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## **Land Acknowledgment**

The Arts & Science Undergraduate Society (ASUS) acknowledges that Queen's University is situated on Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee territory. Acknowledging the history in which Queen's has participated and benefited from colonialism, it is necessary to recognize how Politicus has benefitted as an organization. Recognizing this ancestral land involves acknowledging its extensive history, pre-dating the formation of the earliest European colonies. It also entails recognizing the profound importance of this territory for the Indigenous Peoples who have resided on it, and who persist in their connection to the land. Their customs and spiritualities have been intertwined with the land, evolving in tandem with the territory and its current inhabitants.

At Queen's, we aspire not only to address the historical wrongs but also to recognize and celebrate the enduring beauty, resilience, and potency of Indigenous culture. Looking ahead, our goal is to establish novel traditions that resonate with the ethos of reconciliation, especially as we delve into academic theory and debate. Politicus is dedicated to fostering the amplification of equity-seeking voices within our academic sphere and beyond. While academia may have the potential to oppress, create divisions, and perpetuate colonial dynamics, it also serves as a platform of empowerment—a space to explore uncharted possibilities, the unknown, and the contentious. Politicus aims to address historical grievances by offering a forum for the expression of diverse voices. Our commitment extends to fostering a non-partisan platform where all political perspectives can find expression. Acknowledging our status as a colonial institution, we understand that gaining insights into these histories is a privilege, and we encourage you to explore additional sources to further enrich your learning journey.

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## Foreword

Dearest Readers,

The general volume is always special to us at Politicus. Granting the brilliant undergraduate students at Queen's complete creative freedom allows us to see our student body's wide variety of political appeals and concerns. This April 2024 volume houses articles about global affairs, colonialism and imperialism, regime change, globalization, and structural analysis. Our talented authors have consistently demonstrated how niche interests can blossom into critical studies of the political structures that govern our societies, institutions, and everyday life.

Volume 10 has been a labour of love. With an unprecedented number of both submissions and published articles, the publication process has been one of hard work and incredibly gratifying results. We would like to thank our dedicated editorial board for screening all the submissions and our copyeditors for consistently raising the standards. In addition, we are also so grateful for our EDII team, assistant editor, interns, and marketing and events teams, without whom none of this would be possible.

We would also like to take the time to thank our supporters at ASUS, especially Reagan Feld, for their consistent support and dedication. Next, we cannot thank enough the incredible social science professors who have generously donated their time and energy to encouraging undergraduate journalism: Dr. Whitelaw, Dr. Delaney, Dr. Laforest, Dr. Bouka, Dr. Garner, Dr. Moellers, Dr. Harriss, and Dr. Berthelette. Your wisdom and assistance have a transformative power that can not be underestimated.

In a year of budget cuts, contributing to academic journalism may oftentimes feel like a thankless journey. However, it is evident that our political community continues to flourish despite any barriers and concerns. To all those who have already submitted and those who plan to do so in the future, we dedicate Volume 10 to you and your passion: there is always a target audience ready to read and learn from you.

As our tenure as Editors-in-Chief ends, we are incredibly proud of our team, authors, professors, and supporters for making this publication come to life. While we celebrate our second launch event of the academic year, we also celebrate everyone involved. Happy reading!

All our love,  
Emily Poltorac & Fallon Gervais,  
Politicus Co-Editors-in-Chief 2023-2024



# Identity Politics at the Polls: Using the Michigan School of Thought to Examine the Outcome of India's 2014 General Election

Cordelia Jamieson & Allie Moustakis

## Introduction

In 2014, 551 of 814 million eligible Indian voters proceeded to the polls to cast their vote in the 16th general election.<sup>1</sup> The election, which lasted over one month, was the longest in India's history and ultimately led to the ascendance of Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party.<sup>2</sup> With the end of this monumental electoral race, voters demonstrated the profound integration of democratic political practices in Indian society and political behaviour. This specific election offers a distinctive canvas for delving into the diverse factors that shape voting choices within India—the world's largest democracy. Given the pervasive influence of caste and religion in shaping India's political landscape, this essay employs the Michigan School of Thought to examine the outcome of the 2014 general election and the subsequent appointment of Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

To substantiate this postulation, this paper will first examine the Michigan School of Thought as a theoretical framework by which to understand why individuals develop a psychological affinity toward a political party, shaped by family, social surroundings, and personal encounters—as exemplified in Indian voter behaviour. It will then analyze and interpret the significance of Narendra Modi's rise in 2014, in a general election breaking both voter turnout and electoral expenditure records. Moreover, our work will explore the “Modi wave,” a strategic fusion of leadership charisma, social media outreach, and anti-incumbency sentiment that shifted India's political landscape. Finally, this analysis will address the prevalence of caste dynamics, religious identity, and the rise of Hindutva in Indian electoral behaviour, driven by historical and social factors precipitating individuals to safeguard community interests.

## Theoretical Framework: Michigan School of Thought

Coined in the 1960s by researchers at the University of Michigan, the Michigan School of Thought refers to a leading approach used to explain and predict voting behaviour. This model, primarily focused on the study of electoral behaviour in the United States, has significantly contributed to our understanding of how individuals make political decisions. Essentially, the Michigan School of Thought is a theory of vote choice contending that citizens predominantly base their vote choice on their party identification.<sup>3</sup> The theory implies that “over the course of their lives, citizens develop deep psychological attachments to political parties, which may have direct and/or indirect effects on voting behaviour.”<sup>4</sup> Centred on the “funnel of causality,” which discusses how three factors: party images, candidate images, and issue opinions combine to influence party identification, the theory predicts that when both leader evaluations and party preferences are used to predict voting choice, party identification usually overpowers the candidate effect.<sup>5</sup> In other words, individuals will typically vote for the party, not the candidate.

At its core, the Michigan School emphasizes the role of individual-level factors in shaping political behaviour, with a particular emphasis on the voting decisions of citizens. As previously noted, one of the fundamental principles of the Michigan School of Thought revolves around the concept of party identification, asserting that individuals develop a psychological affinity toward a political party.<sup>6</sup> This attachment, typically formed in adolescence and early adulthood and shaped by diverse factors including family, social surroundings, and personal encounters, emerges as a critical framework through which individuals interpret political information and formulate their voting decisions. According to the Michigan School model, party

1 Judith Brown, “India decides: 2014,” University of Oxford Faculty of History. <https://www.history.ox.ac.uk/india-decides-2014>.

2 Brown, “India decides: 2014.”

3 Yuliya Tverdova, “Follow the party or follow the leader? candidate evaluations, party evaluations, and macropolitical context,” *Citizens, Context, and Choice*, (2010), 126 <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199599233.003.0006>.

4 Tverdova, “Follow the party or follow the leader,” 128.

5 Tverdova, “Follow the party or follow the leader,” 128.

6 Marthe Chandler, “Models of voting behavior in survey research,” *Synthese* 76, no. 1 (1988): 30 <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00869640>.



identification functions as a perceptual filter, moulding how individuals perceive political events, candidates, and policy issues. This psychological allegiance to a political party is considered a steadfast and enduring facet of an individual's political identity.<sup>7</sup>

The cognitive shortcut principle, also known as heuristics, is another key aspect of the Michigan School of Thought. Political scientists and Michigan School theorists posit that "voters cope with the complexity of detailed ballots by finding "shortcuts" to trudging through the swamp of information that forms around them during elections."<sup>8</sup> Individuals tend to simplify complex decision-making processes, such as voting, by relying on mental shortcuts or heuristics. These cognitive shortcuts often take the form of relying on readily available information such as stereotypes associated with political parties, leaders, or specific identity markers. Over the years, scholars associated with the Michigan School of Thought have conducted extensive empirical research to test and refine the model. Through surveys, experiments, and observational studies, researchers have sought to uncover patterns in voting behaviour and understand the conditions under which party identification exerts the most significant influence. The Michigan School of Thought has been influential, not only in shaping our understanding of individual voting behaviour, but also in providing insights into broader political phenomena, such as stability and change in party systems.

### **India's 2014 General Election: An Overview**

In May 2014, the results of India's general election declared that Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) achieved an absolute majority, winning 282 of 543 seats.<sup>9</sup> The Hindu nationalist BJP has now ruled India uninterruptedly since 2014—its success largely attributed to Mr. Modi's charisma and

the employment of polarizing rhetoric to consolidate the Hindu vote bank. In prioritizing issues that resonate particularly with the Hindu base, such as sacred cattle-protection legislation and Uniform Civil Code promotion, the Modi government isolated minority religious demographics and became increasingly authoritarian. In 2014, the Party's platform broadly centred plans to battle inflation, eliminate the scope of governmental corruption, increase public spending on education, and prioritize infrastructure such as roads and electricity.<sup>10</sup> Good governance and anti-corruption efforts were popular and publicly sought, and the BJP rode the wave of public frustration amidst corruption scandals from the previous government. Narendra Modi promised a clean and efficient administration, having earned a good reputation for being decisive, capable, and action-oriented in his governance style as the chief minister of Gujarat from 2001 to 2014. This electoral shift is one from "the politics of accountability to the politics of trust,"<sup>11</sup> contributing to a critical juncture of rising authoritarian tendencies in India's public affairs. In fact, Heller argues that in the case of India, few places have advanced democracy as substantially, especially in reshaping social dynamics, only to see such profound democratic resistance.<sup>12</sup>

The 2014 Indian general election broke records in terms of both voter turnout and election expenditure.<sup>13</sup> The outcome of this election was the first time in thirty years that a single party achieved a parliamentary majority on its own, without depending on coalition partners. This feat had only previously been accomplished by the rival Indian National Congress (INC) party.<sup>14</sup> The incumbent and primary rival party in the 2014 election was the INC, ruling India most recently from 2004 to 2014. As a centrist party, the INC's policies are predominantly secular, supporting contemporary economic reforms including liberaliza-

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7 Chandler, "Models of voting behaviour," 30.

8 John Gastil, "Beyond Endorsements and Partisan Cues: Giving Voters Viable Alternatives to Unreliable Cognitive Shortcuts," *The Good Society* 23, no. 2 (2014): 146 <https://doi.org/10.5325/goodsociety.23.2.0145>.

9 Sagarika Dutt, "India's 2014 elections: the BJP's victory," *New Zealand International Review* 39, no. 5 (2014): 16-19.

10 Anwesha Madhukalya, "What promises did the BJP make in its 2014 manifesto," *Business Today*, 2019, <https://www.businesstoday.in/latest/economy-politics/story/what-promises-did-the-bjp-make-in-its-2014-manifesto-183842-2019-04-07>.

11 Patrick Heller, "The Social Roots of the Authoritarian Turn in India," In *Routledge Handbook of Autocratization in South Asia*, ed. Sten Widmalm (London: Routledge, 2021), 116.

12 Heller, "The Social Roots of the Authoritarian Turn in India," 116.

13 Louise Tillin, "Indian elections 2014: Explaining the landslide," *Contemporary South Asia* 23, no. 2 (2015): 117, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09584935.2015.1030354>.

14 Tillin, "Indian elections 2014," 117.

tion and globalization and encouraging social unity, civil liberty, and equal opportunity.<sup>15</sup> The INC's secular stance is a prominent feature of its political operation. They publicly advocate for the separation of religion from affairs of the state and commit to treating all religious communities impartially. In a diverse country like India, characterized by various religions, languages, and subcultures, the INC advocated for policy that promoted unity among those different demographics. The BJP's capitalization on Hindu nationalism and religious divide was the same religious divide the INC was committed to erasing. The Indian National Congress party faced formidable challenges in the 2014 election, culminating from issues of incumbent governance, and a shift in voter preferences ultimately led to a political landscape paving the way for the BJP's victory. The surge of the BJP's unique blend of ethno-national populism and shifting electoral dynamics largely stems from the collapse of the once-hegemonic Congress Party.<sup>16</sup> This represented a mass shift in India's ideological narrative with decisive implications for religious divide and the rise of Hindu nationalism.

### **Interpreting the 2014 General Election Results**

The rise of Narendra Modi's BJP in the 2014 election was intricately tied to the party's strategic outreach to particular social groups, as outlined by Heath, Verniers, and Kumar.<sup>17</sup> Heath, Verniers, and Kumar found that those with higher Hindu caste standings were more likely than any other community to vote for the BJP.<sup>18</sup> Higher caste standing, often associated with socio-economic privilege and influence, was a crucial pillar of the party's voter base. Comparatively, those with lower caste standing were more inclined to vote for the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), a party formally made to represent Bahujans—which translates to “people in the majority,”<sup>19</sup> referring to people from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Back-

ward Castes. The BSP's focus on marginalized and underrepresented groups garnered support from those with lower caste standing. In an attempt to invoke an unwavering sense of unity for the largest religious bloc, Narendra Modi's BJP downplayed caste, which historically divides Hindus and their political allegiances, in the 2014 election. Their majoritarian political structure continued to alter India's position as a tolerant, informed, and secular state. By skillfully combining religious and cultural appeal with pragmatic governance and coalition-building, the BJP effectively harnessed caste and religious polarization to unite a mass Hindu base comprising nearly 80% of the Indian population.<sup>20</sup>

The narrative of unity was critical in the context of India, a nation historically marked by diverse religious and caste affiliations. The BJP's calculated consolidation of India's Hindu and higher caste populations, and the widespread support and enthusiasm that propelled Narendra Modi and the BJP to victory in the 2014 general election, is referred to as the “Modi wave.”<sup>21</sup> Several factors contributed to the formation and sustenance of the Modi wave during the election. Mr. Modi's leadership style and charisma ensured a powerful projection of a decisive and dynamic leader, emphasizing strong governance, economic development, and a commitment to national security. Technology also played a crucial role in the BJP's campaign strategy as they leveraged social media and other digital platforms to effectively communicate their message to youth, an increasingly influential force in Indian politics. In 2014, Narendra Modi became the second most-liked politician on Facebook, trailing behind only then-American president Barack Obama.<sup>22</sup> The scale of Mr. Modi's campaign was unparalleled in Indian history, not only in terms of traditional media sources like radio, television, and news print, but even more so in new media forms including

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15 Indian National Congress, “Indian National Congress Values: Secularism,” 2022, <https://www.inc.in/our-values/secularism>.

16 Heller, “The Social Roots of the Authoritarian Turn in India,” 116.

17 Heath et al., “Do Muslim voters prefer Muslim candidates? Co-religiosity and voting behaviour in India,” *Electoral Studies* 38 (2015): 10-18, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2015.01.005>.

18 Heath et al., “Do Muslim voters prefer Muslim candidates,” 10-18.

19 Stephanie Kramer, “Key Findings about the Religious Composition of India,” Pew Research Center, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/09/21/key-findings-about-the-religious-composition-of-india/>.

20 Stephanie Kramer, “Key Findings about the Religious Composition of India.”

21 Pradeep Chhibber and Rahul Verma, “The BJP's 2014 “Modi Wave”: An Ideological Consolidation of the Right,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 49, no. 39 (2014): 50, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24480734>.

22 Paranjay Guha Thakurta, “Mass media and the Modi ‘wave,’” *Himal Southasian Magazine*, 2014, <https://www.himalmag.com/media-modi-elections/>.

platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the 2014 elections saw significant anti-incumbency sentiment against the ruling Indian National Congress party. Dissatisfaction with issues including corruption, economic downturn, and perceived lack of decisive leadership worked in favour of the BJP, and Modi was positioned as a credible and favourable alternative. Thus, the “Modi wave” was essential in securing a BJP majority on its own in the Lok Sabha, depending on a number of factors, marking a significant shift in Indian politics, and setting the stage for BJP dominance in subsequent races.

## **Caste, Religion, and Hindutva as Influencing Indian Political Behaviour**

### ***Caste Dynamics***

Caste is a system of hereditary social hierarchy inextricably tied to the concept of status in India for centuries. Individuals are born and traditionally marry within a particular jati, or sub-caste, dividing Hindus into lower and upper castes determining occupation and socioeconomic status.<sup>24</sup> The four primary varnas (from lowest to highest) are Sudras, Viasyas, Kshatriyas, and Bhramins. While the caste system long predates modern-day Indian democracy, contemporary politicians use it to their advantage when trying to garner votes. This is because voters often choose candidates based on their caste identity and their perception of how well a party will cater to their caste’s interests.<sup>25</sup> This practice has given rise to caste-centric political parties that align themselves with specific caste groups to secure support.

The deeply entrenched caste system in India has historically shaped the social fabric, influencing relationships, occupations, and socio-economic status for centuries. In the modern Indian democracy, politicians deftly leverage this historical structure to sway votes, exploiting the deep-seated connections voters often have with their caste identity and their expectations regarding a party’s commitment to their caste’s interest. The Michigan School of Thought provides a lens through which we can understand how these his-

torical and social factors influenced voting behaviour in the 2014 general election, specifically through the core concept of party identification, which is strongly linked to caste affiliation.

India’s lower castes have historically experienced social and economic exclusion. The Michigan School of Thought predicts that party allegiance is a powerful force, and in the context of India’s lower castes, voting for candidates from their own caste becomes a means of seeking better representation and addressing socioeconomic issues. This is a prime example of party identification, where voters align themselves with parties and candidates whom they perceive as advocating for their caste’s interest. The Michigan School’s principles of party identification also apply to upper castes as well. Contrary to lower castes, upper castes, like the Bhramins, hold high positions of power in Indian society—often in government offices, academia, or as priests and religious leaders.<sup>26</sup> Like their lower counterparts, upper castes tend to vote for candidates within their own caste to preserve the status quo; often believing that those from their own caste will better serve their interests and safeguard their privileged status. This type of caste-based voting is congruent with the cognitive shortcut principle, where voters rely on simplified heuristics like caste identity to make political decisions rather than thoroughly analyzing a party or candidates’ policy positions.<sup>27</sup> Modi and BJP capitalized on this principle during the 2014 general election by emphasizing caste identity and Hindutva, both of which served as a simplified heuristic that resonated with predominantly upper caste and Hindu voters. By presenting himself as a decisive leader capable of fostering economic growth and protecting the interests of the majority Hindu population in 2014, Modi strategically appealed to upper caste voters’ simplified cognitive associations.

### ***Religious Identity and The Rise of Hindutva***

India’s 2014 general election occurred amid widespread religious polarization, where Hindus constituted the majority, accounting for 79.8% of the

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23 Thakurta, “Mass media and the Modi ‘wave’.”

24 Guilhem Cassan and Lore Vandewalle, “Identities and public policies: Unexpected effects of political reservations for women in India,” *World Development* 143 (2021): 105408, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2021.105408>.

25 Christophe Jaffrelot, “Lok Sabha election special: Do Indians Vote Their Caste?,” *India Today*, 2019, <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/20190429-do-indians-vote-their-caste-1504678-2019-04-19>

26 Nela Sahgal, “Religion in India: Tolerance and Segregation,” *Pew Research Center*, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/06/29/religion-in-india-tolerance-and-segregation/>.

