU can present clear and consistent gains for membership to member states across wide periods of time. Should they not, then issues of legitimacy are set to arise in cases where economic integration has been seen to be harmful, as Kratochvíla and Zdeněk observed occurring after the Eurozone crisis. [15] Thirdly, even if output gains can be maintained consistently, this still may not overshadow the issue of input legitimacy. It has been demonstrated that increasing economic prosperity in member states in turn increases the focus citizens of those states place on input legitimacy as opposed to output legitimacy.[16] This means that even if the EU achieves such consistent output successes as would be necessary, they may inevitably create a future need for input legitimacy to be increased regardless.

THE SEPARATION OF REPRESENTATION AND GOVERNANCE

Going into the issue of the democratic deficits themselves, one of the most prominent has to do with the EU's unusual, near-complete separation between representation and governance, and democratic input in the proposing of legislation. In the current structure of the EU, three bodies are of primary significance. The first, the European Commission, oversees both everyday governance, as well as having the main role in putting forward legislation. The second body, the Council of Ministers, is made up of twenty-seven members, one from each EU state, selected by their respective country's heads of state and who rotate depending on the issue at hand (that is, there will be different ministers for configurations on Agriculture and Fisheries

than Justice and Home Affairs). Finally, is the European Parliament (EP), made up of directly elected Members of European Parliament (MEPs), allocated roughly according to population among the EU states. Under the Treaty of the European Union (TEU), the Council of Ministers and the EP take on a form of 'bicameral' government, in which proposals from the commission must pass a qualified majority vote in both the Council of Ministers and the EP to be approved.[17] This may at first seem to somewhat satisfy the requirement of citizen input expected of a representative democracy, given that legislation requires an elected body in order to become law.

Where the deficit is clear from this structure has to do with how the Commission itself is elected. The Commission is selected by way of the European Council, a group made up of the heads of state for each of the EU members, who are empowered to "provide the Union with the necessary impetus for its development" and "define the general political guidelines thereof." [18] Critically, this role includes the appointment of the president and members of the Commission "...taking into account the elections to the European Parliament", and then voted on by the European Parliament itself.[19] This arrangement presents a clear example of democratic deficit, as

it fundamentally undermines the ability for EU elections, and the politicians therein, to affect EU policy, instead limiting the EP solely to a reactive, rather than proactive, role in policy-making.

This view nonetheless presents some immediate criticisms. Firstly, is that, since the European Council is already voted upon by their domestic constituents, that their decisions are nonetheless democratic. The issue with this claim, is due to the fact that the European Council, being made up of state actors, are inherently going to seek to ensure that domestic preferences are ensured, or at the very least not jeopardized by the decisions made.[20] While the members themselves are each given a single vote in proceedings, the disproportionate size and bargaining powers between states, coupled with their domestic leanings, mean that there will be a near inevitable leaning toward certain actors rather than others. Such an effect is only exacerbated by the fact that the European Council carries a normative framework for unanimous decision making, meaning both political as well as normative power can compel smaller states to bow to larger ones in deliberations.[21] This means that, despite many of these states having a disproportionate vote relative to population in the European Council, these deliberations are likely driven far more by larger states than smaller ones. This in turn means individual citizens voting on the domestic level thus cannot be said to have an equal vote across states in who represents them in the European Commission, breaking a basic tenet of ‘one person, one vote’ representative democracy.

Secondly, is the concern that wresting this appointment power from the European Council would undermine the effectiveness of the Commission itself, given that citizens have far less knowledge of the intricacies of the EU than representatives, and would thus be in a far better position to make such decisions.[22] While this critique may be valid insofar as the output of the EU is uniquely significant, and

qualified actors are necessary for this to be sustained, a precedent had already been established that Commission leadership could be decided by voters. In 2014, the Spitzenkandidaten process was used, through which it was normatively set that the proposed leader of the party which won would be made Commission President, resulting in Jean-Claude Juncker being elected to the role. This process was later ignored in 2019, with the Council of Ministers electing Ursula von der Leyen as President, despite not being a Spitzenkandidat.[23] This, however, made clear that the need for necessarily qualified actors was not so overwhelming as to counteract the clear democratic gains direct executive elections had.

INFORMATION DEFICITS AND THE ISSUE OF “SECOND-ORDER” ELECTIONS

Concerning the Council of Ministers, a deficit emerges from the norms and incentives that drive a lack of information concerning the reasoning behind Ministerial decisions, limiting the ability for states to judge Ministerial actions and thus limiting democratic input. Since official records were kept on votes made in the Council of Ministers in 1999, the Council of Ministers has been oftentimes characterized as having a ‘culture of consensus’ due to the fact that abstentions and no votes are quite rare, and most decisions are passed unanimously.[24] Between 2004-2016, only 12.7% of decisions adopted had any dissenting votes whatsoever, and even when factoring in abstentions as well, this number only rises to 23.5%.[25] This in and of itself is not entirely damning, as in theory, long negotiations, compromises, and edits should oftentimes make proposals commiserate to all parties in such international organizations. Yet, issues arise both from the

reasons why this consensus arises, as well as the reasoning that can be given for which proposals pass, and which do not.

Novak notes that oftentimes, the chair for a given negotiation will simply sum up the debate for a given proposal, and if no objections are given, the vote is passed. This process, during which no formal votes are taken, acts as a form of blame avoidance,

allowing ministers to stay silent, and in turn differing possible criticism from both their peers in the Council of Ministers, as well as their own constituents and governments.[26]

Indeed, when objections are made in final votes, they oftentimes serve only as a form of signalling to home governments, as they carry inordinately high costs to the minister to carry out. Hagemann et al. point out that opposition can even go so far as to cause the dismissal of an opposing government's preferences in the final policy text, and that this cost mainly centers ministerial opposition around acts to increase European integration.[27] Further, information as to the reasoning and effectiveness of ministers even after a vote is deficient as well. For example, a normative basis exists in which those voting in favour of the majority need not make any justification for their vote whatsoever, but those abstaining and opposing do.[28] As well, potential failures or successes of ministers outside of proposal victories (such as helping lead to the defeat of a motion that would harm a minister's home state) are also unable to be seen, given that the data provided by the Council of Ministers does not include a single rejected policy, only

furthering the ability to display overall consensus. [29] All these factors go to not only undermine the ability of individual ministers to act, but more importantly undermine the ability for constituents of their home governments to accurately assess their effectiveness.

However, a broader form in which the EU carries a democratic deficit has to do with the significance behind votes cast for the EP, specifically, whether they relate to European wide issues, or are merely reflections of national issues uploaded to the supranational level. This is the primary concern of those who claim EP elections as being largely "second-order" elections. The conceptualization of 'second-order' elections was first elaborated on by Reif and Schmitt, and has to do with the idea that EP elections, rather than being decided on by voters based on EU wide issues, are instead simply reflections of national, or 'first-order' electoral concerns. The effects of this manifest in three primary ways. These include the lower stakes of the election leading to lower levels of participation, parties representing national government issues losing or winning significantly depending on first-order electoral approval, and those who do vote oftentimes taking the low impact of their choice to vote for new and niche parties.[30]

This second phenomenon is of particular significance, as voters' views are only truly represented insofar as their understanding of national politics is concerned, taking away from constituents choosing leaders based on their political behaviour within EU institutions themselves. This in turn reduces the accountability of elected officials as far as actual EU policy is concerned, undermining the ability of voters to respond to conduct within the EU itself.[31] As such, the EU's democratic institutions become more broadly akin to a jigsaw

of largely domestic, state level conflicts, rather than a coalition thinking in terms of the EU itself. This effect is shown both by the low turnout EU elections have, even when incentives are high, compared to domestic elections, as well as the punitive nature EU elections typically have in relation to member state governments.

For example, in the 2014 EP election, in which the Spitzenkandidaten system gave constituents the ability to alter both the makeup of the EP and the Commission, voter turnout was still at only 42% across the EU, a count lower than the domestic voter turnout of all but two EU member states in their most recent elections.[32] Further, the prediction that EP governing parties lose support to opposition parties to punish the incumbent state government also held true in 20 of 28 cases, with those exceptions being close to recent domestic electoral wins, and none where governing party gains were greater than 3%.[33]

PROSPECTS OF RESOLVING THE DEFICIT

It now stands to ask whether there are specific policies and changes the EU could make to fill these democratic deficits, and if they would be effective. Firstly, concerning the issue of representation in the commission, this appears to be the problem with the highest probability of being resolved. This is due not only to the normative precedent of the 2014 EP election which involved the Spitzenkandidat process, but also because such an act would help bring a key aspect of the EU in line with governmental norms seen in member states.[34] This, in turn, would give an opportunity to increase citizen engagement, as their votes in European elections would have a more apparent result in the output of the EU itself. However, it can be argued which form of choosing an executive would be

preferable, given the EU context. Decker, in particular, argues that the commission would be better served not being formed from a parliamentary majority, but by a separate, EU-wide Commission presidential election. This, he argues, would not only serve to maintain the impartial role that the EP has in relation to the Commission, maintaining a split in allegiances between both, but also allowing parties to shift focus to candidates advocating more about cross-state issues.[35] Regardless of whether the more familiar parliamentary model, or this proposed presidential model were to be used, they would both have benefits with domestic concerns. Citizens with Euro-skeptical views, could now have a demonstrable figure at the head of the EU in which to assign blame for perceived EU failures, increasing calls for changes in Commission leadership, rather than seeing these issues as solely stemming from EU membership itself.

As for the deficits seen in the Council of Ministers, the prospects of fulfilling greater accountability and information for voters and governments has more meddling prospects. Certainly, there exist policies that could help increase the transparency of the decision-making process involved. Requiring written justifications for both approving and disapproving votes, equalizing onuses for all members, and requiring votes on legislation once a certain number of changes from the first form of a proposal have been made, would increase the amount of information about the negotiation process for state governments and citizens to react to. However, these measures would still have to overcome the normative culture of consensus that has already amassed for much of the Council's existence. Many of the reforms already implemented for publicity are regularly sidestepped. For example, required video

recording of meetings on controversial issues are regularly disabled, and debates required to be in public having negotiations simply take place during lunch or in hallways.[36] Given the incentives of blame deflection that current practices give ministers, it would be hard to imagine similar sidestepping not occurring under a more open model. Further, these reforms could only be effective insofar as domestic governments were interested in regulating ministers, which beyond policies increasing EU integration, remains a rather rare occurrence. Finke, in writing on the lack of transparency in the Council of Ministers, is clear to define transparency not as the availability of documentation, but rather the degree which Council decisions gain publicity in EU member states themselves, noting it to be rather low overall.[37]

Finally, regarding the deficits in the EP insofar as its elections are ‘second-order’ elections, this deficit seems the least likely to be solved of the issues discussed. This is because its root causes deal both with the institutions of the EP itself, but also the conceptualizations European citizens have towards the EU in relation to their own governments. Certain measures could be used to mitigate this, including greater education into how the EU functions for citizens, and models where citizen inputs have clearer results in terms of the makeup of the EU (as seen in both the parliamentary and presidential models of the commission). Yet, this still runs into the issue of citizens conceiving of the EU as only an aspect of national politics, rather than an institution unto itself. Indeed, changing electoral maps for the EP to solve this may also be futile. An EU wide party-list proportional representation vote for MEPs may simply have the same effects occur as the current, domestic EP elections bring about, only in a less easily discernable form. And a model with MEP seat districts drawn across

member state borders would likely require a level of supranational control most member states would be unwilling to give EU elections.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the EU’s democratic deficit is not only real, but presents a key challenge to the ongoing efforts to legitimize the EU. Using a model based on standards similar to those found in EU member states, this article found three key deficiencies particular to the practices of EU institutions themselves. Specifically, a lack of citizen input in the generation of legislation in the Commission, a large absence of transparency and accountability in the operation of the Council of Ministers, and the consequences of the European Parliament having largely ‘second-order’ elections compared to ‘first-order’ national elections. Of these deficiencies, the possibilities for success were found to be somewhat mixed, and largely dependent on the individual issue at hand. Deficiencies stemming more from legislative issues were found to have likelier chances of success than those more based in normative ones. Whether these, or any other deficiencies not specifically covered in this article can be resolved in the future remains to be seen, though with the inadequacies of a purely output based model of legitimacy, the need to tackle these issues becomes ever increasingly significant for EU success.

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Beyond Apartheid: The Impact of Imperialism on Post-Apartheid Development in South Africa

Written by: Madison Paiment

Abstract

This paper explores the multifaceted impact of imperialism on state development, focusing on South Africa as a case study. It investigates how the historical legacies of colonialism continue to shape post-colonial outcomes, notably evident in inequality and sociopolitical fragmentation. Highlighting the crucial connection between economic challenges and state-building objectives, the study advocates for inclusive economic development to foster a unified national identity and to ensure equitable prosperity for all citizens, irrespective of racial identity. The paper is structured into five sections: 1) contextualizing South Africa's past and introducing a decolonial identity framework; 2) employing settler colonial theory to define the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized; 3) analyzing the direct impact of colonialism on political and economic institutions; 4) examining post-colonial perspectives through individual viewpoints; and 5) concluding with a synthesis of key arguments and offering recommendations for state-development using transitional justice frameworks.

Keywords: Imperialism, Post-colonialism, Apartheid, Economic Development, and State-building

INTRODUCTION

The development of a state is a unilinear process influenced by a multitude of social, political, and economic factors. Similar to how a tree's growth is determined by the strength of its roots, a state's existence is inseparable from its historical legacy. The branches of said tree represent the institutions of a state, nourished by historical and modern factors of influence beneath its visible structure. However, when a state is formed through imperialism, can it continue to develop separately from its influence? Or does imperialism continue to impede its progress, resulting in an outdated form of development that cannot prosper as an independent entity? As numerous scholars have argued, colonialism plays a direct role in a state's trajectory.[1] This paper uses South Africa as a case study to examine how imperialism's enduring effects have generated ill-favored post-colonial outcomes, such as inequality, social constraints, and economic and political fragmentation.[2] Furthermore, this study underscores the critical interconnectedness of economic challenges with broader nation-building objectives, emphasizing that inclusive economic development is pivotal for achieving overarching state-building goals and fostering a cohesive and equitable national identity. Therefore, I argue that South Africa's roots of imperialism, particularly manifested in economic disparities, continue to impede its nation-building and state reform efforts, perpetuating continuous inequality despite its post-colonial status.

This paper is composed of five sections to demonstrate my central thesis. The first section presents a contextual background of South Africa's historical roots of colonialism while additionally providing a framework of decolonial development used to measure imperialism's influence on the state. The second section employs the theoretical framework of settler

colonial theory to support the distinct relationship between colonizers and the colonized and differentiate this case from sheer oppression. In the third section, I assert my argument in the context of political and economic spheres of influence using examples to exhibit how colonialism directly impedes the development of a state's institutions. The fourth section explores post-colonialism through an individual frame of reference, which often serves as the basis of counterarguments to colonialism's presence in modern society. Finally, the fifth section concludes the essay by summarizing the key arguments and proposing recommendations for state evolution.

SOUTH AFRICA'S LEGACY OF COLONIALISM AND APARTHEID

South Africa's colonial period began in 1652 with the Dutch settlement in the territory now known as Cape Town.[3] As European monarchies sought to expand their territorial influence and strengthen their economic power, competition between nations intensified. Over the next century, South African indigenes were subjected to European colonies, eventually losing all authority over their social, political, and business organizations by the late 1800s.[4] Ethnocentric values and beliefs associated with European expansion served as the basis for new institutions structured around significant global developments, including the Industrial Revolution and the prosperity of market capitalism.[5] Eventually, the colonial state model existed as an asymmetrical power relationship between the imperial hegemony and native Africans, marked by brutality and domination in the name of a prosperous new world order. While the mid-twentieth century saw the formalization of South Africa's independent statehood through the

Freedom Charter, the nation's development continued to be spoiled by the legacy of colonial influence.[6]

In 1955, the Bandung conference defined the development of a state in the context of decolonialism as a “liberatory human aspiration to attain freedom from political, economic, ideological, epistemological and social domination” imposed by the imperial regime.[7] This definition depicts development as less of a materialistic practice and more of an ideological pursuit that aims to overcome systemic civil and political inequalities. Said rationale emerged alongside the international expansion of state independence from colonial rule to post-colonialism in the 1950s and early 1960s.[8] However, said freedom was notably restricted to white individuals under the apartheid regime in South Africa based on oppressive political and economic systems. The apartheid rule, conducted by the Afrikaners and their associated National Party, chartered segregation and discrimination policies against local Black and Indigenous peoples. The Group Areas Act of 1950, as an example, displaced thousands of “coloured” citizens from their homes to “prevent Blacks from encroaching on white areas.”[9] Interracial marriage, the right to vote, and linguistic expression were also stripped from Black individuals amidst the apartheid.[10] The oppressive regime of the white minority rule against the Black majority persisted until the election of the African National Congress (ANC) in 1994 and their enforcement of the associated neoliberal democratic Constitution.[11]

The significance of the colonial regime and its by-product of apartheid rule is seen today in the state's persistent inequalities amidst the political and economic sectors. These inequalities are highlighted in the 2019 Quarterly Labor Force Survey published by the Department of Statistics

South Africa, which collects data on the unemployment rates among citizens within the working-age population (15-64). The data disclosed that Black Africans possess an unemployment rate over three times higher than their white colleagues (0.22:0.7).[12] The high poverty, crime, and unemployment rates documented in quantitative publications from the post-apartheid state, such as the Quarterly Labor Force Survey, reveal that the goal of development away from systems of oppression has not been fully achieved. Furthermore, this indicates that an embedded obstruction continues to thwart state stability within the sociopolitical and economic realm, preserving systems of white privilege irrespective of South Africa's commitment to the Western development framework.

SETTLER COLONIAL THEORY

The basis of my argument derives from settler colonial theory put forth by historian Patrick Wolfe. Settler colonial theory is a theoretical framework that acknowledges the systemic links between colonizers and the colonized in societies that never experienced the formal retraction of imperial administrators and their descendant population. The theory attests that when colonizers stay and attempt to maintain long-term control over the land, the colonial sphere of influence becomes built into the very sovereignty of the state.[13] The operation of sovereignty is a critical element of the theory because of its close connection to decolonization. The process of decolonization involves the transfer of power from the colonial state to the native population to restore and rebuild the system that existed, and often thrived, prior to colonialism. Thus, state sovereignty, by way of Wolfe's theory, entails abandoning settler sovereignty and reclaiming precolonial agency by the colonized at the same time.

Furthermore, it is critical to note that the withdrawal of colonial powers cannot be considered a formal retraction in South Africa as power did not return to the Black Indigenous population upon colonial departure. Instead, it was transferred to European-descendent elites who upheld Western ideals, characterized by the means through which powerful nations and international entities exert their sphere of political and economic influence over weaker nations after attaining constitutional independence.[14] By engaging with settler colony theory, one can assert that this failure of transitional justice, in turn,

laid the foundation for perpetual power dynamics that continued to protect, maintain, and award white privilege at the expense of Black freedom throughout the apartheid regime.

In the context of development, settlement, in turn, becomes less of an occurrence and more of a structure that operates alongside the state-building process.

POLITICAL IMPEDIMENTS IN POST-APARTHEID DEVELOPMENT

From a political perspective, obstacles to post-apartheid development by means of systemic colonial interference can be seen within the Constitution constructed post-1994. Following the apartheid, South Africa introduced an ideological emphasis on individualism in accordance with Western neoliberal markers of development, including the promotion of intellectual property rights and the rule of law. Former Constitutional Deputy Chief Justice

Dikgang Moseneke underlined the necessity for a radical shift towards liberalism, stating that the post-apartheid South African Constitution “not only establish[es] its supremacy, rule of law and fundamental rights but also recites our collective convictions.”[15] Despite its progressive framework, the de facto assimilation of western influence into practice was prohibited by key legal instruments left over from the colonial regime. While the ANC has successfully enforced several policy initiatives since its rise to power, including the National Development Plan for economic development, none have effectively solved issues of racial inequality as promised, according to T.K. Poee’s research on law and economic development in South Africa.[16] Under settler colonial theory, said disparity can be attributed to the failure of the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR) Policy, established by the ANC in 1994. This policy, which has roots in macroeconomics and neoliberalism, prioritized the prosperity of international investors over marginalized, low-income groups.[17] Consequently, between 1995 and 2000, the annual income for Black households in South Africa declined by 19%, whereas white households saw an increase of nearly 15%.[18] State development ultimately suffered due to the limitations placed on state interference within the GEAR policy, which, in turn, prevented the government from addressing inequality until the policy was archived in the early 2000s.[19] Henceforth, post-apartheid development inefficiently applied colonial norms that eventually resulted in apathetic legal solutions that did not prioritize the interests of South Africa’s Black Indigenous population.

A similar trend emerges when examining the hegemonic constraint imposed on the state to meet one of the necessary conditions of development: globalization.[20] Due to its

preoccupancy with meeting Eurocentric standards left over from colonialism, the South African government found itself paralyzed following the apartheid reign, simultaneously unable to progress with or away from colonial influence. Consequently, it moved to emulate the European model of political security characterized by political privatization in the form of policing, regionalism, and often corruption.[21] However, because it entered the arena of democratic globalization late, South Africa ultimately lacked the resources needed to extend its governmental influence beyond the bounds of capitalism. As a result, the state's politics appeared closer to its imperialist predecessors' "forceful liberalism" than those of "successful" developed states, such as Denmark, who is able to support its people and markets simultaneously with strong social welfare systems and efficient governmental mechanics, supported by its near-perfect score on the sustainable development index.[22] This halted South Africa's progress within the international hierarchy, as the nation tried too strongly to adhere to its Eurocentric roots rather than strengthening its independent government structures to promote a development that is not only swift but sustainable. In other words, colonialism remains an influential variable that prohibits developing countries from progressing politically in accordance with their self-interests.

ECONOMIC IMPEDIMENTS IN POST-APARTHEID DEVELOPMENT

When analyzing colonialism's economic influence, it is also apparent that capitalism has two primary features that directly impede development in the context of de-colonialism in South Africa. The first notable feature of capitalism is the exploitation of black workers within the state's market economy.[23]

According to Bill Freund, a startling two-thirds of the nation's black population lives in poverty.[24] Historically, migrant labor was a prominent feature of colonial expansion, where European colonies in South Africa often relocated Black labor force members from other territories to perform the arduous work associated with mining and industrialization, particularly in the expansion of railway districts for trade.[25] Moreover, the generational exploitation of African natives for European gain prevented Black workers from participating in high-paying job sectors that would have allowed them the same opportunities to pass down economic capital to their children. Henceforth, social fragmentation prospered during colonial rule in South Africa now requires Black South Africans to overcome the double burden of both racial and economic obstacles fostered by a lack of familial exposure to the workplace pre-democratization of the State. Consequently, said burden directly impedes development based on the socio-economic domination of one race over another.

The second feature of capitalism's ties to colonial influence is the monopoly of economic coercion and influence restricted to a small group of conglomerates that promote neoliberalism within the state's market.[26] In Gillian Hart's relational comparison of Marxist postcolonial geographies, she highlights the downfall of labor-intensive industries following the ANC's commitment to neoliberal economic politics as a direct impediment to economic prosperity and development.[27] In the context of neoliberalism, colonial influence is indisputable as the ideology attributes economic segregation to the incompetency of oneself to consume.[28] Nonetheless, a market system based on an individual approach to profit fails to address the structural causes of income disparity, disproportionately affecting one distinct

population or group. In other words, while individualism and capitalist privatization may maintain western ideological domination and economic prosperity, it does not come without infringing on the economic gains of those it is designed to oppress. Instead of protecting the existing economic monopoly of the five primary South African companies that controlled 85% of all listed businesses in the Johannesburg Stock exchange at the turn of the century, policy recommendations should focus on reducing income inequality through reformist taxation strategies and educational investments into the minds of the majority Black population to ensure economic development of the state entirety.[29] However, after two decades, white individuals in South Africa continue to earn six times more than Black people due to the centrality of neoliberal priorities in the South African and Western markets.[30] This, once again, reinforces the maintenance of Western influence in dictating the economic trajectories of the state.

