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An Analysis of AB 109: Was California's Policy to Reduce Prison Overcrowding and Recidivism Effective?

Alexander M. Wood

I. Abstract

Assembly Bill 109 ("AB 109"), also known as "California's Public Safety Realignment Act," is legislation passed in 2011. The bill's primary objective was to reduce California's prison population by diverting certain lower-level felonies from state prison to county jails or out-of-custody release under local supervision. In addition to this, AB 109 also intended to reduce recidivism, which would further reduce California's prison population. This article will discuss the historical background which led to the implementation of AB 109. It will also discuss the bill's effectiveness in achieving its primary and secondary goals and further attempts by California to reduce the prison population. Thereafter, this article will offer recommendations and/or alternatives to reduce prison overcrowding.

Keywords

AB 109; Realignment Act; Prison Overcrowding; Sentencing; Probation; County Jail; Prison

Introduction

From 1985 to 2006, the prison population in California tripled from 50,000 inmates to 173,000 inmates. Incarceration rates, over the same period of time, doubled from 187 to 474 inmates per 100,000 Californians.[1] As a result of these increases, prison conditions were diminishing.

Litigation Against CDCR

In 1990, challenges were raised against the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation ("CDCR") for inadequate health care. This resulted in two federal class-action lawsuits, *Coleman v. Brown* and *Plata v. Brown*. In the *Coleman* case, the District Court found that "prisoners with serious mental illness [did] not receive minimal, adequate care." In *Plata*, the court found that there were deficiencies in prison medical care that violated prisoners' Eighth Amendment rights. [2]

The Court ordered a Receiver to oversee efforts made by California. Several years later, the Receiver noted that California had not improved their conditions and described continuing deficiencies caused by overcrowding. The plaintiffs in *Coleman* and *Plata* motioned to convene a three-judge court, empowered by the Prison Litigation Reform Act of 1995 ("PLRA"). The plaintiffs stated that the remedy for unconstitutional health care could not be achieved without reducing prison overcrowding. The judges granted their request and ordered California to reduce its prison population to 137% of design capacity within two years. [3]

California subsequently appealed that decision. In 2010, the United States Supreme Court agreed to hear the case. At the time of the trial, California's prisons held approximately 156,000 inmates,

double their original design. One year later, in a 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court affirmed the lower court's decision. They held that "through the power of PLRA and the sufficiency of evidence found by the lower court, the court-mandated population limit is necessary to remedy the violation of prisoners' constitutional rights." [4]

Subsequent Legislative Action

Following the court's decision, Governor Jerry Brown signed AB 109 on April 4, 2011. The bill became effective October 1st. This newly-enacted bill changed sentencing laws, post-prison release supervision, and reclassified the statutory definitions of "non-serious, non-violent, and non-sexual" (also called "triple-nons") offenders. In large, three major groups were affected by AB 109:

Felony offenders, who have never been convicted of a "serious" or "violent" crime or an aggravated white-collar crime, are not required to register as sex offenders and will now serve their sentences in local custody; Released prisoners, whose current commitment offense qualifies them as "triple-non" offenders, are diverted to supervision of local county probation under "Post Release Community Supervision (PRCS), and; If persons on PRCS violate the technical conditions of their supervision (rather than committing a new crime), they can no longer return to State prison but must be sanctioned in local jail or community alternatives, such as, house arrest, drug treatment, or flash incarceration.[5]

In November 2014, California voters passed Proposition 47 ("Prop 47"). Prop 47 aimed to reduce penalties associated with lower-level drug and property offenses and also redefined these offenses as felonies or "wobblers" – an offense that could be charged as a felony or misdemeanor – to carry a maximum of a year in county jail. This new law also applied retroactively, so individuals previously convicted, could petition to be released or have their sentence reduced.[6] Similarly, in 2016, California voters passed Proposition 57 ("Prop 57"). Prop 57 allowed parole consideration for non-violent felony offenders and authorized sentence credits for rehabilitation, good behavior, and education. These two propositions are the progeny of AB 109 and further attempt to depopulate the state prisons and award low-level felons.

Analysis of AB 109

Prison Rates

In the month AB 109 was implemented, the prison population in California was at 160,700 inmates. Three months later, the prison population dropped to 144,000. By September 2012, AB 109 reduced the prison population to 133,400 inmates.[7] (See Figure 1.) As the prison population decreased, the county jail population increased. In September 2012, the population in county jail increased by 9,000 inmates. (See Figure 2.)