27 Gastil, “Beyond Endorsements and Partisan Cues,” 145.

population, while Muslims made up merely 14.2%.<sup>28</sup> The remaining 6% predominantly included Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains.<sup>29</sup> Religious polarization in India refers to the growing divide and tension between religious communities, particularly between Hindu and Muslim groups. Religious groups, especially Hindus and Muslims, often vote strategically to safeguard their interests, which can result in religious demographics coalescing behind specific parties. While the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) garners significant support from Hindu voters, Muslims are the only major Indian ethnic group in the state without distinct political party representation. For this reason, Muslim voters are traditionally more inclined to support one of three secular-presenting parties: the SP, BSP, and, dominantly, the INC or Congress.

The Michigan School of Thought provides a lens through which we can analyze how religious polarization, like castes, influenced voting patterns in India's 2014 general election, especially in the context of Hindu-Muslim relations. As mentioned, religious polarization, particularly between Hindu and Muslim communities, has been a defining feature of Indian politics. The BJP, led by Narendra Modi, secured a decisive victory by winning 282 out of 543 seats in Lok Sabha, forming a single-party majority government.<sup>30</sup> This substantial victory was propelled by significant support from Hindu voters, who saw the BJP as the champion of Hindutva, a political ideology that pressures the establishment of Hindu hegemony in India, and a defender of Hindu interests.<sup>31</sup>

Moreover, the Michigan School of Thought's principle of party identification comes into play here, as the BJP strategically aligned itself with Hindutva. Religious polarization continuously fuels the growth of Hindutva and for many Hindus in India, religious and national identities are inextricably bound. Political parties, most notably Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party, have taken advantage of reli-

gious polarization by creating an "us vs. them" narrative to strategically garner support from India's largest religious demographic, Hindu voters. This essentially positioned the party as the designated protector of Hindu interests against perceived threats, creating an outgroup to mobilize others.

Hindutva's influence on Hindu voters is evident in the electoral data. The BJP's success in the 2014 election was particularly pronounced in states with a substantial Hindu majority, reflecting a consolidation of Hindu voters. For instance, in Uttar Pradesh, a state with a Hindu majority, the BJP won 71 out of 80 seats, indicating strong support from the Hindu electorate.<sup>32</sup> This regional pattern aligns with the Michigan School's prediction that voters often choose candidates/parties based on their perceived identity and interests. However, despite the BJP's success among Hindu voters, the party faced challenges in regions with substantial Muslim populations who have historically voted for the INC. The strategic voting of Muslim individuals, often in favour of secular parties, was evident in states like Bihar and West Bengal, where the BJP did not achieve the same level of political success.<sup>33</sup> More specifically, results indicated that "in states like Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, where the Congress was directly pitted against the BJP, the Muslims, in general, voted overwhelmingly in favour of the Congress."<sup>34</sup> Similarly, a sizable portion of the Muslim electorate supported strong regional parties like the Samajwadi Party and the Rashtriya Janata Dal in places like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, both of which are predominantly comprised of Hindu voters, where the INC was unable to directly oppose the BJP.<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, the BJP's emphasis on Hindutva and cultural nationalism served as a powerful heuristic, simplifying complex political decisions for voters. Modi's projection as a strong leader, coupled with the

28 Stephanie Kramer, "Key Findings about the Religious Composition of India."

29 Stephanie Kramer, "Key Findings about the Religious Composition of India."

30 Dutt, "India's 2014 elections: the BJP's victory."

31 Arjun Sharma, "Arjun Sharma on Indian election results: 'Hindu nationalism and India cannot sit easy at the same table anymore'," KU Leuven, 2021, <https://www.arts.kuleuven.be/english/news/arjun-sharma-on-indian-election-results-hindu-nationalism-and-india-cannot-sit-easy-at-the-same-table-anymore>.

32 Al Jazeera, "Why Uttar Pradesh state is the key prize in India's election," Al Jazeera, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/5/18/why-uttar-pradesh-state-is-the-key-prize-in-indias-election>.

33 Sanjay Kumar, "Who did India's Muslims vote for in general election?," BBC News, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-27615592>

34 Kumar, "Who did India's Muslims vote for?"

35 Kumar, "Who did India's Muslims vote for?"



party's narrative of protecting Hindu interests, provided a shared vision of Hindutva that resonated with a broad spectrum of voters. During the 2014 election, Modi drew criticism for spewing hateful rhetoric, specifically accusing political opponents of being "Pakistani agents" and implying that Muslims were "enemies of the state," to garner votes from Hindu nationalists.<sup>36</sup> Modi and the BJP built their campaign on Hindu nationalist rhetoric, and many attributed this as the defining factor that led to his political ascendancy.<sup>37</sup> This tactic, and the BJP's campaign strategy, strategically navigated the cognitive shortcut principle. Modi's projection as a leader committed to national pride, combined with the overarching theme of Hindutva, became a simplified narrative that resonated with a broad spectrum of Hindu voters. The BJP strategically tapped into the fundamental connection between religious and national identities among Hindus, aligning with the cognitive shortcut principle outlined by the Michigan School which predicts that voters, seeking simplified decision-making in the face of complex political choices, would gravitate toward religious identity as a cognitive shortcut.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, India's 2014 general election marked a transformative juncture in the country's political landscape and the Michigan School's focus on party identification helps elucidate how voters, driven by historical and social factors, aligned themselves with parties that represented their caste or religious interests. The "Modi wave," a strategic fusion of leadership charisma, social media outreach, and anti-incumbency sentiment shifted India's political landscape. The Michigan School model provides a valuable framework for understanding the prevalence of party identification, emphasizing its impact on voting behaviour and aptly explaining the outcome of the 2014 election, best characterized by the rise of Hindutva, voter bank consolidation, and voters' cognitive religious and caste-based shortcuts at the ballot boxes

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<sup>36</sup> Max Fisher, "Everything you need to know about Narendra Modi's 2014 rise," Vox, 2015, <https://www.vox.com/2015/5/14/18094076/narendra-modi>

<sup>37</sup> Fisher, "Everything you need to know about Narendra Modi's 2014 rise."

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# Negative Impacts of Tourism on the Caribbean Environment, and How to Mitigate Them

Eleri Maes

## Background

Environmental degradation in the Caribbean islands began shortly after colonization. African slaves were introduced to the islands to work in sugarcane plantations after the collapse of the indigenous populations. Plantations and ranching began to heavily influence capitalism and became highly commercialized following the transatlantic slave trade.<sup>1</sup> These plantations required the clearing of large areas of habitat, contributing to biodiversity loss and significant ecological changes.<sup>2</sup> The twentieth century sparked the rise of other export-related activities like coal, iron, and nickel mining, as well as the exploitation of oil fields and increased fishing.<sup>3</sup> All these economic activities led to consequential environmental changes like soil erosion, water pollution, and agrochemical runoff effects.<sup>4</sup> Broader-scale anthropogenic climate change is a newer threat to the environmental integrity of these highly vulnerable islands. Increasing global temperatures are expected to contribute to increasing sea levels, coastal erosion, and more frequent high-magnitude storms.<sup>5</sup> While there are many current and past contributing factors to the environmental issues that are seen in the Caribbean today, tourism and its associated activities are notoriously damaging to the islands' environments.

The white sand beaches and warm, blue waters of the Caribbean have not always been populated with tourists as they are today. While tourism in Caribbean countries began as early as the late 19th century,<sup>6</sup> mass tourism exploded in the 1980s, when air travel became more accessible to middle-class travellers and

cruising grew in popularity.<sup>7</sup> The notable environmental attractions fundamental to the Caribbean's appeal are known by the "Three S's"—sun, sand, and sea.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, these resources are subject to potential depletion and degradation as threats caused by external forces arise and become more prominent.<sup>9</sup> While historical and broad-scale environmental change is undoubtedly interesting and important to the current ecological state of the islands, this paper predominantly focuses on exploring how recent tourism has significantly contributed to environmental issues, such as air and ocean pollution as well as biodiversity loss in the Caribbean. After extensive analysis, this paper determines that threats to the environment of the Caribbean are largely caused by both direct and indirect effects of tourism. Importantly, there are mitigation strategies that can curb these impacts. The first two sections of the paper provide examples of the direct and indirect effects of tourism, including travel emissions, effects from traveller ignorance, infrastructure construction, limited resource availability, and increased ocean sedimentation. The paper then outlines several personal and large-scale solutions that have the potential to assist in mitigating the negative effects of tourism on the environment. Lastly, this paper concludes with a discussion of the economic reliance of the Caribbean on tourism and whether or not the trade-off is worth it for the islands.

## Direct Impacts

The direct impacts of tourists on the environment are generally associated with a lack of educa-

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1 Reinaldo Funes Monzote, "The Greater Caribbean: From Plantations to Tourism," *RCC Perspectives*, no. 7 (2013): 17–24, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26241124>.

2 Monzote, "The Greater Caribbean," 17–24.

3 Monzote, "The Greater Caribbean," 17–24.

4 Monzote, "The Greater Caribbean," 17–24.

5 Nobuo Mimura, "Sea-Level Rise Caused by Climate Change and Its Implications for Society," *Proceedings of the Japan Academy, Series B* 89, no. 7 (July 25, 2013): 281–301, <https://doi.org/10.2183/pjab.89.281>.

6 Jeremy Taylor, "The Sun Worshippers: A History of Caribbean Tourism," *Caribbean Beat Magazine*, September 1, 1998, <https://www.caribbean-beat.com/issue-33/sun-worshippers#axzz7nHOiRsem>.

7 Jason Leppert, "How the Cruise Industry Has Evolved in 50 Years," *TravelAge West*, 2019, <https://www.travelagewest.com/Industry-Insight/Business-Features/How-the-Cruise-Industry-Has-Evolved-in-50-Years>; Alfred Wong, "Caribbean Island Tourism: Pathway to Continued Colonial Servitude," *Études Caribéennes*, no. 31–32 (September 26, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.4000/etudescaribeenennes.7524>.

8 John Dixon et al., "Tourism and the Environment in the Caribbean: An Economic Framework," *The World Bank*, March 2001, 5, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/b0a3899d-568c-5879-95c3-1f37ac395dc0/content>.

9 Dixon et al., "Tourism and the Environment," xi.

tion or sensitivity regarding the local environment. Examples of this include increased carbon emissions and pollution through air and water travel, the use of products containing harmful ingredients and chemicals, and a general disregard for the vulnerability of surrounding ecosystems. These activities can lead to decreased air quality, marine pollution, and habitat degradation.

### ***Transportation, Cruising, and Garbage Pollution***

Emissions caused by the tourism industry are responsible for roughly eight percent of global emissions, releasing approximately 4.5 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide on a yearly basis.<sup>10</sup> Long-haul flights are responsible for almost one-fifth of these emissions.<sup>11</sup> Planes, cruises, rental cars, and tour buses are all major contributors to the growing issue of climate change and increasing emissions as they all release greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Through an analysis of cruise ships and their effects on surrounding ecosystems, it is easy to see how significantly the environment can be affected by tourist transportation. Major cruise lines like Royal Caribbean Cruises and the Carnival Corporation have been charged in the past with numerous violations of environmental regulations. These violations include the dumping of plastics, waste oils, detergents, and chemicals into Caribbean waters.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, cruise ships can each use up to 250 tonnes of fuel daily, equating to the pollution

of roughly one million cars.<sup>13</sup> Carbon dioxide emissions are the single largest contributor to local and global climate change by “supercharging the natural greenhouse effect.”<sup>14</sup> This means that increased emissions lead to increased trapping of heat into the Earth’s atmosphere, ultimately affecting the overall temperature of the globe. As a result, numerous consequences are experienced worldwide, such as rising sea levels due to melting glaciers and thermal expansion in the oceans, increased storm frequency and magnitude, and longer, more intense droughts.<sup>15</sup>

Unfortunately, tourists who visit these islands while cruising leave behind non-biodegradable waste and garbage, which is harmful to both land and aquatic wildlife.<sup>16</sup> Wild animals can be impacted by trash in their environment, mistaking it for food or getting entangled in the debris. Ingesting garbage can “block [animals’] airways or fill up their stomachs, causing them to choke or starve to death.”<sup>17</sup> Entanglement leads to infection and the inability of animals to move freely, causing drowning and death.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, aside from the effects of litter on animals, plant growth can be stunted by dumped garbage, fires can be started, and humans themselves can also be injured by microplastics and sharp trash lying around.<sup>19</sup> For reference, plastic waste can take up to 500 years to decompose, thereby posing a lasting threat to biodiversity if not properly disposed of.<sup>20</sup> In a global news

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10 David Suzuki Foundation, “Air Travel and Climate Change,” David Suzuki Foundation, 2022, <https://davidsuzuki.org/living-green/air-travel-climate-change/>; Daphne Ewing-Chow, “The Environmental Impact of Caribbean Tourism Undermines Its Economic Benefit,” *Forbes*, November 26, 2019, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/daphneewingchow/2019/11/26/the-carbon-footprint-of-caribbean-tourism-undermines-its-economic-benefit/?sh=1b9a9def3cb5>.

11 Ewing-Chow, “The Environmental Impact.”

12 Friends of the Earth, “Cruise Ships’ Environmental Impact,” Friends of the Earth, March 14, 2022, <https://foe.org/blog/cruise-ships-environmental-impact/>; Cintia Salgado-Gómez et al., “Perceptions Environmental and Health Impacts of Cruise Activity in the Roatan Ports,” *Water* 14, no. 19 (October 4, 2022): 3134, <https://doi.org/10.3390/w14193134>.

13 CBC Radio, “A Cruise Ship’s Emissions Are the Same as 1 Million Cars: Report,” CBC, September 9, 2017, <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/as-it-happens-wednesday-edition-1.4277147/a-cruise-ship-s-emissions-are-the-same-as-1-million-cars-report-1.4277180>; Renatta Fielden, “Cruise Ship Effect on a Caribbean Island - Good or Bad?” LinkedIn, May 14, 2019, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/cruise-ship-effect-caribbean-island-good-bad-renatta-fielden/>.

14 Rebecca Lindsey, “Climate Change: Atmospheric Carbon Dioxide,” Climate.gov, May 12, 2023, <https://www.climate.gov/news-features/understanding-climate/climate-change-atmospheric-carbon-dioxide>.

15 WWF, “Ocean Conservation: Ocean Shipping,” WWF, 2022, <https://wwf.ca/habitat/oceans/ocean-shipping>.

16 Fielden, “Cruise Ship Effect.”

17 National Marine Sanctuaries, “Lend a Hand with Trash Removal,” National Marine Sanctuaries, n.d., accessed December 10, 2023, <https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/wildlife-viewing/trash.html>.

18 National Marine Sanctuaries, “Lend a Hand.”

19 Plano, “Harmful Effects of Litter,” Plano.gov, n.d., accessed December 10, 2023, <https://www.plano.gov/486/Harmful-Effects-of-Litter>.

20 United Nations, “In Images: Plastic Is Forever,” United Nations, June 2021, <https://www.un.org/en/exhibits/exhibit/in-images-plastic-forever>.

interview, Yannick Beaudoin, director general of the David Suzuki Foundation, indicated that increases in tourism trash are directly related to increased tourism accessibility.<sup>21</sup> The following subsection will expand upon this issue, detailing the lack of knowledge and sensitivity of travellers to local environments.

### ***Traveller Ignorance***

The Caribbean islands are known for their beautiful coral reefs and opportunities for snorkelling, swimming, and diving. Generally, visitors who would like to partake in these activities are advised to apply sunscreen before entering the water. However, the most common types of sunscreens contain chemicals that are harmful to coral reefs and the aquatic environment.<sup>22</sup> These sunscreens contain oxybenzone, a chemical commonly found in many different skincare products. Oxybenzone is problematic when introduced into the ocean as it lowers the temperature at which heat stress will bleach coral, altering their DNA to induce lethal deformities.<sup>23</sup> As such, chemical sunscreens can alter and impair the growth patterns of species, cause reproductive issues and deformations, damage coral DNA, kill coral, and harm other vital systems in aquatic species and environments.<sup>24</sup> While there is plenty of accessible information on the impacts of chemical sunscreens on reefs and aquatic ecosystems, consumers still prefer them over reef-safe alternatives because mineral sunscreens tend to have a thick, difficult-to-absorb texture that can leave a white cast on the skin.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, it is important when choosing skincare products and sunscreens to use chemicals that

do not damage the environment, avoiding oxybenzone, butylparaben, and octinoxate.<sup>26</sup>

Tourists also tend to be undereducated about the effects of touching, standing on, or breaking off pieces of coral. Corals are sensitive and fragile animals, and when they are touched, “the coral organisms try to fight off the intrusion, but this process often leads to coral bleaching...”<sup>27</sup> Corals participate in a symbiotic relationship with zooxanthellae algae, which are responsible for both the colour of the corals and act as their primary food source. But when this relationship is put under stress, for example, with chemicals or outside physical touch, the algae are expelled from the tissue of the coral, and the coral loses its colour and food source, thereby becoming more susceptible to disease.<sup>28</sup> Despite the fact that corals can sometimes survive and recover from bleaching events, bleaching typically leads to their death, resulting in biodiversity and habitat loss in marine ecosystems.<sup>29</sup> Thousands of marine species rely on reefs for habitat and food, including “sea turtles, fish, crabs, shrimp, jellyfish, sea birds, [and] starfish...”<sup>30</sup> Once corals die, they rarely return.<sup>31</sup> Assessing the actions and ignorance of travellers provides clear evidence that tourism directly influences the declining state of the environment in Caribbean countries and waters.

### **Indirect Impacts**

Direct impacts on the environment resulting from tourism have been outlined; however, there are some less obvious indirect impacts that are equally

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21 Global News, “How ‘Trashy’ Tourism Threatens World-Famous Destinations,” YouTube, June 28, 2019, 1:19, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9aW\\_Dlq0lnk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9aW_Dlq0lnk).

22 Coral Reef Alliance, “Sunscreen 101: Protecting Your Skin and Coral Reefs,” Coral Reef Alliance, September 28, 2021, <https://coral.org/en/blog/sunscreen-101-protecting-your-skin-and-coral-reefs/>.

23 Hanna Hamblen, “The Environmental Impacts of Reef-Safe Sunscreen and How to Choose the Best One,” Earth.org, March 28, 2022, <https://earth.org/reef-safe-sunscreen/>.

24 National Ocean Service, “Sunscreen Chemicals and Coral Reefs,” National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 2016, <https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/news/sunscreen-coral.html>.

25 Molly Adams, “Mineral or Chemical Sunscreen: Which Should You Choose?” MD Anderson Cancer Center, June 30, 2022, <https://www.mdanderson.org/cancerwise/is-mineral-sunscreen-better-than-chemical-sunscreen.h00-159540534.html>.

26 Hamblen, “The Environmental Impacts.”

27 Camila Cossio, “Coral Reefs and the Unintended Impact of Tourism,” Earthjustice, April 18, 2016, <https://earthjustice.org/article/coral-reefs-and-the-unintended-impact-of-tourism>.

28 National Ocean Service, “What Is Coral Bleaching?” National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, October 4, 2023, [https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/coral\\_bleach.html](https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/coral_bleach.html).