CRITICISMS

One should note that the stance supported by settler colonial theory is not held universally by all political scientists and economists. Many critics, like Thomas Sowell, attest that racial and economic disparities result from human behavior and cultural differences rather than historical oppression.[31] Sowell's book, "Discrimination and Disparities," applies an individual level of analysis to criticize the prevalence of colonial influence in existing political systems. The argument used to support said belief involves a concept he defines as "taste-based discrimination" within the economic sector.[32] For instance, an employer may be less likely to hire a candidate with a criminal record than one with no criminal history, regardless of experience – but is this a matter of preference or the systemic failure of the state to rehabilitate criminals

properly? Sowell argues that systematic oppression has nothing to do with this decision and that our personal frame of reference, guided by our lived experience, determines the outcome. The same goes for race in an economic context by this logic.

In other words, the failure of black South Africans to prosper has nothing to do with colonialism, and statistics surrounding income inequality are misleading and exaggerate variation beyond their sphere of influence.[33]

Sowell's argument prompts theorists to grapple with a pressing question: If political and economic segregation no longer stems from the state's constitution, as he asserts, then who bears responsibility for the discrepancy in the success of Black individuals compared to their white compatriots? While Sowell's argument acknowledges that individual behavior influences the decision-making of economic authorities, its applicability falls short within the context of South Africa.[34] In the field of International Relations, it is crucial to recognize that no frame of analysis is mutually exclusive. On a micro level, individual actors in positions of power indeed wield significant influence over citizens of the state. However, it is equally true that the systemic influence of colonialism acts as a determinant in the same way. That said, there is merit to analyzing development through a broader frame of analysis. Individual frames of reference may inadvertently overlook the experiences and difficulties faced by disadvantaged groups, as well as the broader social and historical circumstances that influence people's identities.

Embracing a systemic perspective allows for a more comprehensive analysis that includes grass-root approaches for facilitating development. In South Africa, the failure of Black South Africans to thrive cannot solely be attributed to the individual behavior of those in power because the state has endured extensive governmental reform since its post-apartheid transition. Nonetheless, persistent statistics surrounding income inequality continue to persist, thus indicating deeper systemic issues at play.[35] Therefore, it is crucial to adopt a wider frame of analysis, preferably at the systemic level, when examining the influences of a state's development as a structural process rather than a singular event dictated solely by an individual leader.

CONCLUSION

Like the roots of a tree, the influences of imperialism have proven difficult to eradicate once they have taken hold in the groundwork of a state. This enduring persistence of colonialism over the modern state formation of South Africa underscores the notion that states, akin to humans, are tightly bound to their historical legacies. Settler colonial theory's examination of unemployment rates, income disparities, policy effectiveness, and capitalism further emphasizes how the intimate ties to colonialism continue to permeate political and economic institutions. This is not to say it is permanent; rather, transformation requires profound introspection by individual states, extending beyond the sphere of Western influence. Moreover, the case of South Africa offers valuable insights applicable to other instances of settler colonialism globally. Similar patterns of colonial influence at the expense of minority populations can be observed in various post-colonial contexts, such as Egypt and Iraq, highlighting the need for broader acknowledgement and responses to historical injustice. Transitional justice mechanisms, geared

toward promoting reconciliation and reintegration, offer an encompassing approach to addressing these legacies of oppression and fragmentation.[36] Through their applications in recognizing past harms and actively pursuing restitution and peace, states can embark on the process of dismantling systemic barriers that currently hinder true growth. Moreover, although South Africa has undergone considerable reorganization since its transition to democracy in 1994, true development cannot be achieved while colonial influences continue to govern, manipulate, and exploit its systems. Thus, to achieve genuine growth and progress, South Africa must confront and address its structural legacy of exploitation and oppression. Only through concerted efforts towards reconciliation, justice, and fair governance can South Africa, alongside other nation-state's confronted with similar legacies, pave the way for a just and prosperous nature.

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Division, Trauma, and Stagnation: The Case Against the British Imperial Legacy Within India

Written by: Marek Brooking

Abstract

This essay explores the British colonial legacy within India and how it has drastically affected the country's ability to become a modern day global economic and geopolitical force. It begins by establishing a historical background from the first European expeditions to the subcontinent all the way to independence from Great Britain in 1947. It goes into how this colonial legacy has created issues on a sociopolitical level, mainly through creating ethnic tensions – mainly through the historical divide-and-conquer strategy – that now threaten the pluralistic democracy that India was founded on. This could mainly be seen through the rise of ethnonationalist movements within India, which acts as a large-group trauma response to this colonial legacy. The final section analyzes the historical economic abuse of the country conducted by the British, where the suppression of domestic industries and exploitation of India's vast resources have limited the country economically after independence.

Keywords: Imperialism, India, Nationalism, Exploitation, Independence

INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, India has received international attention as a rising technological and economic superpower comparable to China with the potential of overtaking it in the next few decades.[1] Its rapid growth in population has surpassed China in becoming the most populous country with a staggering 1.4 billion individuals as of 2023, and as the largest democracy in the world, it could act as a formidable counterweight to China's supremacy over the Asian continent. [2] However, while India is certainly a rising power, it is also clear that this nation is still healing from its colonial past, which has affected both its politics and economy to this day and has been detrimental to the further development of the nation. Therefore, the essay will investigate what legacy has British imperialism left behind in nations such as India, and how has such colonialism affected the anatomy of the nation's current politics and economic outlook. From a largely anti-colonial/liberal perspective, the essay will explore how the British occupation of India not only willingly exploited Indian wealth and cultural diversity, but also how this legacy has held India back in many regards. The paper will first look at how Britain created artificial divisions as well as traumatized India's Hindu populations and how that reflects on current Indian politics. Additionally, the paper will discuss the economic exploitation undertaken by the British and how the occupation led to little economic benefits for India despite its current positive economic trajectory.

BACKGROUND/HISTORICAL CONTEXT

European colonialism within India could be traced back to the arrival of the Portuguese in 1510 and the establishment of various trading posts.[3] This was followed by other prominent

colonizers such as the Dutch & French, though they could never gain a notable economic foothold on the continent. It wasn't until 1600 that Britain established the notorious East India Company and was given permission to trade within India 19 years later by then-Mughal emperor Jahangir.[4] Initially, the British were limited to merely basic trading posts and controlling the sea lanes within the Indian Ocean. However, the capture of Bengal in 1757 would mark a significant turning point in India's colonial history, as the company directly influenced the land and the local economy, while gaining direct control over Bengal's raw materials, such as coffee and spices, and land revenues. India began a slow but steady integration into company control in both a physical and financial sense during the company's full monopoly over the sub-continent between 1757 and 1813.[5] The end of this period would mark the end of such a monopoly and the ability for any European to start trading within India. Along with this development, most of the subcontinent would be under indirect or direct company control by 1857. The company's control over India ended due to a brutal mutiny against its rule by the oppressed population.[6] The defeat of the rebels resulted in the establishment of direct British rule over India – commonly referred to as the British Raj – as well as the reorganization of the Indian military and civilian population to be strictly based on ethnic and religious lines to ensure reduced cohesion and the possibility of another rebellion.[7] The newly-created British Raj would be much less zealous in introducing reforms but gradually allowed more self-governance among Indians. Though the end goal was not complete independence, this gave an opening to a new generation of Indian elites (such as Gandhi and Nehru) who were often educated in Britain and therefore adopted Western ideas of liberalism and democracy.[8] Ultimately, the

gradual growth of the Indian National Congress and the political mobilization of Indians – along with two world wars – would force Britain to leave the colony in 1947, ushering in an era of Indian independence.[9] The key founders of the new India decided to pursue a nation based on pluralism and secularism – united by culture rather than by religion – to create a democracy for all Indians.[10] While these ideas have persisted to this day, the British colonial legacy still negatively affects the ideals of modern India in a largely negative fashion.

IMPERIALISM IN INDIA AS A SOCIOPOLITICAL ISSUE

This legacy could firstly be seen through the sociopolitical aspect and, more specifically, how the average Indian views concepts such as race & identity. The most evident example of this would be the present-day rivalry between Muslims and Hindus, which could be traced back to the British Raj's divide-and-conquer strategy. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the aftermath of the 1857 rebellion resulted in Britain emphasizing ethnic and religious divisions within the subcontinent by favoring one side over the other. For example, in the early stages of the British Raj, Hindus were highly favoured over Muslims. Local Muslim rulers were ousted from power in favour of Hindus, as the Muslim Mughal princes were key to previous rebellions.[11] Furthermore, education and economic development were often oriented toward Hindus, further alienating Muslims from their Hindu counterparts. However, as Indian independence movements grew, the British started to shift their favoritism toward the Muslims to counter the now Hindu-backed calls for greater autonomy. These divisions are still very evident today, most prominently through the mere existence of Muslim-majority (Pakistan & Bangladesh) and

Hindu-majority states (India). However, this could be especially seen through a more individual level as minority religions within the region are often threatened with violence and feel a general lack of safety. In India especially, there have been various reports of Muslim populations being persecuted and even being killed within the country by their Hindu counterparts.[12] Such a sight would have been unthinkable to those who lived before the times of British colonialism, as both groups lived in a notable amount of harmony before then.[13] Although the British are responsible for creating a modern and cohesive Indian political identity rather than a series of nations similar to pre-colonial times, it is clear that this was at the expense of other prominent identities which are still persecuted in the country today.[14] Of course, there is an argument to be made that the British are not entirely responsible for such divisions. It is common for Indian politicians even to this day to continue to capitalize on these ethnic or religious divisions for their own benefit and popularity, resulting in a vicious cycle of racism and religious conflict far surpassing what existed before the departure of the British.[15]

For example, numerous Mosques – often with great historical significance to their communities – have been demolished, often for infrastructure purposes. These Mosques have often been replaced with Hindu temples and the ones that still remain see at least notable petitions against the very existence of Mosques by Hindu Nationalists.[16] Another example could be seen in many Hindu festivals, where in one instance Hindu passed through Muslim neighbourhoods in possession of weapons and the shouting of anti-muslim rhetoric.[17] These examples demonstrate that there is a clear rise in violence between the two groups, and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has certainly not helped in reducing such violence

while in power. The British-influenced system of government allowed for a multi-party democracy within India as well as inclusive Western institutions, and such institutions helped counter the targeted violence against minorities.[18] However, it is also important to consider another prominent aspect: the British did not directly bring these institutions to India, they were brought by figures such as Gandhi and Nehru. Such figures often criticized their colonial overlords for embracing liberalism and democracy in Britain while simultaneously embracing the opposite in colonial India. Therefore, while British-influenced socio-political frameworks were erected, they were brought forward by the Western-educated Indian leaders rather than the colonial occupiers themselves.[19] Furthermore,

evidence shows that the trauma left behind by the British resulted in the prominence of ethnic and religious superiority.

This can be seen in the recent rise in Hindu Nationalist ideals and organizations within the countries, point-in-case the landslide victories of Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the 2014 and 2019 elections, a right-wing Hindu Nationalist leader. The ideology of Hindu nationalism is in complete contrast to the secular democracy established before it, as not only do they disagree with the non-violent and tolerant beliefs of India's founding fathers, but also believe that since Hindus are a clear majority within the country, all minority groups must eventually be assimilated into the wider Hindu identity.[20] This not only puts most of India's multiethnic democratic institutions at risk, but also further increases the possibility of violence.

The most recent example of this factor would be the recent police crackdown in Punjab, where 127 people have been arrested and 27 million more were cut off from internet access to arrest Sikh separatist Amritpal Singh; while Sikh separatism has been considered a grave threat to the Indian government for decades (Indira Gandhi, former Prime Minister of India, was even assassinated due to such tensions), this, among many other recent examples, are clearly not the actions of a secular democracy.[21] Therefore, to fully analyze why Hindu Nationalism and the erosion of long-standing secular democracy have been fully welcomed in India, one must understand the brutal conditions imposed on Indians during the Rule of the British Raj. In order to provide for its own subjects, Britain would export millions of tons of grain from India resulting in the massive starvation of 30 to 35 million Indians. The British proceeded to blame the average Indian's moral character and their "laziness" for their current state and refused to provide relief from starvation. [22] This, along with countless other examples, created a level of self-pride bordering on narcissism within much of India's Hindu population to make up for the humiliations of colonialism. Similar to their former colonizer, the current government under Modi has been ignorant of the needs of many non-Hindu Indians during the pandemic, leaving many to unjustly suffer.[23] In retrospect, not only has Britain's divide-and-conquer strategy resulted in divisions between groups that were previously cooperative with each other, but also traumatized India's population to the point where India's Westminster-inspired democracy itself is at risk. Although British education may have taught Gandhi and Nehru the value of democracy, British actions on the subcontinent taught Hindus the value of putting one group's interests over the others.

IMPERIALISM IN INDIA AS AN ECONOMIC ISSUE

Along with the large-group trauma and rampant social divisions caused by British colonialism, we could also see the detriments of occupation through the lens of economics. Today, India is a promising economic power, often ranking around the 5th largest economy in terms of nominal GDP.[24] However, India started with little after independence, going from one of the richest nations before colonization to one of the poorest upon independence in 1947. Through the exploitation and mass-exporting of grain, tea, indigo, cotton, coffee, and countless other raw materials – all to power Britain’s massive industrializing economy – India was left poor and stripped of its natural resources.[25] Many argue that Britain brought progress to India by constructing railroads and other related infrastructure and industrializing the country – building a foundation for the nation’s future growth.[26] However, it is important to note that this infrastructure was developed for the purpose of exploiting resources and did not benefit India. For example, the colonial Indian economy was heavily based around British-owned industry, agriculture, and consumer goods. More specifically, while Indian domestic industry suffered from little investment, British-owned industry and supply chains thrived, to which all benefits would be exported out of the country. Thus, while the organization of the Indian economy benefited the British, it did little to help the Indian domestic industry or population and left nothing but stagnation.[27] As author Aditya Mukherjee notes, “the development of railways, foreign trade, telegraph, agrarian transformation, a colonial civil service, etc, occurred in a manner that they became critical instruments in converting the pre-capitalist and sometimes emerging capitalist societies in to a still born

colonial structure”. [28] Therefore, the mere presence of infrastructure such as railways and other key aspects of industrialization within a colonized society does not inherently imply that they are receiving the benefits of such infrastructure. In fact, it is important to consider that 60 percent of India’s economic output was through non-industrialized agriculture – depending on monsoon rains rather than irrigation systems. The concept of free market capitalism, another concept brought by Britain, was also not beneficial to Indians. The use of free markets in destroying Indian economic opportunity resulted in a cautionary stance towards capitalism and globalized trade, especially by early post-independence leaders such as Nehru.[29] This could be further supplemented by India’s position within the Cold War as a leading nation of the non-aligned movement (though often leaned towards the Soviet Union) and a primarily state-run economy.[30] In fact, India did not start formally re-embracing a free market stance and encouraging foreign investment until the early 1990s, which would catapult India’s economic prospects.[31] Therefore, it should be not only argued that the lack of free market policies held India back, but also that

Britain’s exploitative version of free market capitalism led to more caution towards the concept after independence, limiting their economic potential even further.

Additionally, the growth and structuring of India’s modern economy could be largely attributed to its own feats. This could be seen through the per capita increase of infrastructure and social benefits, though education should be especially highlighted in this case. The

monumental rise in literacy rates – from 84% of Indians being illiterate in 1951[32] to 74% literate in 2018[33] – is a key demonstration of India's ongoing development. Thus, although there is much work to be done in terms of limiting poverty and corruption, it is clear that India is much more prosperous as an independent state. [34] While the British invested solely in extracting India's natural resource wealth, the modern Indian state invested more in the citizens themselves, a significant factor explaining India's modern development today. Therefore, it is clear that the British occupation was a massive strain on India's economic potential, and the transformation of India into a modern economy was in no way aided by the British legacy.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, India is clearly on track to becoming a world power, though there are still many issues that plague the nation that originated from the British occupation. For example, much of India's current internal divisions – a direct result of Britain's historical divide and conquer strategy – are prominently shown through current-day divisions between Muslims and Hindus on the subcontinent. An additional factor could be seen through the rise of Hindu nationalism, which is in and of itself influenced by the large-group trauma caused by Britain's occupation, posing a serious threat to India's democratic status. Britain's imperialism could also be seen from an economic standpoint, as while Britain constructed infrastructure such as railroads & telegraph lines, these were primarily made to benefit the colonizer alone. Additionally, Britain destroyed much of India's domestic industry in favour of its own, and exploited India's natural resources, making the nation's economy stagnant until independence. Thus, while India can be defined as a democracy and free market economy, it is primarily due to the

efforts of India alone. Ironically, the British occupation has convinced many Indians as to why both of the ideals mentioned above are flawed and should be avoided – a clear antithesis to the British spirit of tolerance and democracy expressed in its other more white-majority colonies.

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The Controversial Bill C-18: Will it Really Help?

Written by: Nicolas Gordon

Abstract

Bill C-18, Canada's Online News Act, has sparked significant debate. It mandates tech giants like Google and Meta to compensate Canadian news outlets for using their content, aiming to support the declining news industry. Proponents argue it will correct revenue imbalances caused by digital platforms, ensuring fair compensation for media. However, critics, including tech companies, claim it's based on flawed premises, asserting that the bill won't resolve the industry's issues and could lead to censorship and reduced news access. This essay argues that Bill C-18 is ineffective, failing to address the fundamental challenges of the Canadian news industry's outdated business model. It also contends that the bill disproportionately benefits large media corporations and could hinder innovation, further entrenching the dominance of a few major players in the industry. Ultimately, the essay suggests that a more effective approach would involve adapting to digital media's realities, moving away from traditional revenue models to ensure the industry's sustainability.

Keywords: Bill C-18 Critique, Canadian News Industry, Digital Media Revenue Models, Tech Giants Legislation

INTRODUCTION

One of the most controversial legislations in recent Canadian politics, Bill C-18 has been a target of popular debate amongst Canadians and Politicians. Canada's divisive Online News Act recently came into law as of June 2023, which requires big tech corporations like Google and Meta to reimburse Canadian news companies for posting their content on their platforms.[1] The Bill was created with the intention to address the declining state of the Canadian news industry, particularly amongst legacy media. Those in favour of Bill C-18 claim it will be an effective way of supporting the Canadian media industry, which has been on a steady decline in recent years due to decreasing advertising revenue and subscriptions. These supporters argue that big tech companies like Google and Meta have been harvesting revenue from Canadian news articles posted on their platforms, while the actual news companies do not receive their fair share. On the other hand, opponents of Bill C-18 claim it results in the censorship of Canadian news online, and that the bill is based on false premises and will not effectively solve the issue of Canada's declining news industry.[2] In this essay, I will argue that

Bill C-18 is ineffective because it would fail to address the dysfunctional and outdated business model of the Canadian news industry.

I will first provide context through a comprehensive background of the legislation. Then, I will examine arguments for and against the Bill. Finally, I will synthesize these arguments and come to my conclusion.

THE DECLINE OF CANADIAN NEWS MEDIA: WHAT IS BILL C-18

The infamous Bill C-18 was first introduced in the House of Commons on behalf of the Liberal Government by the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Pablo Rodriguez, on April 5th, 2022. The Bill proceeded to be approved by the House of Commons and Canadian Senate and was finally given Royal Assent on June 22, 2023. The Online News Act was created to implement fair bargaining grounds within the digital news industry so that Canadian news outlets and journalists could be fairly compensated for their work. It would install new legislative and regulatory frameworks that would warrant digital platforms to engage in negotiations with Canadian Media to gain the capability of distributing their content on their platforms. The Bill would also implement a process for smaller Canadian media companies to bargain collectively with large digital distributors.[3] If an agreement cannot be reached between the two parties, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) will step in for mediation. Through the implementation of Bill C-18, the federal government believes that it will help support the Canadian news industry, which has seen substantial amounts of its advertising revenue relocate to Meta and Google.[4] If the digital giants were to come into compliance with the legislation, it would see them paying 230 million dollars annually to Canadian media companies. [5]

Bill C-18 was introduced in response to the steadily declining media industry in Canada, where advertising revenues and consumer subscriptions have been at historic lows due to the dominance of digital media. Following the

introduction of the internet over the last two decades, there has been a grand shift in advertising revenue going from newspapers and media outlets to online platforms, alongside a steady decline in paid news subscriptions. According to CTV News, it has been reported that 85% of Canadians do not pay for any online news subscriptions and that most Canadians under the age of 64 check social media platforms first to get their news.[6] Furthermore, Global advertising revenue for newspapers has plummeted over the last decade, dropping from 103 billion in 2008 to 49 billion in 2019, and plummeted even further after 2020.[7] Newspapers have progressively become less popular amongst Canadians due to the fact that all the news in the world is available at their fingertips. On the contrary, digital advertising revenue has grown exponentially during the same period. In the US, digital advertising revenue skyrocketed from a measly 8 billion USD in 2000 to 209 billion USD in 2022.[8] Thus, it has become increasingly apparent that the newspaper and Canadian media industries overall are on a steady decline, while digital platforms are significantly growing in popularity and revenue. The purpose of Bill C-18 is to directly address this issue in the Canadian news industry and bring back some of the revenue that has migrated over to digital platforms.

Bill C-18 was inspired by Australia's Treasury Laws Amendment Act of 2021, more commonly referred to as the News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code. This Act implemented a mandatory code of conduct that regulates commercial relationships between Australian News outlets and specified digital platforms that are beneficiaries of a significant power imbalance in the bargaining process.[9]

Through this Act, the Australian government was able to level the playing field so that the designated digital tech giants, Meta and Google, would be forced into facilitating deals and supporting Australian news companies.

Similarly to Bill C-18, the Act was implemented to support Australia's declining news sector. Initially, Meta rejected the Act and pulled Australian news off their platforms in protest. However, once the Australian Government amended the Act to make it less stringent, both Meta and Google complied and conducted deals with numerous news companies. As result of the legislation, Australian news companies receive about 150 million USD annually from Meta and Google.[10] The Australian Act demonstrated its success through its large revenue outcome motivating the Canadian government to enact its own version to support its failing news industry.

THE DEFENCE OF BILL C-16: PERSPECTIVES IN SUPPORT

It has already been discussed how Bill C-18 was implemented in the light of supporting a fading Canadian news industry. Thus, it comes as no surprise that some of the biggest proponents of the bill are those who would benefit the most from it. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) seems to align with the Canadian government in support of Bill C-18. An article published by the CBC in July provided an opinion on how the organization viewed Meta's opposition to the Bill, where it claims that Meta and internet platforms are currently able to exert significant pressure onto both the Canadian Government and news industry. The article argues that "the fight over C-18 isn't really about journalism, it is about power", implying that big tech has become too dominant over Canadian journalism and the government, stressing the

“The lion's share of that \$10 billion went to the tech giants, which pocketed 80% of the revenue,” pointing out their dominance over advertiser markets.[20] As result of their supremacy over the market, digital platforms are enabled to set their own unfair terms, leaving them no incentives to compensate Canadian media for its content on their platforms. Therefore, the Liberal Party argues that digital tech companies are profiting off Canadian media on their platforms and Canadian media businesses are unable to negotiate because of their lack of influence in the market. This is why Bill C-18 is crucial in allowing Canadian media to effectively bargain with tech giants to receive the compensation they deserve.