Figure 1. Prison Population Decline from January 2010 – March 2015[8]

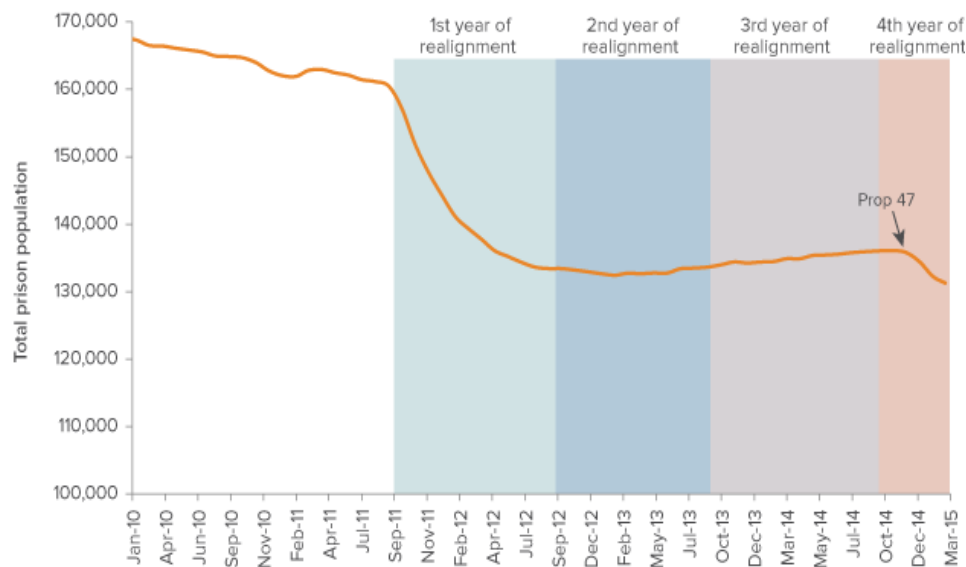
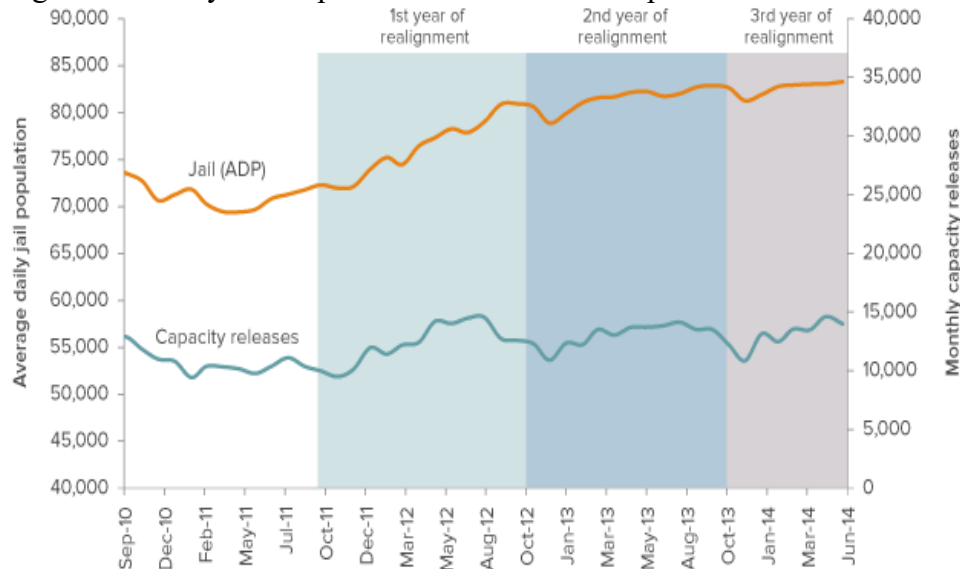


Figure 2. County Jail Population Increase from September 2010 to June 2014[9]



In addition to population change, Stanford researchers found that within two years of AB 109's implementation, noticeable and significant changes to county's spending plans. They noted that: 35% of California's funds went to the sheriff's department for jail operations, 34% went to the probation department for primarily supervision and programs, 12% went to programs and services provided by other agencies such as substance abuse, mental health treatment, housing assistance, and employment services, and 19% of funds were on reserve. These funds were allocated since it was estimated that approximately 40,000 to 60,000 inmates who were released in 2012 would be supervised by county probation officers. The same researchers also discovered disturbing data about those who would serve the remainder of their term on supervision. The uncovered that "56% percent of those offenders scored 'high' on risk-assessment tools that measured a likelihood of their reoffending." [10]

Data from the Uniform Crime Reports of the F.B.I. and California Department of Justice, reflect a decline in prison and jail population dropped to 556 inmates per 100,000 residents as opposed to

the year previous which was 619 inmates per 100,000 residents. Prop 47 had a positive and substantial effect and actually reduced both populations. Two months after Prop 47's launch, the total inmate incarceration in California was 538 inmates per 100,000 residents, the lowest in 20 years.[11] Moreover, since 2017, the prison population in California has stabilized at 115,000 inmates statewide. However, as of 2018, 13 of the 35 state-owned facilities still operate beyond that capacity.[12]

Unintended Consequence

During the years 1960 to 1980, California's violent crime was substantially increasing. The state's violent crime rate increased dramatically from 236 to 888 violent crimes per 100,000 residents. It was an overall, 276% rise in crime. After the declining in the early 80s, the rate rose to a peak of 1,104 in 1992. [13] Since then, violent crime has decreased and continued to decrease up to the implementation of AB 109.

When AB 109 was enacted subsequent to the *Brown* and *Plata* cases, it was clear that while decreasing prison overcrowding was its main objective, reducing crime and recidivism was also. According to data from the California Department of Justice, violent crime from 2001 to 2010 was declining. (See Figure 3.) In 2011, when AB 109 was implemented, to 2012, there was a spike in overall crime. Following that year from 2012 to 2013, there was a decrease in crime. Every year since then, crime overall has been on the rise. (See Figure 4.)