29 Cossio, “Coral Reefs”; National Ocean Service, “What Is Coral Bleaching?”

30 Lorin Hancock, “Everything You Need to Know About Coral Bleaching—and How We Can Stop It,” World Wildlife Fund, 2024, <https://www.worldwildlife.org/pages/everything-you-need-to-know-about-coral-bleaching-and-how-we-can-stop-it>.

31 Hancock, “Everything You Need to Know.”



damaging. These indirect consequences arise from multiple different sources, including the construction of tourist facilities in environmentally sensitive areas, increasing demands for energy and other resources, increased sedimentation, and the use of tankers for the importation of resources necessary to support locals and visitors.

### ***Construction of Tourist Facilities in Environmentally Sensitive Areas***

Most construction of tourist facilities in the Caribbean occurs within 800 meters of the high-water mark.<sup>32</sup> Site construction can cause beach and sand dune erosion, and construction can also lead to sand extraction.<sup>33</sup> Sand mining processes can contribute to changes in watershed functionality and flow, threatened water security, lowered groundwater capacity, decreased biodiversity in aquatic and non-aquatic environments, and increased climate change.<sup>34</sup> Erosion resulting from the process damages or removes natural protection against coastal hazards, meaning that hurricanes and large waves can be more damaging to infrastructure and areas further inland.<sup>35</sup> Not only does the construction of these facilities require the clearing of areas that serve as habitats and shelters for different biodiversity, but it also causes noise and light pollution that has been shown to impact wildlife through the alteration of their patterns of natural activity.<sup>36</sup> Functional facilities like hotels or resorts increase the sewage

pollution of certain areas, as wastewater is often sent into coastal waters, damaging local fauna and flora.<sup>37</sup> Overall, the construction of tourist facilities, especially in close proximity to the shoreline, can cause a plethora of issues that include land erosion, increased pollution, habitat and biodiversity loss, and increased waste discharges into the ocean.<sup>38</sup> Increases in facility numbers also create higher demands for energy and other resources required to support visitors.

### ***Increased Requirement for Resources***

Generally, locals use much less freshwater and energy than tourists in the Caribbean.<sup>39</sup> As such, visitors “place high[er] demand on energy and water resources.”<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the generation of energy in most Caribbean countries relies on diesel and other heavy fuels.<sup>41</sup> As diesel is refined from crude oil, burning it for energy produces harmful pollutants, such as ground-level ozone.<sup>42</sup> Ozone is known to inhibit the proper functionality and growth of plants, leading to increased disease and the inability of certain plants to photosynthesize.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, along with increased energy demands comes an increased demand for freshwater. While many Caribbean countries can access fresh groundwater and surface water for their supply, others like Aruba have little to no natural freshwater sources and are therefore required to perform desalination processes to acquire fresh water.<sup>44</sup> Desalination requires high levels of energy and intensive releases of

32 Dixon et al., “Tourism and the Environment,” 6.

33 Hayley Stainton, “14 Important Environmental Impacts of Tourism + Explanations + Examples,” *Tourism Teacher*, July 18, 2019, <https://tourismteacher.com/environmental-impacts-of-tourism/>.

34 European Commission, “Call for Better Management of Coastal Sand Mining to Halt ‘Dire’ Consequences,” *European Commission*, June 27, 2023, [https://environment.ec.europa.eu/news/call-better-management-coastal-sand-mining-halt-dire-consequences-2023-06-27\\_en](https://environment.ec.europa.eu/news/call-better-management-coastal-sand-mining-halt-dire-consequences-2023-06-27_en).

35 European Commission, “Call for Better Management.”

36 Stainton, “14 Important Environmental Impacts.”

37 Hari Srinivas, “Environmental Impacts of Tourism,” *The Sustainable Tourism Gateway*, 2019, <https://www.gdrc.org/uem/eco-tour/envi/index.html>.

38 Stainton, “14 Important Environmental Impacts.”

39 Dixon et al., “Tourism and the Environment,” 6.

40 Dixon et al., “Tourism and the Environment,” 6.

41 Christopher Barton, Lumas Kendrick, and Malte Humpert, “The Caribbean Has Some of the World’s Highest Energy Costs – Now Is the Time to Transform the Region’s Energy Market,” *Caribbean Development Trends*, November 14, 2013, <https://blogs.iadb.org/caribbean-dev-trends/en/the-caribbean-has-some-of-the-worlds-highest-energy-costs-now-is-the-time-to-transform-the-regions-energy-market/>.

42 US Energy Information Administration, “Diesel Fuel Engines Are Getting Cleaner,” *US Energy Information Administration*, November 7, 2022, <https://www.eia.gov/energyexplained/diesel-fuel/diesel-and-the-environment.php>.

43 Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, “Ground-Level Ozone (O3) Pollution,” *Arizona Department of Environmental Quality*, February 12, 2021, <https://www.azdeq.gov/ground-level-ozone-o3-pollution>.

44 Larry Millar, “Aruba Promises the Best Water in the Caribbean,” *Aquatech*, June 2014, <https://archive.aquatech.com/project/aruba-promises-the-best-water-in-the-caribbean/>.



fossil fuels, contributing immensely to the overall carbon footprints of these islands.<sup>45</sup> In addition to causing increased air pollution, desalination facilities also create large threats to ocean biodiversity as “intake pipes essentially vacuum up and inadvertently kill millions of plankton, fish eggs, fish larvae and other microbial organisms that constitute the base layer of the marine food chain.”<sup>46</sup> Desalination produces a by-product of water that has double the concentration of salt, known as brine, which needs to be disposed of. As such, brine is another contributor to the biodiversity loss associated with desalination. If this highly concentrated salt water is dumped back into the ocean, marine ecosystems struggle to thrive and survive as they are smothered with an accumulation of this brine waste.<sup>47</sup> Along with the accumulation of brine, human-caused sedimentation that can negatively affect marine life is also deposited on the seafloor.

### ***Increased Sedimentation***

Sedimentation in the ocean is generally a natural process; however, human activity can increase its rate and magnitude, which can lead to negative outcomes.<sup>48</sup> Tourism in Caribbean countries leads to an increase in industrialization and infrastructure, as previously mentioned. This leads to deforestation, increased agriculture, and soil erosion. These effects of industrialization and expansion lead to higher levels of sedimentation on the ocean floor, potentially resulting in a cascade of issues relating to the marine environ-

ment. Increased sediments when water is turbid reduce visibility and decrease the amount of sunlight that reaches the ocean floor. The lack of sunlight on the ocean floor reduces the ability of various marine flora to photosynthesize, leading to losses in the numbers of these plant species.<sup>49</sup> Additionally, “increased turbidity dislodges fish and amphibian eggs, [and] reduces the competitiveness of local species...”<sup>50</sup> In the short term, increased competition can reduce the number of species living within a habitat, leading to decreased biodiversity.<sup>51</sup> In a study conducted by Ruiz-Fernandez et al., researchers determined that sedimentation has been on the rise in the Caribbean Sea since the beginning of the 1900s.<sup>52</sup> Overall, increased sedimentation in the oceans causes decreased biodiversity and increased competition among species. Along with the previously mentioned causes of sedimentation, large ships stir up sediments and contribute to negative effects on ocean life.

### ***Tanker Use***

Caribbean islands rely on imports of food products from the United States because of their lack of agriculture.<sup>53</sup> While this would likely still be inevitable without tourism, more visitors require these islands to provide more food, thereby escalating importation. Since the Caribbean consists mostly of islands, most of their imports are transported by boat.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, shipping emits 3 percent of global emissions every year.<sup>55</sup> The combustion of marine fuel

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45 Scientific American, “The Impacts of Relying on Desalination for Water,” Scientific American, January 20, 2009, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-impacts-of-relying-on-desalination/>.

46 Scientific American, “The Impacts of Relying.”

47 Heal The Bay, “Ocean-Water Desalination: A Solution or a Problem?,” Heal The Bay, n.d., accessed December 11, 2022, [https://healthebay.org/sites/default/files/Desalination%20FAQ%20Sheet\\_final.pdf](https://healthebay.org/sites/default/files/Desalination%20FAQ%20Sheet_final.pdf); Scientific American, “The Impacts of Relying.”

48 New Zealand Department of Conservation, “Facts about Marine Sediment,” Department of Conservation, n.d., accessed December 12, 2022, <https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/habitats/marine/threats-facing-our-oceans/sediment-and-our-coasts/facts-about-marine-sediment/>.

49 Omar Yusuf, “IAEA Supports Marine Laboratories in the Caribbean, Helping to Expose the Link between Healthy Sea Life and Sedimentation,” International Atomic Energy Agency, November 5, 2020, <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/news/iaea-supports-marine-laboratories-in-the-caribbean-helping-to-expose-the-link-between-healthy-sea-life-and-sedimentation>.

50 Yusuf, “IAEA Supports Marine Laboratories.”

51 University of Michigan, “Competition and Resource Scarcity,” UMich.edu, October 26, 2008, <https://globalchange.umich.edu/globalchange1/current/lectures/competition/competition.html>.

52 Ana Carolina Ruiz-Fernández et al., “<sup>210</sup>Pb-Derived Sediment Accumulation Rates across the Wider Caribbean Region,” *Journal of Environmental Radioactivity* 223–224, (November 1, 2020): 106366, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvrad.2020.106366>.

53 US Department of Agriculture, “Caribbean Basin: Exporter Guide,” Foreign Agricultural Service, December 19, 2019, <https://fas.usda.gov/data/caribbean-basin-exporter-guide-1>.

54 FAL Bulletin, “Maritime Transport in the Caribbean,” FAL Bulletin, September 1997, [https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/36276/1/FAL\\_Bulletin136\\_en.pdf](https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/36276/1/FAL_Bulletin136_en.pdf).

55 Transport and Environment, “Ships,” Transport and Environment, 2024, <https://www.transportenvironment.org/challenges/ships/>.

emits black carbon, which can absorb heat and contribute to further climate change.<sup>56</sup> Black carbon also decreases air quality and influences the prevalence of human health risks like respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.<sup>57</sup> Like cruise ships, cargo ships release pollutants, such as grey water, sludge, and garbage, into the ocean.<sup>58</sup> Along with pollution, cargo ships create underwater noise pollution that drowns out communications between species, increases levels of invasive species, destroys habitats on the sea floor, and increases the turbulence of ocean floor sediments.<sup>59</sup> Collisions with marine wildlife, eutrophication of the marine environment, and physical damage to habitat are all major contributors to biodiversity loss caused by cargo ships.

### **Mitigation Strategies**

It is worth noting that tourism is a booming industry that will likely continue to grow, and one can therefore consider it crucial for every organization and person involved to reflect on the importance of implementing sustainable practices. While it seems like there are many negative connotations associated with tourism and the environment, there is still the opportunity for individuals and the tourism sector to participate in practices that reduce overall contributions to climate and biodiversity issues. Firstly, the availability and distribution of information plays a significant role in the severest of environmental problems.<sup>60</sup> If visitors are aware of the source and amount of pollution at a potential destination, it might influence their willingness to travel there and prevent contributing even more to the issue.<sup>61</sup> Making efforts to self-educate and research before travelling can reduce the ignorant or insensitive actions that tourists can demonstrate when on vacation in environmentally sensitive areas.

<sup>56</sup> Transport and Environment, “Ships.”

<sup>57</sup> US Environmental Protection Agency, “Black Carbon Research and Future Strategies,” Science in Action, October 2011, [https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2013-12/documents/black-carbon-fact-sheet\\_0.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2013-12/documents/black-carbon-fact-sheet_0.pdf).

<sup>58</sup> WWF, “Ocean Conservation: Ocean Shipping.”

<sup>59</sup> European Commission, “Transport and Marine Conservation,” The European Maritime Spatial Planning Platform, January 23, 2019, <https://maritime-spatial-planning.ec.europa.eu/sector-information/transport-and-marine-conservation>; WWF, “Ocean Conservation: Ocean Shipping.”

<sup>60</sup> Dixon et al., “Tourism and the Environment,” 10.

<sup>61</sup> Dixon et al., “Tourism and the Environment,” 10.

<sup>62</sup> Elana Loo, “9 Ways to Reduce Your Environmental Impact While Traveling,” Elana Loo, January 25, 2020, <https://elanaloo.com/reduce-your-environmental-impact-while-traveling/>.

<sup>63</sup> Rinkesh, “13+ Ultimate Ways to Promote Sustainable Tourism,” Conserve Energy Future, 2023, <https://www.conserve-energy-future.com/ways-promote-sustainable-tourism.php>.

<sup>64</sup> Operto, “Eco-Friendly Hotel Ideas: 6 Ways Your Hotel Can Become More Sustainable,” Operto Connect Guest Technologies, June 24, 2021, <https://operto.com/eco-friendly-hotel-ideas/>.

Individually, visitors have a variety of methods to increase the sustainability of their travel. For instance, they can choose to be more conscious about their waste production and disposal practices. Reusing materials and recycling whenever possible can reduce the amount of garbage and plastic that makes its way into the ocean. Additionally, visiting more environmentally friendly hotels that take the initiative to ban single-use plastics, reduce their water use, and implement energy-efficient appliances and lighting can decrease the overall carbon footprint and environmental impact of the visitor’s stay.<sup>62</sup> Other initiatives travellers can take to reduce their environmental impact include buying from local businesses, supporting sustainable travel brands, respecting local heritage and culture, travelling more locally, and taking direct flights whenever possible.<sup>63</sup>

Larger organizations like resorts can also implement changes that can assist in the mitigation of the environmental risks associated with tourism. Hotels, for example, can take the initiative to reduce their plastic waste by eradicating the use of plastic water bottles and key cards, reducing food waste and water use, and promoting local businesses to help consumers stray away from popular chains.<sup>64</sup> Airlines, cargo ships, and cruise ships can also work on switching to more environmentally friendly fuel sources, which will help offset greenhouse gas emissions and water pollution.

### **Sustainable Organizations – An Example**

Wavelength Reef Cruises, located on the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, is an example of a tourist organization that also contributes to environmental sustainability. Along with bringing visitors on picturesque snorkel and dive tours of the Great Barrier Reef,

Wavelength educates customers, conducts research, and engages in active local management to maintain coral density across the reef. Marine biologists are employed as staff on tours, offering education regarding the organization's research process and general issues surrounding coral loss in Australia. Wavelength also supports local small businesses for the operation of their day trips, which is another important practice contributing to sustainability.<sup>65</sup>

While there is no doubt that companies like Wavelength also exist in the Caribbean, it is much more common to see tourism businesses that practice unsustainability and exploit wildlife or other natural features for economic gain. Therefore, in an effort to achieve environmentally sustainable tourism, local governments should include a requirement for tourism companies to contribute and give back to the environment in one way or another, whether that be through customer education, research, or some other means that decreases or offsets the overall impact of tourism or climate change on the environment.

## Conclusion

There are a number of factors relating to tourism that contribute to environmental degradation and pollution in the Caribbean. Some of these factors include the emissions and pollution caused by visitor transportation, a general lack of knowledge and insensitivity to the local environment by travellers, increased construction of tourist facilities, water desalination processes, and the effects of sedimentation and cargo transportation on marine ecosystems. While many of these factors can be generalized to other countries that welcome tourists, the effects are more pronounced in the Caribbean islands due to their small size, higher environmental sensitivity, and higher density of visitors than many other travel destinations. Despite the negative impacts outlined in this paper, mitigation strategies can be implemented on personal and large-scale levels to decrease the tourism industry's overall effects on the environment. Moreover, in light of the increasing challenges of global warming and declining biodiversity, further research into this subject becomes increasingly imperative. Identifying the historical and current sources of environmental change and determining what can be done to mitigate the effects of these sources is a crucial step in ensuring a sustainable future for our planet.

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<sup>65</sup> Wavelength Reef Cruises, "Wavelength Reef Cruises Port Douglas - Smallest Reef Snorkel Tour," Wavelength Reef Cruises, 2024, <https://www.wavelength.com.au/about-us>.

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# Settler Tourism in So-Called Canada: The Colonized Gaze, Indigenous Fossilization, and Land Back Resistance

Cordelia Jamieson

## Introduction

The phantom of settler tourism looms large over Indigenous communities in so-called Canada, where the concept of the colonized gaze has contributed to the fossilization of Indigenous livelihoods in nature-based tourism. This essay aims to critically examine the interaction between settler tourism, the perpetuation of the colonized gaze, and the consequential commodification of Indigenous culture for settler consumption. Employing the Doctrine of Discovery principle, Algonquin Park and the establishment of the Canadian National Parks system, and the Banff Indian Days as centralized case studies, my work will attempt to contribute to the understanding of challenges and opportunities for cultural preservation, decolonization, and community-led Indigenous resistance in so-called Canada—taking a closer look at the Land Back movement specifically.

To substantiate this thesis, I will first contextualize settler colonialism in Canada by outlining the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius, underscoring power dynamics between settlers and Indigenous communities. Next, I will explore the colonized gaze and the perception of Indigenous presence in the context of non-Indigenous urban outdoor enthusiasm and second-home ownership. I will then explore the profound connection between Indigenous communities and land, as well as the impact of settler tourism on the sustainability of Indigenous territory. Furthermore, I will scrutinize the concept of Indigenous fossilization—with a strong emphasis on cultural commodification in the promotion of tourism. Finally, this essay will highlight community-led resistance efforts like Land Back and Wet’suwet’en pipeline opposition, analyzing the effectiveness of strategies employed by Indigenous communities.

## Settler Tourism, Settler Colonialism, and the Doctrine of Discovery

1 Kacey Dool, “Lecture on Theoretical Strands: Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Feminisms,” Queen’s University, 2023, GNDS340: Indigenous Women, Feminisms, and Resistance.

2 Shreya Shah, “The Doctrine of Discovery and Terra Nullius,” The Indigenous Foundation, October 26, 2021, <https://www.theindigenousfoundation.org/articles/the-doctrine-of-discovery-and-terra-nullius>.

3 Assembly of First Nations, “Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery,” January 2018, <https://afn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/18-01-22-Dismantling-the-Doctrine-of-Discovery-EN.pdf>.

4 Matteo Cimellaro, “The Doctrine of Discovery has been rescinded by the Vatican. What happens next?” National Observer, April 12, 2023, <https://www.nationalobserver.com/2023/04/12/explainer/doctrine-discovery-rescinded-vatican-what-happens-next>.

To understand the contemporary impact of settler tourism, one must first grasp the historical roots of settler colonialism. Colonialism, traditionally an extension of imperialism, involves the active presence of settlers from nations occupying a region. It is not about mere displacement, but conversion—centring subjugation and the exertion of political and economic control over the original, or Indigenous, inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> Settler colonialism, the ongoing presence and power of settlements and colonizers, focuses on the displacement of Indigenous nations and the replacement of settlers in their stead. This form of colonial domination transcends an isolated event and becomes structural. In other words, settler colonial invasion is not a single historical moment of imperial conquest but an ongoing form of occupation via social, political, and economic structures built by the invading society. Separate from the concept of colonialism, settler colonialism relies on permanence, assimilation, and cultural genocide.

