Ramerican Political Science Review (Vol. 8, 2023)

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/ramerican

Part of the Political Science Commons

© The Author(s)

Recommended Citation
https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/ramerican/8

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the VCU University Archives at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ramerican Political Science Review by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact libcompass@vcu.edu.
**Table of Contents:**

Does low socioeconomic status affect voter turnout in elections?  
A Comparative Case Study between Iraq, Lebanon, and Tunisia  

Mariam Al-khafaji, Virginia Commonwealth University............................. 2

Colonial Legacies on African Development  

Jack Normile, Virginia Commonwealth University.................................33

The Median Voter Model Applied to Federal Infrastructure Investment  

Anna L Meyer, Virginia Commonwealth University...............................60

Burkina Faso: Conflict and Development  

Jack Normile, Virginia Commonwealth University...............................76

**Acknowledgements**

The Department of Political Science at Virginia Commonwealth University is proud to present Volume 8 of The Ramerican Political Science Review. This journal presents some of the best undergraduate work produced by students at VCU 2022-2023 academic year.

While the journal is supported by the Department of Political Science, the final product is the work of a student editorial board that solicits and reviews manuscripts in a double-blind fashion.

The Department of Political Science recognizes the hard work of this year’s student editor, Alexandra Pabon, and co-editor, Hunter Barsness, and thanks both for their time and effort.

The Department of Political Science would also like to thank Dr. Alex Keena for advising our student editorial board.
Does low socioeconomic status affect voter turnout in elections? A Comparative Case Study between Iraq, Lebanon, and Tunisia

Mariam Al-khafaji, Virginia Commonwealth University

Abstract

This paper examines whether socioeconomic status (SES) affects voter turnout. Most studies utilized mixed methods and Westernized nations such as Canada and America or Europe. However, some used single case studies and focus groups to test their theoretical questions. Most researchers found that low socioeconomic levels greatly impact voter turnout in elections. Unlike previous studies regarding the relationship between low SES and voter turnout, this study is a comparative case study to test whether that theory holds true in Middle Eastern parliamentary elections. This paper is organized as follows: how education mediates one’s socioeconomic status and, as a result, skews voter turnout, how income inequality and financial hardship mediate one’s socioeconomic status (SES) and skews voter participation, and a collection on whether socioeconomic status affects Middle Eastern countries that have had consistent elections. The cases used in this study include Iraq, Lebanon, and Tunisia. Socioeconomic status can be analyzed through five spheres. In comparison, this paper examines primarily two spheres: income inequality or household income status and level of education achievement. It is hypothesized that lower income status and lower levels of educational attainment will result in a lower voter turnout. This study utilizes crosstabs and quantitative data collected from the Arab Barometer, a large data analysis tool, to test the hypothesis and see whether there is an effect between the two variables and whether it can be ruled out as a theory. This study's main findings indicated a high level of significance between the level of educational attainment, household
income status, and voter turnout but a lack of significance between household income status and voter turnout in specifically Tunisia as shown in the cross-tabulations.

**Introduction**

Political scientists can agree that voter turnout can be affected by an individual’s socioeconomic status. More specifically, voter turnout tends to be lower among those with a lower socioeconomic status than those with a higher socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status analyzes how much an individual can access financial or economic resources from family or personal work. It also measures an individual’s sociological sphere, including educational attainment and social or environmental support. Those with lower socioeconomic statuses are less likely to have attained a college degree or some form of higher education. Individuals with lower socioeconomic levels also have trouble gaining financial support from the community or cannot access a strong support system. Without these vital needs, an individual may suffer from unemployment, financial stress, and possibly homelessness.

These are some intervening factors that lower the overall rates of voter turnout across different nations. Some individuals may already come from a higher socioeconomic status, which gives them the privilege of a better education, resulting in the likelihood of consistent voter participation. However, those with lower socioeconomic status may need help reaching or making voter deadlines due to external stressors discussed earlier. Based on this explanation, individuals with low SES are more likely to act based on self-interest and choose to take care of their personal needs rather than take the time to participate in elections or politics. Without greater voter turnout, individuals with lower socioeconomic statuses may miss out on possible policy reforms and political candidates to aid their situations and overall living conditions.
Does low socioeconomic status affect voter turnout in elections?

Regarding Middle Eastern countries, such as Iraq, Tunisia, and Lebanon, low socioeconomic status may affect voter turnout significantly in parliamentary elections if individuals are more likely to be met with lower levels of educational attainment and income insecurity. As described before, individuals who are more likely to struggle with their household income or face some level of income insecurity are less likely to go out of their way to vote during parliamentary elections. The same logic follows for those with a lower educational attainment in their nation-state. The less education attainment an individual holds, the less likely they are to see the importance of parliamentary elections and voter participation, resulting in a lower voter turnout. As a general theory, lower levels of educational attainment and low-income status (SES) result in lower voter turnout in most Middle Eastern countries with consistent elections.

Middle Eastern countries are primarily picked for this study since they are considered understudied regarding this specific research question. This is likely due to the numerous assumptions, stereotypes, and stigmas associated with the Middle East and its governmental structures. Usually, mass media portrayals depict Middle Eastern countries as either extreme Islamic republics such as Iran or monarchies like Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Qatar, or the UAE. Despite some Arab states attempting to be democratic and have parliamentary elections, they are usually seen as unorganized and corrupt. This may hold true in some cases and previous election years, but the Arab states picked in this study have some form of consistent elections. They are still worthy of studying whether low socioeconomic status affects the average Arab citizen’s motivation to vote. There may also be some assumptions about overall voter turnout or political participation in the Middle Eastern region. In addition, it is a chance to uplift Arab voices and create the understanding that the political participation of the average Arab citizen is just as
significant as other citizens who make up a democratic society. Previous researchers already conducted several studies on how low socioeconomic status affects the average citizen’s motivation to vote in various regions internationally. However, Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) countries are heavily discounted from the list of research done on this topic due to the assumptions regarding the region, as discussed before. This study will motivate future researchers to ask the same question, but whether the same general theory holds true in other MENA countries. Studying how low socioeconomic status can affect a citizen’s political participation and behavior is vital in figuring out how to uplift citizens struggling with high poverty levels. In other words, being politically active and voting in elections will allow citizens to engage with candidates who will represent them and find ways to resolve their issues through implementing policies. If citizens cannot be politically active due to their low SES, they may miss out on potential candidates willing to change and reform their daily lives for the better.

**Background**

Voting in the Arab world is usually depicted in a manner where Arab citizens show apathy in the media. It is an assumption that Arab nation-states are not democratic enough or struggle to reach a perfect democratic structure for proper political participation. This may be why the Arab region tends to be understudied when researching political patterns and election results. This paper tests out the socioeconomic effects on political participation with the average Arab citizen, which, unfortunately, not many scholars have researched in the past. However, Arab democratic regimes show that Arab citizens are, in fact, interested in participating in elections and care about policy implementation that may affect their daily lives (de Miguel et al., 2015). Electoral participation is heavily researched in Western democratic countries and usually
Does low socioeconomic status affect voter turnout in elections?

indicates approval or disapproval of certain political candidates. However, the Arab world also suggests that political participation shows whether citizens agree with different regime types, policies, and political candidates. Unfortunately, not enough research has been done on electoral behavioral patterns in this region. Notably, the countries picked in this study also have significant poverty levels or are more likely to comprise communities with low socioeconomic statuses. For instance, Iraq’s poverty rate in 2022 was about 11 million people, or 25% (The Media Line Staff, 2023). The national poverty line for Tunisia was at 16.6% as of 2021 (World Bank, 2023). As for Lebanon, about 80% of its population lives in poverty, and 36% live below the poverty line (EU, 2023). The high poverty levels in these countries can influence a lower socioeconomic status among its citizens and decrease voter turnout.

Usually, high voter turnout indicates a healthy democracy (Mohamed, 2018). After the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, Iraq began to transition from an authoritarian regime to a democratic regime, which gave rise to a new population of voters in parliamentary elections. The average Iraqi voter will likely be a middle-aged, educated male interested in politics and political institutions within their nation-state (Mohamed, 2018). Iraq also tends to be a leading example in the transition from an authoritarian to a democratic structure in the Middle East region (Mohamed, 2018). Especially after the new approval of Iraq’s constitution, the country experienced high levels of voter turnout in their parliamentary elections (Mohamed, 2018). Iraq’s citizens also seem to significantly understand the importance of showing up to vote, but socioeconomic statuses may mediate that behavior. Furthermore, Lebanon and Tunisia also have some form of consistent parliamentary elections held every couple of years and have been thought of as politically unstable by the media, just like Iraq. Voting behaviors are highly understudied in the field of research and political science when it comes to the Middle Eastern
region in general (Hourani, 2012). It is also crucial to note that Tunisia has a smaller population than Lebanon and Iraq since it is geographically smaller. However, Tunisia is also known to have high rates of migration and citizens leaving the country in recent years, which may also be an intervening factor in voter turnout.

Lebanon had previously dealt with major economic downturns in 2019 and suffered significant supply shortages and inflation (BTI, 2022). Due to this, the country dealt with negative consequences in its socioeconomic system (BTI, 2022). Most citizens of Lebanon dealt with harsher living conditions and had to face lower levels of income (BTI, 2022). Among the citizens with the financial capability and education credentials, they were preparing to migrate out of the country with their families. Lebanon’s electoral system is organized in a sectarian system, representing and dividing the seats by different religious identities. Christians make up fifty percent of the seats in parliament (BTI, 2022, p. 10). In addition, Lebanon’s TV systems and media are highly influenced by political parties and leaders, for instance, Nasarallah’s Hezbollah (BTI, 2022, p. 12). However, many anti-sectarian movements arose and assembled protests from 2019 to 2020 (BTI, 2022). Due to Lebanon’s sectarian system, the country is not exactly defined as democratic but continues to hold consistent parliamentary elections. Lebanon is also known to have a socioeconomic crisis, which has raised the country’s poverty rates over the years (BTI, 2022). Despite having protests in Tunisia, Lebanon, and Iraq, each country still attempts to maintain some form of election every couple of years to maintain some form of democracy.

Tunisia also had its fair share in fighting for free and fair elections and gaining a semi-presidential democratic system. In 2011, Tunisia was enduring a revolution from its people demanding “the fall of the regime” and reforms (BTI, 2022). Tunisia had become a more democratic nation after the Arab Spring of 2011. However, most Tunisian citizens are extremely
disappointed with the overall treatment received from its government. It was recorded that about seven million Tunisians were registered to vote, a significant increase from the number of registered voters during the local elections in 2018 (Yerkes, 2022). Unfortunately, Tunisia’s first democratically elected president passed away, pushing the presidential elections (Yerkes, 2022). Most Tunisians believe their government is unresponsive and does almost nothing to help them with their needs and troubles (Yerkes, 2022). However, the economy seems to be the largest issue in Tunisia, as there is a 15 percent unemployment rate, and about one-third of university graduates are unemployed (Yerkes, 2022). This indicates that Tunisia comprises many individuals with a low socioeconomic status, which usually dissuades individuals from voting during elections. Tunisia has two elections, one for their parliament and one for the president, and international organizations observe them to ensure that the voting process is free and fair (Yerkes, 2022).

Literature Review

Many scholars included throughout this literature review have tested how low socioeconomic status affects voter turnout and a citizen’s motivation to vote. Many studies found that lower educational attainment levels and higher levels of income insecurity or economic hardship led to a lower voter turnout or individuals being unmotivated to be politically active. Most of the studies conducted utilized a mixture of either quantitative or qualitative methods. Unfortunately, the studies included in this literature review only test this theory in Western or European countries. Most of the researchers who conducted studies on how educational attainment affects voter turnout found that the level of education affects the likelihood of political participation and the educational experiences offered. If civic education is offered
within the school system, people are more likely to understand the importance of being politically active and engaged in society and during elections. Many studies that tested how economic hardship and income insecurity affect voter turnout found that the more wealth and resources an individual had, the more likely they were to be politically active and consistent with voting during elections. Most found that low-income or poorer individuals are less likely to be encouraged to vote during elections. However, one study found contradicting results and asserted that, in some cases, the poor vote more than the rich.

Empirical evidence has shown that those with lower socioeconomic statuses are less likely to grow up and become politically engaged in elections due to a lack of higher educational attainment. Not being able to voice political concerns due to low socioeconomic factors can be detrimental to this group’s political interests and overall living conditions within a nation. It should be a democratic principle to give everyone an equal opportunity for voter participation to increase voter turnout and address common concerns through public policy. A cross-sectional study completed on a school in Sweden in 2010 indicated that 90 percent of individuals who came from an advantaged background and had higher educational attainment were more likely to skew voter turnout positively (Lindgren et al., 2019). It can be concluded that inequality in political participation opportunities was still a primary concern in most democracies worldwide and that socioeconomic status tends to be the primary determinant of such results.

Educational experiences may also affect how active citizens become later on, affecting whether that citizen becomes politically active. Political Scientists have consistently recognized that higher education attainment equates to the likelihood of high voter turnout. A mixed-method study focusing on the socioeconomic status of American citizens and positive political socialization in their environment or at home found that non-academic extracurricular high
Does low socioeconomic status affect voter turnout in elections?

School experiences have tremendous long-term effects on civic engagement (Stoddard, 2023). This can further create a gap in voter turnout since they are less likely to have access to political engagement programs (Stoddard, 2023). Educational attainment is very important to the likelihood of political participation and voter turnout. Another study on American college students and how education affected voter turnout indicated that highly educated people were likelier to view voting as their civic duty, and educated respondents were likelier to withstand certain stimuli telling them not to vote. That education was one of the main effects of voter turnout during the 2016 elections. Their primary results implied that voting norms do vary by education and provide more explanation for socioeconomic disparities in voter turnout (Hansen & Tyner, 2021).