Figure 3. Crimes Trends between 2001 to 2010 [14]

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Crimes										
Violent Crimes	210,510	207,988	204,591	197,432	189,593	194,128	191,493	185,233	174,579	163,957
Homicide	2,201	2,392	2,402	2,394	2,503	2,483	2,258	2,143	1,970	1,809
Rape (Forcible Rape prior to 2014)	9,882	10,176	9,918	9,598	9,345	9,213	9,047	8,906	8,698	8,325
Rape	8,219	8,620	8,461	8,287	8,115	7,937	7,931	7,859	7,719	7,408
Attempted Rape	1,663	1,556	1,457	1,311	1,230	1,276	1,116	1,047	979	917
Robbery	63,299	64,805	63,597	61,573	63,424	70,961	70,702	69,391	64,006	58,100
Weapon										
Firearm	22,606	23,444	22,155	20,609	21,947	24,409	23,519	22,089	19,863	18,076
Knife or Cutting Instrument	6,512	6,599	6,453	6,119	6,230	6,833	6,632	6,253	5,658	5,051
Other Weapon	6,034	5,769	5,644	5,521	5,949	6,683	6,593	6,430	5,816	5,361
Strong-Arm	28,147	28,993	29,345	29,324	29,298	33,036	33,958	34,619	32,669	29,612
Location										
Highway	29,000	29,603	29,511	28,738	30,381	34,685	34,880	33,983	31,145	28,360
Commercial	10,877	11,247	10,587	10,388	10,367	10,917	10,287	10,126	9,403	8,463
Gas Station	1,721	1,678	1,522	1,458	1,665	1,689	1,596	1,477	1,221	1,157
Convenience Store	2,951	2,991	2,745	2,717	2,854	3,252	3,039	2,936	2,710	2,476
Residence	5,333	5,489	5,349	5,046	5,142	5,512	5,674	5,848	5,640	5,250
Bank	1,540	1,502	1,369	1,323	1,233	1,331	1,178	1,275	1,107	1,029
Miscellaneous	11,877	12,295	12,514	11,903	11,782	13,575	14,048	13,746	12,780	11,365
Aggravated Assault	135,128	130,615	128,674	123,867	114,321	111,471	109,486	104,793	99,905	95,723
Weapon										
Firearm	21,545	22,916	22,311	22,237	23,266	23,504	21,720	19,201	17,333	16,971
Knife or Cutting Instrument	18,295	17,983	18,065	18,608	18,677	18,209	17,430	16,693	16,099	15,182
Other Weapon	44,028	42,845	42,699	41,699	41,761	40,465	39,975	38,092	35,510	33,092
Hands Fists Feet	51,260	46,871	45,599	41,323	30,617	29,293	30,361	30,807	30,963	30,478

Figure 4. Crimes Trends between 2010 to 2019 & Increase After 2013 [15]

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Crimes										
Violent Crimes	163,957	155,313	160,629	151,634	151,425	166,588	174,701	178,553	176,866	173,205
Homicide	1,809	1,794	1,878	1,745	1,697	1,861	1,930	1,829	1,739	1,679
Rape (Forcible Rape prior to 2014)	8,325	7,678	7,828	7,459	9,397	12,793	13,695	14,724	15,500	14,720
Rape	7,408	6,792	6,935	6,665	8,562	11,827	12,785	13,799	14,526	13,791
Attempted Rape	917	886	893	794	835	966	910	925	974	929
Robbery	58,100	54,358	56,491	53,621	48,650	52,785	54,769	56,609	54,312	52,050
Weapon										
Firearm	18,076	16,180	17,083	16,274	13,546	14,706	15,490	15,349	13,501	12,414
Knife or Cutting Instrument	5,051	4,817	4,920	4,641	4,553	5,028	5,207	5,277	5,031	4,719
Other Weapon	5,361	4,907	5,259	5,089	4,818	5,651	6,067	6,502	6,538	6,068
Strong-Arm	29,612	28,454	29,229	27,617	25,733	27,400	28,005	29,481	29,242	28,849
Location										
Highway	28,360	26,302	26,246	24,463	22,052	22,872	22,953	22,494	21,231	19,782
Commercial	8,463	8,231	8,608	8,191	7,871	9,567	10,187	11,134	10,771	10,429
Gas Station	1,157	1,015	1,142	1,089	889	1,257	1,263	1,453	1,480	1,286
Convenience Store	2,476	2,210	2,547	2,264	2,385	2,845	3,062	3,453	3,369	3,188
Residence	5,250	4,941	5,190	4,794	4,370	4,283	4,730	4,504	4,343	4,275
Bank	1,029	916	845	784	696	662	669	596	568	443
Miscellaneous	11,365	10,743	11,913	12,036	10,387	11,299	11,905	12,975	12,550	12,647
Aggravated Assault	95,723	91,483	94,432	88,809	91,681	99,149	104,307	105,391	105,315	104,756
Weapon										
Firearm	16,971	17,164	18,040	15,610	15,801	18,286	20,633	19,157	17,908	17,748
Knife or Cutting Instrument	15,182	14,873	15,128	14,504	14,859	17,100	17,157	17,123	16,936	16,413
Other Weapon	33,092	30,732	31,533	30,008	32,481	33,985	36,048	36,579	36,494	35,093
Hands Fists Feet	30,478	28,714	29,731	28,687	28,540	29,778	30,469	32,532	33,977	35,502