The Doctrine of Discovery was the principle used by European colonizers in the 1400s to stake claim to lands beyond the European continent.<sup>2</sup> The doctrine gave colonizers the right to claim land deemed terra nullius or vacant and for the taking, regardless of whether that land was genuinely vacant. In 2018, the Assembly of First Nations poignantly asked, “How is it possible that any Pope, King or Queen, or explorers from Europe could “discover” lands in the New World if Indigenous Peoples were already occupying such lands, according to our own laws and legal orders?”<sup>3</sup> The concept of Eurocentric “discovery” was used to extinguish the sovereign rights of Indigenous people and invalidate government, property, and human rights of Indigenous individuals and communities at the expense of colonial expansion. Despite the Doctrine’s colonial justification since the 1400s, the Doctrine of Discovery was only denounced in 2023.<sup>4</sup> On March 30th, the Vatican released a statement decrying the series of documents as “not part of the teaching of

the Catholic Church,” recognizing the Doctrine failed to uphold the dignity and rights of Indigenous people and was legally wielded to justify immoral acts against them.

This acknowledgement was by no means a valiant act from the Church. Not only was this proclamation centuries overdue, but the institution also missed the opportunity to actively reconcile by returning assets and property in so-called Canada, worth \$3.3 billion, to Indigenous peoples and communities. There was no initiative by Pope Francis to discuss Land Back initiatives, turn reconciliation into action, or call on governments to renounce and abandon the Doctrine of Discovery as it appears in legal frameworks. Andrea Palframan, communications director for a legal defence fund assisting Indigenous people in protecting ancestral territory, asks, “How can we keep building pipelines, mining and practicing business as usual but just offer Indigenous Peoples this tokenistic participation?” The Vatican’s dismissal of the Doctrine calls into question the Church and the Canadian state’s ability to take accountability, recognize fault, and own up to subjugation and confiscation permitted because of the Doctrine of Discovery and the legislative concept of *terra nullius*. As scholar John Borrows reiterates, “Canadian law will remain problematic for Indigenous peoples as long as it continues to assume away the underlying title and overarching governance powers that First Nations possess.”<sup>5</sup>

### The Colonized Gaze in Settler Tourism

The colonized gaze, in both the context of my analysis and more broadly, refers to the lens through which settlers, in this context non-Indigenous urban outdoor enthusiasts and second-home owners, perceive Indigenous culture and presence. This concept is essential in understanding power dynamics and representation in Canada’s environmental spaces, where the influence of the colonized gaze is particu-

larly pronounced. Grimwood, Muldoon, and Stevens (2019) succinctly articulate that “In Canada (though not exclusively), it has been shown that nature spaces are discursively scripted by and for the colonizing gaze and consumption of white, masculine, and heterosexual audiences.”<sup>6</sup> This gaze is especially evident in the promotional aspect of wilderness and outdoor tourism, as it is intrinsically tied to power dynamics that determine who belongs and what behaviours and values are deemed inappropriate or out-of-place. The promotional activities in Canada’s natural landscape contribute to Indigenous marginalization and contemporary settler colonialism. Outdoor spaces cannot solely be sites for settler recreation because they are firstly arenas where narratives of Indigenous identity, sacredness, and tradition are fostered. James B. Harkin, the first commissioner of the Dominion Parks Branch of Canada, is widely regarded as the father of Canada’s national parks—renowned for his obsession with the parks’ commercial value and pursuit to commodify the country’s natural landscape.<sup>7</sup> The Canadian Government notes that park development was idealized as employing contractors and staff, stimulating booming tourism industries, and revitalizing regional economies.<sup>8</sup>

*Terra nullius* legislation contemporarily bleeds into ongoing settler desire for the Canadian wilderness. The conviction that land is vacant and free for the taking can be wed to the establishment of the Canadian National Parks system under the Dominion Forest Reserves and Parks Act in 1911, a process that began in the 1880s and intensified throughout the early 1900s.<sup>9</sup> As part of this process, Indigenous communities were forcibly displaced to accommodate newly established park boundaries. The sites these parks dominate have never been *terra nullius*; the land has never been empty. The colonial concept of conservation was selective and deployed as justification for continued settler dominance in so-called Canada.

5 John Borrows, “The Durability of *Terra Nullius*: *Tsilhqot’in* Nation v British Columbia,” *University of British Columbia Law Review*, (2015) 48 UBC L Rev 701 – 742.

6 Bryan S. R. Grimwood, Meghan L. Muldoon, and Zachary M. Stevens, “Settler Colonialism, Indigenous Cultures, and the Promotional Landscape of Tourism in Ontario, Canada’s “Near North,” *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 15, no. 3 (December 2017): 233–248. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743873X.2018.1527845>.

7 “Creating Canada’s National Parks,” Canada’s Historic Places, n.d., [https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/pages/13\\_canas\\_national\\_parks\\_parcs\\_nationaux](https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/pages/13_canas_national_parks_parcs_nationaux)

8 William Fergus Lothian, “A Brief History of Canada’s National Parks,” Environment Canada | Parks, 1987, [https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2017/pc/R62-237-1987-eng.pdf](https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2017/pc/R62-237-1987-eng.pdf).

9 Wacey Little Light, “We Are Still Here: National Parks, Colonial Dispossession, and Indigenous Resilience,” “Conservation” is Colonialism, n.d., <https://graphichistorycollective.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/RRR20-ConservationisColonialism-Web.pdf>.

While conservation embraced land, trees, and rocks, it did not include buffalo. These animals were hunted to near extinction to vacate the plains and starve Indigenous people into submission to accept colonized occupancy. Conservation also neglected the preservation of cultural practices and traditions tied to the land — which were viewed as “primitive” and “savage” and in need of destruction. This selective ‘conservation’ only applied to Indigenous culture when it was deemed profitable and palatable for tourists.

Another poignant case study highlighting the guilt of propelling contextual colonial gaze is Algonquin Park, emblematic of macro-scale nature tourism in northern Ontario and the establishment of the Canadian parks system. Algonquin Park’s promotional material circulates prevailing discourse adhering to the colonized gaze, tethered to imaginaries of “nature as an untouched and stunning backdrop for pleasure-seeking pursuits and fulfilling leisure desires.”<sup>10</sup> Idioms and keywords, including “cherished and pristine natural environment” and “unsoiled lakes and rivers,” appear frequently amid an onslaught of imagery depicting cottage docks, lush forests, and boating to showcase various forms of outdoor recreation. The visual giveaways insinuate that northern Ontario is meant to be experienced and consumed as a nature-based getaway, shaping settler perception of wilderness and often the erasure of Indigenous histories.<sup>11</sup>

### **Indigenous Connection to the Land**

Many Indigenous communities in so-called Canada have a profound and sacred connection to the land, making them stewards of ecosystems and bearers of cultural practices intimately fastened to the environment. These connections are rooted in a holistic understanding of the environment, encompassing not only physical landscapes but also spiritual, emotional, and social ideals. Every nation and community has a unique relationship with the land, but broadly speaking, land—for Indigenous communities—is more than

property. The nature of that relationship is not so much one of ownership but one of stewardship.<sup>12</sup> Indigenous knowledge of ecosystems, migration patterns, and cyclical environmental processes is passed down through generations, whereby land is perceived as a living entity and a source of guidance contributing to sustainable resource use and stewardship. Indigenous peoples and communities prioritize stewardship; to manage, take care of, and maintain the land rather than own it emphasizes the importance of reciprocity and balance in their interactions with the environment. Therefore, whatever undermines the sanctity of a sacred site, say expulsion or imposed boundary limitations for newly established national parks, undermines Indigenous culture and affects the well-being of affected communities. Despite an onslaught of historical injustice, forced displacement, and the imposition of colonial policy disrupting Indigenous connection to the land, Indigenous communities in Canada continue to assert and revitalize their environmental relationships.

While climate change is often understood and categorized as an “environmental” issue, many Indigenous leaders say the root cause of climate change is colonialism. The set of values imposed by the Western world that shape Canadian society is incredibly different than those embraced by many Indigenous communities.<sup>13</sup> While Indigeneity is broadly fastened to stewardship, settler connection to the natural world constitutes the perception of ecosystems as resources that can be owned, controlled, and distributed. As a result, “mainstream” society and its carbon-intensive profit-driven economies have an endless demand for resources—which are consistently extracted from the ancestral land of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Not only is collaboration with Indigenous communities a step towards recognition and the fostering of a more equitable approach to environmental governance, but it is also incredibly beneficial in achieving ecological balance. In contemporary discussions about environmental conservation and sustainable development, incorporating Indigenous perspectives in deci-

10 Bryan S. R. Grimwood, Meghan L. Muldoon, and Zachary M. Stevens, “Settler Colonialism, Indigenous Cultures, and the Promotional Landscape of Tourism in Ontario, Canada’s “Near North,” *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 15, no. 3 (December 2017): 233–248. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743873X.2018.1527845>.

11 Annette Pritchard and Nigel J Morgan, “Privileging the Male Gaze,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 27, no. 4 (October 2000): 884–905, [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0160-7383\(99\)00113-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0160-7383(99)00113-9).

12 Bob Joseph, “First Nations’ Relationship to the Land,” Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., May 7, 2015, <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/first-nation-relationship-to-the-land>.

13 “Indigenous Knowledges and Climate Change,” *Climate Atlas of Canada*, 2019, <https://climateatlas.ca/indigenous-knowledges-and-climate-change>.



sion- making processes related to land management and resource utilization is invaluable in crafting effective strategies for mitigating the impacts of climate change. In the most general sense, Indigenous knowledge systems can offer a more holistic approach, separate from and complementary to the disciplinary nature of Western science and exploration.<sup>14</sup> More specifically, the fluid and adaptive essence of Indigenous environmental ways of knowing is responsive and evolves alongside the natural world—making it ideal for advancing meaningful solutions in real-time with respect and careful teaching.

### **Indigenous Fossilization: Promotional Landscape of Tourism**

The concept of Indigenous fossilization, exacerbated by settler tourism and the colonized gaze, captures the harm and stagnation inflicted upon Indigenous communities when Indigenous stories and livelihoods take the form of “artifacts” well-suited for museums where the “customary tourist gaze is locked on some romanticized version of difference.”<sup>15</sup> As settlers engage with Indigenous spaces, often through tourism, there is a harmful tendency to freeze living traditions for the convenience and marketability of the colonized tourist gaze.<sup>16</sup> The commodification of Indigenous culture distorts and contributes to the ossification of Indigenous communities, effectively trapping them in a past that is selectively preserved for tourist consumption and gratification.

In 1894, the first Banff Indian Days were held as a way to entertain tourists trapped in Banff by spring flooding that destroyed the railway tracks.<sup>17</sup> The event then remained one of the region’s most prolific tourist attractions until its end in 1978. Indigenous people were expected to live in tipis, wear traditional clothing, and dance for onlooking tourists. At its peak, the three-to- five-day spectacle encour-

aged thousands of tourists to flock and observe “real Indians,” or the Bearspaw First Nation, Chiniki First Nation, and Goodstoney First Nation communities in Treaty 7 territory.<sup>18</sup> It was considered a remarkable occasion to see Indigenous people within the confines of their “natural surroundings”—like a museum or a zoo. The consumption of Indigeneity perpetuates harmful stereotypes and diminishes the diversity and virtue of tradition. Settler organizers and park administrators seized the annual event as an opportunity to subvert Indigenous peoples who were believed to be “savage” and would “run wild if allowed, destroying the park if they were given free access.” Banff’s Indian Days reinforce detrimental narratives of exoticism and power imbalance. Moreover, the event contributes to the erosion of genuine Indigenous culture, agency, and voice—as their cultural narratives are controlled and shaped by settlers and national park administrators.

Wacey Little Light (Stommiikiisokkou), a member of the Siksika Nation, which is a part of the Blackfoot Confederacy in Treaty 7, powerfully articulates that Indigenous people used Banff’s Indian Days performances to maintain a semblance of a connection with the land. Keeping a connection to the same places as their ancestors, gathering the same medicines, touching the same waters, and enacting the same sovereignty of their land (now settler parks) is an integral way to reinforce that territorial displacement is not territorial disconnect. Indigenous peoples danced at Banff Indian Days to “keep those connections,” and Wacey Little Light says they “continue to dance on the Canada National Parks Act,” legislation that states no changes can be made in the boundaries of existing parks except by an Act of Parliament.<sup>19</sup>

### **Community Resistance**

Community-led resistance efforts are move-

14 Amy Hudson and Kelly Vodden, “Decolonizing Pathways to Sustainability: Lessons Learned from Three Inuit Communities in Nunatukavut, Canada,” *Sustainability* 12, no. 11 (May 28, 2020): 4419, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12114419>.

15 Bryan S. R. Grimwood, Meghan L. Muldoon, and Zachary M. Stevens, “Settler Colonialism, Indigenous Cultures, and the Promotional Landscape of Tourism in Ontario, Canada’s “Near North,” *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 15, no. 3 (December 2017): 233–248. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743873X.2018.1527845>.

16 Stinson, Michela J., Bryan S. Grimwood, and Kellee Caton. “Becoming Common Plantain: Metaphor, Settler Responsibility, and Decolonizing Tourism.” *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 29, no. 2–3 (March 9, 2021): 234–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2020.1734605>.

17 “Banff Indian Days Affirmed Stereotypes, Reinforced Culture,” *Rocky Mountain Outlook*, April 3, 2014, <https://www.rmoutlook.com/local-news/banff-indian-days-affirmed-stereotypes-reinforced-culture-1565423>.

18 “Aba Wathtech,” *Stoney Nakoda Nations*, n.d., <https://stoneynakodanations.com/about-us/>.

19 “We Are Still Here: National Parks, Colonial Dispossession, and Indigenous Resilience. ‘Conservation’ is Colonialism,” Wacey

ments initiated and driven by communities to assert their rights, exert sovereignty, safeguard their interests, and address issues affecting their well-being. Community members actively organize, advocate, and implement strategies to bring about change. In the face of settler tourism and subsequent fossilization, Indigenous communities have been forced to assemble various forms of resistance. Resistance to these stifling issues takes on a myriad of forms, reflecting the diversity of Indigenous communities and their differing responses to the challenges posed by the encroachment of settler colonialism, settler tourism, the colonized gaze, and cultural fossilization. The fossilization of Indigenous livelihoods, as influenced by settler tourism and the colonized gaze, is met with powerful resistance. Through legal battles, activism, and community mobilization, Indigenous groups strive to reclaim control over lands that have been subjected to imperial injustice.

The profound connection between Indigenous communities and the land becomes a focal point for community-led resistance. Efforts to prioritize responsible resource management, reclaim sacred sites, and demand sovereignty over ancestral territory are integral to this resistance. The Land Back movement stands as a powerful and tangible example of community-led resistance—calling for the acknowledgement and return of Indigenous sovereignty over ancestral territories.<sup>20</sup> Settlers knew that to claim ownership and access to land for wealth and extraction, the relationship between land and Indigeneity would first have to be severed. Forced relocation and the establishment of reserves, the introduction of patriarchal governance, the starvation of resources (including the buffalo massacres reviewed above), the destruction of family units via the residential school system, and the implementation of a legal framework invalidating fights for stolen land were all tactics used to colonize so-called Canada's landscape and institute land "ownership."<sup>21</sup> So, while the Land Back movement officially began in 2018, it has been a community-led reclamation initiative since European settlement and colonization in the 15th century.

#### Another example of community-led resistance

Little Light, n.d., <https://graphichistorycollective.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/RRR20-ConservationisColonialism-Web.pdf>.

20 Kim Kaschor, "Here Are 3 Places to Watch the Land Back Movement Unfold in 2023," CBCnews, January 7, 2023, <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/unreserved/indigenous-land-back-movement-1.6704611>.

21 Ronald Gamblin, "Land Back! What Do We Mean?," 4Rs Youth Movement, n.d., <https://4rsyouth.ca/land-back-what-do-we-mean/>.

22 "Criminalization of Wet'suwet'en Land Defenders," Amnesty International, March 6, 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/03/criminalization-wetsuweten-land-defenders/>.

to land claim initiatives is the Wet'suwet'en opposition to the Coastal GasLink pipeline project passing through Wet'suwet'en territory in British Columbia, a plan rejected by all five Wet'suwet'en clans—which are notably matriarchal.<sup>22</sup> Indigenous leaders, community members, and allies have protested, blockaded, and pursued legal action to assert their rights to the land and express concern about the environmental implications of the pipeline. The movement garnered international attention, highlighting the intersectionality of environmental justice, Indigenous rights, and the ongoing impacts of settler colonialism.

While community-led resistance efforts exhibit considerable resilience and creativity, their effectiveness is contingent on a myriad of factors. Resistance efforts often grapple with financial constraints. Legal battles, advocacy campaigns, and sustained activism require significant resources, and many Indigenous communities face uphill and sometimes unrealistic economic battles. Legal proceedings, a sound avenue for addressing land rights and environmental justice issues, are notoriously slow and resource-intensive—making them increasingly inaccessible. Settler institutions have the upper hand in a settler system, further delaying justice and exacerbating the power imbalance. These systems, favouring settler interests, are resistant to change. Bureaucratic processes, biased legal frameworks, and systemic discrimination pose formidable obstacles, limiting the ability of Indigenous communities to efficiently execute community-led resistance in challenging settler imposition.

#### **Conclusion**

This essay has navigated the complex terrain of settler tourism in so-called Canada, unveiling the relationship between the colonized gaze, settler colonialism, and the fossilization of Indigenous livelihoods. My work reiterates an urgent need to decolonize tourism and foster respectful relationships in outdoor-for-leisure consumption using the establishment of Canada's parks system and community-led Land Back resistance efforts as central observations. The struggle for cultural preservation and decolonization in Canada persists, beckoning for collective

awareness and action to navigate a delicate balance between exploration, understanding, and respect for the landscape's natural beauty.

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# The “Silent Crisis:” The Negative Effects of Globalization on Mental Health

Allie Moustakis

## Introduction

In the 2022 World Mental Health Report, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared “one in eight people in the world live with a mental disorder.”<sup>1</sup> Despite knowing this information, there has been little effort made by global health institutions, like the WHO, to adequately address the problem at large. This is primarily due to the lack of funding dedicated towards mental health at the national level. The pharmaceutical industry, commonly referred to as “Big Pharma,” is in a much stronger position than supra-national organizations like the WHO to fight global health issues worldwide due to its unprecedented level of financing, massive cash flow, and ubiquitous influence on international policy and public perception. Many scholars link this to the neoliberal economic policies, which is the idea that “collective and individual well-being is guaranteed through economic growth rather than direct governmental interventions in social realms such as health or education,” that globalization is centered on.<sup>2</sup> While globalization has increased opportunities for national governments to collaborate on mental health issues, very few have used it to their advantage. Instead, governments and multinational corporations use globalization, which has promoted neoliberal economic policies that favour market forces over social welfare, to their benefit by capitalizing on mental health services and prioritizing the capitalist elites at the expense of the majority.<sup>3</sup>

This paper argues that globalization has hindered cooperative governance in addressing the global mental health crisis. As will be demonstrated, through the continuation of neoliberal economic policies and the escalation of social inequality and exploitation, which are fundamental aspects of the capitalist system as seen through a Marxist lens, globalization has made it more difficult for cooperative governance to address the mental health crisis. To substantiate this thesis, the paper will proceed as follows. First, I will provide an overview of Marxism and its perspective on globalization. Second, I will explain the ongoing global mental

health crisis. Third, I will discuss how globalization has led to the privatization of mental health services, ultimately creating a divide between the public and private sectors. Subsequently, I will analyze the impact of multinational corporations (MNCs) on mental health worldwide. Finally, I will examine how globalization has disproportionately affected lower-income countries, transcending national borders and leading to severe power disparities between national governments.