Economic hardship and income inequality are also the main factors that can skew the outcome of voter turnout and make citizens less motivated to vote. A study utilizing forty-one elections from twenty-two countries, including data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), found strong evidence that economic hardship negatively affects voter participation from those with lower SES backgrounds and that income inequality only had marginal effects on voter turnout (Wilford, 2020). Wilford suggested that there should be more support for those from a lower SES background, and policymakers need to find ways to provide resources to improve the likelihood of voter turnout among this population. Further studies also tested whether changes in income status can lead to changes in voter participation. Some findings from a study analyzing the effects of income on voter turnout in Northern Italy indicated that the declining turnout of voters facing economic insecurity had negatively contributed to income inequality in voter participation (Schafer et al., 2022). They also found that individuals were more likely to face policy consequences due to voter turnout inequality. In other words, the
lack of voting caused this lower-income population to miss out on potential policy reforms from specific political candidates. This means some political candidates who are willing to support this population if elected could not proceed with such reforms due to the lack of voter participation from this population. They also found that voter turnout is higher among the rich than the poor, which can lead to “biases in representation and overall, negatively impacts the performance of democratic institutions” (Schafer et al., 2022, p.1). Overall, they contribute to the research on the income-turnout gap and explain the importance of meeting citizens' needs to give them a fair shot at political participation in hopes that a new candidate can improve their daily lives. As empirical democratic theory states, active citizen participation is crucial to democracy (Schafer et al., 2022).

Other scholars have found similar results showing that financial hardship and income insecurity can negatively impact voter participation. As discussed previously, a lack of voter participation from those who identify with a lower SES can result in significant consequences for political representation with marginalized populations. A study that utilized Canadian Election studies from 1984 up to 2015, party manifesto data, and inequality measures at the sub-national level found that inequality is negatively associated with turnout, especially for low-income earners (Polacko, 2020). The patterns between the previous researchers and Polacko remain relatively consistent as overall declining turnout among individuals of low socioeconomic status leads to greater turnout inequality. Similarly, researchers who utilized the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) argued that the more monetary resources one has, the more likely one is to stay politically engaged and go out of one's way to take advantage of voting in a democratic nation. Unlike previous research, Nadeau et al. (2019) compared more than just income and education and how that affected voter turnout. These researchers refer to “wealth” as material
Does low socioeconomic status affect voter turnout in elections?

possessions, general investments, or generational wealth acquired over time. Comparable to one who has not invested in the stock market, lives in a lower-income neighborhood, and does not have a healthy bank account that keeps them financially stable and free.

In some cases, researchers found opposite results indicating that the poor vote more than the rich do in some cases (Kasara & Suryanarayan, 2015). They argued that the potential tax exposure of the rich explained a positive relationship between income and voting in some countries (Kasara & Suryanarayan, 2015). In other words, they believed that the relationship between socioeconomic status and voter turnout is reversed in some nations, which is a different hypothesis that previous researchers had in mind. They found that the rich presented a higher turnout when “political preferences of the rich and poor diverge and where bureaucratic capacity is high” (Kasara & Suryanarayan, 2015, p. 1). These researchers also measured bureaucratic capacity and the wealth of individual nations to test their theory. They also found that politicians were more likely to use fiscal policies in their campaigns to gain more support from the rich. They explored two factors affecting the tax exposure of the rich: “the political redistribution in party politics and the state’s extractive capacity” (Kasara & Suryanarayan, 2015, p. 1). More importantly, these researchers tested a question that contradicts previous SES and voter turnout studies.

**Gaps in Literature**

While the researchers included in the literature successfully found results to their empirical questions, they still had selection bias. Meaning none of the researchers focused on other “modern” democracies that also have free and fair elections worldwide besides European nations and Westernized nations. Testing out the empirical question of whether low
socioeconomic statuses affect voter turnout in countries other than these two continents, North America and Europe, is crucial in testing if the results equate to similar patterns. More literature should be on Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) countries with democratic models and consistent parliamentary elections. It is just as important to test how the average Arab citizen is affected by their low socioeconomic status and if that impacts voter turnout. As described previously, there may be stereotypes or stigmas due to mass media portrayals when researching Middle Eastern and North American (MENA) politics and elections. This study will fill in those gaps presented in the literature by specifically addressing whether low socioeconomic status affects voter turnout in three Middle Eastern countries: Iraq, Tunisia, and Lebanon. By doing so, this study will answer whether the same patterns from the literature hold true in Middle Eastern countries as well.

The overall results from the literature upheld that socioeconomic status (SES) did affect or skew voter turnout. However, some studies found that a more depressed economy, low socioeconomic status, and high unemployment rates do not necessarily equate to a lower voter turnout. The overall literature, however, found a significant impact based on one’s educational attainment, income earnings, and financial hardship when it came to the motivation for civic participation. An individual’s socioeconomic status can be crucial to political participation and engagement. People with lower SES may be less motivated to vote without proper resources and lack proper civic engagement and education. This can result in fewer opportunities for policy reform that could benefit this population and can hurt democratic institutions overall since there are not enough resources provided to this population to have an equal chance at voting.
Does low socioeconomic status affect voter turnout in elections?

Theoretical Argument

This paper's main research question is whether low socioeconomic status affects voter turnout in Middle Eastern countries. Middle Eastern elections tend to be understudied and underrepresented when asked whether socioeconomic status affects voter turnout. The cases picked in this paper include Iraq, Tunisia, and Lebanon. Three of these cases are known to have parliamentary elections that are consistent and readily available to the public to cast votes. However, it is unclear whether the low socioeconomic status of each country’s population may negatively skew voter turnout. Tunisia is known to have some of the lowest voter turnouts among the other two countries picked in this study and has lower levels of educational attainment. On the other hand, Iraq and Lebanon seemed to have similar and higher voter turnout percentages than Tunisia but do have disparities when it comes to the level of educational attainment as well. This paper also considers whether low-income statuses can significantly affect voter turnout in the three countries observed for this study. There seem to be disparities in income between all three countries and how that affects overall voter turnout in parliamentary elections despite Lebanon having the highest poverty rate. Theoretically, lower educational attainment levels and income status of a family result in lower voter turnout within these three countries. It can also be hypothesized that Tunisia will have the lowest voter turnout due to lower levels of education attainment and income status.

Independent and Dependent Variables

The independent variable used in this study is socioeconomic status. More specifically, this variable is operationalized by the level of educational attainment of an individual and the household income status of an individual. In other words, the independent variable,
socioeconomic status (SES), is operationalized through the level of educational attainment and income status. The dependent variable in this study is voter turnout and whether lower levels of SES will greatly impact voter turnout in three specific countries: Lebanon, Iraq, and Tunisia. Also, by utilizing the Arab Barometer survey polls, this study tests its proposed theory with ordinal and dichotomous variables. More specifically, the survey polls collected from the Arab Barometer include a Likert scale asking individuals to describe their level of educational attainment and household income status. A Likert scale is usually utilized during survey polls to collect data on an individual by measuring their opinions, behaviors, and attitudes through the best corresponding answer. A dichotomous questionnaire is also included for the dependent variable asking whether an individual participated in the previous parliamentary elections with a ‘yes or no’ answer. Since both variables are categorical, a cross-tabulation was created for both survey polls to test the effect on voter turnout for all three cases combined, Iraq and Lebanon combined, and Tunisia alone, due to it possibly skewing results.

Methods & Data

The large datasets used in this study are collected from the Arab Barometer and the International IDEA websites. The Arab Barometer includes a collection of survey polls and responses to many questions regarding the average Arab citizen’s social, political, and economic attitudes about their nation-state, specifically in Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) countries. Collected from their large dataset was a cross-sectional survey asking about their political participation in the latest parliamentary elections for each country, which included dichotomous questions about whether an individual voted or did not vote, along with a survey poll that contained a Likert scale describing an individual’s level of educational attainment and
Does low socioeconomic status affect voter turnout in elections?

another survey response with a Likert scale representing an individual’s household income status in those three countries. The surveys were collected in 2021 within Lebanon, Iraq, and Tunisia. By using these survey polls, six cross-tabulations were created explaining the relationship between the two categorical variables: level of educational attainment and whether or not an individual voted in the last parliamentary election and description of household income status and whether or not an individual voted in the previous election. Again, these variables were tested using only three cases: Lebanon, Iraq, and Tunisia. The research method used in this study was a quantitative comparative case study since a Likert scale and dichotomous closed-ended questionnaires were used for the survey polls.
Figure A: Effect of Education Attainment on Voter Turnout

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your highest level of education?</th>
<th>Did you vote in the last parliamentary elections?</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>49.6%</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>838</td>
<td>724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53.3%</td>
<td>46.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>49.8%</td>
<td>49.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>988</td>
<td>857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53.4%</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54.2%</td>
<td>44.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>661</td>
<td>495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>64.7%</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3892</td>
<td>3301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53.6%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2 = 98.378 \cdot df=21 \cdot Cramer's V=0.067 \cdot Fisher's p=0.000$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legend/Key</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>98</th>
<th>99</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rows on Cross-tab</td>
<td>“No Formal Education”</td>
<td>“Elementary”</td>
<td>“Preparatory/Basic”</td>
<td>“Secondary”</td>
<td>“Technical Degree”</td>
<td>“BA”</td>
<td>“MA and Above”</td>
<td>“Don’t Know”</td>
<td>“Refused to Answer”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legend/Key</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columns on Cross-tab</td>
<td>“Yes”</td>
<td>“No”</td>
<td>“Don’t Know”</td>
<td>“Refused to Answer”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Does low socioeconomic status affect voter turnout in elections?

Figure B: Effect of Income Status on Voter Turnout

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which one of these statements comes closest to describing your net household income?</th>
<th>Did you vote in the last parliamentary elections?</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51.2%</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>916</td>
<td>874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50.7%</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1546</td>
<td>1167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1085</td>
<td>930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53.4%</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>77.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>3892</td>
<td>3300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53.6%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 32.183 \cdot df = 15 \cdot Cramer's V = 0.038 \cdot Fisher's p = 0.002 \]
**Figure C: Effect of Education Attainment on Voter Turnout in Iraq and Lebanon**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your highest level of education?</th>
<th>Did you vote in the last parliamentary elections?</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50 %</td>
<td>46.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>56.5 %</td>
<td>43.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53.6 %</td>
<td>46 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55.3 %</td>
<td>44.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54.4 %</td>
<td>44 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55.7 %</td>
<td>43.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>62.1 %</td>
<td>35.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2684</td>
<td>2137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55.2 %</td>
<td>44 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 61.729 \cdot df = 21 \cdot \text{Cramer's } V = 0.065 \cdot \text{Fisher's } p = 0.000 \]

**Legend/Key**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rows on Cross-tab</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>98</th>
<th>99</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“No Formal Education”</td>
<td>“Elementary”</td>
<td>“Preparatory/Basic”</td>
<td>“Secondary”</td>
<td>“Technical Degree”</td>
<td>“BA”</td>
<td>“MA and Above”</td>
<td>“Don’t Know”</td>
<td>“Refused to Answer”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legend/Key</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>98</th>
<th>99</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Columns on Cross-tab</td>
<td>“Yes”</td>
<td>“No”</td>
<td>“Don’t Know”</td>
<td>“Refused to Answer”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Does low socioeconomic status affect voter turnout in elections?

**Figure D: Effect of Income Status on Voter Turnout in Iraq and Lebanon**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which one of these statements comes closest to describing your net household income?</th>
<th>Did you vote in the last parliamentary elections?</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>673</td>
<td>652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1114</td>
<td>755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2684</td>
<td>2137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2=43.105 \cdot df=15 \cdot \text{Cramer's V}=0.054 \cdot \text{Fisher's p}=0.001$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legend/Key</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>98</th>
<th>99</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rows on Cross-tab</td>
<td>“Yes, able to save”</td>
<td>“Yes, without notable difficulties”</td>
<td>“No, face some difficulties”</td>
<td>“No, face significant difficulties”</td>
<td>“Don’t know”</td>
<td>“Refused to Answer”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legend/Key</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columns on Cross-tab</td>
<td>“Yes”</td>
<td>“No”</td>
<td>“Don’t Know”</td>
<td>“Refused to Answer”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure E: Effect of Education Attainment on Voter Turnout in Tunisia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your highest level of education?</th>
<th>Did you vote in the last parliamentary elections?</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>49.2%</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>49.2%</td>
<td>49.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37.6%</td>
<td>62.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50.4%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>52.8%</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>58.9%</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>70.5%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1208</td>
<td>1164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50.4%</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 64.484 \cdot \text{df}=14 \cdot \text{Cramer's } V=0.116 \cdot \text{Fisher's } p=0.000 \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legend/Key</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>98</th>
<th>99</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rows on Cross-tab</td>
<td>“No Formal Education”</td>
<td>“Elementary”</td>
<td>“Preparatory/Basic”</td>
<td>“Secondary”</td>
<td>“Technical Degree”</td>
<td>“BA”</td>
<td>“MA and Above”</td>
<td>“Don’t Know”</td>
<td>“Refused to Answer”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legend/Key</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columns on Cross-tab</td>
<td>“Yes”</td>
<td>“No”</td>
<td>“Don’t Know”</td>
<td>“Refused to Answer”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure F: Effect of Income Status on Voter Turnout in Tunisia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which one of these statements comes closest to describing your net household income?</th>
<th>Did you vote in the last parliamentary elections?</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1208</td>
<td>1163</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 5.458 \cdot df = 10 \cdot Cramer's V = 0.034 \cdot Fisher's p = 0.755 \]