The main argument against AB 109 is that it generally made our streets less safe. Because the California's goal was to reduce the prison population, it amended what classified as a felony and awarded felons with criminal histories early release on out-of-custody supervision. That had inadvertent consequences. Certain egregious crimes were categorized as "non-violent" crimes:

Human trafficking of a minor for sex [Penal Code § 236.1(c)]

Hate crimes [Penal Code § 422.7]

Arson of forest land causing physical injury [Penal Code § 451(c)]

Assault w/ deadly weapon on peace officer [Penal Code § 245(c)]

Active participation in a street gang [Penal Code § 186.22]

Exploding destructive device w/ intent to cause injury [Penal Code § 18740]

First degree burglary [Penal Code § 459]

Assault with a deadly weapon or force likely to cause great bodily injury [Penal Code § 245(a)(1) & (4)]

Domestic violence [Penal Code § 273.5]

Battery with serious bodily injury [Penal Code § 243(d)]

Solicitation to commit murder [Penal Code § 653f(b)]

Inflicting corporal injury on a child [Penal Code § 273d]

Rape/sodomy/oral copulation of unconscious person or by use of date rape drugs. [Penal Code §§ 261(a)(3) & (4), 286(f), 288a(f)][16]

To put this into perspective, two incidents are highlighted below which show dangerous convicts who benefited from AB 109. Documented gang member, Michael Mejia, 26. On the morning of Monday, February 20th, 2017, Mejia rear-ended a couple of cars in Whittier, California. Officers Keith Boyer and Patrick Hazel responded to the scene and began speaking with Mejia. As Boyer and Hazel identified the car Mejia was driving as stolen, the officers asked him to step out of the vehicle. At that moment, Mejia opened fire on the officers, striking both of them. At least one officer returned fire and struck Mejia. [17] All three were rushed to the hospital, where Officer Boyer was pronounced dead. Prior to this incident, Mejia was released from Pelican Bay State Prison and placed on parole just 10 days earlier. Police investigators noted that Mejia's

criminal history included: vandalism, resisting arrest, robbery, grand theft auto, and vehicle theft. All of which are seemingly violent crimes.[18]

Controversy swirled around this incident and many law enforcement officials blamed California's realignment for this incident. Unfortunately, Mejia is not the only case like this.

On or about May 29th, 2017, two suspects in Torrance, California, 17-year-old, Demarco Blake, and an unidentified 18-year-old male, violently invaded the home of victim, Judy Turner, 73. Turner stated that she heard two intruders coming up her stairs towards her bedroom. The intruders began to violently beat her, leaving her with two black eyes and bruises on her face. A neighbor heard screaming and saw two males flee the home and immediately called the police. Once police arrived, they set up a perimeter around the neighborhood and took the first suspect in custody. About 90 minutes later, the second suspect was arrested. During the arrest, a private citizen filming the incident asked one of the men being arrested why he was there and the suspect replied, "Prop 57." Blake, was wanted previously in connection with a murder in Denver, Colorado. According to police, he was part of a "violent burglary ring." [19][20][21]

These are two unfortunate incidents of many. An inference could be drawn that prior to AB 109, crime was decreasing as we were locking up dangerous criminals. A reasonable inference could also be drawn from the data that crime is on the rise once again as we release dangerous convicts with lengthy criminal histories back into our community.

Recidivism

Following the years when AB 109 was enacted, there were adverse effects of its secondary goal. Two years after the implementation of AB 109, it was found that 71.9% of individuals were rearrested, 2.6% higher than before realignment. In addition to this, 56.4% of those individuals were reconvicted, 2.4% higher than before realignment. [22]

Furthermore, 74.5% of offenders convicted under California Penal Code section 1170(h) [which requires that certain felons serve their time in county jails, as opposed to state prisons] were rearrested, an increase of 2.3% than before realignment. However, 54.9% of those were reconvicted, a 2-point decrease than before realignment. Those who received a "spit-sentence," meaning time served in jail and then on probation, had higher rates of rearrest, by 7.8 points, compared to before realignment. [23] This data concludes that AB 109 had negative effects on recidivism and raises questions about the bill's effect on repeating offenders.

Overall Effectiveness

Overall, California did comply and meet the court-mandated requirement of reducing the prison population. But at the cost of increasing the jail population, releasing dangerous convicts back into the community, and increasing recidivism. In these regards, AB 109 has been ineffective. Although the increase in crime cannot be tied conclusively to AB 109. However, post-AB 109 data has made it clear that the bill, and its sister bills, have contributed to making California streets less safe. Moreover, it can be conclusively stated that AB 109, Prop 47, and Prop 57 has released thousands of dangerous convicts and has radically altered criminal punishment in the state.