## *Theoretical Framework: Marxist Perspective on Globalization*

Globalization, as described by many IR scholars, is the process of enhanced interconnectedness and interdependence among nation-states, primarily in trade, finance, and technology.<sup>4</sup> While some consider globalization a driving factor for economic progress and development, Marxists view the concept from a more critical lens. Developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the mid-19th Century, Marxism is a branch of socialism that focuses on exploitation and class struggle in capitalist systems. Marxist theorists see capitalism as an inherently exploitative system in which the bourgeoisie upper-class profit of the proletariat lower class’s work. This exploitation then leads to various social inequalities. As a result, Marxism aims to overthrow the capitalist system and substitute it with a more socialist society in which labourers own and control the means of production, instead of already wealthy individuals.<sup>5</sup>

When analyzing globalization, Marxist theorists contend that it is an inherent by-product of the capitalist system, primarily motivated by the interests of the upper-echelon elites and transnational corporations. Essentially, they view globalization as a way of expanding the influence and dominance of neoliberal economic values, primarily present in the global North, across national boundaries, allowing multinational corporations to maximize their profits by avoiding high labour costs and outsourcing to differ-

1 “World Mental Health Report: Transforming Mental Health for All,” Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization (2022): 17.

2 Nitsan Chorev, “Restructuring Neoliberalism at the World Health Organization,” *Review of International Political Economy: RIPE* 20, no. 4 (2013): 629.

3 William Gottdiener, “Saving Talk Therapy: How Health Insurers, Big Pharma, and Slanted Science Are Ruining Good Mental Health Care,” by Enrico Gnulat,” *Psychoanalytic psychology* 36, no. 3 (2019): 276.

4 Joshua S. Goldstein and Jon C. Pevehouse, *International Relations*, 12th edition. (Toronto: Revel Pearson, 2020), 15.

5 Goldstein and Pevehouse, *International Relations*, 87.

ent countries.<sup>6</sup> This has led to a global market where MNCs compete for labour and resources in developing countries, exploiting low-wage workers and decreasing domestic innovation. Moreover, Marxists argue that such exploitation is driven by the inherent selfishness and competitive nature produced in capitalist systems. The goal of capitalism is to maximize profits while spending the least amount of money, which is only possible through exploitation and increased product prices.

Furthermore, Marxists contend that globalization has decreased national sovereignty, providing international organizations like the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) with more power and influence<sup>7</sup>—prioritizing global capital over social welfare. For instance, the World Trade Organization (WTO) has come under fire for implementing free trade laws that favour multinational corporations at the expense of workers and the environment.<sup>8</sup> This allows the rich to stay rich and prevents the poor from advancing.

#### *The “Silent Crisis”: Mental Health on a Global Scale*

Mental health has become increasingly more prevalent within the last two decades—with approximately 1 in 8 people suffering from a mental disorder. As described by the WHO, a mental disorder is:

A syndrome characterized by cognition, emotional regulation, or behaviour that reflects a dysfunction in the psychological, biological, or developmental processes that underlie mental and behavioural functioning. These disturbances are usually associated with distress or impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.<sup>9</sup>

As of 2019, approximately 970 million people in the

world currently suffer from a mental disorder, whether that is anxiety, depression, attention-deficit disorder, etc., making it the leading cause of disability worldwide.<sup>10</sup> Despite the significant impact of mental illness on individuals and countries, governments and global institutions, like the WHO, are failing to provide appropriate care—with approximately 71% of people going untreated.<sup>11</sup> This number is largely attributed to the underfunding of mental health research and care, with only 2% of total health budgets, on average, being allocated towards mental health.<sup>12</sup> This number is extremely concerning, especially since there are only “9 mental health providers per 100,000 people globally.”<sup>13</sup> However, countries like Afghanistan only have 1 psychiatrist for every 10 million people. To put this in perspective, Afghanistan’s total population was expected to reach 39.20 million by the end of 2022.<sup>14</sup>

Two decades after the World Health Organization published its seminal report, “The World Health Report 2001: Mental Health New Understanding, New Hope,” the suggestions made to combat mental illness remain relevant.<sup>15</sup> Although efforts have been made to address the ongoing crisis, primarily by the WHO’s Mental Health Action Plan, established in 2013, progress has been slow. The Action Plan demands for appropriate funding as well as more effective national leadership and governance for mental health, but governments and private institutions, especially in the Global North, have refused to act. Without the right resources and leadership, the mental health crisis will continue to exist, and the overall well-being of individuals will continue to depreciate.

#### *The Privatization of Mental Health Care*

Globalization has facilitated the spread of neoliberal economic ideas that prioritize the interests of the market before societal welfare. MNCs have

6 Rachel Y. Zhou and William D. Coleman, “Accelerated Contagion and Response: Understanding the Relationships Among Globalization, Time, and Disease,” *Globalizations* 13, no. 3 (2016): 287.

7 Goldstein and Pevehouse, *International Relations*, 87.

8 Semih Semin and Dilek Güldal, “Globalization of the Pharmaceutical Industry and the Growing Dependency of Developing Countries: The Case of Turkey,” *International journal of health services* 38, no. 2 (2008): 383.

9 “World Mental Health Report: Transforming Mental Health for All,” 8.

10 “World Mental Health Report: Transforming Mental Health for All,” 39.

11 “World Mental Health Report: Transforming Mental Health for All,” 37.

12 “World Mental Health Report: Transforming Mental Health for All,” 37.

13 Pamela Y. Collins and Shekhar Saxena, “Action on Mental Health Needs Global Cooperation,” *Nature (London)* 532, no 7597 (2016): 25.

14 Collins and Saxena, “Action on Mental Health Needs Global Cooperation,” 26.

15 “World Mental Health Report: Transforming Mental Health for All,” 15

seen this as an opportunity to capitalize on the industry, leading to the commodification of mental health services. As a result, there has been a significant shift from public to private mental health care, limiting access to those who do not have sufficient funds. This is best exemplified by the Australian mental health care system. In the early 1990s, the Australian mental health care system saw a shift from public to private care facilities. This shift was mainly due to the influence of Western practices, which valued deregulation, profit-making, and efficiency.<sup>16</sup> Promoting such an economic agenda led to an increased private medical sector that was created “as a means of saving health-care delivery costs, increasing competition and providing more choice for consumers than publicly funded services.”<sup>17</sup> This shift allowed multinational corporations and private companies exclusive control over healthcare units, oftentimes cutting costs to maximize profits.

Researchers conducted a study of a private in-patient mental health service unit for young adults aged 16 to 30 years old in Australia. The study observed and interviewed the team of nurses and medical staff, which were led by a nurse unit manager, many of whom were unhappy with their working conditions.<sup>18</sup> The findings stated that “cost-cutting was a theme raised by participants as playing a significant role in the unit. Participants acknowledged that while issues related to cost-cutting stemmed from the hospital’s senior management, they had a direct impact on the day-to-day running of the unit and clinical decision-making.”<sup>19</sup> Participants also noticed that funding problems heavily influenced clinical decisions about admission, with some patients being admitted merely to keep up occupancy levels rather than for legitimate medical reasons.<sup>20</sup> One of the nurses even went on to state that “we’ve had people with 7 or 8 admissions ... and because it’s private sector and occupancy

rules, having them here means you have bodies in beds, means you’re fulfilling your financial imperative (Participant 11, Nurse).”<sup>21</sup> The need to fulfill financial goals was enforced by senior staff who faced pressure from private corporations to perform and maintain profits.<sup>22</sup> This meant that staff at all levels of the unit were operating within the political, economic, and cultural norms that characterize 21st-century neoliberalism, where the “best care” had to be provided with the fewest resources.

Similar practices can be seen across the United States, which views healthcare from a primarily economic standpoint that is based on the notion of an individualistic consumer marketplace. In accordance with this agenda, healthcare services are tradeable and are consequently, with certain exceptions, subject to the same rules that govern the trade of other products and services.<sup>23</sup> The marketization of care has created a competitive culture that is congruent with capitalism’s “privatize the profits, socialize the costs” axiom.<sup>24</sup> However, the shift towards privatized healthcare is not only being pushed by private corporations. Professor, Michael Keaney states that, along with MNCs, “the World Bank has [also] encouraged a reduction in government services and increased privatization of health care. The health care systems of developed countries are under pressure to reform, ostensibly ... because of global pressures toward privatization and the extension of an efficiently regulated capitalism.”<sup>25</sup> In other words, the opening of global healthcare to market sources has put pressure on developed countries to privatize healthcare in order to stay competitive.

Unlike Marxists, Liberal economists favour this shift towards private health care, believing that out of the two, private versus public healthcare, private institutions have more of an incentive to provide quality care due to their financial ties. However, the Australian case study proved this untrue, as under a

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16 Dawson et al., “Every Single Minute and Hour is Scrutinised’: Neoliberalism and Australian Private Mental Health Care,” *Sociology of health & illness* 42, no. 2 (2020): 277.

17 Dawson et al., “Every Single Minute and Hour is Scrutinised,” 278.

18 Dawson et al., “Every Single Minute and Hour is Scrutinised,” 280.

19 Dawson et al., “Every Single Minute and Hour is Scrutinised,” 281.

20 Dawson et al., “Every Single Minute and Hour is Scrutinised,” 282.

21 Dawson et al., “Every Single Minute and Hour is Scrutinised,” 283.

22 Dawson et al., “Every Single Minute and Hour is Scrutinised,” 283.

23 Michael Keaney, “Unhealthy Accumulation: The Globalization of Health Care Privatization,” *Review of social economy* 60, no. 3 (2002): 336.

24 Keaney, “Unhealthy Accumulation,” 340.

25 Keaney, “Unhealthy Accumulation,” 348.

capitalist system, the only thing that truly matters is profit. In fact, private mental health systems are less inclined to provide quality care due to the high costs associated with maintaining resources and staff.

### *Globalization of the Pharmaceutical Industry*

Much like the shift towards a privatized health-care system, globalization has also influenced the pharmaceutical industry. This has been done by allowing multinational corporations to promote a biomedical approach that advocates for the use of medication to treat mental health disorders. Due to this, mental health treatment has been left in the hands of pharmaceutical executives whose only goal is to make as much money as possible. The decrease of psychodynamic and holistic traditions of psychotherapy have significantly decreased as a result of several social and economic forces that are less focused on what's best for people with mental health problems and more focused on what is best for pharmaceutical companies, insurance companies, and academics who are interested in publishing research.<sup>26</sup> This is especially apparent in the United States, where “pharmaceutical executives determine the costs of those drugs, which must be paid by the public, either through their insurance companies or directly out of pocket.”<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, the US government has no regulations when it comes to pharmaceutical companies, allowing them to set their own rates as long as they do not collude with one another.<sup>28</sup> The fact that there are very few competitors in the industry means that the price of a drug can be whatever the company desires. As a result, the “\$500 billion, multinational pharmaceutical industry can earn \$10 billion a year on sales for a single product.”<sup>29</sup>

The success of Big Pharma in the psychiatric industry is primarily due to its enhanced commercial marketing and the lack of trained mental health professionals. As previously mentioned, there are not nearly enough trained mental health professionals to individually treat those struggling from mental disorders—which is why governments have opted for a biomedical approach that emphasizes the use of

medication despite its proven ineffectiveness for most patients. Most notably, the late 1980s saw a spike in the usage/prescription of psychiatric pharmaceuticals with the introduction of Prozac, a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI) used to treat depression, that promised miraculous cures that have been proven not to occur. Research on Prozac and other antidepressants clearly showed that they were only effective for those with severe depression and that users were susceptible to a variety of negative side effects, including an increase in suicidal and aggressive inclinations.<sup>30</sup> Despite this, pharmaceutical companies, governments, and doctors continue to push the usage of psychiatric medicines to treat mental disorders. Now, “psychiatric medications have been shown to be modestly effective, but they are heavily marketed, and now general medical doctors prescribe most psychiatric medications with psychiatrists—the only physicians trained to prescribe them—accounting for 15% of prescriptions.”<sup>31</sup> For this reason, psychiatric medications generate enormous revenues for pharmaceutical corporations even though they do little to treat mental illness.

Moreover, Big Pharma is actively contributing to global public health concerns by taking advantage of neoliberal globalization's chances to reduce expenses and increase profits. Top pharmaceutical companies are increasing medicine access disparities by rigorously enforcing a global “patent regime” that stifles underdeveloped nations' attempts to create their own medication. This is due to the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement (TRIPS), “which establishes minimum universal standards for intellectual property and patent protection in terms of both the availability of rights and their enforcement for any invention in almost all areas of technology”<sup>32</sup> and holds all WTO members accountable for enhancing the scope, length, and coverage of industrial patents. The TRIPS essentially monopolizes the industry to a select few multinational giants and prevents developing countries from producing their own resources, leaving them with no other option but to purchase expensive drugs from large multinational

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26 Gottdiener, “Saving Talk Therapy,” 276.

27 Catherine D. Deangelis, “Big Pharma Profits and the Public Loses,” *The Millbank quarterly* 92, no. 1 (2016): 30.

28 Deangelis, “Big Pharma Profits and the Public Loses,” 30.

29 Andrew Puow, “The Globalization of the Pharmaceutical Industry,” (2008): 2.

30 Gottdiener, “Saving Talk Therapy,” 277.

31 Gottdiener, “Saving Talk Therapy,” 277.

32 Semin and Güldal, “Globalization of the Pharmaceutical Industry and the Growing Dependency of Developing Countries,” 383.



corporations.<sup>33</sup> Reliance is now being put onto public-private partnerships between global pharmaceutical companies and national governments to work together to create more inclusive solutions to global health crises, but they have failed to align their interests—which is necessary for creating adequate policy plans. Thus, globalization has allowed top pharmaceutical companies the power to influence not only health policy and pharmaceutical access for the whole world, but also deciding who is worth healing.

### *Who's Winning and Who's Losing*

Globalization has given private institutions the power to decide who is worthy of healthcare. Rather than addressing the social determinants of mental health disorders, such as poverty, inequality and social exclusion, governments are allowing MNCs to capitalize on low-income individuals who are unable to afford quality healthcare. When it comes to mental health, globalization has disproportionately affected lower-income countries and communities—transcending borders. It is well established that private companies often prioritize profits over people, leading to limited access to mental health services. Unfortunately, “in most countries pharmaceuticals are produced, advertised, and sold for profit, under free-market rules, while approximately 30 percent of the world’s population has no access to essential pharmaceuticals,”<sup>34</sup> and in the rare case that developing countries do have access, they are forced to pay out of pocket.

Sadly, these inequalities are not limited to who does and who does not have access to healthcare and medication. The capitalist system, which is a necessary component of globalization, is known for prioritizing profits ahead of worker welfare, leading to substandard working conditions and exploitation. Moreover, the globalization of labour markets has resulted in corporations competing for the cheapest labour available, leaving them with no other choice but to offshore their production to developing countries whose low-wage workers are desperate for money. Not only are they forced to make the drugs at an unlivable wage, but companies are also outsourcing “clinical trials [to] exploit the populations of the developing world by subjecting them to experimental drug treatments that nobody in the developed world wants to risk.”<sup>35</sup>

Unfortunately, when social inequalities increase and persist, it can create even more disparities in power between national governments. In other words, the already powerful countries remain powerful, and the weaker countries get weaker. Such disparities in power make it harder for smaller and less developed countries to assert their interests and participate in international cooperation—especially with large hegemonic states that work at the hands of multinational corporations.

### *Conclusion*

Globalization has hindered cooperative governance in addressing the mental health crisis by perpetuating neoliberal economic policies that prioritize profit over social well-being. This is evident in the shift towards privatized healthcare, the promotion of pharmaceutical treatments, and the increased power given to multinational corporations. From a Marxist perspective, addressing mental health issues requires a fundamental restructuring of society. This means shifting away from a profit-driven mental health system and towards a system that prioritizes social welfare. However, none of this is possible if private companies continue to have such an enhanced role in global public health.

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33 Puow, “The Globalization of the Pharmaceutical Industry,” (2008): 8.

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# Beyond Borders, Beneath Tensions: Assessing the Prospects for Peace Post-Ethnic Partitions

Gurisha Sahni

## I: Introduction:

As Dr. John McGarry argues, Partition is often a neglected form of eliminating ethnic diversity in deeply divided states, as it is often seen as “antiquated” or a “hangover from imperialism.” However, as ethnic tensions and conflict continue to be a pervasive issue, partition’s moral validity as a conflict mitigation strategy is actively disputed in international law and political academia. As such, this paper will answer the question of how efficient the use of partition is as a means to cultivate peace between ethnic groups by discerning the internal and international consequences of state actors post-partition. Within the scope of this paper, the following is argued: a) semantically, the term “partition” implies political disarray because it must be externally imposed; b) ethnic partition, as a particular subset, necessitates further negative consequences to peace in the successor states as a result of continued “othering,” and; c) the current position held by international actors concerning ethnic partitions has led to continued tension, violence, and dispute in post-partition states. Ultimately, using a theoretical approach to ethnic partition through analyzing the aforementioned impetuses and impacts of partitions and the nature of ethnic majority statehood, this paper argues that it is highly implausible to achieve peaceful coterminous successor states post-partition.

## II: Defining Partition:

First, to define “partition,” the term is often mistakenly conflated with secession (i.e. self-determination resulting in a division to a predecessor state) or simple settler colonialism and/or imperialism (i.e. the imposed land claim to a given territory by a particular alien group with the intent to either: a) integrate said territory into a pre-existing empire, or; b) claim a stake on a certain territory under the jurisdiction of a pre-existing state). Partition, however, can be defined as the creation of two (or more) independent states from a once unified predecessor state, separated by distinct

borders.<sup>1</sup> Note that partitions seek to establish entirely novel borderlines, meaning there was no former claim to the territory by the new state. Therefore, the definition does not include returning to once-inhabited lands that predated the unification of the predecessor state.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, for this paper, reference to “partition” is in the context of solely being instantiated by a third-party actor. Given the lack of explicit consent or the requirement for a majority agreement to draw new state borders, a partition is often opposed by the people residing in the predecessor state itself. Arguably, opposition can also be attributed to two ethnonationalist groups who believe they have a claim to the territory in its entirety. For instance, the UN General Assembly (UNGA)’s motion to partition Palestine to create a Jewish “homeland” has resulted in two distinct groups with feelings of one-state claim to the land and conflict of ownership in key areas, viz. Gaza and the West Bank.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, this paper will specifically reference “ethnic partitions,” that is, partitions that share the same characteristics as those outlined but include the necessary condition that the new states are meant to territorially separate two ethnic groups from the predecessor state (further details in Section II). Note that the terms “partition” and “ethnic partition” are used interchangeably.