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES: VOICES AGAINST BILL C-18

In terms of those who are opposed to Bill C-18, there are no bigger adversaries than the likes of Meta and Google. It is to be expected that the two tech giants that Bill C-18 specifically targets protest strongly against the legislation. In the case of Meta, the digital emperor has asserted that Canada's Online News Act is founded on flawed premises. Meta's President of Global Affairs, Nick Clegg, released a public statement regarding the Bill, stating “Meta does not benefit unfairly from people sharing links to news content on our platform. The reverse is true.”[21] The Meta representative argued that Facebook benefits Canadian publishers much more than they benefit the platform, as news stories make up less than 3% of users' feeds. Moreover, Clegg reveals that Facebook feeds provided an estimated 1.9 billion clicks to Canadian media websites from April 2021 to April 2022, claiming that it “amounts to free marketing we estimate is worth more than \$230 million.[22] For these reasons, Meta stated that it will remove all Canadian news content from its platforms in response to the legislation

and began doing so in August 2023. Thus, judging from the statistics provided by Meta, it would be irrational for the company to comply with the Bill that demands monetary reimbursement when Canadian media clearly generates more revenue from Meta than vice-versa.

The digital giant Google also responded to Bill C-18 in similar fashion to Meta. In Google's official statement regarding the legislation, the company stated that the Canadian government imposing a “link-tax” on their platform exposes them to “uncapped financial liability simply for facilitating Canadians' access to news from Canadian publishers.”[23] Consequently, Google declared that it will be removing links to Canadian media websites in response to the Bill. Evidently, the company is following in Meta's footsteps by removing Canadian news from its platform rather than paying into the imposing legislation. Google also adopts a similar argument to Meta in claiming that its platform provides a free service to Canadian media, as they benefit Canadian media by increasing its exposure to Canadians.

On the political side of things, the group that is spearheading the opposition to Bill C-18 in Parliament is the Conservative Party of Canada.

One of the primary arguments the Conservatives have against the Bill is the censorship it indirectly imposes on Canadians.

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre criticized the Liberal government's Bill stating: "You have a Prime Minister passing a law to make news articles disappear from the internet. Who would ever have imagined that in Canada, the federal government would pass laws banning people from effectively seeing the news?"[24]

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The Controversial Bill C-18: Will it Really Help?

Although Poilievre's statement is somewhat misleading in consideration of the true intentions of the Bill, it is objectively true that the Bill has directly caused the censorship of Canadian media. It has already been mentioned how the implementation of the Online News Act led to Meta beginning to remove Canadian news off its platform in August 2023. Moreover, data has revealed that 64% of Canadians aged 18-34 are concerned about how Bill C-18 will impact their access to news, while 51% of Canadians are worried about the Bill's impact on their ability to stay informed.[25] This shows that although it was unintended, a direct consequence of the Bill was the removal of Canadian news from the digital platforms that are widely used by Canadians for news consumption.

Another noteworthy criticism of the Online News Act made by the Conservatives among many other groups is that most of the revenue collected from the Bill would go toward Canada's biggest media corporations. Tracy Grady of the Conservative Party argued that "like much of the current government's supposed small business policies, it would be the most prominent companies that would benefit the greatest." The Conservative MP pointed out how the Bill functions by paying media companies primarily based on quantity of their content posted online. Media "giants" such as Bell, Rogers, and the CBC are able to produce much more content than smaller businesses because of their larger company sizes and would thus receive the majority of the revenue. Tracy asserts that "Regulations such as Bill C-18 are a permission, and they are the swiftest killer of innovation and the greatest tool of existing media powers to kill competition." [26] This concern is warranted, as the exact same issue can be observed in the legislation that Bill C-18 is modeled after in Australia. It is estimated that 90% of revenues negotiated from Australia's News Media

Bargaining Code have gone to the nation's three largest media companies.[27] Undoubtedly the same phenomenon would occur in Canada as well, as the media industry is already dominated by a select few corporations.

Finally, one of the most prominent reasons that Bill C-18 is both ineffective and built on false premises is that it is trying to save an outdated business model. Many individuals and organizations have been quick to point out that the Bill won't change the reality that media consumers have migrated to the internet. In the Canadian Senate debate regarding Bill C-18, Senator Leo Housakos points out that although traditional news media is indeed struggling, at the same time the media industry as a whole is thriving.[28] Many industries over the last 20 years have seen significant changes as the world increasingly shifts online. Canadian media companies have fallen behind in adapting to the new digital business model that is dominating the advertising industry. As Senator Housakos describes it, "We're going to help those with the bad ideas and bad fiscal results and we're going to prop them up with taxpayers' money." [29] The reality is that the Canadian media's revenue strategy of newspapers and subscriptions does not stand a chance against the vast consumer base offered by online platforms. Advertisers have no incentives to choose Canadian media when online platforms offer enormous consumer bases in comparison. Moreover, most people are not going to pay for news when they are able to easily access other sources for news for free online, and Canadian media fails to recognize this. Canadian media needs to abandon the subscription model and aggressively pursue a presence in the online world. Only by adapting to the increasingly technological world will the industry be able to survive in the long term, Bill C-18 will only prolong the demise of Canadian media.

CONCLUSION

The Canadian Online News Act is an ineffective and redundant legislation. The Liberal Party's Bill C-18 is built on false premises that claim digital platforms are unfairly profiting off Canadian media, when the reverse is the case. As result of this Bill, digital platforms Meta and Google have begun removing Canadian platforms off their sites, effectively impeding Canadians' ability to access news and stay informed. Meanwhile, the Canadian news industry will be significantly worse off than before as much of their exposure to viewers came from these platforms. The Bill is flawed in its function as it will almost exclusively benefit the largest media corporations, reinforcing the already oppressive oligarchy in the Canadian news industry. In addition, the online news legislation fails to recognize the underlying innovation problems of Canadian media that is responsible for the industry's decline. It will only provide a temporary boost to an industry with an outdated and failing business model that will collapse in the long term if left unaddressed. In the long run, Bill C-18 will prove to be utterly useless for the smaller Canadian news outlets and journalists and will likely result in Canadian media losing their privileges of utilizing digital media platforms for exposure.

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How the Internet Transformed Political Communication: The Tension between Democracy-Enhancing Networks and the Private Market Corporations that Reign

Written by: Bridget Duimering

Abstract

Political communication encompasses all messages passed between political actors, citizens, and the mediums that facilitate them, namely media including broadcast television, radio, newspapers, and digital platforms. The rapid proliferation of social media platforms through the internet has expanded opportunities for vertical and lateral political communication available to both citizens and political actors, as shown through enhanced political efficacy and social movements, like #MeToo. However, the private corporations that govern popular social media platforms are profit-motivated, driving them to employ manipulative technologies and act as arbitrary gatekeepers. Their private-market impetus undermines the internet's potential to enhance political communication's informational, truth-seeking, and political accountability purposes. As a result, misinformation, trivialization, and abuse are augmented through political communication on the internet. Overcoming these challenges requires increased digital literacy amongst platform users and government intervention to reshape the profit structures at play in social media corporations.

Keywords: Political Communication Dynamics, Social Media Impact, Misinformation and Digital Platforms, Political Efficacy via Internet, Regulatory Measures for Online Media

INTRODUCTION

The internet has irreversibly transformed the field of political communications. The development of open-ended, interconnected social platforms through the internet has created unprecedented communication opportunities between political actors and citizens. The purpose of political communication is diverse, including truth-seeking, information, and political accountability. [1] Internet platforms have disrupted legacy media political communication traditions by introducing direct channels for dialogue between citizens and politicians.[2] In the twentieth century, legacy media like newspaper organizations and broadcast television dominated political communication. Now, internet search engines and social platforms, like Google, Facebook, and Twitter, have invaded the traditions of political communication and created a new public square.[3]

Today's world of political communication is described by some as a "hybrid" system, which are older and newer media rules combined to curate and address messages to the public.[4]

Others argue that the internet has redefined political communication altogether, asserting that by disrupting the advertising model of legacy media through cheaper, digital marketing internet platforms contribute to the structural collapse of journalism.[5] Homero Gil De Zúñiga suggests that the internet has failed to fulfill its promised enhancement of public knowledge and that traditional, legacy media remains the primary information feeders and standard-setters for political communication.[6]

As the internet's connection to politics continues to grow, a multitude of experts are attempting to uncover the new dynamic of political communication.

I set out to conceptualize political communication as a means of truth-seeking and political accountability through messages sent between politicians and citizens by a media channel. I examine the communication enhancements made possible through the internet by outlining new vertical and lateral communication structures, and case studies of citizen mobilization made possible through the internet. I explore evidence pointing to the permeation of profit-driven incentives and arbitrary gatekeeping developing in political communication. The impacts are threefold: misinformation, trivialization, and upticks in abuse. I will highlight several proposed solutions for the Internet commercialist lens, including improvements to media literacy, market regulation, and public media.

CONCEPTUALIZING POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

It is crucial to first understand the purpose, structure, and actors that constitute political communication to understand the Internet's impact. Political communication involves the exchange of information from and between political actors and citizens.[7] In this sense, any message that includes a politician and a citizen, regardless of which party is sending or receiving that message, is a form of political communication. Political communication always involves a medium, typically a "press" institution protected by liberal democracies to allow for free dissemination of information.[8]

Political communication serves a multitude of purposes. Firstly, free, accessible and diverse political messages create a “marketplace of ideas” through which the truth can be uncovered.[9] Amidst a broad selection of information, citizens apply their own interpretation, social understanding, and logical analysis to the message they receive.[10] This rational process will ideally lead the citizen to the truth.[11] The concept of the “marketplace of ideas” importantly suggests that no single agency should be solely responsible for the course of politics.[12] Instead, the public can explore alternating perspectives and responsibly direct their democratic choices in society.

Political communication also serves an information function, situating the citizen as the primary beneficiary. The information function asserts that political communication exists mainly to cultivate an informed citizenry.[13] Exercising informed citizenship is linked to effective democracy.[14] Political communication makes reaching the informed citizenship objective realistic by directing citizens’ attention to public affairs issues and campaign policies deemed valuable by political decision-makers and journalists.

Thirdly, political communication serves a watchdog function, generating political accountability and encompassing government scrutiny by the public through media.[15] The quality of democracy is contingent on a supply of meaningful public affairs knowledge that reports and investigates politicians’ choices and decision-making processes to a wide audience.[16]

The interactionist view of political communication conceptualizes it as highly relational, constantly evolving as messages and mediums are exchanged amongst three key actors: the media, politicians, and citizens.[17] It is a relationship of both vertical and lateral connections. Lateral communication refers to

channels between political actors and the media and inter-citizen channels. Vertical communication channels are between political actors and citizens and may be facilitated by media operators.[18] Political communication is intrinsically linked to the mediums through which these messages travel.[19]

Indeed, media, including broadcast television, radio, newspapers, and digital platforms, are frequently viewed as synonymous with political communication, given its institutional structure and active impact on the messages themselves. [20]

The media are the main link between governments and their constituents. Not only does the media convey messages, but media actors take on the duty of framing, prioritizing, and contextualizing information, thereby influencing the agenda of political debate.[21]

Political actors include the government, politicians, and political parties who depend on support from the public to gain, retain, and harness democratic power.[22] They rely on methods of communication to interact with and campaign to citizens for election and policy support.[23] Politicians are highly interested in the political agenda determined by the media as it relates to their own need for policy development and planning, as well as highlighting their weaknesses through the political accountability function.[24] In today’s hypothesized hybrid media system, political actors hold power if they can direct information flows to suit their own goals while modifying or disabling other parties’ interests.[25]

Lastly, citizens are crucial in legitimizing democracy, and consequently, informative political communication is essential in the exercise of citizenship. Stephen Coleman and Peter Shane describe three theoretical conceptions of the citizen as central to modern political communication: the info-lite citizen, the push-button citizen, and the actualizing citizen.[26] Each case necessitates a base level of public knowledge to the exercise of democratic citizenship.

The info-lite citizen is unable or unwilling to competently digest detailed public affairs knowledge and demands only rudimentary information, pushing journalists to employ bite-sized headlines and veer towards entertainment-focused content. The push-button citizen is an imagined individual who, with the proper networking tools, will naturally gravitate to a general will. For example, individuals who engage with a government forum online without effective dialogue play the part of a push-button citizen, simply contributing to a consensus rather than negotiating the contents of that consensus. This citizen fails to truly challenge incumbent ideas or develop actionable alternatives, instead veering towards a common truth when possible.

The final citizenship is actualizing, in which citizens are social actors who interact with political messages while understanding that political communication must be a two-way street. They prioritize both vertical and lateral communication in pursuit of an increasingly democratized relationship with the government in power.[27]

Political communication's functions serve the interests of political actors, media elites, and citizens as they interact and evolve. An uninformed citizenry is a democratic failure, and political communication should provide citizens access to the ideas and observations they need to be effective, actualizing actors. Given the

importance of information within democracies, the internet presents a fascinating opportunity for increased dialogue and direct political communication.

INTERNET AS A VEHICLE FOR VERTICAL AND LATERAL DIALOGUE

The internet is a significant innovator in media, political actors' strategy, and citizenship. Networked platforms seek to assume each of the roles of political communication – a “marketplace of ideas”, a forum and source of information, and a political watchdog. Traditionally, citizens can communicate their opinions about policy or government actors through direct lobbying or mail, in-person visits, canvassing or events, and protests.[28] These channels are effective in bringing the citizens' beliefs to the political actors' ears – but they are limited in their accessibility and the scope of citizens they attract. [29] People who experience direct injury may be mobilized to seek out communication with the government, but with traditional channels being laborious and inaccessible, the threshold for injury before seeking out communication tends to be high.[30] Research shows that above all else, existing interest in politics is the primary driver of one's public affairs knowledge and efficacy. [31] As a result, traditional vertical channels are only attractive and accessible to an already mobilized group of individuals and fail to spark widespread actualization.

The internet appears to break the barriers to effective upwards communication from citizen to politician by bringing communication opportunities to the citizenry's fingertips.

the level at which a citizen can gain exposure to a multitude of ideas, learn about the public affairs impacting their world, and hold politicians accountable is multiplied. Indeed, research shows that consumers who use social media and search engines for their news have more diverse exposure to opposing ideas.[32]

When it comes to the transmission of messages, internet platforms can facilitate interpersonal discussion.[33] Actualizing citizenship requires not only the transmission of messages from government to citizen, but the sharing of ideas and experiences amongst the citizens. Governments can then engage citizens via social platforms to collaboratively reflect upon shared experiences and expose their own ideas to critical public reason.[34]

As society moves to a more digital, mobile, and platform-dominated media structure, news is becoming both more abundant and more accessible.[35] In 2008, at the time of rapid internet growth within its still-early days, Woodly's findings drew strong implications for the value of political blogs in generating real opportunities for democratic engagement among active and inadvertent citizens.[36] Grassroots organizations have utilized these platforms to have a direct influence on the news agenda.[37] As the abundance of information increases, the importance of discussion and deliberation is further emphasized. The internet's significance cannot be overstated as permeated to the extent that "every aspect of public life is coordinated through [internet] platforms".[38]

The #MeToo movement exemplifies the internet's power to enhance political communication. This grassroots movement, which began on Twitter in October 2017 in response to sexual harassment claims across industries, provided a platform for survivors to share their experiences and created a global collective awareness around sexual abuse.[39]

The internet's power to spark dialogue and institutional change is not limited to established democracies. In societies where citizens possess limited agency, the open nature of the internet can build political efficacy. In China, the social media and payments giant WeChat, is a revolutionarily "super app", encompassing nearly every aspect of citizens' daily lives and habits.[41] A 2018 study found that the intensity of individuals' WeChat use is positively related to their belief in their ability to impact politics.[42] China's authoritarian government hinders citizens from developing a complete understanding of government processes and decision-making consequences.[43] With an internet platform like WeChat, citizens can connect and develop confidence in their value as actualizing citizens.

A 2017 study in Taiwan, a developing country with a strong, opaque incumbent government, found that the adoption of Taiwanese Facebook increased the likelihood of political power changing hands.[44] Where traditional media imposes unidirectionality, internet media opens communications between citizens and governments that allow for meaningful mobilization to change government. These cases support advocacy for networks of political communication that not only enhance but develop democratic engagement.

Some argue that the power of traditional media organizations is resilient within democratic societies, and they continue to feed the logics of transmission and reception.[45] Indeed, professional news companies are persistently significant contributors to political communications and the institutional significance of legacy media is potent.[46] Perhaps, rather than completely replacing existing methods of political communication, the internet is reshaping them. Nonetheless, new media logics like technologies, genres, norms, behaviours, and organizational forms that emphasize

multidirectional communication and negotiation amongst citizens and political actors. These innovations can augment the truth-seeking, informative, and accountability functions of political communication.

INTERNET AS A VEHICLE FOR PERVASIVE PRIVATE MARKET INCENTIVES

The Problem: Gatekeeping and Profit Over Public Service

Despite evidence that the internet can augment political communication, its democratic potential is corroded by the private market incentives by which it is governed. Social platforms like Facebook and Twitter dominate the new public square of political communication.[47] Indeed, these non-democratic corporations have begun to take on the democratic responsibilities of the free press and have served as “first responders” in political emergencies.[48] Their business models rely on advertising revenue to generate profit, with advertising generating the vast majority of Meta’s (Facebook’s parent company) revenue year over year, at over \$113 USD in the fiscal year 2022.[49] Their advertising revenue relies on consumers’ time spent on their platforms, meaning that the more engagement they can achieve, the better. As a result, platforms employ manipulative technologies to capture and exploit psychological weaknesses amongst their users to maximize their profit.[50]

Traditional media is not innocent when it comes to relying on advertising profits. Professional journalism and news organizations need advertising to keep the lights on.[51] However, when broadcast television dominated the “public square” of political communication, the information consumer was perceived to be a single, imagined community receiving one,

cohesive message.[52] Now, with a more mobile and networked system of political communication, the single community concept has been shattered. In its place are many individuals, each of whom has a certain amount of time and attention at their disposal. Social media platforms are constantly vying for citizens’ attention in the pursuit of profit, and they are effective. Digital advertising carries lower costs than print or broadcast advertising, and hence it frequently outcompetes traditional media.[53] Rather than competing based on high quality content, professional organizations and politicians have been forced to adapt to internet platform strategies.[54] This change comes at a high cost – not only are social media platforms disincentivized to pursue social goods beyond profit, but traditionally democratic press institutions are adjusting to this model to remain competitive. The overall quality of political communication is thus in jeopardy.

The significant impact of business incentives on political communication introduces a secondary, illegitimate form of gatekeeping to the free press. [55]

The “marketplace of ideas” function is contingent on the capacity of media institutions to prioritize messages to consumers.[56] Known as gatekeeping, the press adds value to the citizen by harnessing professional journalistic expertise and editorial discretion to select and display the news items most worthy of attention.[57] A 2009 comparative study found that private market broadcast television is significantly less effective at generating an informed citizenry that public

television.[58] In the US, which utilizes a private market broadcast model, respondents answered only 38.8% of international hard news questions correctly. In comparison, respondents from the UK, Finland, and Denmark, which employ private-public or public broadcast models, responded correctly to over 62% of the same questions. For the functions of political communication to be effectively realized, the consumer of information should trust that the information they are directed to will be of the most value to them. Once again, internet platforms shatter this ideal.

Standing in as an arbitrary gatekeeper, social media platforms and search engines actively determine the information with which citizens can interact. In some cases, like the 2017 Austrian election, internet platforms fail to serve as diverse channels for change, and instead transfer the status quo from the political sphere to the digital sphere.[59] This gatekeeping ability is dangerous to the actualizing citizen, as they may be unable to or discouraged from engaging with important political messages because non-democratically motivated platform algorithms stand in the way.

In 2021, Mager and Katzenbach observed the prophetic and consequential impact that technology companies have on determining the course of society's future.[60] Imaginaries are genuine sociopolitical processes involving collective, deliberative evocations of the future, by which the future is constructed.[61] Technology companies are highly motivated to write themselves into the future vision of society to ensure their longevity and avoid public scrutiny on the risks they entail. As a result, strong marketing and algorithmic efforts, particularly by Facebook, have developed to the point that political orders and technologies are produced simultaneously and are intrinsically connected.[62]

The notion that platforms and incredibly embedded in society as it is now known are echoed by Griffin[63] and L.S. Jones and Samples.[64] The systemic significance of social platforms and the pervasive nature of their profit-driven models undermines the potential for enhanced democratic political communication and actualizing citizenship. The functions of political communication –truth-seeking, information, and political scrutiny – cannot be fully realized while exploitative platforms remain unregulated and uninterested in the democratic goals of the actors. With incentives in place that motivate platforms to manipulate their users, movements like #MeToo are the exception, not the rule.

Misinformation, Trivialization and Abuse

Misinformation is a direct result of private market incentives. Facebook and other platforms have no reason to stop misinformation if it benefits their bottom line.[65] While traditional media outlets and organizations are highly interested in their reputation as reliable, trustworthy news sources, social platforms lack that incentive. Since online platforms are open to public contributors and participants, misinformation is primarily attributed to the source and platforms tend to minimize their own liability. Misinformation became highly problematic and had real health costs during the COVID-19 pandemic, with radical ideas about vaccine effectiveness, lockdown rationales, and corruption becoming widespread.[66] Debates on the prevalence and patterns of misinformation online are rampant, but each side acknowledges that misinformation does exist and its circulation threatens the ideal of the informed, actualizing citizen.[67]

The commercialization of political communication platforms has created an increased trivialization of important public affairs coverage. During the 2016 US federal election, Hillary Clinton received coverage that over-emphasized scandals compared to media coverage of Donald Trump.[68] Since Clinton was seen as the front-runner, her scandals were unevenly emphasized compared to her opponent. Overall, the coverage of the election was equated to the coverage of a sports show and deemed “bad for America, but damn good for CBS!” by the CEO of the network.[69] With a structural shift across political communication mediums towards profit over public service, spearheaded by distributive internet platforms, these simplifications and trivializing instances will persist.

Beyond misinformation and trivialization, abuse is rampant on social media and dangerous violence made possible.[70] Research has demonstrated that open and permissive platforms are breeding grounds for abuse, and that this abuse is primarily fielded by already disadvantaged groups.[71] The opacity of these platforms and the anonymity that users receive opens the door to trolling and harassment, which is complicated to govern. Not only does abuse take place within the platforms, but it can be translated beyond digital boundaries. On January 6th, 2021, the worst invasion of the US capitol since the war of 1812 was planned, initiated, and executed using Twitter and Facebook.[72] This real-world violence was the result of digital mobilization and abuse of the platform itself. Although platforms have expressed concern and implemented some efforts to mitigate this issue, user engagement is positive for a purely profit-based model, regardless of the content or consequence.

SOLUTIONS FOR POLITICAL COMMUNICATION COMMERCIALISM

There have been many potential solutions proposed over the past decade to minimize the democratically detrimental impacts of commercialism in political communication.[73] The purpose of this essay is to highlight the basic principles of the most prominent of these solutions. Complex implementation is necessary to effectively realize the internet’s potential for democratic actualization, and many agents – including citizens, governments, and social media platforms themselves – must each play a role.

Media Literacy

While studying solutions for the propagation of misinformation online, most researchers situate users as the protagonists of the solution.[74] Significant improvements in media literacy of the public are required for users to effectively combat the manipulative technology that exploits their time and undermines the democratic potential of the internet.[75] Governments and education organizations should develop creative public policies that augment the public’s understanding of the importance of critical platform use, sustainable habits, and work towards developing a culture that calls for healthy platform interactions.

Incentive Transforming Regulation

The business models that encourage the exploitation of users’ psychology are a type of market failure and create clear negative externalities, including trivialization, misinformation, and abuse. When the free market produces socially undesirable consequences, it is the government’s responsibility in a social

capitalistic society to install regulatory bodies and policies to reshape the market itself.[76] The government can implement limitations on the amount of time each social platform can monetize from each user (ex. once the user reaches three hours on a website, the platform cannot charge or profit from advertising to them).[77] As long as there remains no legal obligation or incentive for social media platforms to meaningfully consider the consequences of profit-driven manipulative communications, the internet and its context will fail to produce actualizing citizenship.