Conclusion & Recommendations

Unquestionably, the goal of the criminal justice is to decrease crime, reduce recidivism, and keep the jail and prison population at a minimum. Those goals could not be accomplished with AB 109 and the like. Although AB 109 holds great promise for a better, more effective criminal justice system, there were inadvertent consequences. Those consequences rendered this bill ineffective. What California did with this bill was shift the state's responsibility of inmates to local

counties and implement new ways for inmates to be released back into the community. Both of these were largely unproductive.

Therefore, I offer these recommendations and/or alternatives to AB 109: (1) The focus on reducing the prison population should have been on first-time offenders for minor violations. It's well known that mixing first-time offenders with repeat offenders increases their change for recidivism. (2) Shift the focus from drug addicts to drug manufacturers and drug dealers as addiction is not a crime. Instead of criminalizing those with addictions, we should concentrate on those supplying the drugs. (3) Provide more funding to rehabilitation and prison-release programs. Not every circumstance where a person commits a crime should he/she be committed to jail or prison. To make the right determination, evaluations should be made on: criminal history, likelihood of reoffending, risk level, circumstance of crime, family & childhood history, and probability of future damage if sent to prison. The future of California prisons ...

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Criminal Sanctions: The Black, The Young and The Innocent – An Analysis on the effects of the “War on Drugs” on black low-income community education

Enya Castaneda

In the year 1971, President Richard Nixon declared the “war on drugs” after the many protests and young-adult led rebellions were happening all across the country to protest the war in Vietnam and defend black lives. A top member of his staff admittedly said that President Nixon would not support both and resorted to enacting a war on drugs. He knew that the population would associate hippies with marijuana and the Black community with Heroin which would insight a bigger supporter group for him and more hatred towards the younger minority. Nevertheless, the Black community had it worst, as they were already being denied equality, Nixon declaring war against drugs which were tunneled into impoverished and primarily black communities lead to a white majority believing their attacks on these communities to be justified. Due to the declaration of war on drugs made by Nixon, life in lower-income communities for black individuals became more difficult as they struggled to keep up with the expectations of the white majority which had the upper hand in government and policymaking. The incarceration rates for nonviolent drug-related charges skyrocketed thereafter, rising from 50,000 in 1981 to more than 400,000 by the year 1997, mass incarceration which targeted mostly the black population in those low-income communities (“A Brief”).

To this day the American Government is still fighting to end Richard Nixon’s war on drugs which disproportionally continues to affect black individuals via policing, racial profiling, and especially those in low-income communities. These over-policed, therefore often criminalized communities are communities with a higher black population. This however goes beyond just a war on drugs, but more so the criminal sanctions placed on these communities as a result of Nixon’s war cry. Just like “Civil Sanctions” communities which are considered civilized and short of a crime, there are also “criminal” sanctions. To further understand this concept sanctions are defined as follows: a sanction is a means of centralized law enforcement to combat population disarray and enforce policies with punishment or incentives. A criminal sanction is therefore a focused government enforcement of an area to control crime. With Nixon painting a target on the black community the difference between civil and criminal sanctions, therefore, becomes the same as the difference between gated predominantly white communities and black low-income communities.

With a very prominent target drawn on black communities, oftentimes it is difficult to assess who truly is receiving the biggest punishment. To further understand the extent to which the War on Drugs is currently affecting the black community it is important to analyze the most vulnerable population within this community: young black students living in low-income communities. The ghost of Richard Nixon’s war on drugs remains in the United States and affects young black students in low-income communities through the school-to-prison pipeline within the united states education system.

The correlation between the school-to-prison pipeline and what this paper has defined as criminal sanctions is one of the many keys that the united states use to preface the Black community as a crime-filled group. The primary connection between the school to prison pipelines and the criminal sanctions developed due to the war on drugs is policing on campus. There have

been more than a handful of incidents across the country of police force used on students on campus with the authorization of campus staff and faculty. This sets a precedence for a more welcoming aura and environment for police officers than a black member of a school's student body. On October 18, a 17-year-old Helix Charter High School student was subjected to excessive force while on campus by Scott Wulfin, a La Mesa Department Police Officer in San Diego California (Nguyen). In October of 2019 officer, Zachary Christensen wrestled an 11-year-old student to the ground in New Mexico's Mesa View Middle School (Lockhart). The rates at which these crimes against students are being committed by officers permitted to be on campus is alarming, especially when school staff is inviting these officers onto the campus.

Black students in low-income communities are subjected to this kind of behavior and it is not unusual. The constant eye watching black students waiting for them to express anything other than comfort and satisfaction with school policies and the threat of policing on-campus drives black students away from schools and out into the world and independence at a young age.