### *i: Catalysts*

While the causes of a partition should be subject to case-by-case examination, political literature tends to take a two-pronged approach to address its catalyzing events. The spark is pre-existing ethnic conflict or tensions, and what follows is the will of an external actor—for instance, an imperial/colonial state or supra-state coalition like the UN—to mitigate said conflict or terminate their involvement in a given polity.<sup>4</sup>

Post-WWII global decolonization efforts marked an imperative shift in how partitions were

1 Brendan O’Leary, “Analysing partition: Definition, classification and explanation,” *Political Geography* 26, no. 8 (2007): 887, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2007.09.005>.

Note: See O’Leary’s 2007 article for further definitions of how distinct borders might manifest.

2 O’Leary, “Analysing partition: Definition, classification and explanation,” 888.

3 Walid Khalidi, “Revisiting the UNGA Partition Resolution,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 27, no. 1 (1997): 8-9, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2537806>.

4 O’Leary, “Analysing partition,” 895-896.

conceived and implemented. In the post-war era, colonial and imperial powers, most notably Britain, were beginning to lose influence and socioeconomic hegemonic control over their overseas territories, and tensions in various polities regarding land claims and self-determination were heightening. Thus, using the above reasoning, this paper argues that empires lost the will and faculties to tend to colonial territories, particularly when their lands were in significant post-war turmoil.<sup>5</sup> As the desire to withdraw from states heightened due to the growing intrastate ethnonationalism, post-colonial/imperial states retreated from their overseas territories. This is historically evidenced by Britain's withdrawal from Palestine and political withdrawal from India for administrative ease—which will be further expanded upon in Section V of this paper.<sup>6</sup> Ultimately, it is quick and messy exit strategies, as well as inadequate state border development, that leads to ethnic cleansing to construct a homogeneous post-partition state. Further, even when states are established, it is a history of violence that intergenerationally precipitates incessant violence.

### III: Defining “Ethnic Majority” and its Implications to Consequent States

The key element differentiating ethnic partitioning from other forms of partition-based intervention is its distinct reliance on segregating two or more ethnonational identities to create successor state borders that render each ethnic group the majority of their given novel state. The intention is that the new states' laws, institutions, etc., will be constructed by prioritizing the will of the majority ethnic group—i.e., Pakistan became an Islamic Republic post-partition. Hence, for this paper, “ethnic majority” will signify more than just a majority composed of a given ethnic group; the definition includes the intention of giving said group(s) territorial autonomy and the right to self-governance.

This distinction is paramount to the discourse regarding the formation of the ethnic majority state during ethnic partition, particularly due to the presence of intersectionality in the identity of a given

populace. Discerning which side of the freshly-cut border people belong is inherently challenging, given that identity is multifaceted. As such, people residing in a given predecessor state may identify with both their ethnonational group and their state affiliation, where they possess citizenship. For instance, a Catalan might refer to themselves as both Catalan and Spanish. Specifically, in the case of partition, this could manifest in people being coerced into choosing a side, ergo eliminating any legitimate acknowledgment of their holistic identities. Arguably, this is one of the contributing factors to the fact that a significant portion of the world's Muslims still reside in India.<sup>7</sup> This then catalyzes continued intrastate conflict and hostility towards certain ethnic groups.

By extension, not only is the predecessor state unaware or unwilling to acknowledge intersectional identities, but by virtue of partition being externally imposed, often territorial claims are also not adequately sated. Consequently, novel borders are not always able to rid the produced states of ethnic cleavages, thus resulting in an underdeveloped comprehension of national identities. This insecurity can be argued to significantly contribute to continued tensions between ethnic groups. Accordingly, these national identities are often constructed on the basis of “othering” the opposing group. This paper argues that this inevitably results in intrastate tension between the new and stable ethnonational majority and the inevitably existent minority group, as the sheer nature of partition prevents complete homogeneity. Further, it argues that interstate tension between the consequent states prevents a positive sociopolitical outlook toward the other state. This result is intrinsic to ethnic partitioning because it is necessarily the case that the predecessor states already exemplify a tendency towards deep divisions, coupled with “othering” tactics that only exacerbate such issues.<sup>8</sup> Under this, pre-partition intrastate conflict only transfers into a cross-border inter-state conflict where poorly drawn state lines result in continued territorial disputes. This is currently transpiring in the India-Pakistan disputed land claims of Jammu and Kashmir—a militant region that is administered by

5 Clive J. Christie, “Partition, Separatism and National Identity: A Reassessment,” *The Political Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (1992): 75, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-923X.1992.tb00885.x>.

6 Radha Kumar, “The Troubled History of Partition,” *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 1 (1997): 26, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20047907>.

7 John McGarry and Margaret Moore, “The Problems with Partition,” *Politics and the Life Sciences* 16, no. 2 (1997): 267, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4236362>.

8 Smith, A. D., “States and Homelands: the Social and Geopolitical Implications of National Territory,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 10, no. 3 (1981): 189-190, <https://doi-org.proxy.queensu.ca/10.1177/03058298810100030201>.



India yet has a significant Muslim majority.<sup>9</sup>

#### **IV: Ensuing Political Powers & the International Response to Partition**

The exclusionary nature of post-ethnic partition states has severe impacts on maintaining peace, with the most prominent effect being the rise of nationalist sentiments. Intense nationalism threatens the prospect of successful democracy in the resulting states due to weakened governance and the continued perceived threat of minority groups to ethnic heterogeneity.<sup>10</sup> It is this objective of cleansing the new territory of the othered group that leads to the exorbitant number of deaths and displacements that have historically been observed during partitions. It should come as no surprise that hostility towards the othered groups continues post-partition when people are murdered and displaced en masse.<sup>11</sup> This perceived need for vehement nationalism to protect the needs of a given ethnonational group leads to periods of disarray, where people look to strong leadership and, in some cases, authoritarian solutions.<sup>12</sup> The lack of unity also furthers susceptibility to military coups, notably seen in Palestine and Pakistan.<sup>13</sup> The marriage between self-determination rights being benign—due to colonial tyranny and confusion of what and who constitutes a given post-partition state—even results in states that were “born democratic” suffering due to poorly erected civil institutions, ergo threatening democratic ideals.<sup>14</sup> This is present in India, where while it is considered to be the “world’s largest democracy,” a history of government corruption through internal conflict with Muslims and other minority groups, like Sikhs, has instantiated the regression of democratic practices in the state. Thus, India’s position contributes to the narrative of a continued perpetuation of weak

9 Kumar, “Troubled History of Partition,” 30.

10 Amitai Etzioni, “The Evils of Self-Determination,” *Foreign Policy* 89 (Winter 1992-1993): 21-23, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1149071>.

11 Radha Kumar, 2004. “Settling Partition Hostilities: Lessons Learned, Options Ahead,” in *The fate of the nation state*, ed. Michel Seymour (Montreal: McGill Queen’s University Press, 2004), 248.

12 Christie, “Partition, Separatism, National Identity,” 69.

13 Christie, “Partition, Separatism, National Identity,” 77.

14 Thomas Chapman and Philip G. Roeder, “Partition as a Solution to Wars of Nationalism: The Importance of Institutions,” *The American Political Science Review* 101, no. 4 (2007): <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27644478>.

15 Chapman and Roeder, “Partition as a Solution to Wars of Nationalism: The Importance of Institutions,” 677.

16 Takashi Inoguchi and Paul Bacon, “Empire, hierarchy, and hegemony: American grand strategy and the construction of order in the Asia-Pacific,” *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 5, no. 2 (2005): 118, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26156570>.

17 Khalidi, “Revisiting UNGA,” 5.

18 Leila Farsakh, ‘The “Right to Have Rights”: Partition and Palestinian Self Determination.’ *Journal of Palestine Studies* 47, no. 1 (2017): 63, <https://doi.org/10.1525/jps.2017.47.1.56>.

government systems that cannot adequately account for partition-driven violence and turmoil.<sup>15</sup>

While imperialism and, by virtue of this, partition itself, is often viewed as a historical issue, this paper argues that exorbitant power afforded to certain states—in what is referred to as the “hierarchy of hegemony” to interject in the political affairs of other states—acts as a proxy for modern imperialism.<sup>16</sup> Thus, if imperialism is not truly a historical issue, it suggests that partitions should not be treated as such either. It is this interventionist nature that affords some states the ability to throw others into disunity, particularly permanent UN Security Council member states, which hold very little international political repercussions for eliciting geopolitical conflict due to veto power.

This relationship is evident in the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where responsibility for the colonial state, its civil war, and corresponding ethnic conflict was deferred to the UN.<sup>17</sup> As the conflict reaches a climax and Israel continues its strong allyship with the US, the UN has become hesitant to act, furthering the violence.<sup>18</sup> Thus, even an ethnic partition agreed upon by international actors in 1945 is still experiencing significant conflict and now war, 78 years later.

Moreover, there is no clause or convention ratified in international law directly addressing the prevention of ethnic partitions and its consequential ethnic cleansing. However, Article 2(4) of the Charter of the United Nations states:

“The Organization and its Members, in pursuit of the purposes stated in Article 1, shall act in accordance with the following principles. [...] 4. All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force

against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.”<sup>19</sup>

Given this, the UNGA Partition Resolution regarding Israel and Palestine, resulting in a directly sanctioned partition, contradicts what is codified in the charter. Therefore, the lack of clarity surrounding partition would likely exacerbate violence during and after the process solely because there are limited means to actively prevent both the action itself and the ensuing disarray post-partition. The presented issue of modern partition-instigated violence and the lack of legislation to address it create an international community both conducive to and complicit in partition-based violence.

### **V: Exemplifying Post-Partition Tensions: The India & Pakistan Case**

One of the most prominently cited examples of ethnic partition is that of India. The partitioning of India and Pakistan in 1947 separated the former British Raj into three states, India, Pakistan, and East Pakistan—which would later secede in 1971 to create sovereign Bangladesh—marking the most sizable partition of the twentieth century.<sup>20</sup> It is indisputable that the partitioning itself was brutal and violent, with over one million reported deaths and fifteen million displaced throughout the conflict’s most bloody period.<sup>21</sup>

*Divide et impera*, or “divide and rule,” was the British Empire’s motto for exerting control over its several colonies and overseas territories, including India in its pre-partition territorial form.<sup>22</sup> The notion of divide and conquer in imperial times persisted until the end of the British Raj, first acting as a means to dominate the Indian regime by creating a cleavage between Muslims and Hindus. Domination was manifested as a third-party interventionist agent, the British, was required to maintain peace between the two groups. An undisclosed British official’s October 1945

notes, recently posted in the UK National Archives of 2022, revealed the empire’s acknowledgment of escalating tensions between Muslims and Hindus. Believing that these two groups had a more violent predisposition, the British believed that emphasizing the conflict between the two ethnonational groups would elicit a need for persistent British imperial rule in the territory. Consequently, when the British Empire exited, providing India with dominion status, they believed the only means to do this was to partition Muslims and Hindus to maintain the peace they could no longer provide.

This illustrates imperial withdrawal strategies and persisting tensions between the two groups. With a prerogative to exit the territory, India and Pakistan were not provided with adequate faculties to develop strong institutions and effectively self-govern. On par with civilian revolutions in places like France and even the early United States, it is this lack of strong governance that Kaushik Roy rightly characterizes as “spilling over into the streets;” where once empires could maintain peace, responsibility was turned onto already hateful civilians.<sup>23</sup> Driven by hatred for one another, intensified by British imperialist efforts to build tension, it becomes evident how violence became imminent.<sup>24</sup> These sentiments have persisted through modern territorial disputes, with the contested, militant areas of Jammu and Kashmir continuing to spark riots due to conflict between the Muslim majority and fear of suppression by Hindus and a small Sikh minority. Considering the region’s distinct culture and language, Kashmiri, there are historic claims to the land by all groups residing on it, as well as the issue of competing intersectional identities.<sup>25</sup> It is for this reason that the British left their territorial claim to Kashmir as a project for succeeding leaders in India and Pakistan, as there was no clear-cut example to begin with.<sup>26</sup>

Despite the prominent Muslim minority in India and the diverse diaspora that continues to per-

19 United Nations, Charter of the United Nations, 1945, 1 UNTS XVI, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter>.

20 Kumar, “Settling Partition Hostilities,” 251.

21 Kumar, “Troubled History of Partition,” 26.

22 Kaushik Roy, “Partition of India: Causes and Consequences Revisited,” *India Review* 13, no. 1 (2014): 77, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14736489.2014.873681>.

23 Roy, “Partition of India: Causes and Consequences Revisited,” 82.

24 Roy, “Partition of India: Causes and Consequences Revisited,” 77-78.

25 Sumit Ganguly and Kanti Bajpai, “India and the Crisis in Kashmir,” *Asian Survey* 34, no. 5 (1994): 402, <https://doi.org/140.182.176.13>.

26 Kumar, “Troubled History of Partition,” 30.

meate the “world’s largest democracy,” there has been a notable shift towards Hindu nationalism. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) continues to espouse homogenous Hindu values, going so far as to include nationalistic content in school curricula reforms from 1998-2004.<sup>27</sup> This is only escalated by burgeoning conflict surrounding the on-again-off-again push for Khalistan—a Sikh homeland. The current Prime Minister, Narendra Modi’s denial of allegations from Justin Trudeau concerning the murder of Khalistani leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar by Indian government officials seems to act as a catalyst to re-precipitate fortified sentiments in support of Sikh separatism.<sup>28</sup>

## VI: Acknowledging Counterexamples

One frequently cited example of a “successful” partition is that of Ireland—now Northern Ireland, the UK, and the Republic of Ireland—given that Ireland is often considered one of the most peaceful states in the world. This paper concedes that this is true; however, this does not detract from the credence of its thesis.

Initially, as reported by the BBC regarding the elevation of the terrorist threat level from “significant” to “severe” in early 2023, Northern Irish dissident republican factions, including the IRA, persisted in presenting a significant terrorist threat to the region.<sup>29</sup> This shift can largely be attributed to growing tensions in the region post-Brexit, where the majority voted against the decision.<sup>30</sup> As tensions continue to rise and Northern Ireland’s affinity to the UK develops dissenters, Northern Ireland may still be more peaceful than other post-partition states, but that does not necessarily render it peaceful.

Second, it is crucial to note that peace and anti-terrorism in Northern Ireland were significantly fiscally and procedurally supported by the European Union (EU) through the Peace and Reconciliation Fund. Therefore, this makes the case study an anomaly in terms of securing post-partition peace. As such, while other states are often forced to fend for themselves in peace brokering and institutional develop-

ment post-partition, Northern Ireland was privy to support from its suprastate affiliation with the EU.<sup>31</sup> Given this, such advantages do not represent the normative experience of post-partition states adequately, for if other states such as India and Pakistan had access to the same financial and governance aid, it is possible that achieving peace would become tenable.

## VII: Conclusion

In this paper, I argued that the inertly violent nature of ethnic partitioning normatively yields pejorative consequences, preventing peace between and amongst the resulting states. Ethnic cleansing, imperial impediments to the ability of successor states to self-govern, and the lack of international accountability and effort to ameliorate partition-based threats serve to prove that violence and tension are imminent repercussions of ethnic partitioning.

I acknowledge that peace itself is a subjective metric. As such, further normative theoretical analysis is needed regarding the extent to which a state ought to be nonviolent to be considered “peaceful.” However, this exceeds this paper’s scope.

The analysis presented in this paper underscores the need for a more nuanced comprehension of the reverberations to the consequent states in the short and long-term aftermath of ethnic partition. I hope that a more informed discourse on conflict resolution in a post-partition context will lead to international efforts to seek genuine and lasting peace rather than continuing to perpetuate cycles of violence and turmoil.

27 Martha C. Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 52-53

28 Nadine Yousef and Neal Razzell, “Who was Canadian Sikh leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar?” BBC, October 2, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-66860510>.

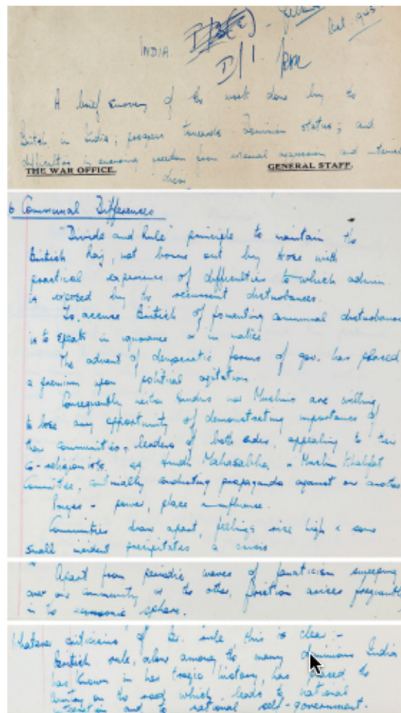
29 Julian O’Neill and Niall Glynn, “Northern Ireland Terrorism Threat Level Rises,” BBC, March 28, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-65096493>.

30 Michael O’Neill, “Brexit and the Irish border: consequences for the peace process,” *Rivista di Studi Politici Internazionali* 85, no. 3 (2018): 359-382, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26573153>.

31 Sean Byrne, Mislav Matic, and Eyob Fissuh, “The European Union Peace and Reconciliation Fund Impact on Northern Ireland.” *International Journal on World Peace* 24, no. 2 (2007): 88, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20752778>.

## Appendix Primary Source Images

Figure 1:



Note: A transcript can be located at <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/partition-of-british-india/source-3/>.

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# Understanding Russian Aggression, a Neorealist Analysis

Colin Dennis

## Introduction

In his inaugural speech, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said, "History is unfair. We are not the ones who have started this war. But we are the ones who have to finish it."<sup>1</sup> Russia's invasion of Ukraine was described by a United States senior defence official as the "... largest conventional military attack that's been seen since World War II."<sup>2</sup> Evidently, this invasion is very significant for the study of International Relations (IR) and specifically revitalizes debates around issues of war and peace (which is typically the focus of realist theory). This paper will present two points; first, international politics surrounding the Russia-Ukraine conflict can be best understood through a neorealist perspective. Secondly, Russia's aggression towards Ukraine is due to changes in the balance of power and Western expansionism. The purpose of this paper is to advocate for the adoption of neorealist assumptions in understanding developments in international politics. Neorealism, as opposed to its alternatives, offers a comprehensive understanding of Russia's aggression and reasons why actors operate as they do. Throughout this analysis, the terms "structural realism" and "neorealism" will be used interchangeably, adopting the theory of structural realism as conceived by Kenneth Waltz in *Theories of International Politics*.<sup>3</sup> This paper will proceed with a brief explanation of neorealism's key features and how these features materialize in the international system with reference to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The analysis shall then conclude with an examination of other theoretical approaches and their deficiencies.