**Legend/Key**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rows on Cross-tab</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>98</th>
<th>99</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Yes, able to save”</td>
<td>“Yes, without notable difficulties”</td>
<td>“No, face some difficulties”</td>
<td>“No, face significant difficulties”</td>
<td>“Don’t know”</td>
<td>“Refused to Answer”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columns on Cross-tab</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yes”</td>
<td>“No”</td>
<td>“Don’t Know”</td>
<td>“Refused to Answer”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interpretation of Data**

Figure A presents a cross-tabulation explaining the relationship between two categorical variables: level of educational attainment and voter turnout during parliamentary elections. The cross-tabulation includes a Likert scale presented by numbers on the rows that correspond with
the level of educational attainment, 1-7 and 99 to: 1 stands for "No formal education," 2 stands for Elementary, 3 stands for "Preparatory/Basic," 4 stands for "Secondary" 5 stands for "Technical degree" 6 stands for "BA" 7 stands for "MA and above" and 99 stands for "Don't know." Numbers present the columns dichotomous scale that corresponds with the voter turnout variable, 1-2 and 98-99: 1 stands for “Yes,” 2 stands for “No,” 98 stands for “Don’t Know” and 99 stands for “Refused to Answer.” Among the categories, the respondents with lower education levels indicated lower voter turnout, as 49.6% voted and 47.1% did not vote. However, among those respondents who received a Master’s degree or above, 64.7% of them voted, but 33.6% did not vote. Notably, the association may be relatively weak, but there is a strong indication that higher educational attainment levels had greater voter participation and turnout. The cross-tabulation in Figure A accounts for all three countries that responded to the survey collected by the Arab Barometer, including Tunisia, Iraq, and Lebanon. Fisher’s p-value indicated that there was a high level of significance since it was 0.000. This means that the null hypothesis can be rejected and that there is a direct effect between educational attainment and voter turnout. The cross-tabulation utilized a chi-squared test to test whether there was a level of significance between educational attainment and voter turnout. The test statistic is $\chi^2 = 98.378$ with 21 degrees of freedom. Cramer’s V is also a measure of a strong association between the variables, presented in the cross-tabulation as 0.067, indicating a strong association between the variables.

Figure B presents a cross-tabulation indicating the relationship between respondents’ reported household income and participation in the last parliamentary election. Again, the rows are presented by numbers 1-4, 98, and 99 with a Likert scale. In this case, 1 stands for “Yes, able to save,” 2 stands for “Yes, without notable difficulties,” 3 stands for “No, face some difficulties,” 4 stands for “No, face significant difficulties,” 98 stands for “Don’t Know” and 99
Does low socioeconomic status affect voter turnout in elections?

stands for “Refused to answer.” I asked the respondents of this survey whether they were able to save within their household incomes. Numbers present the columns dichotomous scale that corresponds with the voter turnout variable, 1-2 and 98-99: 1 stands for “Yes,” 2 stands for “No,” 98 stands for “Don’t Know,” and 99 stands for “Refused to Answer.” In further interpretation of the data presented in the cross-tabulation category 1, it was found that among the respondents, 51.2% voted, 47.7% did not vote, and 0.6% didn’t know if they voted. Category 2 found that among the respondents, 50.7% voted, and 48.4% didn’t vote. Category 3 indicated that 56.5% did vote and 42.6% did not vote. Category 4 indicated that 53.4% voted and 45.8% didn’t vote. Oddly enough, in the “Didn’t Know” category or 98, 45.5% of the respondents did vote, and 51.5% didn’t. Along with category 99 or “Refused to answer,” 22.2% of the respondents voted, and 77.8% did not. However, only a couple of respondents fell into those two categories. However, the percentage of those who voted versus those who didn’t vote in the last parliamentary election of their country were close in proximity to each other. This indicates that the percentage of those who did not vote was still affected by their household income despite having a high percentage of respondents who stated that they did vote in the previous election.

The chi-squared test was also used to test the significance level between the two categorical variables in the cross-tabulation. The test statistic was \( \chi^2 = 32.183 \) with 15 degrees of freedom—Fisher’s p-value is 0.002, representing a strong significance between household income status and voter turnout in Tunisia, Lebanon, and Iraq, along with Cramer’s V being 0.038, which also shows a high level of significance.

Figure C represents the relationship between educational attainment and voter turnout in Iraq and Lebanon. The same labels 1-7 and 99 hold as the last two crosstabulations. The dichotomous scale presented corresponds to the voter turnout variable with the same labels for 1-
2 and 98 as the previous crosstabulations. The only difference is that this crosstabulation measures how citizens’ level of educational attainment in Iraq and Lebanon affects their motivation to vote during parliamentary elections. It is important to note that all these survey questions were conducted in 2021. However, the question, “Did you vote in the last parliamentary election?” will differ for each country depending on the year the last parliamentary election occurred. However, all crosstabulations measure whether citizens voted in their last parliamentary election. The percentages throughout the crosstab in Figure C indicate that a higher voter turnout percentage is present as the level of educational attainment goes up. This is indicated in categories 6 and 7, where 6 represents a Bachelor’s degree, and 7 represents a Master’s degree or above. However, the categories for 1-5 exhibit that the relationship between the level of educational attainment and voter turnout is relatively weak. In this crosstab, 55.2% of the respondents voted, while 44% did not. Cramer’s V measure of association strength is 0.065, meaning there was again a weak association between educational attainment and voter turnout. However, Fisher’s p-value is 0.000, supporting the significance of the chi-squared test. The test statistic was $\chi^2 = 61.729$ with 21 degrees of freedom, indicating that it is statistically significant.

A similar crosstabulation also presents Figure D to Figure B. However, this specifically measures how household income status affects voter turnout in Iraq and Lebanon. The Likert scale 1-4 and 98-99 hold the same labels as the previous crosstab presented in Figure B. Among the respondents who reported having less income insecurity and having a high-income status in their household, they were more likely to vote. In category 3, respondents exhibited a relatively high-income status, and 59.1% voted, while 40.1% did not. In category 4, respondents with the highest income level in their household had a voter turnout of 59.4%, with 43% not voting. The general takeaway of this crosstabulation is that voter turnout also tends to increase as income
status increases. However, the relationship between the two is relatively weak until category 3 and 4. Cramer’s V is 0.054, suggesting a weak association, but Fisher’s p-value is 0.001, indicating a high significance level of the chi-squared test. The test statistic was $\chi^2 = 43.105$ with 15 degrees of freedom, which is statistically significant.

To ensure that Tunisia was not a case that may be skewing the results shown in Figures A and B, a crosstabulation was created solely to measure how socioeconomic status affects voter turnout in that specific case. Figure E presents how educational attainment affects voter turnout among citizens in Tunisia. Interestingly, Tunisia alone indicated a significant association between educational attainment and voter turnout, not a relatively weak one. Typically, as the level of education increases, the voter turnout also tends to increase among the crosstab. Again, within categories 6 (Bachelor’s) and 7 (Master’s or above), a higher voter turnout is depicted than in categories 1-5. Tunisia greatly differs from Lebanon and Iraq since there is a notable decrease in voter turnout among the respondents who only completed a preparatory/basic education, which is category 3. Cramer’s V is represented by 0.116, suggesting a moderate association between education attainment and voter turnout. Fisher’s p-value is 0.000, indicating a high significance level of the chi-squared test. The test statistic was $\chi^2 = 64.484$ with 14 degrees of freedom, which is statistically significant. Moving onto Figure F, a crosstab tests only the relationship between household income status and voter turnout among Tunisia’s citizens. The categories are labeled the same as Figure B and Figure D for the measured independent and dependent variables. This crosstab depicted a very different result than all the other crosstabulations. Cramer’s V is 0.034, suggesting a very weak association between household income status and voter turnout. Fisher’s p-value is 0.755, which indicates a lack of significance between the two variables. The test statistic was $\chi^2 = 5.458$ with 10 degrees of freedom, which is not statistically significant. The
voter turnout rates depicted across the crosstab are relatively similar throughout the various household income categories. Therefore, there was no clear trend indicating that there would be a higher voter turnout among those with a higher voter turnout.

**Comparison**

Data from IDEA was collected regarding the most recent voting turnouts to assess the comparison between voter turnout in Iraq, Tunisia, and Lebanon. It was hypothesized that Tunisia would have the lowest voter turnout due to lower educational attainment and household income status. However, as shown in Figure F, there is a lack of significance between household income status and voter turnout. However, there was a level of significance between educational attainment and voter turnout. This was particularly interesting since Tunisia tends to have a high socioeconomic crisis and poverty levels, just as Lebanon or Iraq has had, yet yielded a relatively high voter turnout regardless of household income status. However, as indicated by the cross-tabulations and the data interpretation, there is a high level of significance between the level of education a respondent earned and the voter turnout in all cases, along with the overall household income status of a respondent and the voter turnout in Iraq and Lebanon. According to IDEA, Tunisia had a voter turnout of 11.4% in its last parliamentary election (IDEA, 2023). Iraq had an overall turnout of 43.5% in their previous parliamentary election, and Lebanon had a percentage of 49.1% in voter turnout (IDEA, 2023). In comparison, Iraq and Lebanon both share disparities in low-income status and lower levels of educational attainment, like Tunisia. However, they are lower than the disparities in Tunisia. Tunisia had the lowest level of educational attainment when it came to a Bachelor’s degree at 9.3%, according to the Arab Barometer. Iraq had a percentage of 22.2%, and Lebanon had the highest at 32.0% of its respondents having earned a Bachelor’s
degree (Arab Barometer, 2023). As shown in Figure A, the lower the education level attained by
the respondent, the more likely they are to be apathetic towards parliamentary elections in their
country. As explained earlier, it was hypothesized that Tunisia would have the lowest voter
turnout and participation due to much lower levels of education attained and high-income
insecurity levels among households, which held true as well when Tunisia was tested
independently in Figure E. Again, Iraq and Lebanon have their fair share in dealing with such
disparities but have higher levels of voter turnout than Tunisia when it came to level of
educational attainment.

Conclusions

As the cross-tabulations indicated, there was a high level of significance between the
level of education attainment and voter turnout throughout all three cases: Tunisia, Lebanon, and
Iraq. There was also a high level of significance between household income status of an
individual and voter turnout between Iraq and Lebanon but not Tunisia. Future research
involving Middle Eastern countries and voter turnout should consider how these patterns may
also hold true in other Arab countries with consistent elections. Another aspect to consider within
this study is why Tunisia had some of the lowest levels of educational attainment compared to
Iraq, Lebanon, and other Arab nations. There could be other implications that are leading causes
of the low levels of educational attainment and high levels of income inequality in Tunisia. Also,
future researchers should consider why there may be a high voter turnout in Tunisia’s
parliamentary elections despite having high levels of income insecurity and whether there are
intervening factors between those two variables. These can be further studied and considered
when researching voter turnout in parliamentary elections within the Middle East. There is very
limited research on elections and voter turnout in Middle Eastern countries with consistent
elections, and this study will hopefully encourage other researchers to conduct similar studies regarding how low socioeconomic status affects voter turnout. Socioeconomic status can affect an individual’s motivation to vote, as was indicated throughout this study. However, the relationship between income insecurity and voter turnout was relatively weak but still managed to show a high level of significance and a pattern indicating there were still many individuals who were unmotivated to vote due to low-income status in Lebanon and Iraq in particular. Lower levels of educational attainment seemed to have a huge effect on voter turnout in all three countries. Again, these patterns may also hold true in other Middle Eastern countries. Regardless, studying how voting behavior may be mediated by socioeconomic status is crucial to the average Arab citizen so that there can be further solutions to implementing a more fair, free, and somewhat democratic election system for all citizens. Elections are important in every citizen’s life since they allow them to vote for candidates who can help resolve their specific problems and create a more equitable community.
Does low socioeconomic status affect voter turnout in elections?

References


Does low socioeconomic status affect voter turnout in elections?


Colonial Legacies on African Development

Jack Normile, Virginia Commonwealth University

The African continent has been a significant recipient of foreign aid for several decades, with the aim of promoting economic growth and development. However, despite the large amounts of aid pouring into Africa, the continent has struggled to make significant progress towards development. This raises questions about the effectiveness of foreign aid and why it has failed to deliver the desired results. One of the reasons often cited for this failure is the legacy of colonialism, which left behind institutions that have hindered development efforts. This research paper aims to explore the role that colonial institutions have played in impeding development in Africa, and why despite foreign aid, the continent has not experienced the desired progress. Through an in-depth analysis of the forms of colonial legacy and its impact on African institutions, this study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the challenges that Africa faces in achieving sustainable development. I believe that the effectiveness of aid and colonialism have an intertwined relationship. Countries have struggled more to develop that were under more exploitative, indirect forms of colonialism, whereas countries under more direct rule have fared relatively better due to the more centralized, bureaucratic, and inclusive form of government installed, providing a better foundation for long-term development.