Besides the overwhelming target of policing in young black students, school policies as well as school funding, or lack thereof, provided by the government is a significant contributor to deterring black students from attending school. The quality of education provided for black low-income students is low. Students attending low-income community schools, do not receive the same education as those in other communities. Low-income schools don't have access to the same technology, the same mental health services, the same medical services, the same food, or qualified professors to teach them the items on the school curriculum. Black students in low-income communities can't afford anything other than a poor-quality education. Without the proper technology or support from the staff around them, black students lose touch with the school. School policies then, make it much more difficult for students to remain motivated. Many schools across the country have adopted what is known as the "Zero Tolerance" Policy (Curran). The meaning behind it as simple as the name, the staff holds zero tolerance for misconduct and therefore staff also has zero compassion or understanding for the students' individual and personal life which affects their school behavior as well as grades and attendance. UCLA Research study found the following to be true: suspension rates for black students in low-income communities have increased up to 3 times in comparison to their white student counterparts (Losen).

Not only are black students faced with policies that when enacted by school staff they become direct targets. Black students are also faced with a disproportionate disadvantage in school academics. As previously discussed, black students in low-income communities are subjected to low-quality education with a lack of proper government funding and lack of proper support from staff members which has evidently led to what is known as the achievement gap between the black and white community and their constituencies (Bowman). Black students in low-income areas are faced with low-income situations. Black low-income students are often therefore often being raised by single-parent households with parents working overtime. This exposes children to many mental health issues and learning disabilities, in fact, children with incarcerated parents are up to 48% more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD (Morsy). Because of this, it becomes difficult for these students to focus on or even pay attention to the material they are shown. The difficulty often makes them distracted in the classroom and therefore are often referred to as the trouble-making kids. Which are the students that are then sent to face the Zero Tolerance policy which lands them in detention, are suspended, or expelled. This directs students to have gaps in their learning abilities and academics in comparison to the opposite end of the spectrum: white students.

Black Students in low-income communities are faced with an education system working against them which exhausts them and often time leads to Black Students dropping out of school

at a young age. Without a degree, it becomes difficult for black students to find a job and therefore are introduced to drug dealing as a more economically satisfying and fulfilling option. Because of racial profiling, therefore black young adults are more likely to be arrested in the future and prosecuted for possession of drugs or the selling and distributing of drugs which often times lands them in prison with high sentences and high bails which they don't have the money to pay for (Spencer). The School-to-prison pipeline is a direct result and a discourse of the target placed by Richard Nixon on black low-income communities with his "war on drugs" cry.

The declaration of the war on drugs made in July 1997 by President Richard Nixon was a direct cause to a target being placed on embers of the black low-income communities due to previous clear and aggressive racial biases of the white majority. This led to the increase of policing in black low-income communities defined as criminal sanctions and therefore mass incarceration of that same community. This left young black students in low-income communities vulnerable to the school to prison pipeline. The School to prison pipeline is made up of components such as these: policing on campus, zero-tolerance policies, and the racial achievement gap. This pushes black students into dropping out of school at an early age, thus engaging in drug consumption and the drug business. Because of high policing and racial profiling along with it Black people are more likely to be detained and charged for drug use or possession and faced with harsh sentences and high bail-outs leaving them once again vulnerable to prison. The lining amongst all of the components mentioned is clear, the unended war on drugs left black low-income students vulnerable to the prison school pipeline.

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Moving Past the Two-Party System

Emily Lucchese

The Democratic Party and Republican Party have dominated the United State's politics since the 1850s. The two parties, in the past, contained many overlapping beliefs and values but not now; America has become a divided republic. The two-party system does not represent American's like it use to. John Adams wrote: "A division of the republic into two great parties ... is to be dreaded as the great political evil." There has been more discontent and frustration of our two-party system in recent years. America is due for political reform and a multiparty democracy could be the answer.

Americas division has become more evident since the unexpected election of Donald Trump as the 45th president; this is not so much the problem but a symptom of something much bigger. The divided parties do not have the overlap they did in the past, our fellow citizens have become our political opponents. Americans have become more hostile across party lines but do countries with multiparty systems experience the same discontent in their citizens? This essay attempts to answer this question as well as cover and analyze the history of Americas two-party system, Americas Division of Democrats and Republicans, a comparison of other countries with multiparty systems, and the possibility of America having more than two parties, all to help us gain a better understanding of how American can progress and become a better united republic.

Party disagreements have been part of history, since James Maisson and Thomas Jefferson organized the Democratic-Republican party and the Federalist Party founded by Alexander Hamilton and lead with George Washington and John Adams. The Founding Fathers warned against the partisanship, the parties appeared to danger the young republic of America. "Madison warned against the dangerous ways in which "different leaders ambitiously contenting for pre-eminence and power...have, in turn, divided mankind into parties, inflamed them with mutual animosity"(Drutman). Although political parties were seen as being responsible for separating societies, parties became useful tools for politicians to assemble coalitions in the legislature and in building their brands to win elections. After a while, political parties was part of each Americans identity. As years went, there have been many political parties that have come and went but since the Civil War, the two parties we know today, Democrats and Republicans, have been the primary parties.

From the mid-1950's through the mid-1990's, there were essentially four hidden parties: liberal Democrats, liberal Republicans, conservative Democrats, and conservative Republicans. Each sub party represented its own cluster of values, no one party had the majority which created an overlap and cohesion between the parties. As liberal Republicans and conservative Democrats began to dwindle in popularity and into irrelevance, the two parties became much more distinct starting in the 1990s.