## The Basics of Neorealism

Neorealism emphasizes that states are the most important actors in world politics, but the theory is not blind to the influence of non-state actors. According to neorealism, all states act according to the international structure, which is a state of anarchy. Such an anarchical structure exists because there is no higher

authority other than states themselves. The anarchic structure dictates that states maximize their power, as it is necessary for their survival. As Kenneth Waltz puts it, states act this way "...because some states may at any time use force, [therefore] all states must be prepared to do so-or live at the mercy of their militarily more vigorous neighbors."<sup>4</sup> The underlying principle behind this is the stronger a state appears, the safer it is. In this regard, states act in their self-interest for their survival. Moreover, Waltz considers states to be rational actors because states undertake a cost benefit analysis that drives their decision making, balancing their relative power against other states they might perceive as a threat. Waltz further identifies self-help as a key feature of the anarchic system and maintains that it applies in both the international economic and political contexts.<sup>5</sup> The arena that is world politics, represents a balance of power that defines the division of power between states. Neorealism does not see IR as a zero-sum game because the theory recognizes that self-interest can lead states into mutually beneficial agreements. While this theory is a simplification of reality, it is the most effective theoretical approach for making sense of world politics. However, like all theoretical approaches, it cannot explain every anomaly.

## Primary and Secondary Actors

The primacy of state actors is an important feature of neorealism and reflects the way in which the Russia-Ukraine conflict is unfolding. The conflict is taking place between a regional power in Russia and a sovereign state in Ukraine. Neorealism recognizes non-state actors and their efforts in the promotion of peace and cooperation but underlines the fact that they have a secondary role in world politics as they often fail to significantly influence state behaviour. This continues to hold true in this conflict as non-state actors have attempted to influence state behaviour, yet have often been without significant success. For example, the European Union (EU), one of the largest supranational

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1 "Volodymyr Zelenskyy's Inaugural Address." Official Website of the President of Ukraine, last modified May 20, 2019. <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/inavguracijna-promova-prezidenta-ukrayini-volodimira-zelensk-55489>.

2 Jeremy Herb, Ellie Kaufman, and Barbara Starr. "US orders 7,000 more troops to Europe following Russia's invasion of Ukraine." CNN, February 24, 2022. <https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/24/politics/us-military-ukraine-russia/index.html>

3 Kenneth N, Waltz. "Theory of International Politics", Reading: Addison - Wesley, (1979) pp.1-17 & 60-126.

4 Waltz, "Theory," 102

5 Waltz, "Theory," 89.

tional organizations, has taken measures on several fronts to help Ukraine and to punish Russia. The EU has imposed heavy sanctions, promised €3.6 million in military assistance, and helped mobilize €37.8 million for financial and humanitarian aid.<sup>6</sup> However, the largest amount of aid has come from states rather than international institutions, with the US already having committed €73.1 billion in aid.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the EU arguably remains a secondary actor as their decisions are not made autonomously but through the will of the member states. Therefore, the EU is one of the largest non-state actors in international politics but fails to have significant influence over important state actors.

Another international institution that is involved in the conflict is NATO, although they are not as involved as some might think. Since Ukraine remains outside of NATO, Russia was able to invade without triggering war with the West. NATO responded to the conflict by condemning Russian aggression and sending aid in the form of military capabilities. However, NATO and its member countries have remained on the side lines supporting Ukraine, opting not to fight alongside. NATO's mandate is determined by its member countries much like the EU but with less egalitarianism influence. Leading countries within the alliance, such as the US, have greater say in determining appropriate responses. One example of the inegalitarian nature of NATO is Donald Trump's ability to force the hand of member countries through the threat that the US would leave NATO if other countries did not increase funding.<sup>8</sup> NATO, just like the EU, suffers from a lack of unilateral state autonomy in decision-making and therefore cannot be classified as an independent actor. The alliance rests on the self-interests of its member states, and thus far, the result has not been a joining with Ukraine in the fight against Russian expansionism, but instead an establishment of support.

Additionally, militia groups have played a role in the conflict even before Russia's full-scale invasion

in 2022. Russian backed separatists and pro-Ukrainian militias have been fighting each other in Ukraine's Donbas region since 2014. In 2015, Paul Mulford wrote that the conflict between the mercenary groups on both sides was escalating and that "...it could lead to greater violence".<sup>9</sup> The major escalation took place once Russia and their state military formally invaded Ukraine, prompting a response from their state military. Since Ukraine and Russia formally entered into armed conflict, there has been a much larger effect on world politics. Namely, the introduction of sanctions has greatly impacted the global economy, states bordering Russia are bracing for invasion, and billions of dollars in financial, military, and humanitarian aid have been transported. Interestingly, this level of global involvement was not present during the conflict between militias, before Russia and Ukraine formally entered the war. Therefore, state actors can be properly classified as primary actors in international relations, while militias are secondary actors.

### How States Act

States operate in an anarchic system in which they must employ self-help to survive. Neorealism recognizes the importance and benefit of cooperation between states, but this does not overcome the need for states to be their own saviours. Waltz observes that a self-help system is, "...one in which those who do not help themselves, or who do so less effectively than others, will fail to prosper, will lay themselves open to dangers, [and] will suffer."<sup>10</sup> This is evidently true when examining the war in Ukraine, as no other states have entered the war. Most states are simply observing or cautiously supporting Ukraine through any means they deem acceptable. While states such as the US, France, and Germany have all given military aid to Ukraine, they are still ultimately relying on Ukraine to be its own saviour. Ukrainian soldiers are the ones defending their homeland, exemplifying the neorealist self-help aspect of IR.

6 Kristin Archick. "Russia's War Against Ukraine: European Union Responses and U.S.-EU Relations." Congressional Research Service. (2023). [https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IN/IN11897#:~:text=Through%20its%20European%20Peace%20Facility,supplies%20\(%E2%82%AC380%20million\)](https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IN/IN11897#:~:text=Through%20its%20European%20Peace%20Facility,supplies%20(%E2%82%AC380%20million)).

7 Katelyn Bushnell, André Frank, Lukas Franz, Ivan Kharitonov, Stefan Schramm, and Christoph Trebesch. "Ukraine Support Tracker: A Database of Military, Financial and Humanitarian Aid to Ukraine." Kiel Institute for the World Economy. (2023). <https://www.ifw-kiel.de/topics/war-against-ukraine/ukraine-support-tracker>

8 Johannes Thimm. "NATO: US Strategic Dominance and Unequal Burden-Sharing Are Two Sides of the Same Coin." The German Institute for International and Security Affairs. (2018).

9 Joshua P. Mulford. "Non-State Actors in the Russo-Ukrainian War." *Connections* 15, no. 2 (2016): 102. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26326442>

10 Waltz, "Theory," 118.

Russia's invasion proves that hard power remains king in the international arena. Hard power refers to coercive means of influencing states, such as economic and military force, as opposed to soft power which is non-coercive.<sup>11</sup> From the intense military fighting to the economic sanctions posed on Russia, hard power has been on full display in this conflict. Russia's modern hybrid war strategy represents a strategy that captures the effectiveness of hard power supported by the ideological and diplomatic elements of soft power. The reason why hard power is more important in their war strategy is that without it there would be no war. Meanwhile, if they were not to employ soft power methods there would still be a war. The fact that the world is more likely to respond to uses of hard power highlights its primacy. The use of hard power is much more determinant but also has many risks, such as economic turmoil, diplomatic enmity, and civilian and military casualties. One does not have to go back very far in history to find instances of states using hard power to invade other sovereign states for the purpose of maximizing their power. When the US invaded Iraq in 2003, it was hailed as a peace effort to try and demilitarize Iraq. Years after the fact, it has become evident that the US was determined to invade Iraq whether or not they had a legitimate reason for war. As James Fallows puts it in *The Right and Wrong Questions About the Iraq War*, “[p]lans for the invasion had already been underway for months. The war was already coming; the “reason” for war just had to catch up.”<sup>12</sup> The US wanted to invade Iraq before they had a reason to do so, they just had to sell the narrative to receive backing for the war. The misinformation that was deployed by the US government to sell the war in Iraq can be seen as the “...start[ing] point in a new period of widespread state-sanctioned misinformation, in which China and Russia have become the two most prominent actors”.<sup>13</sup> This narrative rings true in regard to the situation in Ukraine as Russian officials had to devise reasons for their invasion. As such, Russia has mirrored the US, painting the war

in Ukraine as a necessary and worthwhile cause.

Furthermore, Waltz describes states as, “... unitary actors who, at a minimum, seek their own preservation and, at a maximum, drive for universal domination”.<sup>14</sup> From this description it is easy to see where both Ukraine and Russia fall. Ukraine is acting for their own preservation while Russia is dominating for the sake of power maximization. Russia is trying to dominate surrounding territories and has been doing so for many years. There are several examples of Russian expansion, from arctic expansion in 2007 with the Mir-1 and Mir-2 submarines, to the Russo-Georgian war in 2008, and the annexation of Crimea in 2014.<sup>15</sup> These external efforts show a pattern of Russian power maximization through physical intervention.

### **Balance of Power**

Waltz sees the balance of power as a stabilizing force within IR that refers to the ways in which power is divided between states. The anarchic system of world politics forces states to work towards a balance of power. There is stability in the international system when economic, diplomatic and military capabilities are divided between states so that no one state can dominate. Since the end of the Cold War, the balance of power seems to have been distorted and the structure of world politics has moved from a bipolar system to a “unipolar moment” with the United States as the sole hegemon.<sup>16</sup> Over time, countries such as China and India began to emerge as influential powers in the east creating what Waltz refers to as a “multipolar system”. Russia has been working to restore its status as a hegemon and challenge the balance of world power.

It is conceivable that Russia is threatened by the current balance of power. The West is expanding in the form of diplomatic relations and international institutions such as NATO and the EU. Western expansionism has seen influence spread politically, economically, and militarily to countries that border Russia. As a former foe, Russia most likely sees NATO in Europe as a foreign embodiment of the US military,

11 Joseph S. Nye. “Soft Power.” *Foreign Policy*, no. 80 (1990): 153–71. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1148580>.

12 James Fallows. “The Right and Wrong Questions About the Iraq War.” *The Atlantic*, May 19, 2015. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/05/the-right-and-wrong-questions-about-the-iraq-war/393497/>

13 Peter Beaumont. “The invasion of Iraq was a turning point on to a path that led towards Ukraine.” *The Guardian*, March 19, 2023. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/mar/19/2003-iraq-invasion-legacy-west-international-law-ukraine>

14 Waltz, “Theory,” 118

15 “Relations With Ukraine.”, NATO, last updated March 7, 2024. [https://www.nato.int/cps/fr/natohq/topics\\_37750.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/fr/natohq/topics_37750.htm?selectedLocale=en)

16 T. V. Paul. “The Post–Cold War Era: Restraining the United States.” In *Restraining Great Powers: Soft Balancing from Empires to the Global Era*, (Yale University Press, 2018), 97. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv5cg9s2.9>.



which would be alarming to Russia and would represent a threat to their security. Russia has warned of the consequences of NATO expansionism for years and has taken many steps to deter Ukraine from joining the defence alliance. In 2017, Ukraine adopted legislation “...reinstating membership in NATO as a strategic foreign and security policy objective...”, making it clear to Russia of their intentions to join.<sup>17</sup> Since then, Russia has gone to extreme lengths to keep Ukraine out of NATO, with Russian President Vladimir Putin insisting that the need to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO was a pretext for war.<sup>18</sup> Ever since war broke out in the Donbas region of Ukraine after the annexation of Crimea, Western states have been militarily training Ukrainian troops. In 2015, the Canadian Military launched operation UNIFIER, with an objective to train “Ukrainian military and security personnel in battlefield tactics and advanced military skills.”<sup>19</sup> Canada and other NATO nations training Ukrainian soldiers effectively aligns Ukraine with the West, posing a threat to Russia’s balance of power.

To put this into perspective, one can look at a similar case from the point of view of the US. What if Russia began training Canadian or Mexican troops? On this view, some propose that there is a level of sanctity in maintaining buffer states to prevent possible threats from existing directly on a state’s border. But this raises the question of whether states actually have a right to buffer states. To this, we assert that no such right exists because the buffer state, as a sovereign nation, has a right to join whatever alliances and agreements they want. But with no powerful international governing force, international institutions like NATO must recognize that their expansion can be threatening and could possibly upset the balance of power. We must keep Russia’s perspective in mind: “Where we see Moscow’s aggression, Putin sees defense”.<sup>20</sup> NATO expansion is heavily correlated with the expansion of US influence, which causes their rel-

ative power to grow. With NATO entering states like Estonia and Latvia, this would be perceived by Russia as a Western military expansion. In the same situation, it is hard to imagine that the US would passively stand by as a Russian defence alliance surrounds them; the US would likely also see aggression as a defensive tactic. It would be unacceptable to the US for one of their buffer countries to fall under Russian influence, let alone three buffer countries. Just as the US created the Monroe Doctrine to distance itself from European influence, Russia has a similar motive to repel Western influence in the form of NATO.

John Mearsheimer, an influential structural realist scholar, has held that since the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, “...the United States and its European allies share most of the responsibility for the crisis”.<sup>21</sup> Mearsheimer recognized from the beginning that NATO’s eastern expansion threatened Russian interests; Putin was quoted as saying the admittance of Georgia and Ukraine to NATO would represent a “direct threat” to Russia.<sup>22</sup> But even after this, Western leaders have dismissed Russia’s concerns claiming there is no credible threat to Russian interests. Many in the West have argued that Russia is not concerned about NATO expansion but primarily seeks to rebuild a Russian empire. However, as Mearsheimer points out, if this were true, signs of Putin’s plans would have materialized prior to Russian invasion of Crimea in 2014.<sup>23</sup> This leaves a clear motive for Russian aggression: the threat of NATO expansion that has established itself right on the Russian border. Putin has for a long time warned about the consequences of such expansion and Western leaders have been ignoring them until now.

### **Alternative Theories and Their Shortcomings**

This paper has contended that structural realism is the most effective approach for studying the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Having analyzed the conflict through a neorealist lens, we will now ex-

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17 NATO, “Relations With Ukraine.”

18 Lara Jakes, Edward Wong. “NATO Won’t Let Ukraine Join Soon. Here’s Why.” The New York Times, January 13, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/13/us/politics/nato-ukraine.html>

19 National Defence. “Operation UNIFIER.” Government of Canada. Last modified November 28, 2023. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/current-operations/operation-unifier.html>

20 Ken Morowitz. “Did NATO Expansion Really Cause Putin’s Invasion?” The Foreign Service Journal. (2022). <https://afsa.org/did-nato-expansion-really-cause-putins-invasion>

21 John T. Mearsheimer “Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West’s Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin.” Foreign Affairs Vol. 93, No.5, (2014): 77.

22 Mearsheimer “Why”

23 Mearsheimer “Why,” 85.

amine alternative theories and how they might explain the conflict. As we will find out, dominant approaches such as classical realism, constructivism, and liberal institutionalism fail to grasp what drives state action and therefore do not prove effective in studying the given conflict.

Classical realism was a predecessor to neorealism and identifies a primary attempt to understand issues of war and peace. The main reason why this theory does not capture the reality of world politics is that it undervalues the importance of non-state actors. In classical realism, state actors are the sole unit of analysis. As Hans Morgenthau writes in *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, "...the nation state [is] the ultimate point of reference of contemporary foreign policy."<sup>24</sup> This approach would overlook the implications of NATO and how non-state actors have contributed to the conflict in a secondary role to state actors. Neorealism has improved upon the ideas of classical realism by keeping states as the primary unit of analysis but opening the analysis to the impacts of non-state actors in a secondary manner.

Additionally, classical realism fails to recognize possible cooperation between states as the theory assumes that states are constantly competing against each other for power. Morgenthau states that "...the struggle for power is universal in time and space and is an undeniable fact of experience."<sup>25</sup> This assumption solely allows for the understanding that states can only mutually benefit from cooperation and implies that cooperation is not sustainable. However, the reality is that states give resources to others in times of need without a direct mutual benefit. Since the Russian invasion, many states have sent military and financial aid to Ukraine as a diplomatic gesture of goodwill. States are still acting in their own self-interest but not

in the competitive way in which Morgenthau conceived, proving classical realism is deficient.

Constructivism was a successor to neorealism as the dominant paradigm in IR theory. Constructivism believes that the structure of world politics and the actions of actors are determined by socially constructed ideas and norms. This is counter to the structural realist view that states act according to their strategic interest. Alan Bloomfield, a proponent of constructivism, holds that "[n]orms apply to multiple actors and define 'standard[s] of appropriate behaviour for actors within a given identity'."<sup>26</sup> However, this theory overemphasizes the importance of norms when determining state action as "Putin is trampling over most if not all of the norms pertaining to the use of force."<sup>27</sup> Global norms are materialized in the United Nations (UN) Charter, which has had little effect on slowing Putin's aggression. One such norm that Putin has overlooked is the use of the UN Security Council as a mediator of conflict. According to Article 39 of the UN Charter, "The Security Council shall determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression."<sup>28</sup> However, we should note that Russia has yet to sign the UN Charter despite being a UN member since 1991.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, one does not need to go back far in history to find another example of Russia violating international law. One such example was the breach of the 1994 Budapest memorandum, which was an agreement between the US, the United Kingdom and Russia, designed "...to pledge security assurances to Ukraine."<sup>30</sup> This treaty was breached in 2014 when Russia illegally invaded Ukraine and annexed Crimea. From this, it is evident that international law represents a weak barrier for international conflict, showcasing that states only pay attention to international laws and norm if they align with their national self-interest. As such, constructiv-

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24 Hans J. Morgenthau. "Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, brief edition." Boston: McGraw-Hill, (1948): 11-12.

25 Morgenthau, "Politics," 36.

26 Alan Bloomfield. "Norm Antipreneurs and Theorising Resistance to Normative Change." *Review of International Studies* 42, no. 2, (2016): 310.

27 Stephen M. Walt. "An International Relations Theory Guide to the War in Ukraine." *Foreign Policy*, March 8, 2022. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/03/08/an-international-relations-theory-guide-to-ukraines-war>

28 United Nations. 1973. "United Nations Charter." United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter>

29 Dmytro Natalukha, Alina Polyakova, Danial Fried, Angela Stent, and Samuel Charap. 2023. "Should Ukraine Negotiate With Russia?" *Foreign Affairs*, July 13, 2023. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/responses/should-america-push-ukraine-negotiate-russia-end-war>

30 Mariana Budjerin, and Matthew Bunn. "Budapest Memorandum at 25: Between Past and Future." Harvard Kennedy School (2020). <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/publications/budapest-memorandum-25-between-past-and-future>

ism exhibits shortcoming in examining this conflict.

The last alternative theory, liberal institutionalism emphasizes the importance of institutions for the cooperation between states and for sustainable peace. A key theorist in this field of study is Robert Keohane, who asserts that "...[regimes] facilitate the making of substantive agreements by providing a framework of rules, norms, principles, and procedures for negotiation".<sup>31</sup> Just like constructivism, there is an idealist view that states will follow international norms, which in the context of Russia is untrue. As discussed earlier in this paper, institutions have played a very minor role in ensuring peace and stability. In fact, as we have seen with NATO, institutions can create divisions between members and non-members to the point of provoking state aggression. As such, liberal institutionalism has adopted overly idealistic views of world politics, which has led to the naïve belief that conflict in Europe was resolved thanks to international regimes like the EU and the UN. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has uncovered this liberal fallacy and shown that states act primarily according to their strategic interest and are willing to break international laws, rendering this theory inadequate.