Public Media

Lastly, a public media system should be renewed and delivered to citizens as a replacement for profit-driven communication. The current consequences of private market social platforms have underscored the impact of profit-driven journalism as it exists online, as well as highlighting challenges that have existed in legacy media forms before the internet.[78] Public media can have meaningful impacts on the level of information to which citizens are exposed. It allows for expert gatekeepers to steer the political communication flow to and from citizens.[79] Public, government-funded media organizations are already in place in most liberal democracies. Now, the task at hand is to reshape the revenue structure and adapt the platforms to reach citizens effectively.

CONCLUSION

Political communication is defined by the dynamic between political actors, the media, and the citizens, and the variety of interests at the table. The internet's ability to mobilize the public and enhance vertical channels of communication illustrates in potential to positively transform political communication. Yet, the private market interests and commercialism that dominate the digital sphere and its platforms exploit and

arbitrarily gatekeep information, generating dangerous misinformation, trivialization, and abuse. Overcoming these challenges requires fostering increased digital literacy amongst platform users and government intervention to reshape the profit structures at play in digital corporations. Scholars have suggested a variety of solutions that aim to realize the enhancing potential of the internet. The rapidly growing body of research on the internet, its promises, and its woes must evolve to capture meaningful insights on the significance, transformation, and health of political communication in the online age.

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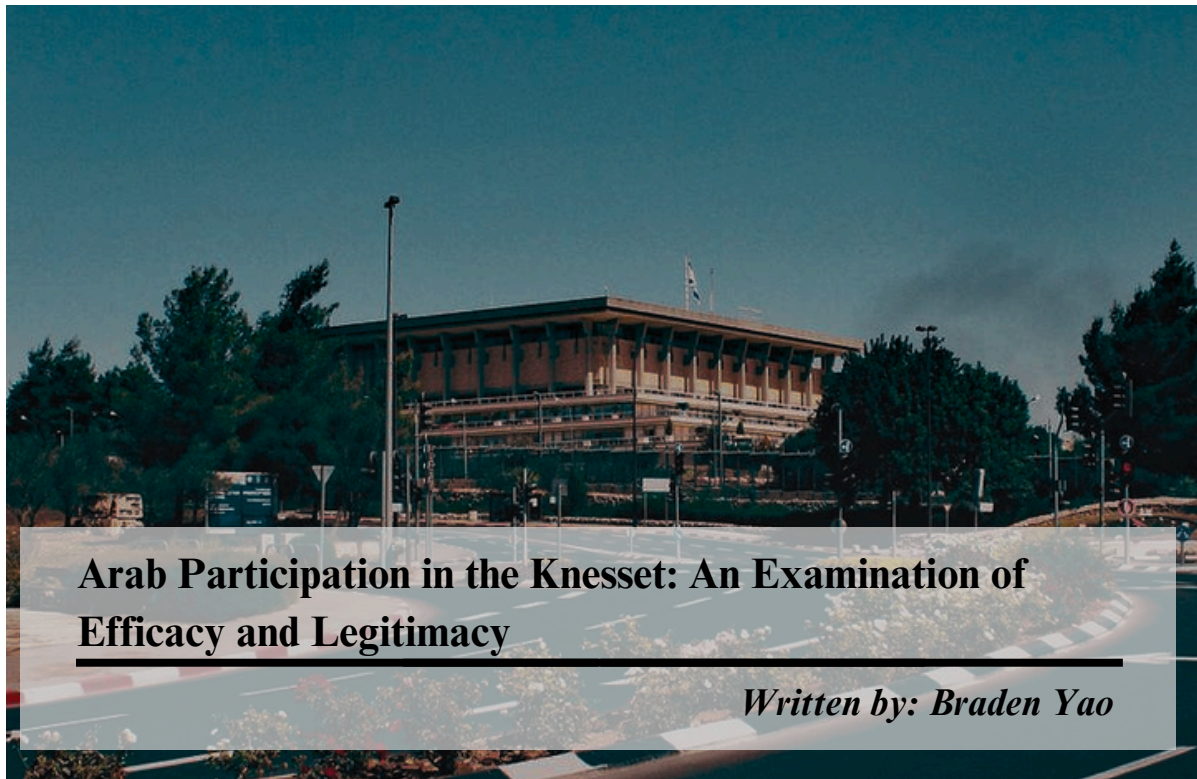
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Arab Participation in the Knesset: An Examination of Efficacy and Legitimacy

Written by: Braden Yao

Abstract

This article dissects the relationship between the State of Israel and its large Arab citizen minority in two ways: by examining how government policies both suppress and support Arab influence in the political sphere, and how Israeli Arabs themselves navigate the complex challenges they face in the Jewish State. Specific attention is brought to four special-interest parties that advocate for Arab rights in the Knesset – Ra’am, Hadash, Ta’al, and Balad – and the Joint List coalition they formed between 2015-2022. The degree to which these parties are successful in improving the political and social conditions of their community despite systemic challenges is explored in detail, and in doing so, it is argued that Arab legislative participation in Israel is genuine, practical, and productive. This success is a testament to the resilience of ethnocultural minorities and to the strength of Israel’s democracy.

Keywords: Israel, Israeli Arabs, political participation, democracy, and minority rights

Through their status as a minority, Israel's Arab population has faced systemic challenges since the country's founding in 1948, including discrimination, racism, and inequity.[1] However, the community also has access to parliamentary representation through special-interest Arab parties in the Knesset, Israel's legislative body. The question to be answered is whether Arab participation in the political sphere is beneficial, and why it may be worthwhile to maintain a presence in government despite these challenges. While there are nuances between the terms 'Arab citizens of Israel' (or ACIs), 'Palestinian citizens of Israel' and 'Israeli Arabs', all of these terms will be used in this paper to designate those who remained in Israel after the Nakba and gained citizenship. This paper will argue that Arab participation in the Israeli electoral process is indeed a legitimate means of improving the community's conditions – because their interests are genuinely represented, it is possible for their grievances to be addressed, and that participation is an effective way to bring about change.

BACKGROUND

Approximately 20% of Israel's population is of Arab origin, the descendants of those who remained in the country after the 1948 War of Independence and the Nakba, during which 700,000 Palestinians were displaced.[2] The political history of the Arab citizens of Israel from that point onward can be categorized into 4 phases, according to scholar Nohad 'Ali.[3] The first, lasting from the creation of the State of Israel until 1967, was characterized by a sentiment of hopelessness. Coming to terms with their newfound minority status, and cut off from the rest of the Arab world, ACIs felt no choice but to 'work within the system' and avoid conflict for fear of retribution.[4] From the beginning, Arab interests were represented in the Knesset in theory, but each party had its own approach to

Palestinian representation. David Ben-Gurion's ruling Mapai (today the Israeli Labour Party) forbade Arabs from appearing on its party lists, instead relegating them to a number of satellite parties. The leading opposition parties that would become the modern-day Meretz and Communist Party were more welcoming, offering a platform for ACIs and calling for Israel to return to its 1947 Partition Plan borders.[5] However, Mapai used intimidation tactics to prevent Arabs from voting for Mapam and Maki, hiring local collaborators to beat up communist sympathizers. There were no independent Arab parties during this stage.

Until 1966, Palestinian citizens of Israel were subject to martial law - consisting of, among other things, administrative detention and mandatory travel permits - due to fears by Zionist leaders of Arab infiltration from neighbouring countries.[6] The lifting of military rule that year, coupled with the occupation of the West Bank following the Six-Day War, meant that ACIs regained contact with their partner villages across the Green Line. With this came the second phase of Arab political history, which saw a reinvigoration of a Palestinian identity. Increased awareness of the reality of military occupation from the mingling of Palestinian families led to new political consolidation through the building of civil society, the introduction of chapters of the Muslim Brotherhood in Israel, and the formation of a new joint Jewish-Arab-run political party known as Hadash (al-Jabha in Arabic) in 1977.[7] Hadash's rise ultimately led to the elimination of satellite lists in 1981, and Arabs were fully integrated into mainstream parties from that point onward.

The third phase lasted from the Oslo Accords in the 1990s to 2006, when Arab citizens of Israel went beyond striving for equality and sought to redress systemic discrimination. By 1999, 69% of the Arab vote went to Arab parties such as al-

Jabha.[8] The final phase, which includes the present day, saw ACIs with more political representation than ever, recording their highest-ever seat count in the Knesset in the early 2020s. In 2021, the Islamist Arab party Ra'am joined a government coalition for the first time in its history.[9]

From a population of 150,000 in 1948, the Arab population of Israel numbers roughly 2 million today. They form a diverse sector of society, consisting of urban conglomerations (mostly in the "Triangle" region near the Galilee) as well as rural Bedouin communities (particularly in the Negev), and comprising religious, secular, Muslim, Christian, and Druze individuals.[10] In law, ACIs enjoy the same legal rights as Jewish Israelis.

In practice, however, they are systemically afflicted by a regime of structural discrimination targeting land rights, healthcare, employment, language, infrastructure, and state benefits.

Israeli Arabs live in poorer cities, and even mixed cities are often segregated by neighbourhood. Over half of Arab families were considered 'poor' in 2020, with a median monthly income of USD \$3048 compared to \$4652 for Jews.[11] A different school system, while fulfilling a collective right, leads to less formal education. 70% of all murders in Israel are of Arabs; only 20% of those cases are solved compared to over 50% of murders for Jews.[12] Finally, Israel's designation as a Jewish state is itself a point of contention. Many Arabs consider themselves second-class citizens, considering that the Right of Return applies to Jews but not their Palestinian relatives. In 2018, Israel passed the controversial

Basic Law, removing Arabic as an official language and declaring the country to be the 'nation-state of the Jewish people'.[13] These measures only alienated the ACI community and sowed intercommunal discord within the country.

Arab citizens of Israel have always been torn as to whether they ought to participate in Israeli elections.[14] Some believe it validates a system that was designed to exclude them and will never see them as equals, while others hold that refraining from participation denies them the ability to change a broken system. The crux of the scholarly debate on this issue lies in how one evaluates two important considerations: the short-term interest of improving their immediate socioeconomic condition, and the long-term interest of changing Israel's nature as a Zionist, Jewish state.[15] Ultimately, that question requires a thorough examination of the efficacy and validity of Arab participation in the Knesset, as outlined in the arguments below.

...THAT THEIR INTERESTS ARE GENUINELY REPRESENTED

Arab citizens of Israel have the right to vote and run for office. Members of their community sit on the Supreme and lower courts in the country and work in the civil service.[16] However, the idea that ACI representation in all three branches of the government is a legitimate manifestation of Arab voices is questionable and, according to some, even problematic.[17] This is because although their parties have participated in Israeli elections since 1949, this was at a time when they were still under military rule - thus casting doubt on the true independence of such lists. Indeed, the aforementioned satellite parties of Mapai could hardly be called free, as they did not function outside of election season - one author described the fiasco as "vote contractors, campaigners, party and public officials... all of a sudden

[descending] upon ordinarily ignored Arab villages”.[18] Even today, the fact that Arab Members of Knesset (MKs) swear allegiance to Israel can give the illusion that the country is truly democratic, a common propaganda talking point to claim that Arabs are treated fairly. One Palestinian journalist went so far as to call the Arab parties a “fig leaf” whose only purpose was to “beautify the state to the world”.[19]

Despite these criticisms, the Israeli-Arab parties in the Knesset can indeed be called democratic as evidenced by their persistence and representation across all sectors of Arab society. For instance, there is the aforementioned Hadash/al-Jabha, a far-left communist party led by Ayman Odeh, and Ta'al, a centre-left moderate reconciliatory party. There is Ra'am - led by Mansour Abbas - a conservative religious party that acts as the southern faction of the radical Islamic Movement. Finally, there is Balad, a Palestinian nationalist party with close ties to the PLO.[20] The parties have significant differences - Ra'am for instance, opposes both the Zionist and the secular Arab parties. In rhetoric, al-Jabha advances the ACI cause through the lens of a democratic argument – “a state for all its citizens”, Balad through a nationalist argument – “this is the Palestinian homeland”, and Ra'am through a cultural one – “we represent true Muslim values”.[21] The voter base, too, is diverse, with urban Arabs voting for Hadash or Ta'al, the Negev Bedouins for Ra'am, and interestingly, the Druze for Zionist parties. [22]

The Arab parties' dynamic can be illustrated with one prominent example - the formation of the Joint List in 2015. An electoral alliance of the four parties mentioned above, it sought to improve the standard of life for ACIs by annulling the Nation-State Law, tackling rampant crime in their communities, and fixing infrastructure. Internally, there were disagreements between the member lists over the

modernity vs tradition continuum, such as on the issues of shari'a courts and homosexuality.[23] The alliance broke up later due to infighting as will be discussed below, however, the point remains that Arab parties in Israel have both the ability to cooperate and disagree.

On the other hand, both Jewish and Arab parties are complicit in perpetuating a lack of Arab representation in lawmaking - the latter to rally support and protect their independence.[24] Joint List MKs voted against the normalisation of relations with Bahrain and the UAE in 2020 despite the fact that a majority of the Israeli Arab population supported these agreements.[25] But in balancing dogmatism and pragmatism, over 70% of the ACI surveyed approved of Ra'am joining the government coalition in 2021. There were no mass resignations from the party nor widespread protest from Palestinian citizens of Israel for allying with Zionist parties.[26]

...THAT IT IS POSSIBLE FOR THEIR INTERESTS TO BE ADDRESSED DESPITE ISRAEL'S JEWISH NATURE

It can thus be concluded that there is a genuine diversity of opinion in Arab Knesset representation. But what good is this if Israel's political system is inherently flawed? One must consider that Israel was founded as the nation-state of the Jewish people - thus, by definition, not a state for the Arabs. No representation, therefore, no matter how comprehensive, will ever make the Palestinian civilians of Israel equal in practice. Since the country's founding, and until 2021, Arab-led parties were never seen as legitimate coalition partners, but as a nuisance - hence a 2014 election law increasing the minimum vote threshold to win seats in the Knesset from 2.0% to 3.5%, widely seen as a measure to shut those parties out of the

legislature.[27] In 2020, the Joint List won the most seats ever (15), but Jewish parties left, right and centre refused to include the faction in their coalitions. The loyalty of Arab politicians is frequently questioned, with the leader of Yisrael Beiteinu accusing Odeh of ‘treason’ and calling for his suspension from the chamber.[28]

But there is a conflation of individual and group rights here - it is the collective right of ACIs (as part of the greater Palestinian nation) that the Zionist state will never recognize, true; the question, however, is whether the electoral process is an effective means of improving the Israeli Arab condition. And when it comes to resolving the issues (crime, infrastructure, education, welfare) that disproportionately affect the Arab community, both Odeh (Hadash) and Abbas (Ra’am) agree to prioritise civil over national (i.e. Palestinian autonomy) issues, a sentiment shared by 69% of ACIs according to a 2022 poll by the Israeli Democracy Institute.[29]

Now there is a valid argument to be made that minorities should not be forced to choose to sacrifice one type of right for another. This naturally follows to a discussion about group rights in Israel. In July 2020, a bill was brought forth to the Knesset prohibiting gay conversion therapy.[30] This bill fiercely divided the lawmakers, both on the Zionist and Arab sides - thus revealing a telling fact about Israeli-Palestinian politics. When it comes to individual equity issues, such as women’s and LGBTQ+ rights, politicians transcend communal lines to do what is best for their constituents as a collective. Ra’am unequivocally opposed a conversion therapy ban, calling homosexuality a transgression against Islam; in doing so, it was sacrificing the right of individual ACIs to live their life as they please in the name of a collective religious cause. By claiming to act as the voice of the conservative Arab population, the party hijacked ethnocultural minority rights as an anti-

democratic Trojan horse.[31]

On the other side of the political spectrum - when the Joint List was formed in 2015, Hadash had the most seats out of the Arab parties and managed to condition his faction’s support by demanding more women on the party list. When the alliance finally broke up, Odeh indicated his support for a leftist coalition with Jewish parties and refused to cooperate with right-wing politicians, especially Netanyahu’s Likud.[32] Meanwhile, Ra’am wanted to strengthen the Arab political voice at any cost, and this included working with conservative Zionist parties. Abbas went so far as to say in an interview: “What do I have in common with the left? ...of course, we support the two-state solution. But on religious affairs, I’m right-wing”.[33] Indeed, this is why many secular, Druze and Christian Arabs would rather vote for Meretz than Ra’am.[34]

Conversely, while Jewish parties attract some of the Arab vote, the opposite can be true too. In 2020, Hadash was eager to expand its voter base and launched a campaign to woo left-wing Israelis disappointed by Meretz’s alliance with the historically-questionable Labour Party- the Meretz-Labour pact consequently lost half its vote support.[35] It even put forth billboards in Yiddish aimed at the pacifist ultra-Orthodox (“Your vote against forced conscription!”) and in Amharic, promising to fight against police brutality against Ethiopian Jews.[26] In one of the ironic twists of the Israeli political arena, Ra’am also tried to attract the ultra-Orthodox vote in the election the following year, appealing to both communities’ insular and religious nature.[37]

What this shows is that civil and national issues are not as simple as Arab parties ‘betraying’ the Palestinian cause for some concessions.

There is genuine concern of collective rights being used to violate the individual rights of ACIs, who are not a monolith. The Knesset provides an opportunity for Arab parties to consider the values and intersectional identities of their constituents, through parallel alliances with Jewish parties, especially when group and individual rights conflict.

...THAT ULTIMATELY, PARTICIPATION IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO BRING ABOUT CHANGE

Having demonstrated that it is possible for Arab interests to be advanced in the Jewish state, the question now becomes how one proves that change has actually come about via the electoral process. The doubts are understandable; after all, voter turnout in recent decades have plummeted, a symptom of a pervasive lack of trust in Israeli institutions. From 75% in 1999 to 54% in 2009, the percentage of ACIs voting in Knesset elections has been in steady decline.[38] Many Palestinian citizens of Israel feel they have no say in policymaking. For instance, the Nation-State Law managed to pass despite the fact that the Arab parties rallied passionately against it.

This frustration manifests itself in two ways: a boycott of elections, and the formation of alternative means of activism such as CSOs. Some Arab parties already boycott the democratic process, such as Abnaa el-Balad and certain sectors of the Islamic Movement. After 13 youths were killed by the Israeli police in 2000, turnout in prime ministerial elections dropped to a measly 18%.[39] Regarding the latter, advocacy has increasingly been carried out by non-partisan organisations focusing on areas of society like recreation, education, welfare, culture, and religion. As one journalist put it, “[those Arab politicians] should have done more than

collectively denounce the Nation-State law... [they should have] resigned en masse... they should have converted their struggle from a parliamentary to a popular grassroots one”.[40] Based on such sentiments, Hadash-Ta’al-Ra’am-Balad had refused to endorse any candidate for Prime Minister for decades.

However, refraining from participating in the electoral process denies the ACI community an opportunity to bring about change within the system.

Holding only 15 seats out of 120 in the Knesset when they represent a fifth of Israel’s population due to low turnout. The potential for parliamentary representation would be enhanced if they turned out to vote in greater numbers. This influence is not theoretical. After the September 2019 elections, Odeh indicated his desire to join a centre-left coalition based on certain conditions: resumption of peace talks with the PA, repealing of the Nation-State Law, stopping the demolition of illegally-built Palestinian homes, and allocation of more of the state budget to the Arab sector - in his words, to “transform Arab politics from politics of protest to politics of influence”.[41] The moderate Jewish bloc could not reach an agreement with his party in the end, and in return, they were punished by another Netanyahu government. This would have taught them that in the future, cooperation with ACIs is mandatory if they wish to unseat Netanyahu.

Even on the other end of the political spectrum, Odeh’s philosophy is echoed by Abbas, who stated that Arab citizens “have to become influential in decision-making... in order to bring about real, tangible change for [their] community”.[42] In what ended up being Israel’s

most diverse governing coalition ever, Ra'am finally joined the 24th Knesset in a historic first for the ACI community, ironically also the first government to be led by an Orthodox Jew and a West Bank settler.[43] In return, new Prime Minister Naftali Bennett agreed to the legalisation and formal recognition of numerous Negev Bedouin settlements and the freezing of a law cracking down on illegal Bedouin construction, two key issues that had been affecting Ra'am's voter base.[44] This demonstrates that Arab parties increasingly have real bargaining power, and that their influence cannot be ignored by Zionist parties.

In other words, despite the shift towards CSOs in recent decades, parliamentary activism has been making a comeback, and it has been successful in bringing about change. Through the politics of pragmatism, ACIs can easily manage to give themselves the kingmaker seat in Israel politics - holding any government hostage unless they act on Arab concerns - by committing to voter turnout. We exist, and we cannot be ignored. This is just one aspect of building bridges in a society that, in spite of all the mistrust, has led to cooperation between Jews and Arabs - a partnership illustrated no better than by how the two groups worked closely together in the healthcare sector during the COVID pandemic, with workers treating patients from the other community.[45]

CONCLUSION

The 2022 legislative election was seen by many as a referendum for the ACIs on whether they approved of Ra'am joining a Zionist coalition. [46] The party ended up seeing its vote share increase, allowing it to gain an additional seat and become the largest Arab party in the Knesset. In effect, this shows that Arab participation in the parliamentary sphere is still valued among members of the community, and that there is hope

for future Arab involvement in lawmaking and governance. The arguments advanced in this paper have shown that it is possible to balance two interests - having a meaningful say in government while also being unapologetically opposed to mainstream Zionist parties - without sacrificing one or the other.

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Women's Rights in Taliban's Afghanistan

Written by: Morgan Hayes

Abstract

This paper details the evolution of women's rights in Afghanistan spanning the 19th century to the present day, with a particular focus on the UN Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda. The WPS agenda is a policy framework that promotes women's equal and meaningful participation in peace processes, peacebuilding and security. This paper argues that since 2021, the WPS Agenda's mission in Afghanistan has been limited in enacting global governance policies for Afghan women. Using the feminist framework of international relations (IR) scholar Cynthia Enloe, this paper is a feminist analysis of global governance in Afghanistan. Ultimately, any policy that is targeted toward Afghan women must involve them in the process and centre their agency.

Keywords: Women's Peace and Security (WPS Agenda), Cynthia Enloe, women's rights, global governance, international relations.