The financial crisis of 2008 began a movement known as the Tea Party. The Tea Party was a political movement of conservatives within the Republican Party. Candidates of the Tea Party challenged the established Republican Party but never ran under the Tea Party label. The movement brought to light conservative grassroots but "In 2010, when the Tea Party swept away all but a few of the last remaining moderates in Congress, American became the fully sorted two—party democracy we have today"(Drutman).

Division of the two parties was what the Framers of the Constitution feared: two geographically situated parties, seeing each other as the enemy. A warning from the Framers stated

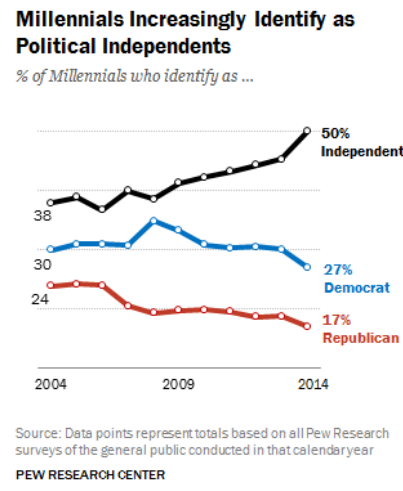
“partisan fighting would beget more partisan fighting, until self governance collapsed into authoritarianism” (Drutman). Now, Americans are more divided than ever, between two parties and gridlocked over social issues, race, gender and the economy.

The public fear, anxiety, and anger comes from major economic disruptions that have occurred over the past few decades. A decline in agricultural jobs, manufacturing has moved overseas, a rise in technology in industries that has left more people unemployed, and middle class wage left unchanged while income inequality is increasing. The global pandemic of the novel coronavirus has further driven the divide between American parties, on which presidential candidate has the best solution. The unrest in Americans has led to bitter feelings and the economic distress only adds to the division we see today. The increasing divide can be de-escalated, split the parties apart and break the binary thinking in politics. Party leaders have created conflict and sharper contrasts between parties, the political agenda must expand and make necessary compromises.

Too often American political opponents are offering grand promises, with little detail on how it will be accomplished and that is because the broad coalition within Democrats and Republicans creates the issue of trying to keep specific agreements among many, but this only creates tension within parties. The Democrats and Republicans usually divert attention to the shortcomings and failures of the other party, as a way to distract the internal battle building from within. Two-party systems have too many internal differences which makes it harder for politicians to focus on meaningful campaigns and projecting a concise guarantee of what will be accomplished in their time as an elected official.

Every society faces some social and political division from religion, geography, education, and other personal factors. A multiparty system helps citizens focus on the nuances of these differences and allows voters to add precision to the choice made during elections. A multiparty system in America would offer more options in political parties across a spectrum of issues and give voters the opportunity to see the small details that have been missed before. Eliminating the binary barriers in voting may be a good idea, but “what’s really needed is a shift to a multi-party system through proportional representation; many comparative studies suggest that such a shift would lead to an increase in voter turnout of between 9 and 12 percent” (Cheung). Multiparty democracies represent diverse opinions and interests better, where compromise is valued, instead of “us against them” in our current two-party system.

Americas broken two-party systems has been brought to light in recent years as a generation of young voters, known as Millennials, have been making their voices heard. Millennials represent more ethnically diverse Americans with progressive views towards social issues, than any generation before. Millennials are less likely to identify with the Democratic or Republican Party, leading to a raise in the Independent Party. The Pew Research Center survey data “found that about half of Millennials did not identify with either the Democratic or Republican political party, an increase from 38 percent in 2004” (George Cheung).



Pew Research Center-2

In 2015, Americans continued to see a change in politics with the backing of Bernie Sanders by young voters. The raise in Donald Trump supporters was also surprising but the increasing popularity of Trump and Sanders was an indication that Americans want options, two parties cannot adequately represent people’s views. These two presidential candidates represented more than just the Democratic or Republican Parties, but the voting system does not support a third party the same as the primary two parties. “In the United States, voters who favor a non-major party candidate must decide between casting a strategic vote for the “lesser of two evils” or casting a vote for their first choice, which could perversely help their least favored candidate to win” (Cheung). This does not represent the true views of voters in American, unlike democracies with multi-party systems where elections can reflect the views of voting citizens.

Our current electoral system of "winner-take-all voting disproportionately advantages two major parties, while proportional representation voting empowers parties in proportion to how many voters their platforms actually represent”(Kristin Eberhard). If the electoral system is never changed, non-major parties will struggle to gain representation and voter support. Modernizing our voting systems is critical to removing barriers in participation and in giving confidence to the voter in knowing their vote does matter.

When comparing countries with multi party systems, there are some cautionary cases from places like Brazil, Italy, or Israel. These countries have a political history of corruption that challenges any party. Israel is by surrounding hostile enemies which challenges their political system. Multi party systems can have too many parties, which is something Brazil and Israel are facing. Rather than it being difficult to gain legislative representation, too many parties makes it easier for parties to obtain political legislation.

Countries with similar political culture and political history make a more appropriate comparison for the United States. A couple multi party democracies to consider would be New Zealand and Canada.