Direct and indirect rule were two different systems of control used by colonial powers, typically associated with the British, however, the general forms are applicable to most other colonizing countries. For my definitions, I look to Matthew Lange, who elaborates on direct and indirect control in his 2009 work, “Lineages of Despotism and Development”. Lange explains how direct rule depended on an integrated state apparatus and resembled the form of state
Colonial Legacies on African Development

domination which developed in Western Europe over the previous centuries of state building. It required dismantling the pre-existing political institutions and constructing a centralized, bureaucratic legal-administration, which typically was more inclusive of subordinate groups to prevent social conflicts as well as producing a local, indigenous bureaucracy capable of managing the country post-independence. Lange (2009) discusses how indirect rule, on the other hand, was a form of colonial domination which saw collaboration with indigenous intermediaries who controlled regional political institutions. This resulted in various chiefs ruling over their own regional power base and reporting to a miniscule state apparatus isolated in the colony's capital and areas of European settlement. These indirect institutions were highly patrimonial and typically corrupt under a decentralized, exclusive system purely intended to extract as much profit and resources as possible for the colonizing power. In some colonies, the line between the two forms of rule is blurry, with many experiencing a mixed form (Lange, 2003).

In this paper, I seek to explain how direct rule has provided more positive development in former colonies through a case study of four nations. Mauritius, who was directly ruled by France until 1810, then Britain until independence in 1968, has experienced more positive development compared to its fellow African nations (Lange, 2009; Lange, 2003; Simmons, 1982). I also investigate the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) which was ruled indirectly by Belgium in the late 19th century until independence in 1960. The DRC experienced high levels of exploitation and brutality, resulting in the country still suffering today despite receiving $3.54 Billion in Official Development Assistance (ODA) in 2021 (World Bank, 2023). I also take a look at Botswana, an exception which experienced mainly indirect British rule during colonialism, however, has experienced positive development since independence. This is due to the nation revolutionizing its institutions in the years prior to and immediately following
independence to instill a more direct form of government, therefore altering their development path and reaping the rewards today (Froitzheim, 2009; Lewis, 2020; Beaulier, 2003). One last case I explore is outside the continent in the form of India. India experienced both indirect and direct rule during colonialism depending on the region. The more directly ruled regions have experienced more positive development since, meanwhile the indirectly ruled regions have had comparatively worse development. This has ultimately resulted in moderate levels of development as a whole (Lange, 2009; Iyer, 2004; Jha & Talathi, 2021; Heller 1999; Banerjee & Iyer, 2005).

I emphasize qualitative and quantitative factors in each case. Specifically, for qualitative factors, I observe the form of colonialism imposed on the country, the institutions installed and compare it to the institutions and form of rule in the modern era, assessing whether the current institutions are more similar or different from their colonial forms. For quantitative factors, I analyze data spanning from their respective independence up to 2021, looking at ODA per capita, GDP per capita, literacy rates, infant mortality rates, and the Human Development Index (HDI) for each country. I chose these five quantitative measures to look at some critical measures of development and see how they compare and have advanced from independence to 2021. These variables are crucial for my question of looking at how colonization has created the institutions that have persuaded development, whether positive or, mostly, negative. The ODA per capita reflects, mainly, how dependent (or independent) a nation is on other countries, specifically for the purpose of development. I find that directly controlled colonies have had less volatility in their ODA rates and have been able to better utilize ODA for developmental goals than indirectly ruled colonies. Looking at GDP per capita allows us to observe whether a nation’s economy has grown since independence and by how much. As seen by the more directly ruled examples, the
GDP grew at much higher rates than the indirectly ruled examples. Similar findings are seen in the literacy rates and infant mortality rates since independence. The HDI score will also show us that, generally, the more directly ruled nations have higher levels of human development. Although all of the cases do show improvements, the directly ruled states exhibit much higher rates of development.

I. Literature Review

While there is an insurmountable amount of literature around the topic of foreign aid and its impacts on African development as well as colonialism in relation to African development, my paper discusses how lasting effects of colonialism have impacted the effectiveness of aid. I believe that the two factors, colonialism and aid, have an intertwined relationship in development. This paper seeks to explain how the experience of more indirect rule and extraction on a former colony builds the institutions and paves the way for relatively worse development than a colony which was ruled more directly with more inclusivity, bureaucracy, and infrastructure.

One section of literature focuses majorly on aid and its effect on African development. For example, multiple papers have found a positive effect of aid on growth and investment, yet given donor aid fatigue, they emphasize reducing future dependence on aid (Loxley & Sackey, 2008). Other works have found multilateral aid, or aid which comes from a multilateral agency, such as the World Bank, which pools funds from various official (government) sources to fund their own development programs, to be more consistently effective than bilateral aid, which flows directly from one official (government) source directly to the recipient country (Heady, 2008). Also, Gyimah-Brempong et al. (2012) finds that aid is only positive when it is between 6.6% and 14.4% of a recipient country’s GNI, anything less or more has negative effects. They
suggest donor countries either focus more aid to specific countries at a time to meet this threshold or raise the aid to everyone up to this threshold (which they admit is not likely to happen). Other literature hones in on aid and social development, in which the authors find, while donors have made considerable progress in supporting the social sectors in recipient countries, profound issues remain. For example, they claim aid remains highly fragmented and uncoordinated, reducing its benefits to recipients and failing to consider their needs and priorities (Addison et al., 2015). Other scholars look into education and gender performance and equality, discovering that higher aid to education significantly increases primary completion rate and suggests that education aid can be used as a policy instrument to achieve the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) which is to ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning (Yogo, 2017). Meanwhile, Bali Swain et al. (2020) finds that, while aid donors recognize a focus on gender equality and women’s empowerment in development is a means to enhance the total effectiveness of foreign aid and is a goal of development, there is little evidence to suggest increasing aid-flows help improve gender outcomes. They suggest that aid will need to challenge institutional structures and norms in order to impact gender outcomes at country level. There are also scholars who question the effectiveness of aid. Andrews (2009) investigates whether or not aid contributes to underdevelopment in Africa, finding that, given the “unclear and ambiguous nature of empirical literature” on aid effectiveness, they cannot firmly conclude that aid has led to underdevelopment. Goldsmith (2001) on the other hand, questions if aid has destroyed state institutions in Africa, yet he fails to find a relationship between foreign aid and state failure or misrule in Africa. Instead, the evidence is consistent with a small, positive relationship between aid and these indicators of state performance.
There is also a section of literature which focuses more on the institution's effect on development. Lange (2009) looks at the various effects of direct and indirect rule in development of former colonized countries. He explains how direct rule installed more bureaucratic, infrastructurally powerful, and inclusive institutions which were inherited by colonies post-independence and provided sufficient conditions for positive development. In contrast, indirect rule installed despotic institutions which gave much power to various ruling elites over their regions with the government extracting large amounts of resources, exploiting the land and people in favor of the colonizing country. Clapham (1985) also looks at the effect of institutions in which he argues the colonial state was largely detached from and excluded the local population and did not foster the development of civil society or democratic institutions. He suggests that the demise of the colonial state was a critical turning point and notes that the post-colonial state often inherited many of the characteristics of the colonial state, whether for better or for worse.

There is also a portion of literature to be observed which examines the relationship between aid and institutions. One example is Watkins (2022), where he questions whether foreign aid projects undermine citizens' trust in local and national political institutions, finding that active aid projects are on average associated with decreased trust in the president, parliament, and local government council. Citizens living near active projects have increased perceptions of leader involvement in corruption and lower assessments of government performance fighting corruption. Similarly, Burnside & Dollar (2004) explore whether the impact of aid depends on the quality of institutions and policies, in which they find aid is most effective in countries with “sound” institutions and policies, countries with corruption and weak
policies aren’t as effective. I seek to add to this branch of literature which explores the relation between institutions and aid in regard to promoting development.

II. Model

When looking at the question of why, in general, African countries have had low to moderate development despite high levels of development assistance, my theory claims poor governmental institutions left by colonialism are the main culprit. Specifically, nations that were ruled indirectly, typically under France, Belgium, The Netherlands, and Britain in Africa, bar a few exceptions. This is due to these colonies being under heavily exploitative systems which didn’t prioritize their post-independence future, instead focusing on extracting as much resources and human capital for the colonizing nation’s benefit. Inversely, colonies under more direct rule have fared better post-independence due to institutions being installed which were more infrastructurally powerful, bureaucratized, and inclusive. My model asserts that poor institutions which were set up to be more exploitative (infrastructurally weak, non-bureaucratic, and exclusive) have carried over into these nations after independence which has greatly hampered their development despite high amounts of foreign aid.

One exception to this model is Botswana who was largely ruled indirectly by Britain, however, has had higher levels of development compared to its neighbors. This is explained due to Botswana, in collaboration with Britain, revolutionizing their governmental system leading up to and directly after independence, creating a more infrastructurally powerful, bureaucratic, and inclusive governmental system, similar to a directly ruled British colony. This revolution during a critical juncture altered their trajectory and path dependence to a more developmentally successful country (Froitzheim, 2009; Lewis, 2020). One way to validate this model would be to look at nations outside of Africa who’ve also had relatively low levels of development and
higher levels of aid and looking at their colonial past, who they were colonized by and what form of rule they were under, which my model would expect to find a more exploitative form of colonialism which has harmed their development. For example, I choose to examine India, a nation which experienced indirect and direct rule depending on the region. In the indirectly ruled regions, one tends to find less development, whereas in the more directly ruled regions, it is common to see higher levels of development. Overall, this has produced moderate levels of development as a whole (Iyer, 2004; Jha & Talathi, 2021).

Another way to possibly falsify this theory would be to look at other former colonies who have had high levels of development and analyze their colonial past, which you would expect to find a form similar to direct British rule, more bureaucratic, inclusive, and infrastructurally powerful. An instance of this which I don’t discuss is the Asiatic nation of Singapore, which was directly ruled by Britain up to 1963. The British focused on building a meritocratic civil service where citizens are employed based on their ability, rather than patronage. Additionally, a strong legal framework was constructed to regulate state and societal relations, a factor largely missing in indirectly ruled colonies. This culminated in an emerging leadership post-independence committed to development and were able to build strong institutions, leading to greater development than some of their fellow colonial neighbors (Ezrow et al., 2016).

III. Research Design

In order to reinforce my model, I investigate four case studies of former colonies, their colonial history, and how it has impacted their development. First, I will examine the case of Mauritius, a former colony off the south-east coast of Africa which experienced direct British rule and has had more successful development to the current era as a result. The second case is the DRC, a large, resource rich nation in the center of Africa who experienced extremely brutal
and exploitative indirect colonization under Belgium. Post-independence to today, the DRC has had extremely negative development, I argue is due to the institutions constructed under colonization. Then, I will take a look at Botswana, an exception to the model which was primarily ruled indirectly under Britain, yet has had positive development primarily due to the direct institutions which were built leading up to and immediately after independence in 1966. Finally, I observe India, a case outside the continent of Africa which experienced both indirect and direct British rule depending on the region, thus different regions have had different development rates, ultimately culminating in moderate development as a nation.

In each case, I intend to offer both qualitative and quantitative data to measure the various levels of development and offer an explanation as to that nation’s development, through their colonial history and legacy. Qualitatively, I have analyzed various sources of literature, including Clapham (1985), Lange (2006), Ezrow et al. (2016), and Schwikowski (2020), to name a few. I observe the institutions established under colonialism and their characteristics in order to show how direct or indirect the colonizing power controlled their colony. I then compare those past institutions to their current institutions to show whether they have persisted to the modern era or have changed. I intend to show that former colonies typically continue their institutions inherited from their colonial ruler, possibly making slight changes to better fit their culture, however, maintaining the general structure, resulting in better or worse development.

Quantitatively, I compared multiple factors to gauge a nation’s development level from their independence to 2021; ODA per capita, GDP per capita, literacy rates, infant mortality rates (per 1,000 live births), and their HDI score. I chose to test these variables since they are crucial measures of a nation’s development, both economically and socially. ODA per capita shows how dependent or independent a nation is for development assistance. In more directly ruled nations, I
assume to find a lower and more consistent ODA per capita than indirect countries due to their different needs, therefore, incentivizing nations to install a more direct form of government. GDP per capita reveals how productive a country’s economy is, which I expect a higher GDP per capita rate in directly controlled versus indirectly ruled. Similarly, literacy rates and infant mortality rates measure the education systems and healthcare systems, respectively. One would expect to find higher levels of literacy rates and lower levels of infant mortality rates in the directly ruled former colonies, and the inverse for indirectly ruled. Finally, the HDI score of these nations, as the name suggests, reveals human development, measuring a combination of life expectancy, education, and per capita income, which ranks countries on a scale of 0 to 1. The closer to 1, the higher the development, and conversely, the closer to 0, the lower the development. I look to both the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to find my data measures. Essentially, throughout the paper, I will be examining the effects of colonialism on a nation’s institutions and how effectively those institutions have utilized ODA to pursue development.
IV. Findings

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ODA (per capita)</th>
<th>GDP (per capita)</th>
<th>Literacy Rate</th>
<th>Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000 live births)</th>
<th>HDI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

(World Bank; United Nations Development Programme)

Table 1 shows each case’s quantitative data I am testing; their ODA per capita, GDP per capita, literacy rate, infant mortality rate, and their HDI score, according to findings from the World Bank and UNDP. For some variables, there was no available data from that time or specific year, so I provided numbers from the closest available year, with “E.” representing the earliest available data and “L.” representing the latest available data. On the Y-axis, I have provided the nation, their year of independence, and their form of colonialism. One factor that may stand out is the fact I have also provided the 2019 data for Mauritius specifically. This is due to the fact that in 2020, Mauritius experienced a massive oil spill off its coast, about 1,000-2,000 metric tons, requiring a massive spike in foreign aid and assistance. This, in turn, caused the nation’s ODA to spike, representing non-typical data for 2021 (UNCTAD, 2020). I have provided the data for 2019 to show the historical pattern of consistent, positive development with
Colonial Legacies on African Development

low, consistent ODA per capita, up to 2020. At this point, I will analyze each case, beginning with a qualitative analysis of their colonial history and the institutions installed compared to their current institutions before evaluating the quantitative data to further explore how these institutions have influenced their development.