**“I wish I could fly. I would take my two kids in my wings and could fly to my husband and could live happily with my family.”[1]
- Fozia, a mother of two, living under Taliban rule (2023).**

INTRODUCTION

Global governance, the framework of institutions, norms, and procedures that “facilitate collective action and cooperation among countries and other actors,” is a linchpin of the liberal international order.[2] For all global issues, either historical or ongoing, global governance seeks to provide mechanisms to handle global issues.[3] One of the most prominent bodies of global governance is the United Nations (UN). An area that the UN must improve is addressing how Afghan women have been portrayed by the UN and its branches, such as the Women's Peace and Security Agenda (WPS) and its peacekeepers, as politicized to justify the American occupation of Afghanistan. [4] This thesis will address the difficulty of implementing the WPS agenda and UN Women to promote Afghan women's human rights amidst the Taliban regime. To help explain the ongoing issue of human rights violations against Afghan women, a delineation of the feminist framework adopted by international relations feminist Cynthia Enloe will be employed. The feminist framework will be used to unpack how the UN and WPS's policies to address the violations that Afghan women face have ongoing negative implications due to institutionalized colonialism and the assumption of universal gender-based norms.[5] To note, when referencing ‘women’

FEMINIST FRAMEWORK AND THE UN: CYNTHIA ENLOE'S FEMINIST FRAMEWORK

Cynthia Enloe is a professor in the Department of International Development, Community, and Environment at Clark University in Massachusetts.[7] Professor Enloe's feminist teaching and research have focused on the interplay of gendered politics in the national and international arenas, focusing in particular on how governments have utilized the emotional and physical labour of women to support their war-waging policies and how women have attempted to oppose war endeavours.[8] Racial, class, ethnic, and national identities, as well as ideas about gender binaries, are common themes throughout her studies.[9] Focusing on the gendered aspects of war and militarization, one of Enloe's central ideas is that promoting the agency of women involuntarily placed in conflict zones is key to providing essential support and resources. [10]

The framework provided by Enloe provides a feminist backdrop to understand the issues affecting Afghan women. It also identifies the weaknesses within global governance and the UN that must be addressed to execute the WPS agenda and other policies to empower Afghan women successfully.[11] Enloe's framework focuses on how gendered binaries ingrained in global governance institutions impede the resolution of real gender-related challenges since developing policies based on rigid gender norms restricts the consideration of complex topics.[12] She also argues that addressing the social construct of gender is essential for understanding how the UN, global governance, “militarization, security, and war are based and dependent upon gender dynamics.”[13] This framework will assist in analyzing how the patriarchal structures

established by the Taliban influence women, as well as the political hierarchies that still have an impact on Afghan women's rights.[14]

Understanding the different types of power that control women's lives in Afghanistan is made easier with the use of Enloe's framework. Enloe's attention to "invisible" facets of women's contributions sheds light on the often-disregarded responsibilities that Afghan women play in their nation's social and economic fabric.[15] Furthermore, her approach shows how global governance institutions such as diplomacy and international assistance could challenge or reinforce these gendered power dynamics.[16] The significance of intersectionality is emphasized by Enloe, who acknowledges that various converging elements such as race, class and religion influence women's experiences.[17]

In addition to criticizing militarism and war, Enloe draws attention to the unique circumstances faced by women in combat zones.[18] Analyzing how militarism, armed conflict, and geopolitical interests have shaped Afghan women's rights is a necessary part of applying her approach to Afghanistan.[19] This perspective highlights Afghan women's difficulties in the more extensive international security and governance framework.[20] However, Enloe's ideas may fall short of capturing Afghanistan's cultural, historical, and theological subtleties. Local settings and traditions can profoundly shape women's experiences and rights, often in ways that do not precisely fit Enloe's broader framework.[21]

Although Enloe's feminist theory offers a valuable framework for comprehending Afghan women's rights in the context of global governance, its application necessitates careful consideration of regional differences in power structures, and limiting Western-centric viewpoints.[22] Her observations must be combined with localized information and current

advancements to better understand Afghan women's experiences.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF AFGHAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The historical context of Afghan women's rights must be discussed before addressing their current situation.[23] A common misconception rooted in racism and colonialism is that women's rights in Afghanistan only existed during colonial rule under the British and U.S. occupation periods.[24] As a result, it is necessary to analyze the status of women in Afghanistan within the broader historical framework of Afghanistan rather than using the ideological framework of the Taliban.[25] From this perspective, women are recognized as central to the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

As early as the 1920s, women's rights were central to national objectives for improvement.[26] Gender dynamics and women's roles in Afghanistan have been influenced by two significant periods in the country's history.[27] When the monarch Habibullah Khan was assassinated in 1919, his son Amanullah ascended to the throne, ushering total modernity in Afghanistan.[28] His program for modernization included releasing women from the constraints of entrenched tribal gender norms.[29] Amanullah drafted the first Constitution of Afghanistan in 1923, laying the groundwork for the official system of government and defining the monarch's position within it.[30] In addition to openly opposing polygamy and the veil, Amanullah promoted women's education in Kabul and rural regions of Afghanistan.[31]

The first phase beginning in 1923 saw changes aimed at enhancing the status of women in the home and their quality of life.[32] Widespread opposition by religious fundamentalists and extreme conservative groups to the measures led

to Amanullah's eventual downfall.[33] The Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), supported by the Soviet Union, led to the ten-year war between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union.[34] Additionally, the rise of the Mujahideen throughout the 1990s meant that any liberties women had gained under the Soviet communist era were removed by the Mujahideen.[35] The Democratic Movement would ultimately collapse due to the dissolution of the USSR, internal instability, and a failed coup attempt.[36] Afghanistan has never been a centralized solid state with a conventional legal system, despite the occasional attempts to unite multiple groups of powerful tribes.[37]

Gender roles in Afghanistan have been determined by tribal rules, which have frequently superseded Islamic and constitutional regulations.[38] This is primarily due to familial hierarchies in rural areas. Intertribal displays of patriarchal authority and entrenched systems of honour have threatened women's status.[39] Under tribal regulations, women are expected to submit to their husbands and their families at all times, are forced into marriages, are not permitted to divorce, and are not allowed to pursue further education.[40]

Afghan women's rights issues have historically been limited by deeply ingrained patriarchal social constructs and gender roles in traditional communities.

Furthermore, the lack of a centralized government has failed to enact progressive policies in the face of tribal feudalism.[41]

By 1928, the rural ethnic tribal elders were in opposition to the increase in women's rights and freedoms and formed groups to oppose the liberties women in Kabul enjoyed.[42] As women

gained more liberties during this period, opposition and fragmentation continued. Although women were able to enjoy more rights during the modernization period with support from the Soviet Union, women living in rural and tribal areas outside of Kabul were not able to take advantage of modernization.[43] There existed a division along geographic lines between women who were able to access education and those who could not. Furthermore, women bound by familial obligations had less access to education, a theme that persists to this day.[44]

By 1959, the new monarch King Zahir Shah announced that veils were no longer mandatory, leaving it to become a matter of personal choice.[45] Furthermore, per other policy changes, women were granted access to schools and medical facilities.[46] The 1964 Constitution provided significant rights for women, including the right to vote and the right to education.[47] Although such constitutional freedoms now existed, their implementation was unequal. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, a woman's socio-economic position and her location affected her enjoyment of freedoms.[48]

To avoid making the same error as his predecessor Amanullah, the newly-elected prime minister Mohammed Daoud made veiling a personal choice.[49] The Third Constitution of Afghanistan, which went into effect in 1964, granted women the right to vote and the ability to run for office.[50] The *Democratic Organisation of Afghan Women* (DOAW) was founded in the same year.[51] The DOAW sought to end forced marriages, abolish bride costs, and eradicate illiteracy among women.[52] The latter part of the 1970s saw the second wave of vigorous women's reform.[53] Women's educational attainment, and representation in academic faculties and Parliament increased throughout the 1970s.[54] The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) was established in 1978.

Under the PDPA government, mass literacy programs for women and men of all ages were adopted along with fast social and economic development.[55] By the end of the 1970s, many Kabuli women were able to travel around cities without a male family member.[56] They were able to study at university and have their own career.[57] However, these liberties caused friction throughout conservative religious communities leading to acid attacks against women and violent demonstrations.[58] The reactions by conservatives led to anti-government protests of the 1970s, resulting in the leftist coup d'état of April 1978.[59]

Shortly after the coup d'état, the Soviet conquest of Afghanistan occurred in December 1970. This would mark the beginning of ten years of conflict. [60] The Mujahideen battled against the Soviet Union with support from outside forces, such as the U.S., Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and China. [61] The Mujahideen seized control of Kabul after the coup and proclaimed Afghanistan to be an Islamic state. Subsequently, in 1996, the United States, Pakistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia backed the Islamic fundamentalist Taliban to confront the Mujahideen's brutalities.[62] The Taliban aired its new regulations on the radio and drastically altered societal norms.[63] Every day, Radio Sharia, the Taliban's primary radio station, repeated the new fundamentalist Islamic rule that both men and women had to comply with.[64]

The rights of Afghan women have wildly shifted throughout the 20th century due to various changes in state leadership and as a consequence of internal and geopolitical conflict. This highlights that women have experienced moments where rights were freely granted, and taken at a moment's notice. The connection between leadership and normalization of women's rights has allowed the UN to justify its intervention through the WPS Agenda.[65]

EVOLUTION OF THE UN AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE REGARDING AFGHAN WOMEN: OVERVIEW OF THE UN'S ROLE

The UN is essential to global governance as a multilateral institution that promotes international cooperation, upholds peace and security, advances human rights, and tackles global issues. [66] It has historically operated peacekeeping missions in Afghanistan, such as the *United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan* (UNAMA), established in 2002 to support peace and stability efforts following the ousting of the Taliban regime.[67] Additionally, the UN promoted and backed programs to advance women's rights and gender equality in Afghanistan. These programs include strengthening women's involvement in public life and protecting their rights through changes in healthcare, education, and legal systems.[68] Nonetheless, there have been obstacles to the UN's work in Afghanistan, including changing political environments, bureaucratic roadblocks, security risks, and restricted access to war zones. [69]

EVOLUTION OF THE UN AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE REGARDING AFGHAN WOMEN: INTRODUCTION TO THE WPS AND UN WOMEN

International discourse on women's rights and gender equality has been dramatically influenced by feminist frameworks within the UN and its specialized agencies, mainly through organizations like UN Women and the WPS agenda.[70] The creation of UN Women in 2010 marked a commitment to improving coordination

and efficacy in tackling gender inequality globally by combining many UN organizations focused on women's issues into one.[71] Using feminist principles, UN Women advocates for gender equality as a fundamental human right.[72] It drives programmes that support women's leadership, political engagement, and economic empowerment to tear down structural obstacles that impede women's success.[73]

Simultaneously, the WPS agenda underscores a feminist perspective within conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts.[74] Originating from UN Security Council Resolution 1325, it outlines women's essential roles in peace processes and decision-making and advocates for their meaningful participation in negotiations and governance structures.[75] The WPS agenda also emphasizes the critical need to address and prevent gender-based violence during conflicts and give priority to women's rights and protection in conflict zones.[76]

Although Afghanistan's constitutional revisions have guaranteed women's rights and gender equality on paper, it is still difficult for Afghan women to see tangible progress in these areas.[77] Afghanistan adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2003, which promised to eradicate all forms of discrimination based on gender.[78] However, deep-seated patriarchal structures and the resurgence of conservative ideologies influenced by fundamentalist rule have impeded the execution of these international commitments.[79] Cultural norms throughout Afghanistan do not exist in a monolith and vary uniquely based on geography, religion, and traditional structures. In this context, norms refer to traditional patriarchal structures. Despite progress in terms of education and political participation, many barriers still exist for Afghan women.[80] Gender-based violence, restricted access to healthcare, and limited

economic possibilities underscore the disparities in legislative framework execution and actual conditions on the ground.[81]

FEMINIST FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING AFGHAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The impact of global governance on women's rights in Afghanistan is complex. Although foreign operations and humanitarian programs seek to enhance women's rights and access to services, they are insufficient in tackling the complex issues that women in war zones are forced to confront.[82] Varying agendas among global actors can influence the effectiveness of interventions to safeguard women's rights.[83] Global governance structures are pivotal in shaping policies that impact women's rights in conflict zones.[84] However, the effectiveness of these initiatives is often hampered by challenges such as limited local engagement, inadequate funding, and insufficient coordination among stakeholders.[85]

Violence and militarism have severely harmed women's rights and safety in Afghanistan. This has led to impeding the advancement of gender equality, as noted by the lack of progress in the WPS Agenda detailed by IR scholars.[86] These frameworks that are intended to protect women from violence are not implemented effectively.[87]

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE TODAY

In Afghanistan, UN Women has been crucial in organizing initiatives to support gender equality and women's empowerment.[88] UN Women has made significant progress in increasing women's participation. From decision-making processes to political agency, UN Women has been accredited

for its programs.[89] Initiatives influenced by the WPS agenda have promoted women's participation in peace talks, assisted women-led civil society groups, and stressed the safety of women in combat areas in Afghanistan.[90] Additionally, efforts to empower women in Afghanistan have received financing and resources from global governance entities, including donor nations and international organizations.[91] These initiatives have helped enhance women's financial conditions and encourage their involvement in various societal sectors by funding economic ventures, healthcare initiatives, and education programs.[92] Even though these projects have improved Afghan women's rights, many issues remain. Such as implementation gaps and security risks.[93] These obstacles notwithstanding, the UN and other global governance organizations have successfully implemented many other projects and programs which highlight ongoing efforts to advance women's rights in Afghanistan.[94]

CHALLENGES OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The difficulties of enforcing policy objectives can be seen in the case of the WPS Agenda and UN Women. Both governance structures have outlined objectives to enact change, and have fallen short in their implementation.[95] Converting policy frameworks into workable tactics that cater to Afghan women's unique needs and circumstances is one such challenge.[96] Obstacles to that affect implementation include cultural and religious norms, security risks, and restricted access to regions impacted by violence.[97] Afghan women cannot meaningfully participate in peace talks and decision-making processes because of these obstacles.[98] Similarly, legislative changes that protect women's rights, economic empowerment, and

gender equality are given top priority in UN Women's policy frameworks.[99] Although the ambitions of UN Women are important, there have been shortcomings in the execution of the policies.[100] More specifically, there are gaps between the objectives of the policies and the realities that Afghan women have because of difficulties in putting them into practice.[101] Furthermore, coordination and consistency amongst UN bodies and governance institutions are still essential for implementation to be successful.[102] Inconsistencies in how UN Women's programs and the WPS agenda are coordinated might result in redundant and dispersed efforts that worsen the overall situation for Afghan women's human rights.[103]

The difficulties associated with security concerns, evolving political landscapes, and altering donor priorities further impede the effective execution of these policies and programs at the local level.[104]

Cynthia Enloe's feminist theory serves as an effective framework. Her ideas provide the foundation for an analysis of the obstacles associated with implementing policy.[105] Enloe emphasizes the complexities of power structures ingrained in patriarchal institutions, cultural norms, and geopolitical forces that affect the creation and execution of policy in the context of Afghan women's rights.[106] Furthermore, Enloe's theory emphasizes the significance of challenging myths and investigating how internationally formulated policies translate into tangible improvements for women.[107] The impacts of global governance, as specifically detailed in the case of UN Women throughout

this paper, have highlighted a necessity to listen to the needs of Afghan women, rather than acting on their behalf through global governance systems that remove individuality and agency from Afghan women.[108]

Through a feminist analysis of the UN and its implications on Afghan women, it is evident that uplifting women's voices and ensuring their involvement in determining policy that directly impacts their lives is crucial.[109] Enloe's feminist theory dissects several reasons behind the shortcomings in executing Afghan women's rights legislation.[110] It also promotes adopting more comprehensive, situation-specific, and women-focused strategies to tackle Afghan women's obstacles in their efforts to achieve equality and human rights.[111]

SHORTCOMINGS OF THE WPS AGENDA AND 'GLOBAL GOVERNANCE'

The WPS agenda aimed to promote women's rights within conflict zones, ensure their involvement in peace processes and address their unique needs during post-conflict reconstruction.[112] Despite efforts to implement this agenda, several factors have impeded its fulfilment of promises to Afghan women. Afghan women have struggled to secure meaningful representation in peace negotiations, often finding their voices marginalized or altogether excluded from formal talks.[113] Also, the fragile security situation in Afghanistan has posed substantial threats to women's safety and rights.[114] Ongoing conflict and the resurgence of the Taliban have escalated violence against women, curtailed their freedom of movement, and restricted access to education and healthcare.[115] Furthermore, despite existing policies and laws supporting women's rights, their implementation and enforcement must be improved due to weak institutional

frameworks and corruption.[116] The withdrawal of international military forces, along with logistical and financial support, has exacerbated the challenges faced by Afghan women. This abrupt departure created a power vacuum which prompted the return of the Taliban and eroded gains made in women's rights over the years.[117]

The failure of the WPS agenda in Afghanistan stems from multiple factors, including ongoing conflict, cultural barriers, insufficient representation, and abrupt geopolitical shifts within the country.[118] This complex issue calls for persistent work, sincere dedication from all parties involved, and strategies that emphasize reconciliation initiatives and the participation and rights of Afghan women in all spheres of society.[119]

In the current setting, the UN and global governance systems face several challenges in adequately addressing the human rights of Afghan women. The UN has pushed for women's rights in Afghanistan and passed resolutions, but its capacity to implement these policies is limited, especially when member nations disobey.[120] Further, global governance mechanisms rely on member-state cooperation, meaning the Afghan government must be open to addressing women's rights.[121] This crucial component of administration is made much more difficult by the Taliban's recent return to power.

The emphasis on women's rights in Afghanistan may be overshadowed by other geopolitical interests and strategic concerns within the international community,

which might result in concessions or inactivity on essential problems.[122] Additionally, resource constraints and coordination challenges

within the UN and other international organizations limit their capacity to effectively address Afghan women's multifaceted needs.[123]

Finally, attempts to meet the particular requirements of Afghan women are hampered by their absence from national and international decision-making processes.[124] More Afghan women need to be represented in dialogues and decision-making forums to ensure the efficacy of policies and programs.[125] These flaws demonstrate how difficult it is for the UN and other international governance institutions to protect Afghan women's human rights adequately.[126] More resources must address these problems, member nations must cooperate more closely, inclusive decision-making procedures must be used, and Afghan women's rights must be prioritized and protected within the larger global governance framework.[127]

CONCLUSION

Based on the evaluation of the WPS agenda and the UN in addressing Afghan women's rights, it can be concluded that using a feminist framework can assist in understanding how global governance policies are framed. Unfortunately, the real-world implications of policies based on rigid gender binaries are not as practical as they aim to be.[128] Afghan women's rights are severely constrained by the patriarchal norms reinforced by the Taliban. The application of international interventions, such as those by the WPS agenda and UN Women, provide surface-level solutions that do not fully address how Afghan women can access essential civil liberties.[129] The UN needs to abandon its 'one size fits all' approach to women's rights in Afghanistan, and take into consideration the unique context that results in challenges for the emancipation of Afghan women.[130] Global governance can

only be effective if policies are created with the participation of those affected.[131]

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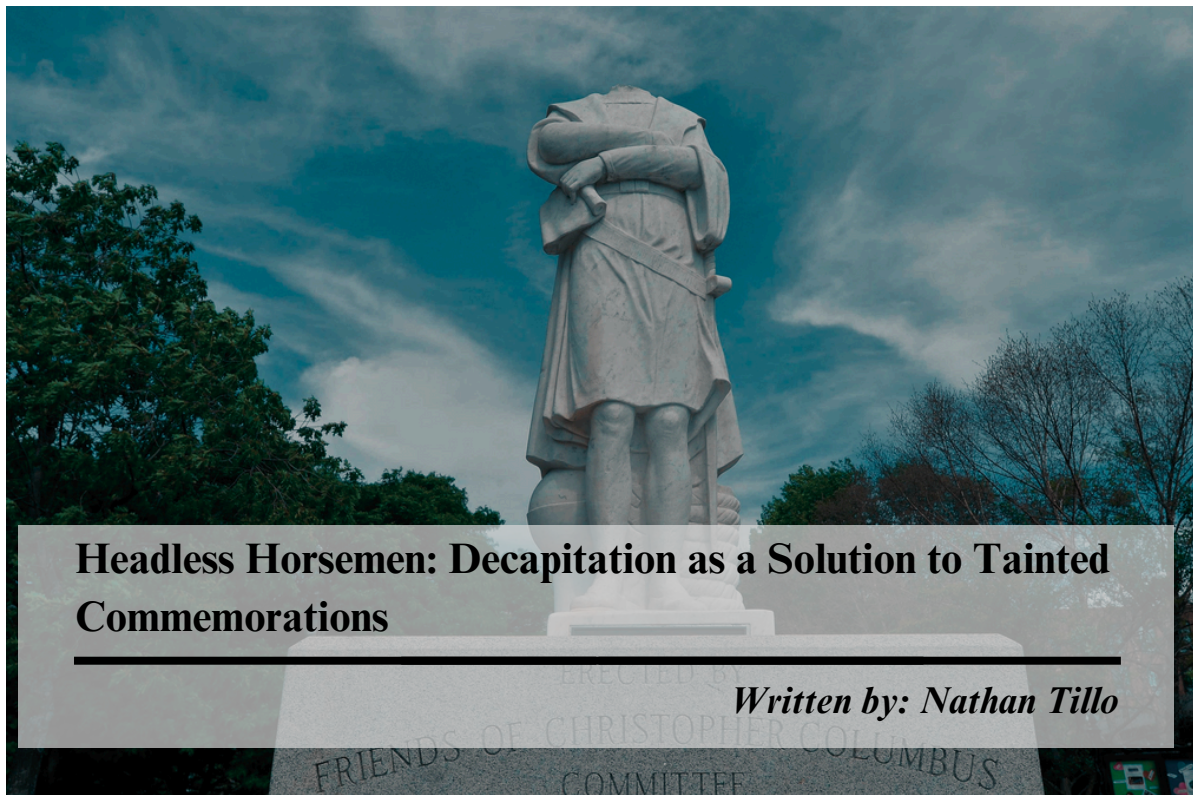
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Headless Horsemen: Decapitation as a Solution to Tainted Commemorations

Written by: Nathan Tillo

Abstract

This essay explores the controversy surrounding tainted commemorations, specifically statues honouring individuals associated with racism, colonialism, and oppression. Focusing on the removal of a Christopher Columbus statue in Boston during the Black Lives Matter movement, I present common responses to tainted commemorations and propose state-ordained decapitation as an alternative solution. I begin by outlining the concept of tainted commemorations as well as some of the common solutions to these statues: removal, counter-commemorations, and contextualizing plaques. However, I argue that state-ordained decapitation satisfies both Chong-Ming Lim's (2020) preservationist and self-respect desideratum, while additionally overcoming aesthetic and organizational drawbacks seen in alternative solutions. Further, I respond to objections, addressing economic concerns, distinguishing state-ordained decapitation from vandalism, and proposing limitations to prevent potential misuse of governmental power. Overall, I conclude that decapitation is a feasible response to tainted commemorations, while additionally acknowledging the need for a nuanced approach based on diverse monumental typologies.

Keywords: Tainted Commemorations, Decapitation, Reparation, Preservationist Desideratum, and Self-Respect Desideratum.

INTRODUCTION

In the North End of Boston, Massachusetts lies the Christopher Columbus Waterfront Park, a public park created and named in the 1990s. At the centre of this park lies a 6-foot-tall statue of Christopher Columbus etched in white Italian marble with the phrase “Erected by Friends of Christopher Columbus Committee” engraved within the podium he stands upon.[1] However, at the height of the BLM movement, arguments in support of removing statues commemorating slave owners and colonizers gained mass attention. This placed critical scrutiny onto this central keystone of Boston’s Waterfront Park; the monument was covered in red paint, vandalized with black spray paint, and even tagged with the words ‘Black Lives Matter’ on its podium.[2] It was not until June 10th, 2020, when activists completely beheaded the statue, that the city’s mayor decided that the monument would be removed from the park and placed into storage. [3]

The events surrounding the controversy and subsequent removal of the statue are not unique nor constrained to this one incident. Around the world,

discussions of what to do with commemorations deemed to valorize racist, colonial, and oppressive figures spark large controversy—ultimately raising the question: what ought we to do with these tainted commemorations?

With this in mind, this paper seeks to argue in support of the feasibility of state-ordained decapitating as a solution to tainted commemorations.

Section I will begin by defining what a commemoration is as well as the common ways commemorations become tainted. Section II will present the four common responses to tainted commemorations. Section III will endorse the feasibility of state-manned decapitation of tainted commemorations, arguing it satisfies Chong-Ming Lim’s two desideratum. Finally, section IV will highlight and answer some objections to decapitation as a solution.