## Conclusion

In light of the deficiencies found in alternative theories, we conclude that neorealism is the most effective theoretical approach for understanding the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The war has demonstrated that states remain the most important actors on the world stage, motivated to action by self-interest and the changing balance of power rather than international rules and norms. Russia's war in Ukraine has shocked many contemporary scholars who believed that neorealism was a relic of the past and no longer reflected the reality of IR. Through this conflict, we have seen the dangers of overly idealist foreign policy grounded in hope rather than reality. While neorealism is not a perfect theory, it provides the best understanding of what drives state actions. Much like cars, newer theoretical models try to address all possible needs but emerge as overly complex and unreliable, whereas older models like neorealism are preferred for their simplicity and durability. This understanding carries heavy implications for the study of IR as it devalues contemporary approaches that focus on the importance of institutions. By employing

neorealism, policymakers and scholars can more accurately predict when conflicts will arise and how they might be avoided.

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# Genocide and Regime Change: A Comparative Analysis of Cambodia

Jonathan Owen

The late American political rights advocate and minister Martin Luther King, Jr. once opined, “Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”<sup>1</sup> Yet, when dealing with ethnic or ideological conflict and division, states rarely opt for loving their ‘enemy.’ Throughout the twentieth century, the world has seen dozens of blood-stained genocides wreak terror over ethnic and religious disputes. Such conflicts produce consequences ranging from collapsed economies to mass extinction and complete government overhaul. The connection between genocides and the consequences of regime change is significant and is the primary concern of this paper. A regime change indiscriminately affects everyone, regardless of ethnic or religious differences. The question arises of how genocide influences a regime change. The way citizens, victims, perpetrators of genocide, organizations, and governments respond or react significantly affects who remains in power following a genocide. This article will explore the effects of genocide on countries’ economies, the topic of global isolation, and finally engage with a counterargument. I will argue that genocide catalyzes regime change in nations by delegitimizing them internationally and weakening them domestically.

For this piece, the term genocide will follow the UN’s definition wherein genocide refers to “...a crime committed with the intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, in whole or in part.”<sup>2</sup> The UN definition does not include political groups, which it distinguishes as “cultural genocide.” However, this paper will include the intent to eliminate political groups within the term “genocide.”

In what follows, I employ the Millan comparative methodology of most similar cases to examine the consequences genocide has on regimes. I will look at cases with similar control variables (genocide) and investigate their correlation with regime change. I will primarily be looking at the case of Cambodia and will compare this case with various other cases of genocide. There is no more compelling example than the Cambodian genocide of 1975-1979, wherein leader Pol Pot and his fanatical communist, China-backed

Khmer Rouge, exterminated approximately a third of its population.<sup>3</sup> The actions of the Khmer Rouge significantly debilitated the nation of Cambodia and put its international legitimacy in distress. Such legitimacy issues and regional incapacitation led to a foreign invasion, the UN taking authority, and, eventually, a democratic election.

To understand how genocide impacted Cambodia’s change in government, one must first know the history of the incumbent parties and leaders. The events of Cambodia and the Cambodian genocide can be split into two periods. First, from the 1950s to 1988, consisting of the rise and fall of the Khmer Rouge and second, from 1989 to 1993, when Vietnam pulled out of Cambodia and the UN instituted free elections. For reference, a brief timeline of Cambodia’s government until the withdrawal of Vietnam is as follows: 1953 independence from France; 1955 King Sihanouk abdicated to his father Norodom Suramarit; 1970, the king was ousted, and a republic was established; 1975 Khmer Rouge took Phnom Penh and declared the Kingdom of Cambodia; 1976 Khmer Rouge established the Democratic Kampuchea (still under the authoritarian rule of the Khmer Rouge); 1979 Vietnamese troops captured Phnom Penh and instituted the People’s Republic of Kampuchea ending the rule of the Khmer Rouge.

Cambodia’s timeline from 1989 to 1993 is as follows: In 1989, Vietnam withdrew from Cambodia; in 1992, the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) took control; in 1993, Cambodia held a free election where the National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia (FUNCINPEC) won and formed a coalition with the Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) establishing a constitutional monarchy. Simultaneously, Sihanouk was reinstated as king, and Hun Sen, the leader of the CPP, threatened to secede from Cambodia, but a power-sharing agreement convinced him otherwise and appointed him Cambodia’s second Prime Minister.

## Genocide’s Effect on Economies

When states commit genocidal operations, international actors often freeze foreign aid, resulting

1 Luther, Martin King, Jr. *Strength to love* (1st ed). Harper & Row, 1963.

2 “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide 1948.” United Nations, December 9, 1948.

3 Peak, Thomas. “Halting Genocide in a Post-Liberal International Order: Intervention, Institutions and Norms.” *International affairs* (London) 99, no. 2 (2023): 787–804. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iad003>

in citizens who rely on foreign assistance demanding regime change. For example, in Rwanda, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a Tutsi-dominated political party, had been fighting the Hutu government since 1990 in a civil war. In 1994, the Hutu government killed over 800,000 Tutsis, dealing a devastating blow to the RPF's resistance in the war.<sup>4</sup> The intentional mass murder of Tutsis was considered genocide by the West and other international players. Shortly thereafter, foreign aid to Rwanda plummeted, making its gross domestic product (GDP) fall by almost 60% and crippling the country's ability to attract private investment.<sup>5</sup> With the nation's economy in ruins, the Tutsi RPF took advantage of the weakened state and overthrew the government. Consequently, the RPF took control of the Rwandan government and has since ruled. It is important to note that since the 1960s, Rwanda's population has consistently been 85% Hutu and 14% Tutsi.

It is reasonable to conclude that it was highly unlikely for the Tutsis to hold a majority government in Rwanda, and it was the direct result of countries withdrawing aid and civilian unrest that weakened Rwanda enough that the Tutsis could take power. Thus, the Rwandan genocide delegitimized the Hutu power, prompting foreign aid cuts (destroying the economy), which, accompanied by an already distressed domestic population, resulted in a regime change. Akin to cutting foreign aid, regimes are delegitimized and fall into economic turmoil in many other ways.

The Cambodian genocide catastrophically weakened the country's economy in the short and long term, which accelerated regime change. First, short-term effects like food shortages and famine caused by the regime's harsh and failed agrarian policies created civil unrest amongst citizens, leading to the closure of factories, schools, universities, hospitals, and all other private institutions.<sup>6</sup> Internal opposition and paranoia resulting

from the food scarcity within the governing elite and the regime's violence weakened the regime's cohesion.<sup>7</sup> Concurrently, Cambodian resistance groups, aided by outside actors, vigorously battled the Khmer Rouge, cutting their military prowess and draining capital. The Khmer Rouge's communist economic approach was defective, and running their operations was increasingly expensive. The Khmer Rouge's policies almost immediately created a stagnating economy.

Secondly, the Khmer Rouge's actions had long-term impacts on Cambodia's economy and its ability to develop. Donald Grasse illustrates that genocide devastates a country and its economic capacities immediately and in the long term. He notes that the areas most affected by the Khmer Rouge had the greatest repression and that repression "...undermines development by delimiting human capital."<sup>8</sup> Cambodia's development was restricted by its low human capital, and thus, its economy remained incapacitated. Further, Grasse contends,

A paucity of skilled intellectuals in the aftermath of state violence places communities on diverging development paths: places more adversely impacted compensate for low education levels with behaviors that reinforce low income—such as underinvesting in education, health, and specialized training—since doing so is too costly when starting from a level of extreme poverty and low education. The consequence of mass repression is a poverty trap.<sup>9</sup>

Cambodia was weakened for many years thereafter as the educated and economically powerful were eliminated, and their talent pool or political leadership was so depleted that there was little resistance to foreign intervention. The Khmer Rouge had no capital to support its ventures and became unable to defend itself because it had killed those capable of ruling and had

4 Downes, Alexander, and Lindsey O'Rourke. "You Can't Always Get What You Want: Why Foreign-Imposed Regime Change Seldom Improves Interstate Relations." *International Security* 41, no. 2 (2016): 43–89. [https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC\\_a\\_00256](https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00256)

5 "Rwanda Foreign Aid." *TheGlobalEconomy.com*. n.d. [https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Rwanda/foreign\\_aid/](https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Rwanda/foreign_aid/)

6 "Khmer Rouge ideology." *Holocaust Memorial Day Trust*. (n.d.). <https://www.hmd.org.uk/learn-about-the-holocaust-and-genocides/cambodia/khmer-rouge-ideology/>

7 Lambert, Hélène. "The pol pot regime: Race, power and genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975– 79." *International Affairs* 73, no. 2 (1997): 398–398. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2623892>

8 Grasse, Donald. "State Terror and Long-Run Development: The Persistence of the Khmer Rouge." *The American political science review* (2023): 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055423000382>

9 Grasse, "State Terror and Long-Run Development: The Persistence of the Khmer Rouge," 1.

created failed agrarian societies.

The genocide weakened Cambodia in the long and short term to an extent that allowed for the Vietnamese invasion and intervention. Given the surging death toll in Cambodia, the West became increasingly open to a change in Cambodian leadership. With a slightly more lenient international community and a state weakened by a lack of economic drivers and famine, the Vietnamese invaded. As mentioned, Vietnam's primary objective in Cambodia was to eliminate the Khmer Rouge, and their success ultimately paved the way for regime change by free elections facilitated by the UN. Thus, the Cambodian genocide created enough short-term problems (famine and civil unrest) and long-term consequences (economic stagnation and lack of educated workers) to weaken the country domestically, prompting international intercession and, consequently, regime change. One can then see that in Rwanda and Cambodia, genocide was a driving factor behind the economic collapse of each country, which, in turn, catalyzed regime change.

### **Global Isolation**

To avoid supporting genocide, countries will break trade agreements or sanction countries committing genocide; this isolates and weakens the state, catalyzing regime change. Such economic devices are mainly intended as deterrents, and while their effectiveness as a deterrent is questionable, their effects on regime change are apparent. In the Guatemala case study, the government fought a civil war against various left-wing guerrilla groups from 1960 to 1996, with a prominent genocide of the Maya people occurring from 1981-1983.<sup>10</sup> Initially, the United States supported the Guatemalan government, hoping to quell any socialist uprisings. In 1981, however, the Guatemalan government and local militias massacred 166,000 Maya civilians and another 34,000 others, which was later named the Maya Genocide or Silent Holocaust. Surrounding the Maya Genocide were two rounds of US economic sanctions as the United States did not want to appear as supporting a genocidal regime. The first US sanction came before the genocide in 1977,

suspending the sale of any military equipment by the Pentagon as the US sought improvements in human rights and democratic reforms in Guatemala.<sup>11</sup> The second round followed the genocide in 1983, blocking military assistance "...until a civilian government came to power and brought an end to gross violations of human rights in the country."<sup>12</sup> While the war persisted for another ten years, the sanctions made it increasingly difficult for the Guatemalan military to get weapons and munitions. The sanctions left the once US-backed Guatemalan government in a weakened state, allowing for greater left-wing resistance. The civil war concluded in 1996 with a peace signing (the Oslo Accords) between the Guatemalan government and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity. Following the peace accord, the Guatemalan Unionist Party elected Álvaro Arzú, a leftist leader, as president. Guatemala, formerly under a right-wing authoritarian dictatorship, democratically elected a left-wing president. The economic sanctions encompassing the Maya Genocide delegitimized the government and weakened the nation, allowing the revolutionary group to (1) fight back harder and (2) have more say in the conclusion of the war (disestablishment of dictatorship).<sup>13</sup> Thus, economic sanctions surrounding the Maya genocide helped catalyze regime change in Guatemala.

The Khmer Rouge's genocide of Cambodians delegitimized their authority to the international community. First, the United States and Australia (two influential players in the region) both strongly and openly condemned the Khmer Rouge and did not recognize them as legitimate rulers. The US did not want to have any military presence in Cambodia as it had just withdrawn troops from Vietnam and had tumultuous diplomatic relations, yet later helped when the UN set up a temporary government.<sup>14</sup> It is important to note that when the Khmer Rouge first came to power, despite unusual means, they did receive much condemnation; the West said that although the Khmer Rouge was murderous, we would befriend them. When the Khmer Rouge started massively killing and starving Cambodia, the US and many other Western nations retracted their earlier statements and put

10 "Guatemala Profile - Timeline." BBC News. July 29, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-19636725>.

11 Walldorf Jr, C. William. "Sanctions, Regime Type, and Democratization: Lessons from U.S.-Central American Relations in the 1980s." *Political Science Quarterly* 129, no. 4 (2014): 643-674.

12 Taylor, Whitney K., and Hollie Nyseth Brehm. "Sanctioning Genocide: To What Effect?" *Sociological perspectives* 64, no. 6 (2021): 1081-1103.

13 Walldorf, "Sanctions, Regime Type, and Democratization: Lessons from U.S.-Central American Relations in the 1980s," 644.

14 U.S. Department of State, "U.S.-Cambodia Relations," 2001.

forth a sentiment that the Khmer Rouge needed to be brought down. In an interview, former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger said that he and the US “... would not have dealt with Pol Pot for any purpose whatsoever.”<sup>15</sup> Although the US and the West did not immediately sanction or embargo Cambodia, they vigorously condemned them once news of the genocide and atrocities became known. The Khmer Rouge were then internationally isolated as they had no diplomatic relations with any major Western powers, meaning they did not have access to international forums or economic partnerships. This made it easier for an external power (Vietnam) to overthrow the unrecognized rulers as they would not receive comparable backlash or criticism.

Therefore, the presence of genocide prompted the use of sanctions in Guatemala and a lack of economic and diplomatic engagement with the Khmer Rouge, which, in both cases, led to regime change. As mentioned, Guatemala’s global isolation and sanctions paved the way for greater revolutionary resistance, which forced regime change. In Cambodia, the global isolation demonstrated by a lack of foreign relations paved the way for the Vietnamese to invade, which later resulted in regime change.

### **Regime Change and Self-interest**

Some individuals who oppose the idea that genocide catalyzes regime change through international delegitimization and domestic weakness, argue that the simplest and best explanation for regime change following genocide is that regional powers act only in their best interests. For example, Vietnam annexed Cambodia to expand Vietnamese influence in the region, and NATO flew missions in Bosnia to squash a challenge to the Western regime of rules and laws. Nations acting out of their own self-interest is one of the oldest and most influential markers of international behaviour. Surprisingly, polarizing political and economic theorists Adam Smith<sup>16</sup> and Karl Marx<sup>17</sup> posited that nations and individuals always act out of self-interest. Given the range of authorities supporting its position, such an argument appeals to many. The idea of nations acting regarding their own interests has gained notori-

ety from the surplus of historical evidence (i.e., Britain colonizing India for trade, money, and territory, the US invading Iraq for oil, Vikings plundering Britannia, etc.). However, while there may be evidence suggesting that nations act in their own self-interests, I will examine if they do so in regard to genocide.

Arguing that genocide only causes regime change because of regional interests is simplistic and does not fully match reality. For example, no regional powers removed the Rwandan or Guatemalan genocidal governments. No regional actors around Rwanda sought to benefit themselves by creating a Tutsi-majority government. Although the United States initially had regional interests in Guatemala (preventing any socialist leaders from taking power), they withdrew their support and involvement once they learned about the genocide. As mentioned, the US started sanctioning the regime they once greatly supported. In neither Rwanda nor Guatemala were regional interests at play. Nations do not always act in their own self-interest, and as former US president Jimmy Carter puts it: “[The United States] will have an unchallenged, open, panoramic opportunity on a global scale to demonstrate the finest aspects of what we know in this country: peace, freedom, democracy, human rights, benevolent sharing, love, the easing of human suffering.”<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1957) challenges the notion that states always act in their self-interest by theorizing that states can be altruistic if they desire peace and a certain effort is made. The essence of Kant’s book *Perpetual Peace* suggests that the state of peace among men living side by side is not the natural state; the natural state is one of war and conflict. Therefore, this state of peace is an art that most communities have never known or have only rarely experienced. The art of peace, however, is not learned easily; if it were, the whole world would long since have abandoned the habit of war.<sup>19</sup> In short, Kant takes a more optimistic approach, suggesting that nations are not constrained to acting out of self-interest.

Yet, the argument of Cambodia and Bosnia and their apparent regional interests involved in the change of regime post-genocide must still be considered.

15 “Henry Kissinger on Pol Pot.” Charlie Rose YouTube Channel. August 27, 2007. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=--lkp5GI-ZU&t=1610s>

16 Smith, Adam. *Wealth of Nations*. Classic House Books, 2009.

17 Marx, Karl, et. al. *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (1st ed.). Prometheus Books, 1998.

18 “Jimmy Carter on the American Dream.” Academy of Achievement. October 21, 1991.

19 Kant, Immanuel. *Perpetual Peace*. Liberal Arts Press, 1957.



However, what is important to note is that if it were not for the weakening of the nation-state by genocide, the invasion of the regional powers would either not have happened or would have been ineffective. As discussed previously, the international community's delegitimization of the genocidal regime is what allows regional actors to intervene with little to no repercussions. Therefore, while it is true that regional self-interests do influence regime change following a genocide, they are (1) not the only variable and (2) only begin to factor into the equation after a genocide has weakened the nation domestically and delegitimized them internationally.

### Conclusion

In summary, the combination of the international delegitimizing and weakened domestic state is what led to a change in the Khmer Rouge regime. The unrecognized legitimacy of the Khmer Rouge and the political turmoil caused by the genocide is what led to the Vietnam invasion in 1978. After diplomatic and economic pressure from the international community, the Vietnamese withdrew from Cambodia in 1989. As aforementioned, the UN implemented a temporary government in Cambodia until they held a free election. The election and subsequent negotiation resulted in a constitutional monarchy formed with consociationalism empowering two incumbent Prime Ministers. Control over Cambodia went from monarchy to communist authoritarianism to constitutional monarchy (democracy). Therefore, genocide catalyzes regime change through its international delegitimizing and domestic weakening, as evidenced by the polarizing turnover of authority in Cambodia that was prompted by the Khmer Rouge's genocide of Cambodians.

For this article, I used the Millan comparative technique of most similar cases to investigate the effects of genocide on regimes. I explored the relationship between regime change and several examples with similar control variables (genocide). How citizens, victims, perpetrators of genocide, organizations, and governments responded or reacted had a tremendous impact on who remained in power after a genocide. As seen, the effects of genocide on the nation's economy, the resulting global isolation, and the rebuttal of the argument that regime change is the result of regional interest all indicate that genocide is connected to regime change via international delegitimization and domestic weakening.

If one engages in large-scale murder, the destruction results in a maelstrom of violence and chaos, which destroys the authors of such genocide. Whether by the massively weakened nation-state or the horrified reactions of the international community, the result of genocide is regime change.

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