Mauritius

Mauritius, an island off the south-east coast of Africa next to Madagascar, was uninhabited until Dutch sailors founded a small settlement in 1598. However, this proved unproductive and was left deserted by 1710. A few years later in 1722, the French claimed the island and established a more successful settlement. Under French control, hundreds of French men and women migrated to the island, creating a vibrant economy which was based on piracy, trade, and plantations (Lange, 2009). These plantations required the importations of tens of thousands African slaves. During the Napoleonic Wars, Britain captured Mauritius and controlled it from 1810-1968. In 1835, Britain ended slavery on the island, yet since they still depended on sugar for revenue, they imported hundreds of thousands of indentured servants from India and China. By independence, the island had about 700,000 people from different continents, speaking different languages, and practicing varying religions. Despite suggestions that a largely diverse population could impede growth and governance, Mauritian development has been superior compared to its neighbors, which began with the creation of a strong, bureaucratic government (Lange, 2003). France, and then Britain, installed a large and centralized government with direct and formal control over the entire colony for the 200 years leading up to independence. Under this direct rule, the colony was staffed with over 4,000 non-military employees as early as 1900, with many of these positions being filled by the local population (Lange, 2003). This represents a bureaucratic and, now, inclusive state, promoting local citizens’
participation in politics under a meritocratic system. Under France, formal institutions of law enforcement and representation were established and reproduced under Britain, largely staffed by Mauritians. However, a small elite of plantation owners began to form, much to the chagrin of laborers. After multiple failed political movements, a more popular labor movement began between the 1930’s and 1940’s resulting in labor riots, strikes, and eventually reforms (Simmons, 1982). This resulted in subordinate groups becoming more incorporated into politics and promoting democratization, and institutions constructed to oversee relations between the state and subordinate groups, as well as unions. Post World War II, Mauritius expanded greatly, establishing social welfare programs, massively increasing state employees, and institutionalizing meritocratic practices for government level jobs, further improving bureaucratization. Lange (2009) shows that the colonial state embedded itself within society, relying upon the bureaucratization, inclusiveness, and infrastructural power that began through their experience under direct rule of France and Britain.

Today, Mauritius is still a multi-party, parliamentary democracy and performs well on a range of political and economic indicators. It is 1st out of 54 African countries in the 2020 Mo Ibrahim Index on African Governance and well placed in the Corruption Perceptions Index, ranked 52 out of 180 countries (World Bank, 2023). Economically, it became a high-income country in July 2020, however, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic caused a slip back to upper-middle-income status in 2021. Their public sector debt appears sustainable, and the sovereign debt-carrying capacity is relatively high (World Bank, 2022).

As seen in Table 1, although we don't have Mauritius' GDP from independence, it still shows extreme progress as a result of its colonial history and direct rule. Its GDP per capita rose up to about $9,000 in 2021, about $11,000 in 2019 before their oil spill. That is more than 15
times that of the DRC, an example of indirect rule. Similarly, their literacy and infant mortality rates have done exceptionally well, with 92% and 15 deaths per 1,000 live births, respectively, as of 2021. Additionally, the nation has an HDI score of .802, while the DRC has a score of .479. All this, while showing a pattern of low reliance on foreign aid, with ODA levels of about $18 as of 2019, before their oil spill demanded large investments for aid. Up to this point, they have mainly utilized aid for maritime security, as they are one of the globe’s leading nations fighting piracy off the African east coast (Eppenauer, 2018).

Overall, Mauritius’ colonial history and legacy has led them to promote positive development through their state bureaucracy, inclusiveness, and infrastructural power established under their direct rule from France and then Britain. Today, they have similar institutions established while under colonialism, which has allowed them to develop so positively. Similarly, they have the institutions which are able to effectively utilize ODA, keeping it at fairly low levels, while promoting development at the same time.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

The DRC is a large nation in the middle of Africa with expansive forests and rich natural resources. 1885 marked the beginning of more than a century of looting and brutality when the DRC, then the Congo Free State, was granted to the Belgian King Leopold II at the Berlin Conference, solely to enrich the king. Prior to the conference, Leopold II commissioned his men to get local kings to sign “treaties” to give up their territories in exchange for a piece of cloth and alcohol (Tunamsifu, 2022). Between the years 1890 and 1904, the Congo Free State was the most lucrative colony in Africa due to the increased demand for natural rubber, which was being used for cars and bicycles. Along with ivory, King Leopold II found himself sitting on a source of considerable wealth. In order to maximize gains, a reign of terror began which witnessed
untold human atrocities. Belgian soldiers were ordered to kill or intimidate Congolese kings and villages were burned to the ground (Ewans, 2003). Leopold’s soldiers cut off the right hands of hostages who resisted or failed to deliver the quotas of rubber demanded, itself a dangerous task. The hands were presented as a trophy and to provide proof that the ammunition given was not wasted on poaching or other activities. For every bullet fired, soldiers were expected to produce a right hand. As a result of Leopold’s reign, nearly half the population, or 10 million people, were killed (Tunamsifu, 2022). Throughout the early 20th century, the state remained decentralized, with local chiefs responsible for their territories and answering to the Belgian soldiers. The colonial administration made every effort to ensure that no political and academic class developed, however, they did have a high proportion of the population receive primary education (Schwikowski, 2020; Clapham, 1985). Belgium regarded independence as a distant goal and took no steps to create an indigenous political leadership, as seen in Mauritius, which resulted in a highly exploitative, decentralized, exclusive government. In the 1950’s, when Belgium finally accepted the possibility of independence, there existed neither the parties nor leaders capable of running the state, only inexperienced rivals, each with a separate local power base (Clapham, 1985). Thus, in 1960 when they finally gained independence, the state lost control and collapsed within days with various mutinies.

The exploitation and brutality were continued throughout the years with various leaders taking control and ravaging the nation of its resources, funneling the profits into their own pockets, rather than back into the state. Very similar to their experience with colonialism. This is seen when Mobutu Sese Seko came to power in 1971 and made copper his resource of choice. Thanks to the vast copper deposits in the Katanga Province, he largely enriched himself and his cronies off the backs of his population (Schwikowski, 2022). The DRC has had a long history of
conflict, political upheaval and instability, and authoritarian rule have led to a grave, ongoing humanitarian crisis. In 62 years of independence, the DRC did not experience its first peaceful transition of power until January 2019 (World Bank, 2023). Economically, the country is among the five poorest in the world with a GDP per capita of a mere $577. Surprisingly, the nation has a fairly high literacy rate at 81% (2021), possibly a nod to the high proportion of the population who received primary education under Belgian rule, which further proves my theory that institutions tend to perpetuate from colonialism. Yet, their infant mortality rate is very high with 62 deaths per 1,000 live births (2021), over 2 times the world average at 28 (World Bank, 2023). Additionally, their HDI score is .479, ranking them 179th place out of 191 countries in 2021. This poor development, instability, and violence spurred from colonialism has seen their ODA per capita rise from $5 (1960) to $37 (2021), a large rise compared to the other cases which have remained fairly consistent as seen in Table 1. However, due to the decentralized and patrimonial form of rule consistent since colonialism, much of the nation’s ODA has gone to rulers’ pockets, rather than the benefit of the country. These institutions have perpetuated the pillaging and exploitation observed under indirect rule, further undermining the citizens trust in their government. As Watkins (2022) finds, active aid projects are on average associated with decreased trust in the government due to the risk and perception of corruption.

Overall, the DRC experienced one of the most exploitative, brutal, and violent forms of indirect rule under Belgium and King Leopold II. Despite overseeing a high proportion of the population through primary education, which is seen today in the nation’s higher than expected literacy rate, the colonizing power still brutalized and tortured the people in order to enrich themselves, as is seen today throughout the legacy of the DRC from independence to now. There has been a repeated pattern of a decentralized, exclusive government which has exploited the
land and resources to satisfy themselves and their patrimonial regime (Weiss & Nzongola-
Ntalaja, 2013). This is the same form of rule experienced as a colony, the only real difference is
Belgium was arguably more brutal wiping out half of the DRC’s population and who the
exploitation is benefiting, a local ruler robbing the nation’s wealth, rather than Belgium.

Botswana

In 1885, Britain had declared its “protection” for Botswana, then called Bechuanaland, in
order to stall any expansion by the Germans in Southwest Africa and Paul Kruger’s Transvaal
Republic. The British ruled Bechuanaland through classic indirect rule, the ordinary person was
governed by his or her chief, or by a sub chief or a headman in the area and the colonial district
commissioner worked with the chief (Lewis, 2020). This resulted in a largely decentralized,
exclusive form of government with small power factions throughout the country headed by a
chief, who answered to a representative of Britain. The British had no real interest in actively
managing Bechuanaland, since they thought it lacked valuable natural resources. Additionally,
colonies in India, South Africa, and Rhodesia stretched the British Empire’s colonial budget.
Hence, without resources to take on another large colonial project, the British left Bechuanaland
alone hoping for no military conflicts. So, the chief solved disputes, distributed justice, allocated
land and cattle, and, in general, managed the lives of his subjects (Beaulier, 2003; Lewis, 2020).
The abuse of authority by traditional leaders undermined the support for their continued
hegemony and led to violence from subordinate classes. To resolve this issue and prevent
potential invasion, a group of moderate traditional leaders, European settlers, and the growing
class of intellectuals that shared common economic and political interests cooperated to negotiate
the rules for the new democracy prior to independence. This resulted in a coalition which secured
the nation’s economic interests while also maintaining social peace. The government addressed
demands of the left by giving them a voice in the democratic process and developing social, educational, and health policies which favored the disadvantaged (Froitzheim, 2009). By 1966, Botswana had gone from a nation indirectly ruled with no real formal rules or institutions, on the verge of being absorbed by South Africa, to a country with an inclusive, democratic, bureaucratic and infrastructurally strong government through class struggles, drastically altering their development trajectory. At this point, they were still a poor nation, highly reliant upon agriculture, however, right after independence Botswana discovered diamonds, allowing the government to continue pursuing developmental policies which led to growth in employment and improved the quality of life standards for other social classes. The state expanded physical infrastructure, education, and health services, as well as other public goods (Lewis, 2020; Froitzheim, 2009).

Today, Botswana is bureaucratically organized, effectively regulates social relations, and has been able to exploit rich diamond deposits to promote broad-based development (Lange, 2009). As one of the world’s poorest countries at independence in 1966, it rapidly became one of the fastest-growing economies due to significant mineral (diamond) wealth, robust institutions, and prudent economic management (World Bank, 2023). As seen in Table 1, this revolution of institutions has resulted in a massive rise in GDP per capita for the nation, from $89 (1966) up to $6,805 (2021). Their literacy rate and infant mortality rate have also drastically improved, with the literacy rate rising from 60% (1984) to 87% (2013), and infant mortality falling from 98 deaths per 1,000 live births (1969) down to 62, as of 2021 (World Bank, 2023). Their HDI score now sits at .693, impressive given the African sub-saharan average is .550 (UNDP 2022; Statista, 2023). Despite having an ODA per capita the same as the DRC at $37, Botswana has clearly been able to accomplish more positive development than the DRC. Similarly, the rate of ODA in
Botswana has been consistent, only rising $6 over a more than 50 year period, compared to the DRC rising from $5 in 1960 to $37 in 2021 and still struggling developmentally.

In summary, despite being largely indirectly ruled for most of their colonial history, Botswana took advantage of a critical juncture, transformed their government, sculpting it to be more inclusive, bureaucratic, and provide for the disadvantaged populations. This reflected a more direct form of rule drastically altering their development trajectory, despite being nearly swallowed by South Africa before independence.

India

India’s colonization is an interesting case with many scholars disagreeing about whether it was directly or indirectly ruled. However, the country had a mixed form, with some regions more directly ruled and other more indirectly, with the directly ruled regions having higher levels of development than the indirect areas, culminating in fairly mediocre development as a whole (Lange, 2009). During British rule, the country was divided into two types, British India and native or princely states. Within British India, the British administration had full autonomy in the internal and external affairs, hence, was under the direct rule of the British. Conversely, the princely states were ruled by the local kings, or hereditary rulers, who had full autonomy in the internal affairs, yet Britain still controlled the external affairs, therefore were under the indirect rule of the British (Jha & Talathi, 2021). These areas consisted of about 600 princely states, making up about two-fifths of the area of colonial India and about a quarter of the population. In relation to the country’s population, the central state under Britain was miniscule, which prevented it from reaching down to the local level, requiring intermediaries and depending on regional rulers throughout the country. This form of government showed many characteristics of indirect rule, including; administrative dependence on patrimonial collaborators, severely limited
infrastructural power and bureaucratization, and empowered local rulers or intermediaries (Lange, 2009). The directly ruled regions were absent of local intermediaries and required a larger legal-administration system to collect taxes, register property, and enforce property rights. These more directly ruled regions had states with greater capacities to promote development. For example, the case of Kerala, a directly ruled region in India that had the highest levels of human development in India and among the highest in the Third World. They acquired high life expectancy rates, nearly universal literacy for both men and women, as well as active and democratic politics at the local level. Development in this area was made possible by the destruction of the previously decentralized despotism and the construction of a direct local state that expanded infrastructural power and inclusiveness (Heller 1999). In 1947 when Britain left, the princely states were integrated into independent India, and both the former directly and indirectly controlled areas came under a common system of administration, one based on the British Indian model (Iyer, 2004).