I must clarify that the forthcoming discussion is only centered around a particular kind of tainted commemorations—those that possess a depiction of a person. As my argument is in support of decapitating tainted monuments, a necessary assumption is that there exists a human-esque figure central to the commemoration able to be decapitated (i.e the commemoration has a head and a body). To further illustrate this, Appendix A has Figures 1- 4 taken from Winberry in which he finds that, in general, there are four types of commemorative Confederate monuments: Type 1 is of a Confederate soldier standing atop a pedestal in a neutral pose (Figure 1); Type 2 is of a soldier atop a column with a weapon, flag, or bugle, held in a combative stance (Figure 2); Type 3 is of a single shaft obelisk covered in imagery such as flags, shrouds, or other objects (Figure 3 & Figure 4); Finally, Type 4 monuments are any alternative commemorations. With this typology in mind, my argument only applies to Type 1 or 2 commemorations, meaning that the reference made to tainted commemorations throughout this paper refers only to monuments of these types.[4]

I. COMMEMORATIONS AND TAINTED COMMEMORATIONS

In his work, “*Objectionable Commemorations, Historical Value and Repudiatory Honouring*”, Ten-Herng Lai defines a commemoration as those “statues or monuments that present some historical figure or event in a positive light.”[5] Similarly Chong-Ming Lim states that commemorations are “a way in which a community takes its past seriously.”[6] Lim believes that commemorations acknowledge the importance of a certain person or event for a community and allows the community to relate to its present identity.[7] This sense of expression of values through commemoration is referred to as a monument’s honourific function by Benjamin Rossi. Rossi states that this honourific function of commemorations is how monuments “depict... individual[s] as an exemplar of a value or values, such as courage, integrity, or justice.”[8]

A commemoration can become ‘tainted’ through a variety of ways, though this paper will focus specifically on the two ways Lim outlines in his work.[9] The first way a commemoration becomes tainted is due to an *inappropriate target*. In these instances, the “persons or events have been commemorated which are not truly important to the community or which are morally repugnant” as the person being valorized is not the one actually deserving of commemoration. [10] For example, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall commemorates those who died in a war that was more tragic than triumphant. However, some tend to argue that the wall fails to commemorate those who played other crucial roles during the war—such as American nurses or soldiers from allied nations, including the South Vietnamese, who fought in the war.[11] The second way Lim argues a commemoration becomes tainted is due to an *inappropriate process*.

Here, the commemoration is tainted as it was enacted “without fair consultation or deliberation,” failing to regard some individuals as equal participants of the community in its decision making process.[12] For example, even if there were to be proportional numbers of commemorations of black and white Americans in a community, commemorations of white American heroes may still be considered tainted if they were the recipients of such prejudiced state endorsement during the decision of enacting the white American’s statues.[13]

II. Proposed Solutions to Tainted Commemorations

Assuming that a commemoration can be deemed as tainted through either *an inappropriate target or inappropriate process*, the question then becomes: what ought we to do with these tainted commemorations? One of the most common responses is removal, which is the position endorsed by Joanna Burch-Brown.[14] In her work, Burch-Brown outlines an argument for removing statues of contested figures:

P1: Statues confer honour and esteem on their namesakes.

P2: They express identity, and say something about who we are.

P3: They send signals about who in the community has power and authority.

P4: It is inappropriate to honour people who have carried out grave injustices.

P5: Person X carried out grave injustices and (from P4) it is inappropriate to honour them.

C: Statue(s) of X should be removed.

Following this logic, Burch-Brown argues that removing tainted commemorations is a form of reparation for the ongoing harms caused by the ideology

that these statues confer in their community.[15] This argument for removal is further supported by Frank and Ristic in which they recommend ‘urban fallism’—the removal of tainted commemorations by “minority, marginalized and/or oppressed civic groups in today’s socially, politically, ethnically diverse cities.”[16]

While removal may satisfy a repudiation of harms done to victims of prior injustices,

Lim states that there may be a legitimate preservationists interest in maintaining tainted commemorations.

Lim states that there may be a legitimate preservationists interest in maintaining tainted commemorations. Lim argues that, even though they may be tainted, commemorations act as an avenue for the public to engage with history through the communal incorporation of events, persons, and actions of significance into the “everyday consciousness ... of history.”[17] From this consideration, Lim states that any solution of tainted commemorations must satisfy two desideratum: *the self-respect desideratum*, that of removing the threat to self-respect resulting from the honouring function of a commemoration, and the *preservationist desideratum*, that of the need to continually recognize communal history.[18] In attempting to appease both desideratum, Lim analyzes two common solutions to tainted commemorations: counter-commemorations and contextualizing plaques.

Counter-commemorations are commemorations enacted near the original monument dedicated to the victims of the tainted commemoration. Thus, rather than simply having the tainted commemoration be removed and erasing the opportunity for communal remembrance,

the solution is to enact a new commemoration with a member which society deems as appropriate of honouring—typically the victims of the historical event. On the other hand, contextualizing plaques are the addition of contextualizing information to tainted commemorations”, added directly onto the monument itself.[19] Even though these two responses satisfy the *preservationist desideratum* by keeping the original monument intact, Lim believes that they both fail to successfully satisfy the *self-respect desideratum*. In terms of counter-commemorations, Lim states that they do not satisfy this desideratum as the tainted commemoration itself is still performing an honourific function that threatens an individual’s self-respect. With regards to contextualizing plaques, while Lim does believe they directly speak to the “target-based taint” of the statue necessary for satisfying the *self-respect desideratum*—the taint relating to the person being idolized in the statue—, he finds that as plaques are primarily textual while the commemorations are primarily visual, it reduces the overall effectiveness of rebutting the threat to self-respect.[20]

As these two solutions fail to satisfy both his desideratum, Lim argues that a more feasible solution to tainted commemorations is vandalism as it successfully satisfies both desideratum: firstly, it satisfies the *preservationists desideratum* because a necessary assumption of vandalizing a commemoration is that the original commemoration is preserved to be vandalized upon. Second, he argues vandalism satisfies the *self-respect desideratum* as the subject is humiliated in the act, directly repudiating the threat to self-respect the statues endorse.[21] Overall, Lim concludes that, so long as it conveys a message, the actor is non-evasive,

and is supported by those whose self-respect is threatened, vandalism is a justifiable solution to tainted commemorations. However, even though Lim's argument satisfies both desideratum,

I believe vandalism as a solution to tainted commemorations contains unavoidable disadvantages.

Firstly, the aesthetic appeal of vandalism is inherently ugly; the tainting of monuments in red paint or tagging of the faces of statues brands public spaces as unattractive. Second, Lim's argument leaves unanswered who exactly are the actors executing the vandalism: is it the state, members of the community, or simply those passing by? With this in mind, I shall argue that there is an alternative response to tainted commemorations that satisfies both Lim's desideratum and additionally overcomes these two drawbacks of vandalism—decapitation.

III. An Argument for Decapitation

Returning back to the headless Christopher Columbus statue in Boston, one question arises: why did the act of decapitation force Mayor Marty Walsh to choose to finally remove the statue? My answer to this is that it is due to the powerful symbolic message decapitation conveys against the individual being decapitated. Across time and culture, decapitation has been a tool used by nobles, kings, and political leaders to confer a message of disapproval. In nineteenth-century Europe, heads were “taken to secure justice and held up in public to show that justice had been served.”[22] During World War II, the Third Reich decapitated those of the White Rose who were found to be traitors.[23]

Decapitation has continually been a way to show a “violation of the rules of the bodies grammar ... generat[ing] a sensation of dismay, horror, delight, or absurdity”, symbolically representing that the actions of such individuals have been refuted by those who executed them.[24]

With this symbolic message contained in the act of decapitation, I seek to question: why not have state-ordained decapitation of tainted commemorations? More specifically, I believe that decapitating tainted commemorations satisfies both of Lim's desideratum while avoiding the two consequences of vandalism—that of its unappealing aesthetic and the overarching procedural issues. First, decapitation satisfies the *preservationist desideratum*. By keeping the majority of the tainted commemoration intact, individuals walking by still have the same ability to continually engage with and recognize their communal history. The same way an act of vandalism against a tainted commemoration depends on the monument still being present, the ability to decapitate a tainted statute requires this similar necessary assumption that the monument still be preserved.

Second, decapitation satisfies Lim's *self-respect desideratum*. By requiring the state to decapitate the statute, the local communities' government acts as the ‘executioner’ of the beheading. As the act of decapitation by an executioner shows the refutation of the beheaded's actions, and because it is the local community's state that is the one beheading the statue, the community is communicating a rebuttal of the actions of the target—preserving the threat to self-respect against potential victims. Further, as decapitation removes the head from the body, it separates the part of the person which holds one's rational being and self. Regarding decapitation from this perspective and combining it with Rossi's conception of honourific representation,

by placing a headless body on a pedestal, what is being honoured is no longer the ideals and philosophy of the individual, but the shell of a body, honouring instead the acts as a mere moment in history—further repudiating the threat of self-respect. Finally, decapitation overcomes the limitations imposed by vandalism: that of aesthetic appeal and state organization. One pressing issue faced by vandalism is that it is inherently unattractive. However,

if a state were to decapitate tainted commemorations, they could do so in a visually appealing fashion; somewhat akin to the ‘Winged Victory’,

a headless and armless statue currently aesthetically celebrated in the Paris, Louvre (Appendix A, Figure 5).[25] Additionally, the issues of unambiguous actors performing the act, as in the case of vandalism, is mitigated as the state is the one to decapitate these tainted statues, similar to how they would be the ones to install counter-commemorations or contextualizing plaques, not the individual community members themselves.

Overall, as state-ordained decapitation of tainted commemorations satisfies both Lim’s *preservationist desideratum* and *self-respect desideratum* while additionally overcoming the two prominent drawbacks seen in vandalizing tainted commemorations. Thus, I have argued that decapitation can be a feasible response to these tainted monuments. With my argument established, I shall now briefly comment upon some of the most prominent objections to this proposal.

IV. Objections to Decapitating Tainted Commemorations

First, one may argue that the economic cost required for states to decapitate statues is too hefty. In response to this, I highlight how the alternative options of enacting counter-commemorations or commemorating plaques would be more costly. In these cases, both the installation fees and the actual creation of the additional commemorations and plaques themselves are costly and require skilled labourers to create such materials, while in the case of decapitation, all that needs to be funded is the head’s removal fees. Even with this in mind, one may still contend that vandalism is the cheapest out of all proposed solutions and therefore should be the most suitable response. However, economic considerations should not be the sole consideration and thus would not suffice as an absolute rejection of my argument; even if vandalism is cheaper, I believe the alternative negatives connected with vandalism—that of aesthetic attractiveness and a lack of reliable actors—makes decapitation a more feasible response, even if it does impose slight costs to local community governments.

Second, one may state that decapitation can be encapsulated under vandalism, akin to the events which occurred in the Christopher Columbus case. Even so, I argue that those who subscribe to such ideals fail to notice a key distinction between decapitation through vandalism versus decapitation through state removal. In the case of vandalism, the actor can be understood to be infringing upon another’s property rights, as the perpetrator does not own what they are defacing. Even though Lim argues it is a necessary risk taken by those committing the act, if the state were to organize the decapitation,

there would be no infringement of property rights as the local government owns the monuments. [26] Due to this difference, the two ought not be equated in the way suggested by such an objection.

Finally, one may argue that allowing a state-ordained decapitation of tainted commemorations places too much decision making power on the local community government, where they may begin decapitating statutes that are not tainted. In response to this argument,

I contend that anyone endorsing such a view must then believe that vandalism would be the only acceptable solution to tainted monuments as it is the only solution that would not require some form of local governmental involvement

Government oversight would be necessary for installing counter-commemorations, contextualizing plaques, and removing the monument altogether. To avoid a potential governmental overuse of powers, I believe the process of state decision-making regarding when and which monuments to decapitate should be limited by a rule related to vandalism. In essence, the first time a statue is vandalized by a member of the community will act as a signal to the local government that further action against these monuments is needed. However, one may continue to contend that this rule would still allow for local governments to possess too much power as a government could consider any small instance of vandalism on a statue enough reason for decapitation.

In response to this secondary objection, I seek to distinguish that this is simply one possible rule that could be implemented, and in practical application, these situations would require a potential governance board or a committee to enact a case-by-case review for deciding whether to decapitate a tainted statue.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper has argued that the decapitation of tainted commemorations is the most suitable solution for these contested monuments. Through outlining some of the common responses against tainted commemorations, I have argued that state-ordained decapitation is a more successful response than alternatives, while still satisfying Lim's two desideratum of preservationism and self-respect. However, I believe that my argument for state-ordained decapitation has further illuminated the possibility that, as a diverse typology of commemorations exist, there may be a need to respond to various tainted commemorations differently—some of which ought to be made headless.

Appendix



Fig. 1. Type 1 monument.



Fig. 2. Type 2 monument.



Fig. 3. Type 3 monument.



Fig. 4. Type 3 monument.

Figures 1-4. Confederate Monument Types. Photographs by John. J. Winberry



Figure 5. "Winged Victory" in the Louvre. Image taken from Leonard (2021).

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The Failure of Liberal Peacebuilding in the International System: Post-War Peace and State Building

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Abstract

The concept of peacebuilding, particularly within the framework of liberal peace, has been central to post-conflict reconstruction efforts globally. However, this paper challenges this notion, arguing that its top-down approach prioritizes democratization and electoral implementation over addressing domestic dynamics and the root of conflict in the respective target state, thus hindering sustainable peace. Through examining case studies of Afghanistan and Iraq post-9/11, Guinea-Bissau, and Cambodia, this paper illustrates the shortcomings of liberal peace interventions by the international community. In Afghanistan and Iraq, despite efforts to democratize, state institutions remained weak, and violence persisted. Similarly, Guinea-Bissau's post-conflict state saw ongoing political instability due to an overemphasis on electoral processes. Meanwhile, Cambodia's experience with UNTAC demonstrated the failure of liberal peace to establish control over civil administration and disarm factions. The paper concludes by addressing post-liberal peace approaches that emphasize context-specific, inclusive strategies for sustainable peacebuilding.

Keywords: Liberal Peacebuilding (or Liberal Peace), Democratization, Interventionism

INTRODUCTION

In the broadest sense of the term, peacebuilding refers to the comprehensive process that centers on the maintenance of peace and the prevention of an outbreak, recurrence, or escalation of violence in post-war-torn regions. Peacebuilding is a complex phenomenon within the international community due to its inherently multifaceted nature and its resistance to a static definition. Embedded within this concept lies a theoretical framework for addressing, resolving, and preventing conflict within the international system – referred to as liberal peacebuilding. In its entirety, liberal peacebuilding seeks to foster a state of democratic peace through strategic processes involving “the creation of strong democratic institutions, the protection of human rights, the promotion of a civil society, and the presence of an independent and functioning judicial system”.[1] Additionally, it advocates for macroeconomic growth in a capitalist market economy while seeking to address numerous humanitarian and transitional justice concerns.[2] Contemporary times have necessitated a directional shift towards building peace from the bottom-up domestically, while drawing on top-down resources at the international level. The liberal branch of peacebuilding dominated the global-intervention field for several years; however, its crown has slipped rapidly in the past few decades due to its inability to comprehend and incorporate cultural nuances into its methodology. The functionality of liberal peacebuilding is frequently debated in academic literature, as it is rooted deeply in the belief that fostering democratic governance and state building through liberal internationalism can pave the way for lasting peace. This framework essentially presents itself as a “one-size-fits-all” approach,

suggesting that sustainable peace in post-war-torn societies is only achievable through a purely liberal lens. The central thesis of this paper argues that the liberal peace paradigm, whilst providing a sound basis for practical conflict resolution, prioritizes democratization and electoral processes at the expense of addressing local dynamics and situational grievances. Through its heavy reliance on liberal internationalism and democratization, liberal peacebuilding often operates from the top-down, neglecting local conflict dynamics, institutions, and practices, hindering its ability to foster long-term development and sustainable peace, ultimately rendering it ineffective.

A Brief Chronology of Peacebuilding and Liberal Peace Theory in the UN

As previously stated, liberal peacebuilding refers to the overarching objective of building sustainable “liberal market democracies” in post-war-torn societies. Integration of liberal peace theory into global governance began with the differentiation between democratic peace and liberal peace, the former describing a theory regarding the apparent absence of war in democracies and the latter involving the proactive advocacy and implementation of liberal values as the perfect remedy for the consequences of armed conflict.[3] In essence, liberal peacebuilding describes solidifying peace in conflict-affected areas to avoid a relapse by institutionalizing liberal values. The end of the Cold War in 1989 saw the emergence of this novel form of muscular interventionism, as many communist regimes fell to violence in the absence of a stable government.

This liberal-minded interventionism emphasized the abrogation of state sovereignty in pursuit of reformation for ‘rogue’ or ‘failed’ states.[4]

With peacebuilding rising up as the “great saviour” of post-war-torn societies at the onset of this era in global politics, the United Nations (UN) adopted the framework as its own, officially citing it in the 1992 Report of the Secretary General titled “An Agenda for Peace”.^[5] The publication of this report catalysed peacebuilding into public discourse and global governance in both theory and practice.^[6] In this report, Boutros-Ghali described peacebuilding as the embodiment of “the great objectives of the Charter... social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom” due to its benevolent interventionism.^[7] The Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) became a focal point of the UN, its missions often depicted as vehicles of the liberal peace movement.^[8]

A substantial development in peacebuilding strategy transpired due to the swift expansion of international interventionism – the interference in the political affairs of other countries – with liberal peace theory finding and securing its place as a key justification for interventionism within the UN peacebuilding doctrine.^[9] The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) consistently adapted and broadened its interpretation of what constitutes a threat to international peace and security, providing the UN Charter with the ability to authorize interventions into sovereign territories.^[10] Notably, this new framework of liberal interventionism took shape during various UN-sanctioned missions, such as in Somalia, Bosnia, and Rwanda.^[11]

For contextual purposes, it is crucial to note that while UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali introduced and committed the UN to the peacebuilding framework, it was his successor; Kofi Annan, who cemented it into practice and oversaw its rise in the global domain. Following the indisputable failures of the aforementioned UN-sanctioned missions, Annan began to advocate for a change in international norms, redirecting emphasis from state sovereignty to liberal interventionism in the name of individual human rights.^[12] Believing that a ‘lack of commitment’ to the liberal peace paradigm was the root cause of the missions’ failures, Annan responded by enforcing even greater commitment to the doctrine, as indicated by the creation of the Brahimi Report in the year 2000.^[13] On this account, this new branch of peacebuilding, known to the public as liberal peacebuilding, asserted that the primary driver of post-cold-war conflict and increased humanitarian suffering was the *myriad of sins of the state itself*, characterizing target states as weak, failing, or collapsed, providing the UN with justified cause to intervene on the basis of humanitarianism.^[14]

Critical scholarship on this area of study identified four distinct neoliberal categories which provide liberal peacebuilding its ideational coherence: the *individual*; where defence of individual freedom is thought to be liberalism’s highest political value, the *market*; being the primary arena where individuals interact for mutual benefit and the crucial mechanism for creating and distributing wealth, the *state*; considered both a threat and an asset, where individual and market-based freedom are dependent on the state’s power to impose order on society and uphold rule of law, and democracy; recognized as a ‘universal value’, making it important then to both limit the powers of the state and to maintain its separation from the market.^[15]

These four categories will be further explored in the case analyses of Afghanistan and Iraq, Guinea-Bissau, and Cambodia.

1.0: THE CASE OF AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ POST-9/11

The case of intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq post-9/11 is a major focal point in the discussion of liberal peacebuilding as it provides critical insight into the motivations behind the doctrine. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the administration of President George W. Bush – henceforth referred to as the Bush administration – grappled with internal divisions regarding the extent and scope of their recent declaration of a War on Terror.[16] While Bush remained persistent in his abstention to nation-building with American troops, others within the administration, namely Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz,

strongly believed that the event of 9/11 should act as a catalyst for transforming the international system.[17]

Amalgamating issues of rogue states, weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism into a unified, homogenous threat to the peace and security of the country, the United States government spawned the Bush Doctrine: a pre-emptive interventionist strategy which placed provisions on a state's "right to sovereignty", which was contingent on said state's ability to fulfill their duties to the international community.[18] These events led directly to the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq as they failed to demonstrate their "right to sovereignty". Consequently, the sheer absence of coherent state structures in Afghanistan

and Iraq coupled with continuously escalating levels of politically motivated violence essentially reaffirmed the desire of the United States to expand its occupation, while using liberal peace theory as the grounding framework.[19]

The states of Afghanistan and Iraq were in dire circumstances – in order for the US to extradite itself, these states needed to be rebuilt, order had to be externally imposed, and elections needed to be held.[20] Initially, top officials of the Bush administration (President Bush, Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld, and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice) had all explicitly rejected the implementation and use of liberal peacebuilding as a solution to pre-invasion issues.[21] However, when the realities of the states of Afghanistan and Iraq began to surface and collide with planning efforts, the American-led occupation adopted the framework in a swift attempt to stabilize and extricate its troops.[22]

The United States sought to justify their invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq using a humanitarian perspective, hiding the nefarious interests of the Bush administration behind a moral-liberal interventionist guise to bring about a fundamental transformation of these war-torn societies.

As for the actual use and implementation of the liberal peacebuilding approach to transform these two vastly different nations, the application of this 'universal template' is arguably the direct cause of the current fiercely weakened states. While the approach did effectively regenerate despotic power relations within the states,

it ultimately failed to construct infrastructural capacity in any recognizable form.[23] Efforts were to be made to legitimize the Afghan state through a new democratic system, in tandem with the core principles of liberal peacebuilding. However, the existing Afghan parliament; the Jirga, began to systematically deteriorate, with the electoral system's single non-transferrable vote hindering the formation of mutual partisan interests, fracturing voting patterns, and severing ties between voters and representatives.[24] Additionally, the refusal of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to invest in the Afghani cotton farming market caused major issues, as cotton farming was one of the few sustainable crops available to Afghani farmers, and a lack of funding pushed many to begin farming opium.[25] There were numerous negative implications post-intervention including but not limited to the absence of civilian institutions, concentrated foreign investment on rentier sectors of the economy (90% of Iraq's government expenditure were from oil exports), bottom-tier electoral participation, and empowerment of the governing elite.[26]

Despite the billions of dollars spent on resources, particularly toward the expansion of the American military presence, the American liberal peace intervention failed immensely in its efforts to stabilize and transform state relations in either country into one of sustainable peace.[27]

2.0: THE CASE OF GUINEA-BISSAU

The intervention in Guinea-Bissau was necessitated by the UN deeming it as a “rogue” and “failed” state, riddled with political instability, military corruption, and coups. The consequences of the conflict centering Guinea-Bissau are rooted in three specific structural causes. Firstly, it is deeply intertwined with a complex web of internal, regional, and international factors, tracing back to the Portuguese colonial legacy and the infrastructure of the country itself.[28] Secondly, the aftermath of the Guinea-Bissau War of Independence (1964-1974) left behind an abundance of weaponry in the country, which was later exploited by the government and individuals in coercive armed forces who illegally smuggled and supplied separatist armed groups in Senegal. [29] Lastly, in the era of post-independence, the persisting rule of the African Party for Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) only fortified the autocratic state apparatus.[30] According to the liberal peace paradigm, the end of this conflict signaled a window of opportunity for fundamental change. [31] The UN's involvement regarding peacebuilding and state-building processes in Guinea-Bissau dates back to the late 1990s, however the UN was not the first nor the second multilateral response to the crisis. Rather, the UN's multilateral involvement began after the signing of the Abuja Peace Agreement, which was brokered by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP) in 1998.[32] The aim of the agreement was to establish peace between President Nino Vieira and the Head of Armed Forces General Ansumane Mane, with the following three conditions: the reaffirmation of a ceasefire,

the complete withdrawal of foreign military forces from the state, and the promise to hold elections.[33]

Grounding its presence in the intervention process of Guinea-Bissau, the UN conducted its first initiative, being the establishment of the United Nations Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS) in 1999 to ensure continuity of the ceasefire, even including the country in the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission.[34] The overall stated mission of UNOGBIS was to create an “enabling environment for peace, democracy, and rule of law, and for the organization of free and transparent elections”, all whilst facilitating the implementation of the Abuja agreement.[35] In the years following the conflict, despite numerous efforts from the UN, Guinea-Bissau remained marked by constant fragility and state weakness with limited prospects for improvement. Electoral processes were faced with many domestic issues, such as inexperience from opposition parties and the deterioration of the capacities of civil servants to carry out their duties.[36] The state faced frequent and consistent instability and corruption due to continued military interference which undermined the political sphere. Thus, Mane’s influence only rose, with military power being equal in importance to political power – subsequently, there was a presidential failure to establish a new constitution, ultimately leading to the dissolution of parliament and the formation of a new coup d’état.[37] Ranking 177 out of 186 countries in the Human Development Report produced by the UNDP, the political, institutional, and socio-economic structures of Guinea-Bissau more closely resembled the state of the country prior to the war.[38] Arguably, the UN’s peacebuilding approach in the country of Guinea-Bissau faced major shortcomings due to its strict adherence to the liberal peace paradigm.

This is not directly the fault of implementation or operationalization of the approach; weakness of liberal peacebuilding lies deeply in its conceptualization and formation.[39] Efforts of liberal peacebuilding in this context were structured with the intent of top-down peace processes, however this was not commensurate with the needs of the overall state and population. The liberal peace paradigm places far too much emphasis on the development of democracy and electoral processes without taking into consideration existing local dynamics and other possible causes of conflict that are not necessarily politically guided.

3.0: THE CASE OF CAMBODIA

The 1992-1993 United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) presents itself as a compelling and ideal case for studying the liberal peace debate, as it is the largest and most exhaustive peace operation in UN history. Between the years of 1965 and 1979, the state of Cambodia became entrenched with war and displacement, seized as a supply route during the Vietnam War, leaving the territory extremely susceptible to bombings and guerrilla warfare. [40] The Khmer Rouge, a violent communist regime led by Prime Minister Pol Pot, initiated its takeover of Cambodia during this vulnerable period, marking the beginning of the Cambodian genocide.[41] Subsequently, a brutal conflict unfolded as Vietnam launched a full-scale invasion to overthrow the Khmer Rouge in 1978 under the guise of liberation, which resulted in Vietnam forcibly occupying Cambodia for the next decade. This conflict placed immense pressure on the international community to intervene, resulting in the creation of the UNTAC.

Its mandate rooted in the 1991 Paris Peace Agreement, the UNTAC reflects an all-liberal nature in its content, causes, and objectives, tracing its lineage directly to the development of Western states and the belief of peace being derivative from waves of democracy.[42] This agreement, in accordance with the UN intervention, outlined an elaborate mission to transform the state of Cambodia into a peaceful liberal democracy in order to properly facilitate its transition from a civil war to a sustainable peace and security.[43]

Following UNTAC's departure in 1993, Kofi Annan declared the UN mission a 'success', as UNTAC was seemingly able to hold a "free and fair" election. Whilst the intervention achieved success on many fronts – peacefully resettling approximately 350,000 refugees and organizing an election within a fragile and shattered infrastructure – it ultimately faced failure on two major accounts: it was unable to establish control over civil administration and the failed to demobilize and disarm 70% of Cambodia's fighting factions, a crucial aspect of the initial stated aim of the mission.[44] Justification of the intervention was based on the foundation that Cambodia was a 'failed state', incapable of governing itself and in need of a saviour, in this case, the UN-led international community. Contrary to this notion, Cambodia would be more accurately characterized as a deeply corrupt, rather than failed, state, due to its government wielding extensive internal military and political control, and the Khmer Rouge possessing vast international recognition and juridical sovereignty at the time.[45] Despite the proclaimed success of the mission as a 'triumph of democracy', Cambodia underwent significant regression, consolidating into an illiberal autocracy within just five years of UNTAC's departure. Paradoxically,

the post-UNTAC period saw Cambodia become more of a 'failed state' than it had been prior to the intervention.[46]

The failure of UNTAC is ultimately attributed to an overemphasis on electoral processes, prioritizing the establishment of democratic institutions at the expense of broader reform, giving rise to superficial democratic implementation instead.

Fortunately, with the absence of UNTAC, remnants of the election, international and Chinese sponsorship, and newfound financial resources at its disposal, the Cambodian government has since strategically integrated Khmer Rouge commanders into its ranks, orchestrating the dissolution of the group entirely and solidifying the new Hun Sen regime.[47] This outcome, though indirectly supported by the UN's liberal peacebuilding efforts, stems more so from other factors, such as local co-option, Chinese regional hegemony, and a veneer of UN-sanctioned legitimacy.[48] Thus, the case of interventionism in Cambodia challenges the notion that liberal peacebuilding is the dominant element in contemporary war-ending processes.

LIBERAL INTERNATIONALISM, THE ISSUE OF STATE SOVEREIGNTY, & POST-LIBERAL PEACE

Navigating the delicate balance between the responsibility to protect and the responsibility to respect state sovereignty poses a convoluted challenge, given that both are

cornerstones to the maintenance of the international political order. Following the end of the Cold War, where non-violent revolutions overpowered repressive regimes, a mood of ‘democratic optimism’ was produced leading to the insurgence of liberal internationalist practices which dominated the sphere of conflict resolution.[49]

Western liberal democracy became the epitome of transformative power in the international community, gradually leading to the overarching assumption that multilateral humanitarian intervention and the protection of human rights should supersede respect for state sovereignty in the fight for peace.[50]

This concept of liberal peacebuilding, while in theory has great potential, has mostly had adverse and limiting effects in its practical implementation. Liberal peace critic Roland Paris argues that at worst, liberal peacebuilding missions have seemingly undermined the very peace they were aiming to reinforce.[51] Despite this pessimistic outlook, this paper is not aiming to suggest that interventionism on all scales is a violation of the international political order, nor should it be avoided entirely. Evidently, interventionism is a crucial aspect of global cosmopolitanism; “to respect sovereignty at all costs is to risk being complicit in humanitarian tragedies.”[52] This paper rather aims to display that there are approaches to achieving sustainable peace and the rebuilding of states which exist

outside the liberal peace paradigm, all while respecting state sovereignty and protecting international order. For instance, the theory of post-liberal peace advocates for a more social justice-oriented, context-specific, inclusive approach to peacebuilding in ways which are recognizable to both local and international constituencies.[53] Post-liberal peace places heavier focus on local contextualization (engagement with historical, cultural, and social contexts), hybrid governance rather than solely market-oriented institutionalization, and long-term engagement with communities to effectively build trust and address the root causes of conflict. [54]

CONCLUSION

If the goal of liberal peacebuilding is to not only stop the immediate continuation of war but to create and facilitate conditions that will allow for the endurance of peace long after the departure of the peacebuilders themselves – self-sustaining peace – then it has unfortunately failed to do so on most accounts.[55] The overall goal of peacebuilding is to provide a consistent, standardized model of sustainable peace applicable to various war-affected regions.[56] Upon analyzing the applications of peacebuilding in Afghanistan and Iraq, Guinea-Bissau, and Cambodia, it is evident that the liberal peace framework lacks the conditions necessary to support self-sustaining peace. The liberal peace paradigm faces limitations as it is solely sustained by international actors, bypassing local actors, both of which create a space for elites to hold onto power and prosper.[57] Another major drawback of the liberal peace lies in its propensity for plausible deniability. In attributing state failure and weakness solely to “the myriad of sins of the state itself”, the liberal peacebuilding framework,

the United Nations, and other powerful bodies within the international community can effectively avoid liability for the failures of interventions. With its heavy focus on materially efficient institutionalism, the current liberal model of peacebuilding leads to the “building of an empty shell of the state” rather than true statebuilding; the creation of a socio-political contract between the state and its citizens.[58] Imagining peace outside the liberal peace paradigm can prove to be a complicated task, seeing as it has dominated the global-intervention field for over 30 years. But truly self-sustaining peace demands a departure from the liberal model and a more concerted effort to establish effective statebuilding.

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Demystifying Women's "Municipal Advantage" in Canadian Local Politics

Written by: Vennila Mathialagan

Abstract

The prevailing narrative regarding women's presence in local government often paints a picture of success. Despite extensive scholarly attention on the supposed "municipal advantage" for women, empirical findings remain diverse and inconclusive. While gendered diversity in electoral representation in Canada has garnered attention, the focus on municipal politics and its potential hindrances to women's participation has been comparatively neglected. This research paper undertakes a literature review to investigate the barriers—both institutional and non-institutional—that influence women's participation in Canadian municipal politics. It challenges the notion of a municipal advantage, asserting that women encounter similar hurdles to those in higher levels of government due to a complex interplay of individual, sociocultural, and political factors. By examining these barriers, this paper sheds light on the comparable underrepresentation of women in municipal politics and underscores the need for targeted interventions to address these systemic challenges in Canadian politics.

Keywords: Women in Local Government, Municipal Advantage Myth, Gendered Electoral Barriers, Canadian Political Representation, Systemic Challenges in Politics

INTRODUCTION

The conventional narrative on women's representation at the municipal level has largely been one of success. While the notion of a municipal advantage for women has received significant scholarly attention, the empirical evidence is largely varied and/or muted.[1] Furthermore, while there is a growing body of research on the electoral representation of diversity in Canada, there is less attention paid to the electoral representation at the municipal level, and particularly, how municipal politics can be as equally inhibitory as provincial or federal politics in preventing women from entering. This research paper will seek to answer the question: What are the institutional and non-institutional barriers that shape women's candidacy in municipal politics in Canada?

This paper dispels the notion of women having a municipal advantage and contends that women politicians at the municipal level experience comparable levels of underrepresentation to other levels of government because of individual-level, sociocultural and political barriers.

This paper will begin by outlining the conventional narrative of the municipal advantage and why it has been regarded as being more advantageous for women to enter compared to the provincial or federal level. This will then be followed by an examination of whether women tend to do better in terms of acquiring representation at the municipal level. Following this, the various individual, sociocultural and

political barriers that inhibit women from entering municipal politics will be examined. The paper will conclude with policy recommendations for eliminating municipal barriers to politics followed by concluding remarks that emphasize the need for systemic reform to increase women's representation in municipal politics.

CONVENTIONAL NARRATIVE OF THE MUNICIPAL ADVANTAGE

Many of the barriers that women experience at the provincial and federal levels have not traditionally been considered obstacles for women running at the municipal level.[2] First, at the municipal level, there is no party partisanship and structure to mould into.[3] Women are often skeptical of joining provincial or federal politics because of political parties historically resembling an "old boys' club" which serves to keep women out of politics.[4] In party politics, women must prove to party gatekeepers that they are the "right" candidate to represent the electoral district.[5] In municipal politics, however, a woman is believed to be more judged based on her merit.[6]

Second, running a successful campaign in municipal politics is not as expensive in comparison to the provincial or federal level.[7] At provincial and federal levels, women have less success at fund-raising if they lack lucrative contacts and a network in the business or legal world.[8] Accessing such influential and lucrative networks may be less accessible for women as networking in business, for instance, has been found to occur around activities oriented around what are stereotypically, male interests like golfing.[9] Finding backers at the municipal level

However, while women tend to fare better in school board elections, racialized women who run in school board elections in large numbers with similar levels of ambition relative to their white counterparts fare exceptionally worse in school board elections.[25]

BARRIERS FOR WOMEN ENTERING MUNICIPAL POLITICS

Individual-Level Barriers to Women's Municipal Political Participation

There are various barriers at an individual level that inhibit women from being nominated in municipal politics. It has been found that women are less likely than men to be self-confident in their political leadership, which can translate directly into a gender gap in political ambition.[26] Individual family responsibilities that women disproportionately encounter often have women in a "double bind" where they have to split themselves up between their political and civic responsibilities, as well as their private roles as a wife and mother.[27] This phenomenon is exacerbated by the fact that women receive significantly less suggestions about running for political office from people in their social circles compared to men.[28] Such individual-level barriers - self-confidence, caretaking responsibilities, receiving suggestions - intersect in unique ways to often hinder women from running in municipal politics.

Sociocultural-Level Barriers to Women's Municipal Political Participation

There also exist several sociocultural barriers that inhibit women from participating in municipal

politics including pressure to conform to gendered standards, municipal voter attitudes, and negative media coverage. Women mayors experience more comments about their "appearance, attitude and lifestyle choices" when compared to their male counterparts and generally more pressure to conform.[29] According to the women mayors interviewed, they were told by their teams how to not present themselves - by avoiding their typical forms of self-expression, or altering certain parts about their physical appearance to restrict unpleasant comments.[30] Comments about their smile or their emotions by citizens have also been cited such as "Don't be so emotional." [31]

On top of heightened pressure to conform to certain gendered standards, there also exists a lack of respect on behalf of male colleagues, whether it was at municipal conferences or the council chamber.[32] The women interviewed disclosed they faced "aggression from colleagues during disagreements, condescending comments, unprofessional comments on their appearance from male colleagues, comments about their choices to embark on a career in municipal politics" consequently creating a hostile and sexist work environment for women mayors.[33] Furthermore, none of the male mayors received unsolicited feedback on how they should dress and present themselves.[34]

Municipal voter attitudes rooted in sexism during campaigns also serve as a barrier for women in municipal politics from being elected. Based on a study conducted with 14,000 municipal electors where they evaluated 32 mayoral candidates, it was found that voters' assessments were heavily based on traits and issue stereotypes that were unfavourable to the women candidates.[35]

Voters were specifically found to dislike specific traits and issues of women candidates, but not when their male counterparts exemplified those same traits.[36] When women candidates, for instance, exhibited masculine traits that the voters associated with leaders, the women candidates received more negative evaluations.[37] In this context, women running in local politics received backlash irrespective of whether they exhibited more "feminine" or "masculinized" trait stereotypes based on voter attitudes. Such voter attitudes that are rooted in gendered stereotypes translate into vote choice that directly impacts women's ability to enter municipal politics both as councillors and as mayoral candidates.

Media coverage of women in local politics is also negatively skewed, serving as a deterrent for women aspiring to municipal politics. In one study conducted, it was found that women candidates received a disproportionately higher amount of coverage relating to their physical appearance rather than the political issues they were advocating for. [38]

Furthermore, in electoral races where there were more women candidates present, there was more coverage relating to traits than when compared to electoral races that only had male candidates.[39] Other research finds that the media's coverage of women politicians tends to focus more exclusively on their appearance and other personal attributes rather than their platform.[40] Media coverage overwhelmingly has been found

to focus on the appearances of women candidates rather than what they will do or accomplish.[41]

Additionally, on top of media coverage being disproportionately focused on the physical appearance of women municipal politicians rather than their merit, news reports of recent municipal elections in Canada, notably in 2017 and 2018, tended to exaggerate the involvement and progress made in electing women in municipal elections in Ontario.[42] Furthermore, media coverage overemphasized the presence of women mayors and councillors, creating the false illusion that women are closer to reaching gender parity in municipal politics than women really are.[43] News coverage that perpetuates tropes about municipal politics being more representative than it is for women, can inadvertently mask systemic problems with achieving equal representation in municipal politics. When such systemic problems are downplayed by news coverage, it not only becomes difficult for women mayors and councillors to speak out against such barriers, but to also dismantle them. This prevents more women from entering local politics.

Sociocultural-Level Barriers to Women's Municipal Political Participation

Several political barriers like the size of a municipality, the absence of political parties, the process of seeking election, the incumbency advantage, the nature of municipal politics' focus, and campaign financing all serve to limit women's participation in municipal politics.

The size of a municipality can function as a barrier for women seeking nomination in municipal politics. This was found in a study conducted on the 2014 municipal election cycle in Ontario where district sizes were found to be negatively correlated with women victory in local municipal elections.[44]

Additionally, based on a study conducted on metropolitan Vancouver, while smaller and medium-sized municipalities had women form 50% of the municipal councils, larger municipalities like Vancouver had far fewer women councillors.[45]

While municipal politics is hailed as being easier to enter for women due to the absence of political partisanship, the absence of political parties in municipal politics could also serve as a barrier for women seeking nominations. Nonpartisan elections in municipal politics could adversely inhibit women's advancement as they place a larger premium on "name recognition and personal financial resources".[46] The presence of political parties can, in some cases, help more women to be elected to municipal positions as the dynamics of political parties may emphasize pressures to nominate women candidates.[47] This was what was witnessed in the 1970s in Montreal when Le Parti Civique felt more pressure to present women candidates after the Rassemblement des Citoyens de Montreal/Montreal Citizens Movement elected three women in the previous election.[48]

The ambiguity relating to the process of seeking elected office can also be a barrier for women aspiring to enter municipal politics. What has often been described - the process of seeking nomination - by former parliamentarians as a "black box", has also been voiced by municipal associations.[49] Furthermore, municipal associations have asked that the process to seek candidacy be demystified.[50] Municipal politics is also focused predominantly on economic development and aspects of infrastructure like roads and sewers - activities more closely related to the male-dominated sectors of business and engineering.[51] Some councils may also not be as accessible to women as other councils - the "time demands, the prestige and the

preoccupations of municipal office" are vastly different among small towns and major cities.[52]

Additionally, as community size increases, incumbency becomes more important in determining electoral success.[53] When the vast majority of incumbents are men, incumbency serves in the favour of men and hinders the election of women.[54] Put simply, male incumbents block the access of new women councillors.[55] Since there are no restrictions on the number of terms municipal councillors in Ontario can serve, the incumbency advantage for male councillors can potentially last for years.

While the conventional narrative of campaign financing relating to municipal politics is that it is less expensive at the municipal level, it nonetheless continues to be a barrier for women seeking a seat at the municipal level. Women active in Alberta's Urban Municipalities Association, for instance, have advocated for increased resource support to help women with campaign funding.[56] This can be attributable to not having comparable access to income as men or not making the same amount for the same work that they do as their male counterparts.[57] Such financial barriers are amplified in jurisdictions with little to no campaign finance regulations as is found in some municipalities.[58]

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INCREASING GENDER PARITY IN MUNICIPAL POLITICS

In response to individual-level barriers relating to confidence in political ability, leadership and mentorship programs that target the empowerment and development of political passion can help women overcome internalized personal barriers to municipal politics.

Additionally, because women are underrepresented as candidates and elected councillors, and by extension incumbents, bigger municipalities to achieve gender parity will be a lengthy process.[59] Any policy aimed at increasing gender parity should thus eliminate the incumbency barrier and encourage more women to run.[60] One possible solution, for instance, to the incumbency barrier and by extension the gender imbalance, found in local municipal councils is to create a restriction on the number of terms a councillor can serve.[61] This solution can nonetheless face backlash as term restrictions are not an ideal solution when they lead to the election of the second-best candidate - and if a more competitive incumbent was already a councillor for the maximum number of terms allowed.[62] Furthermore, deciding on the maximum number of terms that a councillor can serve can be difficult to determine.[63]

Furthermore, legislative and policy reforms are required relating to the rules of campaign financing, media scrutiny, the incumbency advantage, increasing leadership and mentorship programs empowering women for municipal politics. Such policy reforms alone, however, will not address the representational gender gap that remains persistent in municipal politics. In order for gender parity to be realized - whether it be at the municipal or any other level - it requires that both formal and informal norms and traditions surrounding harmful prejudices and stereotypes against women also be changed.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, evidence suggests that women do not face an advantage in entering municipal politics as there exists several individually-imposed, sociocultural and political barriers that prevent and deter women from entering municipal politics. With respect to psychological or individual-level barriers, women tend to be l

ess self-confident in their capacity to lead and are expected to balance their career, household and caretaking obligations that prevent them from considering local politics as a viable career path. As for sociocultural barriers, women experience scrutiny from their teams and personal colleagues, a hostile and sexist workplace (relative to their male counterparts), municipal voters' sexist attitudes (that subsequently translate into voter choice), and scrutiny in media coverage. As for political barriers, the absence of political parties places less pressure on parties to take in women candidates and places more emphasis on name recognition - which women candidates may not benefit from. Additionally, the incumbency advantage, the nature of debate in council politics, and campaign financing also serve as political barriers for women entering municipal politics. While legislative and policy reforms are required to ensure that women are not deterred from entering municipal politics, non-institutional reform relating to changing cultural attitudes around women's capacity to lead also requires significant transformation in order to truly conceptualize gender parity in municipal politics.

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Examining Municipal Non-Partisanship: The Relationship Between Mayoral and Provincial/Federal Elections in Ontario

Written by: Wade Mass

Abstract

Despite the common notion that municipal politics are immune to partisan influence, empirical evidence challenges this assumption. Analyzing data from Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton, and Windsor, this study reveals a significant relationship between mayoral candidate vote share and provincial/federal party vote share. Specifically, left-leaning mayoral candidate vote share correlates with higher NDP and ONDP support, while right-leaning candidates perform better in areas with increased CPC and PCPO backing. Furthermore, a nuanced and more complex relationship between mayoral vote share and LPC and OLP support is uncovered. These findings challenge the perception of municipal elections as solely driven by local issues, suggesting instead a substantial influence of partisan affiliations. The paper underscores the need to reassess the role of partisanship in ostensibly non-partisan municipal politics and acknowledge the role of partisanship in shaping electoral outcomes.

Keywords: Municipal Politics, Elections, Voting, Partisanship, Ontario.

INTRODUCTION

There is a common misconception that partisanship is not a factor in municipal elections, existing separate from party-dominated provincial and federal politics. Ontario's municipalities are widely purported to be a non-partisan arena, one where the issues of a city define its politics rather than those of the provincial or federal levels of government. A common narrative is that partisan divisions relevant to higher levels of government bear little relevance to the technocratic and pragmatic governance of municipalities.[1] However, the data presented in this paper refutes this claim.

City councils and their respective mayors are not affiliated with political parties operating at the municipal level of government in all but two of Canada's provinces—British Columbia and Quebec.[2] In Ontario, municipal elections do not contain the necessary apparatus for political parties to form and operate at the same level as provincial and federal parties.[3] As such, the municipal level of government has not been the traditional domain of political parties. There also appears to be little appetite for partisan politics at the municipal level. According to a survey published in February 2023 by Western University and Leger, approximately two Ontarians prefer non-partisan municipalities to every one Ontarian who would prefer partisan municipalities.[4] A natural conclusion would be that mayoral elections reflect the desire for non-partisanship in municipalities. All mayoral candidates in Ontario formally run as independents, even though individual candidates may identify with political parties at other levels of government. Additionally, the enthusiasm of Canadian party brands to enter municipal politics is tepid at best, with many outright admonishing the idea.[5] Yet, the data presented in this paper demonstrates that partisan voting patterns persist

at the municipal level.

To assess the relationship between mayoral candidate selection and provincial and federal partisanship, I measured the vote share of mayoral candidates and compared them to the vote share of provincial and federal parties in their most recent elections. This was achieved by dissolving Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton, and Windsor into their constituent wards. By sorting the percentage vote share of candidates/parties in each ward, they provide datapoints containing the electoral behaviour of a consistent pool of voters across all three levels of government. The wards/datapoints can then be examined to see if the voting behaviour of the ward is part of a larger trend.

This study uncovers an irrefutable correlative relationship between partisan vote share at the provincial and federal levels and mayoral candidate vote share. I argue that partisan politics plays an important role in Ontario's supposedly non-partisan municipal elections.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholarship regarding partisanship in Canadian municipal elections is an evolving field. The conventional portrayal considers the municipality to be largely unaffected by the partisan politics of higher levels of government.[6] Especially in older scholarship, the non-partisan systems of Canada and the U.S. are treated as detached from national politics and “largely devoid of

ideological or programmatic content.”[7] Regarding American municipalities, researchers Hajnal and Trounstein determined that partisan divides do impact vote choice but to a far lesser degree than other factors such as race and ideology,[8] the latter of the three being identified as the most important factor by the political scientist M. W. Sances.[9] In the Canadian context, recent scholarship has instead favoured the idea that Canada’s supposedly non-partisan elections are influenced by partisanship to a greater degree than what was previously acknowledged.[10] Emerging research increasingly suggests that left-right attitudes play a salient role in municipal politics.[11]

In 2020, Jack Lucas identified clear evidence of “party match” between the self-identified partisanship of municipal politicians and the federal parties supported by their constituents. According to his article, Do “Non-Partisan” Municipal Politicians Match the Partisanship of Their Constituents, “nearly 40% of municipal politicians match the partisanship of their districts,” with this figure rising to 54% when excluding politicians who identify as non-partisan.[12] While Lucas’ findings contextualize the saturation of municipal politicians’ partisan identities that match their constituents, I am interested in the degree to which provincial and federal partisanship impacts municipal vote choice. Is the phenomenon observed by Lucas because candidates for municipal office are more likely to identify with the same partisan stripe as the district they are running in, or is it because voters tend to select the candidate with their same partisan identity? I provide evidence supporting the latter explanation.