Post-colonial India provides further evidence that rule through local intermediaries and indirect collaborators has left a negative developmental legacy. Regions with landlords during colonialism had significantly lower levels of economic and human development during the post-colonial era (Banerjee & Iyer, 2005). Lange (2009) observes that the extent of indirect rule is negatively associated with an Indian state’s literacy rate and per capita GDP. As a whole, this is seen in India’s GDP per capita rising from $83 (1960) to $2,256 (2021), an improvement, yet not as high as Mauritius and Botswana. India’s literacy rate has also risen, as seen in Table 1, from 41% (1981) to 78% (2018). A positive development, yet lower than the other cases, even the DRC (81%). However, they’ve made impressive progress in infant mortality rates, decreasing from 162 per 1,000 live births in 1960 down to 26 in 2021 (World Bank, 2023). Their HDI score
sits at a moderate .633, higher than the DRC (.479), but lower than Botswana and Mauritius (.693 and .802 respectively). Yet, their ODA has remained at a low $2 per capita from 1960 all the way to 2021. This shows an impressive relative lack of dependence on foreign aid and providing positive development, albeit at lower rates, with less ODA.

V. Discussion

Throughout this paper, I have provided, both qualitative and quantitative, evidence that directly ruled colonies, or ones that implemented direct rule, have experienced better development than ones which were indirectly ruled. Focusing on cases of Mauritius, the DRC, Botswana, as well as India, I found proof their institutions mainly persisted post independence, drastically influencing their development, whether for better or for worse. In the exceptional case of Botswana, taking advantage of a critical juncture and revolutionizing their institutions to be more direct affected their development trajectory, promoting positive development despite their colonial history. Qualitatively, I discussed their form of rule as a colony and the implications it had on the nation. Similarly, I discussed how their institutions have operated post-independence, observing where they have tended to perpetuate similar forms to colonialism, and for the case of Botswana, where they have differed, and how it impacted their development. Quantitatively, I showed how, from independence to 2021, nations have tended to perform better the more direct their form of government is through their GDP per capita, literacy rate, infant mortality rate, and HDI score. Similarly, I noted how nations which are more direct tend to be more consistent in terms of their ODA requirements, whereas the DRC has drastically risen while still lacking development. In addition, I pointed out how more directly controlled nations have produced the institutions able to better utilize ODA to further their development through higher bureaucracy, inclusivity of disadvantaged or subordinate groups, and infrastructurally strong.
That said, there are potential limitations to my study. For example, I have only reviewed four cases. I chose cases with different outcomes and across different continents to solidify the generalizability of my theory that colonial form of rule installed institutions which have drastically affected a nation’s development to the modern era. Similarly, there could be other factors ignored which have contributed to a nation’s development, such as aid conditionality either spurring or harming growth through the conditions required to receive aid. Also, there were possibly the right conditions for these specific cases to succeed or not. For instance, before independence, Botswana was failing, nearly absorbed by South Africa, and was surrounded by countries suffering from civil war, therefore, England felt a responsibility to stabilize their nation as much as possible to prevent another failed nation and usurpation by South Africa. Also, Mauritius is a key maritime security partner, so other nations have a vested interest in ensuring their success and stability. There could also possibly be selection bias in the four cases I chose to study, as they have been studied previously in the context of colonialism and its legacy.

There is also the counterargument that colonialism was about 60 years ago at this point and can’t really continue to be used as an excuse for these countries for why they have developed or failed to. However, this paper illustrates that many of the same forms of rule established under colonialism are still persistent today. It was much easier for these poor nations to continue their inherited institutions and try to work within them, rather than revolutionize these institutions, which would provide for better long term development. At the same time, I am not making excuses for these countries and do ultimately believe that they have a responsibility to fix their institutions, sculpting them to follow a more direct rule model to influence development. Yet, to say colonialism has little to no impact on these nations today, 60 years later, is ignorant of the
colonial legacies of these nations and how they are mostly administered the same way they were under colonialism, whether for better or worse.

Finally, in this paper, I am by no means defending colonialism or saying that direct rule was “good” while indirect rule was “bad”. My intention is to observe how direct control has, for the most part, produced higher levels of development long term, whereas indirect rule has produced lower levels of development and hasn’t produced the institutions capable of effectively utilizing ODA in the same sense directly ruled nations have. At the end of the day, no form of colonialism was “good”, even direct rule was brutal, exploitative, and destroyed indigenous cultures, forms of rule and law, and suffered mass casualties. That said, this paper does still show that these types of institutions produced by direct rule have provided for more positive long term development.
Works Cited


Infrastructure spending in the United States of America is not something that the average person thinks about much, and yet infrastructure shapes almost every part of their lives. Investments in infrastructure have fluctuated in the country throughout the years and has led to varying qualities of infrastructure across the United States. This has led parts of the public to call for more investing. Infrastructure spending and infrastructure investment will be used interchangeably in this paper. What the major determinants of infrastructure investment in the United States are is the key question to gaining more spending and in the right places. If the determinants of infrastructure spending can be identified then pressure can be applied in the right places to create desired change. Knowing the best way to make change is the first step in creating it after all. There is a proven track record of public support for infrastructure bills brought before Congress seen through polling data from across the country. By investigating the median voter model at the federal level of government it can be determined if people's support of infrastructure investment is being recognized. By using polling data about public opinion on major infrastructure bills and comparing the positive or negative response of people to the passage of the bill a test of the median voter model can be designed. Major federal infrastructure bills were chosen for their visibility to the public making polling data usable. This data is also compared against political control of the government to test the alternative theory that political motivations have a large effect on infrastructure spending. The table derived from this information shows that the median voter model does not hold true for predicting federal infrastructure bill passage. Instead, there appears to be a correlation between the political party in power and infrastructure
bill passage, with the Democratic party passing bills and the Republicans not. These findings hold true with other literature on the nature of infrastructure spending.

**Literature review**

Literature on the field of infrastructure investment is many and varied. Economics has a stronghold on the field due to its monetary nature, but there are more political takes on the matter as well. What is most interesting and vexing at times about the literature is the gaps that appear. There is little literature during the 2000s period with most literature falling either during the 1990s or 2010s. Overall, finding literature on this broad topic proved relatively easy.

Infrastructure investments by all levels of government are mostly examined in literature from an economic standpoint. There is literature examining the success of infrastructure spending and what economic factors contribute to more or less investment. This is important knowledge to have because knowing if infrastructure spending is effective is the first step to wanting to know what causes it. It would be pointless to explore the causes of infrastructure investment if it wasn’t producing the desired results. Economic literature in this field does show though that while infrastructure spending has fluctuated over time and the spending power of a single dollar has changed in the industry, investment is still successful for the most part at producing the desired results. In fact, a survey done on the overall consensus within the economic community found that there is agreement that infrastructure spending has “positive and significant” effects, even if they are smaller than they have been (Alfredo & Andraz, 2013). With this foundational knowledge that infrastructure spending works, it becomes desirable to determine what affects it. Most literature in the economic field puts forth several indicators for what determines spending. The effects of the tax gap and inflation are written about by Hefner
and Burson(1992) and cost-benefit studies by Munnell(1992). These are studies that while older do still appear to hold merit in the modern understanding of infrastructure investments. There are more modern looks in economics into some more political aspects of spending. For example, how states spend in relation to other states is explored by Bruce et. al(2007). This examination starts to get closer to the direction this paper will explore as it will look more into the impact that politics and voters have on infrastructure investment.

In the literature that examines the causes of infrastructure investment from a more political view, there is a wide range of angles explored. The many levels of government in the United States, voter behavior, and political partisanship are the most common with the median voter theorem and political partisanship appearing most frequently. These two models in some ways stand opposed to each other. The median voter model predicts here that the government will spend money on infrastructure when the general public wants it, rather than when special interest groups lobby for it. Political partisanship and motivation in some ways stand, if not opposed, then adjacent to this in that lobby groups and the interest of politicians decide when infrastructure spending happens. Among the literature about infrastructure spending and the median voter model, it all tends towards being at the state or local level. Mendes and Sampaio de Sousa(2006) explain this preference in their paper exploring the median voter theorem due to the fact that “at the local level … consumers of public services have a better knowledge of the benefits and costs.” This idea is clearly emphasized across other literature examining the median voter model in this way. Either literature will investigate how individual states manage their infrastructure investing or in relation to each other. The local level of spending is often considered alongside the state level. Here the median voter model is often applied to data about state spending on infrastructure, and usually with a specific piece of infrastructure as well.
Highways are the most popular choice for studying infrastructure investment at all levels, mostly due to highway expenditure being ranked highly on state and local budgets in the United States (Congleton et. al., 1995). This literature concerning the median voter model and state level spending tends to draw a positive correlation showcasing how the median voter model works in this situation. Authors such as Congleton et. al. (1995) and Hall et. al. (2017) have clearly shown this relationship in their work.

On the other hand, there is literature that examines infrastructure spending as a result of political motivations. Models that consider this approach tend to be a mix of both state and federal levels of government. Most of this revolves around how political decisions affect the money being spent and distributed by the federal government. The differences in political parties along with politicians' desire to be re-elected all play a part here. The pork-barrel effect as well as the structure of different governments are also considered, though not as frequently. The median voter theorem is rarely if ever brought up in research at the federal level of spending. This does make sense for the scale that the researcher at the federal level is often looking at, the median voter for the whole nation is different from the median voter from state to state. The federal level of infrastructure spending is often only examined through political means or through its effects on state spending. Infrastructure investing can be directly linked to policy decisions at all levels of government according to this approach to investment (Hulten & Schwab, 1993). Partisanship’s effect on infrastructure spending and distribution is examined in detail by Goetzke et. al’s (2017) finding that political wants often trumped deterministic ones in determining spending. Political drives and partisanship are the drivers of many other aspects of the federal government so it makes it a common place to start when examining effects at the federal level.
This paper aims to close a gap in the research by examining how the median voter model might be applied to the federal level of spending. It has been demonstrated in the literature that the median voter model does hold true on a state and local level, so why not test its applicability to the federal level as well? Research has shown that political means are the main driver of infrastructure spending for the federal government, but examining how voters impact these politicians' choices is also important. Examining whether the median voter model holds true for the federal level of spending is important for considering the power of the median voter at the federal level. The median voter model holding true at the federal level would validate many claims of the model's success and its usefulness in campaign planning. If the median voter model can not be applied to the federal government's infrastructure spending then it is a showcase of the median voter model falling short on the national scale and questioning its usefulness in political understanding.

**Research Design**

As I began examining the question of how federal infrastructure spending was related to the median voter model, I knew there would be a few key variables. One is I would need public polling data, the other is I would need proof of major infrastructure spending. The federal government is always spending money on infrastructure so in order to measure any changes I identified major infrastructure specific bills that had been proposed. Major infrastructure bills were defined to be any bill at the federal level that proposed direct spending over $30 billion. This number was chosen because it is a little over the average amount the federal government spends directly. Data on important and major bills were collected through a combination of input from my colleagues and research done through the news media. Mentions of major infrastructure
bills discussed in reputable news sources were identified as well as the year they were proposed or passed. Sources such as the official Congress bill tracking system were instrumental in determining the end fate of bills. Once the major infrastructure bills were identified I began to look for public polls about infrastructure spending. The main sources I had for nationwide polling were Gallup, a well known public opinion polling analytic company, and Pew Research Center, a well known nonpartisan think tank. These were the initial data points I knew I would need to collect and worked from the sources mentioned to find them.

I managed to collect seven data points from the years 2009, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2021. As I was gathering data I frequently ran into the issue that polling data on public support for infrastructure spending does not happen until there is proposed legislation for major infrastructure spending. Infrastructure is just not at the forefront of people's minds. Because of this, I focused only on finding polling data on major federal infrastructure bills throughout the years. This helped in focusing my data only on the major changes in infrastructure investments by the federal government. Polling data was often naming bills by name to the public when collecting data which further constrained my data to these major infrastructure bills. There are three data points in 2021 due to the fact that there were three major federal infrastructure bills proposed that year. The other data points are the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and several proposed infrastructure bills by former President Trump. After completing data on the public support for proposed infrastructure legislation I also determined if the bill passed or not. This allowed me to be able to draw conclusions about how well the median voter model was holding for each year. As my data collection process continued I decided it would be prudent to gather data about which political party held control of the presidency, Senate, and House of Representatives in the years I could find polling data for. This would allow me to test my
hypothesis of the median voter theorem against the political partisanship model. As an added piece of information, I found data on how much the federal government spent directly on infrastructure each of the years I had data for. This was money unrelated to major infrastructure bills but instead a look at how spending by the federal government has changed over time, this was helpful in providing a baseline metric for spending by the government. Knowing how much the federal government typically spends on infrastructure helps put many of these infrastructure bills in perspective.

Polling data about the 2011 American Jobs act is not included due to the inability to find polling data about the act not tied directly to the job creation portion of the act. While part of the proposed American Jobs act did include infrastructure investment so much of the rest of the act was dedicated to job creation it was difficult to parse out people's opinions on the infrastructure spending from the job creation.

**Research Analysis**

From the data I was able to gather and synthesize, I observed that the median voter theorem does not hold for infrastructure investment at the federal level. Support for infrastructure investments is always high and also almost always bipartisan from the few polls that tracked that. The general public in the United States always has approval for major infrastructure spending consistently surpassing the 50% mark and frequently reaching into the 60% range. Despite this, infrastructure bills aren’t always passed. In three of the seven data points I examined, major infrastructure bills received over 60% of public support yet were not passed. On the other hand, party affiliation does seem to matter. This potential partisanship effect is expected by the literature. While the data I have does not perfectly encapsulate how political ideas and
partisanship affect infrastructure investment it does showcase what has become to be expected at the federal level with political motivations playing the largest role in decisions. Every year with a majority of democratic control resulted in infrastructure bills passing. In the data I have this was when the Democratic party held both the White House and both chambers of Congress. This correlation between Democrats having governmental control and infrastructure bills passing may be only that, a correlation.