DATA AND METHODS

To investigate whether provincial and federal political vote share influences mayoral elections, it is first necessary to identify a set of mayoral elections to be examined. Mayoral vote share is the dependent variable—the variable whose variance is trying to be explained—using provincial vote share and federal vote share as the independent variables—the variables used to try and explain the dependent variable.

To reduce unaccounted variables that could potentially affect the relationship being studied, case cities were selected using the following four criteria: (1) must be located within Ontario; (2) must have had over 100,000 eligible voters in the most recent municipal election; (3) had at least two candidates achieve over 30% of the vote share in their mayoral election; (4) is not part of the census metro area of a larger city.

Criteria 1 is necessary because, in Canada, the major parties at the provincial level of government are different from province to province. While the independent variable of federal elections and federal political affiliation remains consistent across provincial lines, the independent variable of provincial elections and political affiliation does not. All mayoral elections (dependent variable) selected for analysis must be weighed against the same elections and parties at the provincial and federal levels (independent variables). Therefore, all mayoral elections examined must be from the same province to ensure the provincial vote choice variable remains consistent across all cases. The province selected to source all mayoral election cases to be examined is Ontario because it contains multiple large cities, an abundance of data, and the three major political parties contesting the province’s elections are either formally or informally related to a federal counterpart.

Criteria 2 is important to ensure each city contains a sufficiently large sample size to ensure statistical significance. Statistics Canada classifies its most populated order of cities as “Large Urban” when they contain a population of over 100,000 (Statistics Canada 2021).[13] “Large Urban” cities are more likely to be representative of diverse demographics, opinions, and socioeconomic backgrounds because of their high population, therefore I used the same metric except with eligible voters.

Criteria 3 ensures that cities chosen for the study had competitive mayoral elections where multiple candidates received a significant share of the vote (30%). Mayoral elections are often not competitive, featuring one candidate who dominates the election.[14] This study compares mayoral candidates and their respective vote shares; uncompetitive elections cannot be considered because their results have the potential to skew data collected from more competitive elections due to one candidate achieving a prodigious margin of victory. In an uncompetitive election, one where the second-place candidate received under 30% of the vote, their vote share will not be large enough to ensure statistical significance. The benchmark of 30% was selected to ensure there is enough variability in the mayoral vote share to conduct meaningful statistical tests.

Finally, criteria 4—which requires case cities to not be part of the census metro area of a larger city—screens out suburban cities which surround a larger one. Suburban communities often have homogenous demographics, leading to political homogeneity across all wards within the city.[15] The cities that met all four criteria were Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton, Windsor, and Barrie. Barrie was omitted from this study because data on the mayoral election results was not available at the poll or ward level. This selection process reduces unaccounted variables which may influence the

results. To analyze the relationship between mayoral candidate vote share and provincial/federal party vote share, I used a method of spatial aggregation. In this procedure, I consolidated the poll-by-poll results for each city’s municipal election, the 2022 Ontario provincial election, and the 2021 Canadian federal election results. I then selected the lowest-level spatial division that overlaps between all three. The lowest-level spatial divisions that overlap is the ward. Mayoral election results were aggregated into their respective wards, and the 2022 provincial and 2021 federal election results were disaggregated from their overlapping ridings into municipal ward boundaries. This spatial aggregation, or ward-level aggregation, created a sample of 74 datapoints. Each datapoint represents one ward division and was encoded with ten dimensions of data: city, ward number, left mayoral candidate percentage vote share, right mayoral candidate vote share, federal election vote share for each of Canada’s three major parties—the New Democratic Party (NDP), Liberal Party of Canada (LPC), and Conservative Party of Canada (CPC)—as well as the provincial election vote share for each of Ontario’s three major parties—the Ontario New Democratic Party (ONDP), Ontario Liberal Party (OLP), and Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario (PCPO). Each datapoint will henceforth be referred to as a ward-point. The information necessary to create the sample of 74 ward-points was sourced from the open data websites of each municipality for their respective mayoral election result, Elections Canada for federal election results, and Elections Ontario for provincial election results.

The campaigns of mayoral candidates across the four different cities were not related to each other, so to compare them I labelled them as either the “left” candidate or “right” candidate in relation to each other. By examining the mayoral candidates’

platforms, media coverage, and prior political affiliations at the provincial and/or federal level, I determined which candidate was further left or further right than the other by conventional barometers of political ideology. It is important to note that the labels of “left” and “right” were assigned to candidates only in relation to their competitor; for example, a candidate may have been labelled as “right” even though they may not self-identify as right on the left-right political spectrum because the other mayoral candidate was determined to be further to the left than them. Within Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton and Windsor, the mayoral candidates I labelled as “left” were (in order) Olivia Chow, Catherine McKenney, Andrea Horwath, and Chris Holt and the mayoral candidates I labelled as “right” were Ana Bailão, Mark Sutcliffe, Keanin Loomis, and Drew Dilkens.

RESULTS

The primary outcome of interest sought by this study is to determine the extent to which mayoral election results correlate to the partisan election results at the provincial and federal levels. To test this, I begin with Figure 1 which plots the results of the left and right mayoral candidates in each ward in relation to the vote share federal and provincial parties earned in the same ward, as well as a corresponding trend line (Exhibit 1).

Figure 1 demonstrates that there is a relationship between vote choice at the municipal level for mayor and vote choice at the provincial and federal level for a political party. Though Figure 1 presents these relationships visually, it is necessary to run a linear regression model to examine the exact dimensions of each relationship and establish a correlative relationship that is not attributable to chance.

A linear regression model is a statistical method used to understand and quantify the relationship

between two variables. For each bivariate relationship, a linear regression model produces two measures relevant to this paper: a regression coefficient and a p-value which are displayed in Figure 2. The regression coefficient is a value that quantifies the relationship between the two variables and is the slope of each line of best fit on the plots in Figure 1. For example, each one percent increase in vote share for the NDP will see on average a 0.64238% increase in vote share for the left mayoral candidate. For each one percent increase in LPC vote share, the right mayoral candidate on average will see a 0.3834% reduction in their vote share.

The p-value is a measure produced by the linear regression model that helps determine if the result of a study is likely attributable to random chance or if the results are statistically significant. A low p-value suggests that the observed results are unlikely to be due to chance with a p-value less than 0.05 generally considered to indicate statistical significance. This means that the probability of a test’s results being attributable to chance and an unrepresentative sample is less than 5%. The linear regression model results and their respective p-values displayed in Figure 2 indicates that there are nine statistically significant relationships between mayoral vote share and provincial/federal party vote share and three relationships that are not proven to be statistically significant.

OUTCOMES OF INTEREST

NDP & ONDP

The first outcome of interest is the strong correlative relationship between NDP and ONDP vote share and left mayoral candidate vote share. For both the NDP and ONDP, there exists a similar correlative relationship between their vote share and the vote share of the left mayoral candidate. This means that the partisan patterns of

NDP and ONDP voters extend to municipal elections and can be used as a reliable predictor of mayoral vote share. For every 1% increase in NDP or ONDP vote share in a ward, the left mayoral candidate can be expected to achieve approximately a 0.6-0.65% increase in vote share.

This relationship is not inverted to the same severity for the right mayoral candidate. The right mayoral candidate is only likely to experience (on average) a 0.35% reduction in their vote share for every percentage increase in ONDP vote share. Notably, there is no proven correlation between NDP vote share and right mayoral candidate vote share. Though in Figure 3 it appears like an increase in NDP vote share correlates with a slight decrease in right mayoral candidate vote share, this relationship is not statistically significant. The linear regression model run for NDP vote share and right mayoral candidate vote share produced a p-value greater than 0.05, meaning there is no proven relationship between the two that cannot be attributed to random chance.

CPC & PCPO

There exists a consistent, strong, and statistically significant relationship between left mayoral candidate vote share and both CPC and PCPO vote share. In areas where the CPC and PCPO receive higher amounts of the vote share, left candidates consistently perform poorly. This indicates that voters who vote for ideologically right parties at the provincial and federal levels do not vote for left mayoral candidates. Mayoral elections, despite all candidates formally registering as independents, are still fought along partisan lines. Left mayoral candidates are observed to experience a decrease of approximately 0.76% in wards for every percentage increase in CPC or PCPO vote share.

Right mayoral candidates can be expected to see an increased vote share of 0.76% and 0.59% for every percentage increase in CPC and PCPO vote share. I believe this difference can be attributed to the PCPO's popularity among suburban voters, many of whom voted for the LPC federally.[16]

Increased CPC and PCPO vote share has a strong negative correlation with left mayoral vote share, but NDP and ONDP vote share exhibits no correlation and a slight negative correlation respectively with right mayoral vote share. I interpret this result to mean NDP and ONDP voters are more likely to vote for a left mayoral candidate rather than against a right mayoral candidate. CPC and PCPO voters are roughly equivalently persuaded to vote both for a right mayoral candidate who shares their ideological and/or partisan identity as they are to vote against a left mayoral candidate who does not. NDP voters are more likely than Conservative voters to vote differently than their ideological and/or partisan leanings in municipal elections.

LPC & OLP

The most interesting relationship I found is between mayoral vote share and LPC and OLP vote share. While the NDP and ONDP, CPC and PCPO exhibited similar correlative relationships with mayoral vote choice, the LPC and OLP have far greater variance in their trends. First, there appears to be a slight negative correlation between LPC vote share and left mayoral candidate vote share in Figure 5 but this relationship is not statistically significant. Additionally, there is no statistically significant correlation between OLP vote share and right mayoral candidate vote share, and there appears to be no correlation whatsoever. Right mayoral candidate vote share has a negative correlation with LPC vote share whereas left mayoral candidate vote share has a negative correlation with OLP vote share.

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Interestingly, neither party's vote share exhibits a positive correlation with either the left or right mayoral candidate's vote share. This is likely because both parties occupy a position between the NDP/ONDP and CPC/PCPO on a left-right political spectrum. As an intermediary, they attract voters both from wards that exhibit strong NDP support and weak Conservative support and also from areas with strong Conservative support and weak NDP support. This results in the LPC/OLP being equally popular in wards that vote more for left mayoral candidates as they are in wards that vote more for right mayoral candidates. The inverse would also be true with the LPC/OLP being equally unpopular in wards with strong biases towards the NDP/ONDP (and thus left mayoral candidates) as they are in wards with strong biases towards the CPC/PCPO (and thus right mayoral candidates). Both effects would effectively cancel each other out, resulting in no positive correlation between LPC and OLP voters for either the left or right mayoral candidate.

The LPC's negative correlation with the right mayoral candidate's vote share and the OLP's negative correlation with the left mayoral candidate's vote share can be explained by the unpopularity/popularity of the NDP/ONDP. Federally, the NDP achieved a markedly smaller vote share than the LPC when averaged across the four case cities examined (~23%-43%). Provincially, the ONDP achieved a larger vote share than the OLP when averaged across the four case cities (~31%-27%). By attracting considerably more voters on the left of the political spectrum who may otherwise have voted for the NDP, the correlation between the right mayoral candidate vote share and LPC vote share is negative whereas the OLP does not correlate. Without attracting voters on the left of the political spectrum who instead voted for the ONDP, the OLP vote share accordingly correlates

negatively with the left mayoral candidate vote share.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The vote share of political parties at the provincial and federal levels of government absolutely correlates to the vote share received by mayoral candidates in supposedly non-partisan elections.

Multiple definitive and statistically significant patterns confirm the argument that municipal elections are contested on similar partisan divisions as provincial and federal elections. Mayoral elections, while being non-partisan in theory, find the political cleavages of partisan politics when they become competitive, causing the trends observed to emerge. As discussed, the performance of the NDP, ONDP, CPC, PCPO, and OLP are statistically significant indicators for the performance of the left mayoral candidate in a competitive election. On the other hand, the performance of the ONDP, CPC, PCPO, and LPC are statistically significant indicators for the performance of the right mayoral candidate in a competitive election. These findings contradict spurious claims that municipal politics is not affected by partisanship. Municipal elections are not the uniquely meritocratic and pragmatic arena of politics some may deify it as. Instead, municipal politics are influenced by partisan identities, even without the label.

While it is not possible to determine with certainty why this relationship exists without additional data, I have identified four potential reasons that could explain the cause of this

candidates can identify themselves with a political party to attract their voters.[17] It is also not uncommon for a candidate's political affiliation to be public knowledge.[18] (2) The organizational apparatuses of mayoral campaigns may be comprised of personnel and volunteers who are politically active among provincial and federal parties.[19] By sharing an organizational and volunteer network with a provincial and/or federal party, a mayoral candidate's campaign would possess a similar web of community connections and voter outreach methods. (3) The issues relevant to the provincial and federal levels of government may also bear relevance at the municipal level.[20] This would cause campaigns on different levels of government to be contended on shared issues, leading to ideological and thus partisan overlap. (4) Voters may infer a candidate's alignment or misalignment with their partisan leaning using 'candidate characteristics' in low-information races.[21] Voters may use race, ethnicity, and gender signalled by candidates' names to presume their quality and ideological position when deciding who to support.[22]

Determining precisely what mechanisms cause provincial and federal partisan vote share to correlate to mayoral vote share would require more data that is currently unavailable. All four potential reasons listed likely play at least some contributing factor to varying degrees. My findings suggest the first three are likely to be the most significant explanatory factors because they are ways the partisan divisions of provincial and federal politics can transmute onto municipal politics. Though the definitive reasons why the observed correlation exists cannot be stated with absolute certainty, the findings in this paper illustrate how partisan politics at the provincial and federal levels are related to mayoral vote share. Though municipal elections in Ontario are explicitly non-partisan, the behaviour of voters is

not. Idealistic misconceptions about municipal politics being above the partisan fray are not reflected by the voting patterns observed in the four case study municipalities.

Returning to the original research question of whether partisan provincial and federal vote share has a correlative relation to mayoral vote share, the answer is a resounding yes.

FIGURES

Figure 1

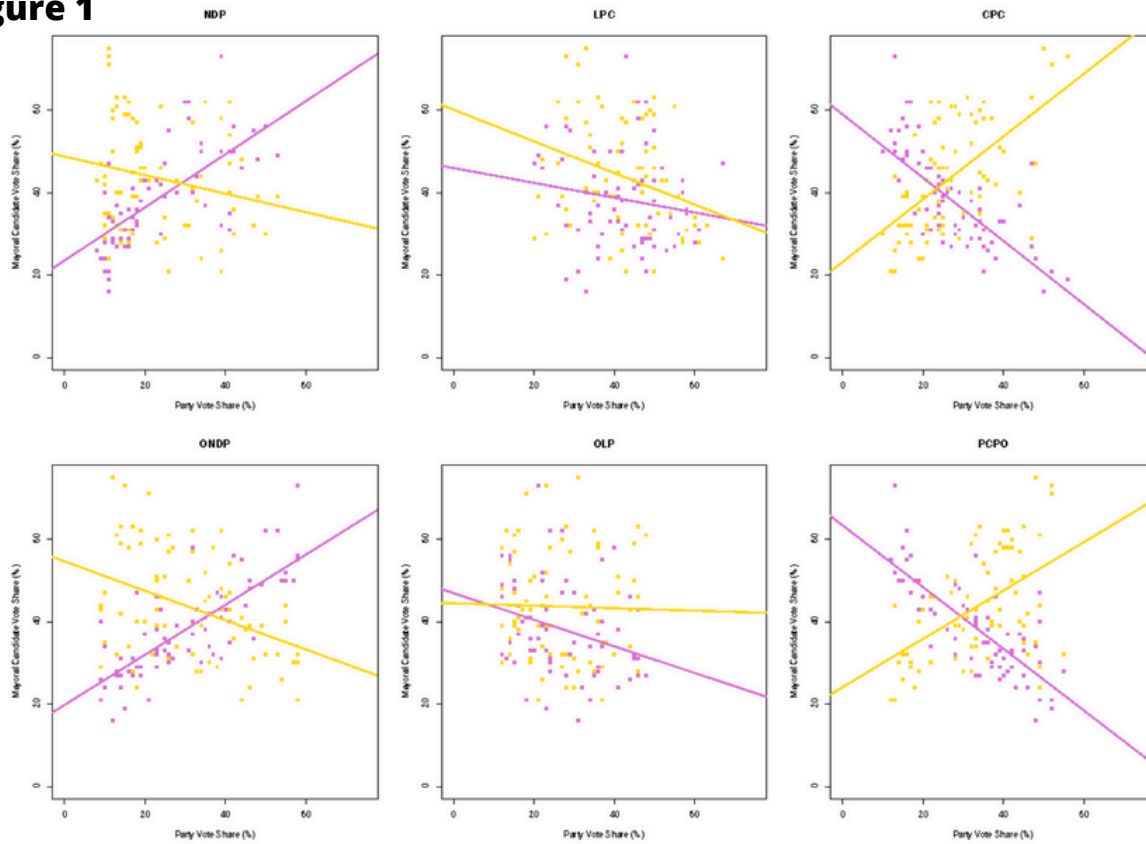


Figure 1. The vote share of the left (■) and right (■) mayoral candidates in relation with the vote share of federal and provincial parties.

Note. The “left” mayoral candidate is represented in purple (■) and the “right” mayoral candidate is represented in yellow (■). These colours were selected to avoid partisan implications and were the colours of the Chow and Bailão campaigns respectively in Toronto’s 2023 mayoral by-election.

Figure 2

	LEFT CANDIDATE		RIGHT CANDIDATE	
	Regression Coefficient	P-Value	Regression Coefficient	P-Value
NDP	0.64238	6.359e-12	-0.2256	0.07591
ONDP	0.60701	3.236e-16	-0.3553	0.000645
LPC	-0.1805	0.1277	-0.3834	0.005017
OLP	-0.3233	0.008035	-0.03195	0.827
CPC	-0.76553	2.41e-12	0.7599	2.262e-08
PCPO	-0.74733	1.769e-15	0.5857	3.324e-06

Figure 2. Regression coefficients and corresponding p-values for left and right mayoral candidates in relation to political party vote share.

Note. Positive coefficients indicate a positive association, while negative coefficients suggest a negative association. P-values assess the statistical significance of the relationships.

FIGURES

Figures 3-5

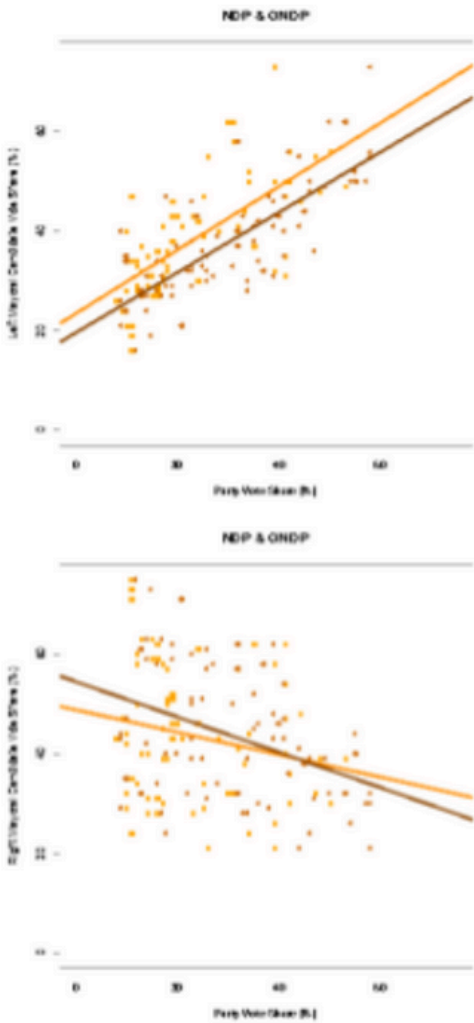


Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 3. Vote share of left and right mayoral candidates in relation to the vote share of the NDP (■) and ONDP (●).

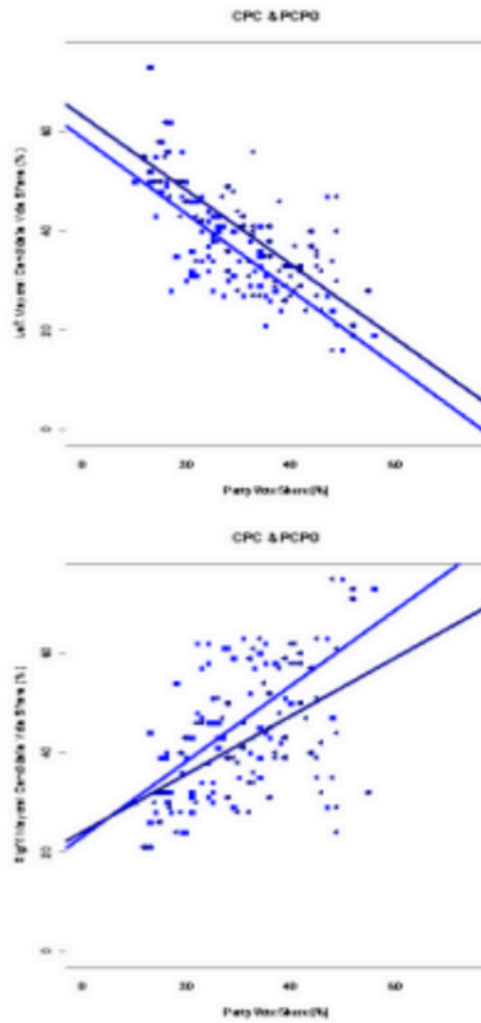


Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 4. Vote share of left and right mayoral candidates in relation to the vote share of the CPC (■) and PCPO (●).

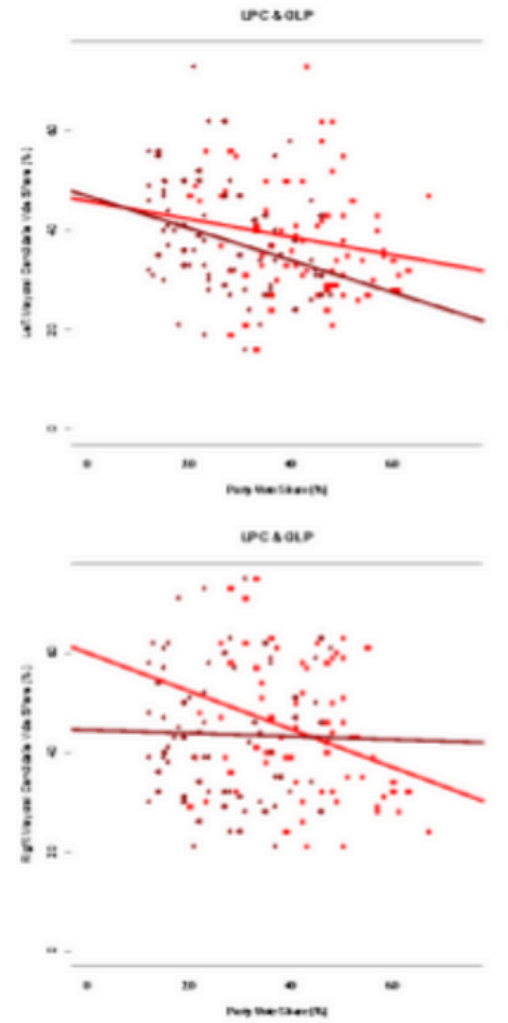


Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 5. Vote share of left and right mayoral candidates in relation to the vote share of the LPC (■) and OLP (●).

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