Table 1: The passage of federal infrastructure bills compared to public opinion polling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Federal infrastructure bill y/n</th>
<th>Federal $ spent (direct)</th>
<th>Poll data</th>
<th>Median voter theorem working</th>
<th>President political party</th>
<th>House party control</th>
<th>Senate party control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>$38.8 billion</td>
<td>59% support</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>$34.6 billion</td>
<td>75% support</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Republican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>$43 billion</td>
<td>64% support</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Republican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>$32.3 billion</td>
<td>87% support</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Republican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>$73 billion</td>
<td>62% support</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>$73 billion</td>
<td>62% support</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>$73 billion</td>
<td>70% support</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is also potentially a confounding factor of the covid-19 pandemic. During the pandemic spending shot up all around as the government fought the virus. This may have also affected people's views of infrastructure spending due to the vast amounts of money being spent. With more money being spent it brought infrastructure to the forefront of people's minds which
as we have seen earlier is often the only time polling is done for the federal level. Covid-19 was an unprecedented time in many ways and the long-term effects of it on our systems of government remain to be seen.

**Figure 1: Direct Federal Spending from 2009 to 2021 in billions of USD($)***

Overall direct spending at the federal level is shown to have mostly remained steady over time hovering solidly between $25 and $50 billion dollars. This showcases that while major infrastructure bills may not have passed under Republican control direct federal spending stayed the same. There is an outlier in the year 2020 with federal spending a little more than doubling. This is almost assuredly due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which as discussed earlier dramatically shifted spending to all parts of the government. It is not surprising here then that spending increased in the ways that it did. Infrastructure spending also has yet to return to pre covid level with 2021 spending still coming in far above the previous average.

While the level of direct spending on infrastructure from the federal government mostly followed a consistent trend aside from major outliers and public support also maintained a
consistently high level, the median voter model still fails. Major infrastructure investments that the American public were aware of and expressed their opinion on did not always pass as the median voter theorem suggests they should have with such high approval rates. In only four of the seven data points collected did the median voter model hold true. A success rate of only 57% is not a suitable success rate, there is no correlation between the median voter and federal infrastructure bills passing.

**Discussion**

Infrastructure spending is a large topic spanning both economics and politics, there are effects across both and it is affected by both. Economic interests are a major consideration to much of the field considering the millions and billions of dollars being spent on infrastructure. With so much money being spent on infrastructure it becomes necessary to examine how effective this spending is and what motivates major spending. Over the years there has been strong evidence that there are impacts thanks to infrastructure investments, mostly positive despite the state of American infrastructure. This is the baseline that must be worked with to establish the rest of the question, what affects infrastructure investing in the government? This paper explored the effects of the median voter model on federal infrastructure bill passage rates. By examining the relationship between voters and spending at the federal level the power of voters and the validity of the median voter model are explored. The findings of this study are in line with the expectations from the literature. The median voter model is not often applied to the federal government due to the lack of direct interaction between voters and the processes of the federal government. There is also already a well-established correlation between political motivations and partisanship in shaping federal spending. My findings that the median voter
model does not apply to predicting federal spending on infrastructure and that instead is mostly correlated to a political party is unsurprising. The democratic party is shown to pass infrastructure bills more frequently than the republican party. I do have to wonder if part of this is related less to the Democratic party and more to do with the fact that Donald Trump was president, a highly polarizing figure in the political world.

There is still importance in null results in their importance of adding validity to the previous literature. This study has helped to confirm the validity of political choices being the main driving force behind federal infrastructure spending. Taking the theory of the median voter, which has been proven on a state level, and applying it to the federal government level is an important test. Proving that the median voter model does not scale up to the federal government gives important information not only about what affects infrastructure investing at the federal level but also about the median voter model itself. We can see from the data that the median voter model doesn't work and that instead political choices and motivations appear to be more strongly correlated. The median voter theorem suggests that special interest groups should not have over policy decisions or internal political motivations and yet we don’t see this at the federal level. The most interesting part of this finding is that the literature has proven that the median voter model does work at a state and local level. This relationship suggests that the more direct citizen participation in government the more likely the median voter model will hold true. More research is needed to prove this hypothesis.

The knowledge that the median voter model does not hold for affecting infrastructure is important to know for anyone who wants to affect it. While the general public may not always have an interest in affecting infrastructure spending there certainly are people who have dedicated a significant amount of time and energy to the endeavor. It is through studies such as
these that people can learn the best ways to affect spending. The results to take from this paper would be that mobilizing general interest in large voter bases may not be the way to go. Hopefully, in the future, those interested in influencing more infrastructure investment from the federal government can use information from papers like this one to be effective.

The next stage of this research I believe should be in clearing up the gaps I feel are present in my own work. In my paper, I have shown that there is no correlation between the median voter and infrastructure bill passage, yet there does seem to be one between political parties. When talking about political choices in the government the literature rarely directly addressed part lines as potential sources. This data seemed to show a correlation between the democratic party and increased infrastructure spending; research could examine if this is due to voters' expressed desires or other political motivations such as spending and debt. Literature on infrastructure at the federal level mostly leans towards political decisions. An examination of which political decisions have the most sway could help show what has the most effect on infrastructure spending. Exploring this relationship further could provide a better understanding of the political decisions and motivations that most strongly cause infrastructure investing.


Burkina Faso: Conflict and Development

Jack Normile, Virginia Commonwealth University

Burkina Faso, a landlocked country in West Africa, has been grappling with conflict and instability in recent years, posing significant threats to the country's security and development. The country has experienced an upsurge in violence perpetrated by Islamist extremist groups such as Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (GSIM), the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Ansaroul Islam (AI), and Jama’at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) (Büttner et al., 2022; Issaev et al., 2022). Additionally, the government’s inability to address long standing grievances, social inequalities, and political exclusion has created fertile ground for the growth of violent extremism (Hubert, 2023). The effects of these conflicts have been felt directly by the people of Burkina Faso, including displacement, loss of livelihoods, and loss of life (Viljar et al., 2022; Druetz et al., 2020). It is important to address that this issue is multi-faceted and complex with no simple resolution.

The impact of these conflicts on Burkina Faso extends beyond the country's borders, as evidenced by the Sahel region's instability (Moderan et al., 2021). The conflicts have also affected the country's economic and social development, hindering foreign investment and impeding access to basic services such as healthcare and education, all crucial areas which were underfunded and struggling prior to the rise of insurgent groups, only to be further worsened (Kambou & Khariss, 2020; Bildirici et al., 2022). Burkina Faso's counterterrorism efforts have also had adverse effects on civilians, further compounding the impact of the conflict (Moderan et al., 2021).
Given the severity of these conflicts, understanding their root causes is crucial to developing effective strategies to address them. Therefore, this paper seeks to uncover the main causes of conflict and instability in Burkina Faso, and how they affect the country's security and development. By analyzing various sources and examining the different factors contributing to conflict and instability, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the situation in Burkina Faso and how to address the ongoing challenges.

It may appear to be a conflict trap that Burkina Faso has been experiencing with a prolonged and repeated war between the government and insurgencies, however, they really have a coup trap. Coup traps, as explained by Paul Collier, occur in countries where coups are seen as a way to gain power and resources, which perpetuates a cycle of violence and instability (Collier, 2008). To resolve conflict, there are three options. First, is negotiation, in which the parties in conflict resolve their differences in a peaceful dialogue and reach a mutually acceptable agreement. The second is military victory, where one side dominates and defeats the other, imposing its will. However, this could potentially lead to further marginalization of the defeated party, potentially fueling future conflicts. The third option to conflict resolution is exhaustion from the involved parties. This involves the groups in conflict having reached a stalemate and realizing neither side can achieve a decisive victory. Typically, at this point, they may be more willing to consider negotiation to find a way out of the deadlock (Zartman, 1989).

The frequent coups in Burkina Faso, especially the two in 2022, have drastically harmed their chances to resolve the ongoing conflict and violence. If anything, the weak and unstable state has provided more incentive to the armed groups to continue their insurgency, rather than working towards a resolution. These groups have no real reason to attempt either negotiation or a power-sharing agreement, since they can’t even be sure that the current government would still
exist in a few years time. Otherwise, another coup d’état could be launched, turning over the current regime and instilling a new one, unwilling to cooperate with the insurgents. Therefore, the only viable option is to continue their brutality, much to the detriment of the people within the country.

I. Sources of Violence

Jihadist Groups

Burkina Faso has been grappling with a wave of violence that has been characterized by a proliferation of jihadist groups who currently control about 40% of the country’s territory and have caused significant damage to the nation’s security and development (International Rescue Committee, 2023). The roots of these groups can be traced to the destabilization of Libya and the rise of Islamist extremist groups in the Sahel region, which provided an opportunity for these groups to establish themselves in Burkina Faso. These groups have been able to recruit new members, finance their operations, and acquire weapons through various means, including exploiting local grievances and alliances with transnational criminal organizations (Hubert, 2023).

The most active jihadist groups operating in Burkina Faso are the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (GSIM), which have been responsible for a significant number of attacks in the country. ISGS has been active in the border areas with Mali and Niger, while GSIM has been operating in the northern and eastern parts of the country (Haavik et al., 2022). These groups have targeted both civilians and security forces, and their tactics have included suicide bombings, ambushes, and kidnappings (Büttner et al., 2022).
The motives behind these attacks are varied, but they are primarily driven by a desire to establish an Islamic caliphate in the region and to overthrow the secular governments of Burkina Faso and other countries in the region (Issaev et al., 2022). The groups have also exploited local grievances, such as poverty, unemployment, and ethnic tensions, to gain support among the population and to recruit new members (Bildirici et al., 2022). In addition, they have been involved in criminal activities, such as smuggling and extortion, to finance their operations. However, smuggling is one of the most prolific, yet least understood aspects of Burkina Faso’s illegal economy. The group JNIM is one of the key actors in this industry. While information is scarce, JNIM is known to have installed itself in key smuggling hubs and relies on certain commodities, such as household goods, fuel, drugs, and cigarettes. Furthermore, in 2021, 72 arrests were made for various offenses in the fuel smuggling industry using specialized trucks which could carry up to 2,000 liters of fuel at a time (Beevor, 2022).

The impact of these groups on Burkina Faso has been devastating. Their attacks have caused significant loss of life and displacement of populations, which has undermined the country's security and development (Druetz et al., 2020). The violence has also had a negative impact on the economy, with the tourism industry being affected, and has led to a decline in foreign investment (Kambou & Khariss, 2020). With an average of 0.0047 tourists per resident, Burkina Faso ranks 193rd in the world. Since the conflict began in 2015 through 2019, tourism has varied in the range of about 150,000 tourists per year, compared to an average of about 231,000 tourists the 5 years before (World Data, 2021). This has resulted in the U.S. Department of State placing Burkina Faso on the Level 4 Do Not Travel list, warning citizens not to visit due to terrorism, crime, and kidnapping, as of July 31, 2023 (US Department of State). Furthermore,
the groups have targeted health facilities, which has had a negative impact on access to healthcare, particularly for maternal health services (Druetz et al., 2020).

State-Sponsored

Burkina Faso has not only faced violence from jihadist groups but also from state-linked sources. In recent years, there have been reports of human rights violations by security forces and government-sponsored militias, exacerbating the already fragile security situation in the country. The government has been accused of arming and supporting militias in response to the invading groups, such as the Koglweogo, who have been involved in extrajudicial killings, torture, and other forms of violence against civilians (Benedikter & Ouedraogo, 2019; Hubert, 2023).

The Koglweogo, which translates to "guardians of the bush," is a self-defense militia that emerged in Burkina Faso in 2015 to combat crime and insecurity. However, they have been accused of committing serious human rights abuses, including lynching and torture. The government has attempted to regulate them, but their involvement in security issues continues to cause tensions and further violence in the country (Hubert, 2023).

The government has also been accused of being slow to respond to external threats from jihadist groups. Reports suggest that the government has not taken sufficient measures to address the problem, and in some cases, has even been complicit in allowing the jihadists to operate within the country (Haavik et al., 2022). This has been a major complaint from the citizens and the main motivation behind Burkina Faso’s last two coups d’état. In January 2022, President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, who was elected in 2015, was ousted by the military due to his
inability to manage the crisis of the Islamic insurgencies. Later, in September of that same year, the military installed Interim President Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba was removed for the same reason, an inability to deal with the country’s Islamist insurgencies, and was replaced with Captain Ibrahim Traoré as the new Interim President through another coup.

Before the rise of these insurgent groups, the former colony of France was already facing an uphill battle in development and had little power due to its poor geographical location, limited natural resources, unstable political culture rife with corruption and overthrowings, a highly politicized armed service, recurring droughts, and a diverse population, only to be exacerbated by invading groups sensing an opportunity (Englebert, 2018).

Overall, the involvement of state-sponsored violence has contributed to the ongoing insecurity in Burkina Faso. The government's failure to address the jihadist threat effectively, and the perpetration of violence by state-linked militias, have led to human rights abuses, further violence, and displacement in the country. The recent coups d’etat have also further undermined the nation’s legitimacy and have contributed to the state’s instability.

II. Effects of Violence

Economy

The ongoing conflict in Burkina Faso is characterized by both state-sponsored violence and Islamist insurgency. The conflict has had significant economic consequences, as well as a negative impact on household investment behavior. The presence of jihadist groups in the country as well as the multiple coups d’etat has reduced foreign direct investment (FDI) as a consequence. Kambou and Khariss (2020) found that terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso have led to a decrease in FDI of up to 0.6% of GDP. Political instability has also led to a decrease in
household investments in Burkina Faso. A one standard deviation increase in instability is associated with a reduction in per capita expenditures for education, health, and durable goods by about 35%, 9%, and 3%, respectively (Büttner et al., 2022). Scholars argue that the lack of economic opportunities and the fear of violence have deterred households from making long-term investments, such as land, equipment, and livestock. They find a negative association between political instability and the accumulation of durable goods and investments in home improvements, education, and health. This has led to a further deterioration and stress on institutions which were already underfunded and struggling to begin with.

Conflict and instability also affects Burkina Faso’s two largest economic sectors, agriculture and mining. With 86% of the population still reliant on subsistence agriculture and food insecurity reaching “alarming levels”, according to the United States Agency for International Development, the violence issue is exacerbating these problems (USAID, 2022). The African Development Bank Group (AfDB) claims that the security situation has resulted in crop areas being reduced for farmers who rely on the land for survival as a result of invading insurgents taking their land or targeting these areas for attacks. About 40%, or 9 million people, live below the national poverty line and, if left unsolved, their coup trap and further conflict will only increase that number. Similarly, the mining sector, which accounts for about 70% of Burkina Faso’s export earnings, has been massively affected by the security issue (International Trade Administration, 2022). Dozens of mines have been shut down for “security reasons” due to Jihadist terrorist groups targeting these sites. Further, gold production fell by about 13% from 2021 to 2022, mainly due to 5 of the remaining 17 industrial mines being closed that year due to security concerns, resulting in an extra loss of jobs, reduction in household income, and risk of increased organized crime (Root, 2023). Additionally, armed groups have claimed mines in the
country to not only finance their operations, but to gain local acceptance at the same time. Specifically, the relationship between gold miners and JNIM is mutually beneficial, rooted in the JNIM’s ability to remove pre-existing systems of control over artisanal mining sites and offer miners more appealing terms than the mine’s previous owners (Beevor, 2022).

In summary, the conflict and political instability in Burkina Faso has had a significant impact on the economy, as well as on household investment behavior. State-sponsored violence, the presence of jihadist groups, in addition to frequent coups d’etat have contributed to the instability of the country, hindering economic development and discouraging long-term investments. The nation’s budget deficit is projected to remain high, at 5.9% of GDP in 2022 and at 5.1% in 2023 (AfDB, 2022). This reflects an increased expenditure in order to respond to the security and humanitarian challenges being faced.

Education

The violence and insecurity in Burkina Faso have had far-reaching consequences on the nation's education system. Terrorist groups have targeted schools in their war on education, leading to the closure of more than 2,000 schools in the northern and eastern parts of the country. The closure of these schools has affected more than 350,000 students, leaving them without access to education. The closure of schools has been attributed to the increased attacks on schools, teachers, and students by jihadist groups (Bildirici et al., 2022). Of the students still attending, these attacks have reduced the quality of learning and put many students behind in their studies. Attacks have also other effects on students, such as long-term trauma, an increase in child labor (specifically working in markets, domestic help, in gold mines, and brick-making), and some commuting long distance to other schools, exposing them to other risks on the road (Human Rights Watch, 2020).
The impact of violence and attacks on education has been compounded by the government's inability to provide security for its citizens, leading to an increase in the number of school closures. In some cases, schools have been closed, not only due to direct attacks, but also because of the government's failure to provide adequate security measures to protect students and teachers (Büttner et al., 2022). This also undermines the government’s legitimacy as a security provider and the people’s trust in its ability to protect them, resulting in lower confidence in institutions. Similarly, the frequent coups d’etat further aggravate these feelings and drastically erode the legitimacy, capacity, and stability of the government. Furthermore, the government has not been able to provide adequate funding for the education sector, since they are spending so much on countering violence and terrorism, leading to a shortage of resources in schools (Benedikter & Ouedraogo, 2019).

The closure of schools and the inability of the government to provide adequate security and funding for the education sector have long-term consequences for Burkina Faso's development. The lack of education will prevent children from accessing opportunities in the future and continue, if not worsen, the pattern of poverty in the country. The lack of education will also challenge the country in achieving its development goals, including the eradication of poverty and the promotion of economic growth (Shinn, 2016). The long-term consequences of this will be felt for years to come, hindering the country's development and perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

*Healthcare*

Burkina Faso’s ongoing violence has had severe impacts on the country's healthcare systems. According to a report by ReliefWeb, a source which journals on humanitarian
information and issues, as of April 2020, approximately 135 health facilities in Burkina Faso had been closed or were providing only limited services due to violence and insecurity caused by jihadist groups and state-sponsored forces (ReliefWeb, 2020). As a result, many Burkinabé people have been deprived of access to basic healthcare services. For example, findings report that violence has led to a reduced utilization of antenatal care, skilled delivery, and postnatal care (Druetz et al., 2020). Specifically, the study found that women residing in areas affected by terrorist attacks were less likely to receive adequate antenatal care, with a decline of 8.4 percentage points compared to areas not affected by violence. Furthermore, women in these areas were less likely to have a skilled delivery (with a decline of 5.2 percentage points) and postnatal care (with a decline of 11.1 percentage points). The report concludes that addressing the security challenges in Burkina Faso is crucial to improving maternal healthcare outcomes and reducing maternal mortality rates in the country (Druetz et al., 2020).

In addition, the violence has also contributed to increased levels of hunger and malnutrition in the country. A report by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) states that as of 2020, more than 3 million people are facing food insecurity due to conflict and displacement (WFP, 2020). Furthermore, the lack of security has made it difficult for aid organizations to reach people in need of assistance, exacerbating the already dire situation.

The violence has also led to an increased risk of disease outbreaks. Displaced populations living in crowded camps with poor sanitation and hygiene conditions are at high risk of contracting diseases such as cholera, meningitis, and COVID-19. Moreover, the closure of healthcare facilities and the displacement of healthcare workers have also made it challenging to provide necessary healthcare services and contain the spread of diseases. In 2019, non-communicable diseases caused 35% of deaths (World Health Organization, 2023). Malaria is
also a very prominent risk in the country which has seen increased cases after conflict with armed insurgents began in 2015. There was an average of about 7.9 million cases in 2013-2015 compared to an average of about 10.4 million cases from 2016-2020 (Sangaré et al., 2022).

Through direct and indirect effects, the ongoing violence and instability in Burkina Faso have had severe impacts on the country's healthcare systems, which has led to the closure of many health facilities and limiting access to basic healthcare services. Additionally, the violence has contributed to an increase in hunger and malnutrition and an increased risk of disease outbreaks, further worsening the already grave circumstances.

Displacement

The violence and conflict in Burkina Faso have also led to a significant increase in the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the country. According to Francis Kwabena Atta (2023), the number of IDPs in Burkina Faso increased from 87,000 in 2016 to over 1.2 million by the end of 2020. The World Bank claims that the number is now up to 1.7 million as of September 2022 (World Bank, 2022). The situation has been furthered by the poor living conditions in the displacement camps. Reports claim that the displacement camps lack adequate sanitation facilities and have limited access to healthcare services (Moderan et al., 2021). Additionally, the camps are often overcrowded, which increases the risk of disease outbreaks such as cholera and measles.

The lack of access to basic necessities such as food and water is another major concern for displaced persons. As stated in the previous section, as of 2020, more than 3 million people are facing food insecurity in Burkina Faso as a result of the conflict and displacement (WFP, 2020). This has led to increased levels of malnutrition, especially among children.
In summary, the violence and conflict in Burkina Faso have led to a significant increase in the number of IDPs in the country, who are facing a range of challenges such as poor living conditions and limited access to basic necessities such as food and water.

III. Moving Towards Resolution?

In their efforts to counter terrorism, Burkina Faso has overly relied on fighting fire with fire, or, fighting violence with violence, yet lack the funds or morale to be effective and successful (Atta, 2023). Therefore, they have only added more conflict and violence to an already violent and conflict-heavy region, a tactic also employed by Kenya, Nigeria, Mali, and Chad who, too, are struggling to tackle terrorism through force (Atta, 2023; Baldaro & D’Amata, 2022). In a collective effort to stop the expansion of these armed and violent groups, the G5 Sahel Joint Force was established in 2017, a regional, inter-governmental organization between countries in the Sahel region. However, about 5 years after its establishment, Mali left the organization on May 15, 2022 as a result of the other members - Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mauritania - refusing to allow Malian transitional authorities to lead the rotating presidency (Baldaro & D’Amata, 2022). These regional tensions and issues with acting collectively have drastically undermined the effectiveness and legitimacy of the G5 Sahel Joint Force, encouraging more insurgency violence and, in turn, more state-sponsored violence in response.

Additionally, in February 2023, France officially withdrew its troops from Burkina Faso after demands from the regime currently ruling under Interim President Capt. Ibrahim Traoré (France24, 2023). The demand came days after Prime Minister Apollinaire Kyelem de Tembela claimed Russia would be a “reasonable” new partner to counter the jihadist groups. However, the fighting has continued and this development has only succeeded in making Burkina Faso
militarily weaker and provided even more incentive for armed groups to continue their insurgency.

Before Burkina Faso can look to peace as an option and resolve the years-long conflict, they must first focus on reinstating a stable, democratic, and civilian ruled government. They must focus on their coup trap before they can make progress on their conflict trap. At this time, current Interim President Capt. Traoré has claimed he intends to uphold the commitment made by former leader Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to return to civilian rule, rather than military, and transition back to democratic elections by 2024. While this is a step in the right direction, it still is yet to be seen if he will follow through. Additionally, the nation must take steps to prevent future coups d’état in order to escape their coup trap. For example, strengthening their democratic institutions and promoting economic growth, starting with re-establishing democratic elections for government which could make them more favorable to foreign aid and development assistance. The World Bank Group has also established a focus on accelerating sustainable private sector growth for job creation, investing in human capital and social protection systems, and strengthening service delivery and the State’s presence in fragile areas (World Bank, 2023). However, those are now much harder to accomplish given the strain on stability and resources due to the ever creeping armed groups and ongoing war. Currently, insurgency groups have no incentive to either negotiate or come to a power-sharing agreement with an unstable regime which may or may not exist in the near future. Therefore, their only option is to continue fighting, with both hoping for a military victory over the other.

IV. Conclusion
Burkina Faso faces many factors that contribute to their conflict and instability, exerting a significant impact on the country’s security and has impeded their development. When discussing the causes of conflict, it is plain to see that the causes are both exogenous and endogenous, seen in the islamic insurgency groups and the state-sponsored militias. Jihadist groups, such as the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (GSIM), the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), and Ansarul Islam (AI), have been invading the Sahel region of west Africa for more than a decade before spilling over into Burkina Faso around 2015 and now control about 40% of the nation’s territory. In response, the government has sponsored militias and other security forces to counter the armed insurgencies, however, they have faced accusations of human rights abuses against the citizens, including lynchings, torture, and other forms of violence. These factors have massively harmed the stability of the state. Additionally, the frequent coups d’etat, with two in 2022 alone, have caused further instability, undermining the state’s legitimacy and capacity. The people have little to no trust in their government, fueling potential future coups as well as providing more incentive and support for the invading terrorist groups.

All these factors have drastically harmed crucial aspects of the country, worsening their chances for development. For example, the economy, including foreign direct investments and long-term household investments, have massively suffered. The nation’s two largest economic sectors, agriculture and mining, have suffered huge blows as a result of the ongoing conflict with crop areas being reduced for farmers who rely on the land for survival and dozens of mines shut down for security reasons. Education systems have also suffered, with 2,000 schools in the northern and eastern parts of the country being closed due to attacks. This has affected more than 350,000 students, leaving them without access to education. Due to the fact the nation can’t
provide security for its education systems, it will suffer long-term consequences, hindering the country's development and perpetuating the cycle of poverty. Healthcare systems have also been targets for armed groups, leading to more than 130 hospitals being shut down and limiting access to basic healthcare services. This has contributed to an increase in hunger and malnutrition and an increased risk of disease outbreaks. Furthermore, the violence and conflict in Burkina Faso have led to a significant increase in the number of IDPs in the country, about 1.7 million as of September 2022, who are facing a range of challenges such as poor living conditions and limited access to basic necessities such as food and water.

While these factors appear to be a result of a conflict trap upon first glance, where the nation is stuck in a cyclical war, draining their resources and worsening the living conditions of its citizens. The nation is suffering from a coup trap. The frequent coups in Burkina Faso have drastically harmed their chances to resolve the ongoing conflict and violence through undermining the state’s capacity and legitimacy. The weak and unstable state has provided more incentive to the armed groups to continue their insurgency, rather than working towards a resolution. These groups have no real reason to presently attempt either negotiation or a power-sharing agreement, since they can’t be sure that the current government would still exist in a few years time. Otherwise, another coup d’etat could be launched, turning over the current regime and instilling a new one, unwilling to cooperate with the insurgents. As of now, the only viable option is to continue their brutality, to the detriment of the people within the country. Therefore, Burkina Faso must focus first on strengthening its institutions and reinstating a stable, democratic, and civilian ruled government before the nation can attempt a resolution to the violence.
Works Cited


Burkina Faso: Conflict and Development


Collier, P. (2008). The bottom billion: Why the poorest countries are failing and what can be done about it. Oxford University Press, USA.


92