New Zealand went from a primary two-party system to a now multi-party system. In 1993, New Zealanders voted in the general election to replace the traditional plurality voting with a new proportional electoral system. “New Zealanders were responding to the destabilizing effects of party system dealignment, increasing disproportionality of election outcomes, and a succession of

governments which many believed had ignored public opinion in their efforts to reform the economy” (Vowles). The two dominate parties made it challenging for minor parties under New Zealand’s winner-take-all or “first past the post (FPP) voting system which in place before the introduction of mixed member proportional (MMP). Under FPP, the number of seats a party gained depended on the number of electorates it won” (New Zealand Parliament). The conservative National Party and progressive Labor Party consistently won until 1996, when the electoral system switched to proportional representation. “Since New Zealand instituted proportional voting, women have consistently made up about one-third of Parliament”(Eberhard-2) and New Zealand’s largest newspaper (the *New Zealand Herald*) began featuring more diverse news coverage after the political reforms, which increased minor parties in their chances of winning a seat. Parliament seats have since been filled with members from various parties including the Green Party, New Zealand First Party, and Maori Party. “New Zealand could be an example for similar reform in other plurality democracies”(Vowles).

Canada’s party system has evolved into a multi-party system after years of disproportional elections. The primary two parties, Liberal and Conservative, have been dominating the minor parties for decades. The 1990s began the transition but since 1993, electoral support has been sought after by three main political parties. This change in Canada’s political system as lead to better representation of Canadian voters because the parties reflect key differences on economic and social issues.

A multi-party democracy in America would need a political reform and implementing proportional representation electoral system would be a good start. With proportional voting, voters could elect like-minded representatives. Proportional representation would improve public support for each political party, help put an end to gerrymandering, break the partisan gridlock, and “proportional representation voting encourages voters by ensuring that every vote counts”(Eberhard).

Executing political reform would most likely have to start at the state level until Congress adopted the reform. “States could make the first inroads into reforming federal elections by creating an interstate compact for fair representation and taking it to Congress asking for permission” (Eberhard). Updating and changing the voting system would empower more parties to challenge the two major parties and give more voters a party they can support.

Ranked choice voting for congressional seats and the presidency would break the two-party cycle, and most importantly empower voters with the freedom to vote for third parties with the confidence their vote is not being wasted. With ranked-choice voting, voters rank their choices in first, second, and third on a ballot and “when tallied, votes given to the lowest-performing candidates are subsequently redistributed to the second choices of that candidate's voters. The redistribution continues until one candidate reaches the requisite threshold and wins”(Burke).

The current winner-take-all system encourages gerrymandering. “Partisan gerrymandering affects issues from gun violence prevention to access to health insurance to policies” (Root). Gerrymandering benefits from single-winner districts because lines can be drawn around a particular demographic of voters but if districts were multi-winner, it would not matter who won the district. Proportional representation would create balance with regional and statewide votes which would confirm consistent results no matter how the districts are drawn.

Multi party system elections are more competitive when compared to the two-party system. A candidate in a two-party system needs 50% plus one vote to win a seat but three-member district can win one of the three seats with 30% or less. Multi-member districts could create more competition and force all candidates to campaign aggressively while also motivating voters to

participate in elections. Voters would be more confident in their vote, knowing the likelihood their candidate would have in a multi-member district.

Two-party systems focus more on the use of power through government that makes intelligent, decisive, decisions. Multi-party democracies want a steady, coalition government. “Researcher Arend Lijphart conducted an exhaustive international study and found that multi-party systems are more effective at governing, maintaining rule of law, controlling corruption, reducing violence, and managing the economy—particularly minimizing inflation and unemployment while managing the economic pressures arising from economic globalization. His conclusion boils down to: good management requires a steady hand more than a strong hand”(Eberhard).

A two-party system can make decisions faster but the rival between the two parties usually causes chaos and disarray, reversing the course of action. Forming a consensus can take longer in a multi-party government but the decisions tend to be more long-lasting and are easier to implement without the probability of being overturned.

“Electoral reform to facilitate multiparty democracy would not fix everything in U.S. democracy. But democracy is not a problem to be solved. It's an ongoing struggle in the still improbable task of self-governance in the face of imponderable scale and wicked cross-generational problems”(Drutman-2). Working towards a multi-party democracy seems difficult but even a small fraction of Americans who are ready for change and are tired of toxic politics can help break the two-party system and begin reform towards a multi-party democracy.

Two dominate parties have created the deep polarization we are now in and this is a result of the winner-take-all plurality elections we currently implement. Breaking the electoral and party system that sustains and reinforces the partisan gridlock will allow the United States to move forward and be the progressive country it claims to be. Americans want more than two choices, but a third party is still a skeptical vote for many Americans. With the multitude of different views and beliefs in the US, it would be hard for Americans to agree on a third party, but five or six parties could represent the true ideological diversity of the country. Proportional representation would give US citizens the opportunity of fair representation and began dissolving the two-party system.

The division in the United States will continue to create challenges until the core problem of two distinct parties with two competing visions is solved. The deep partisan divide will not fade until the fundamental issues are addressed. Americans have been asking for change and now is the time to break the two-party loop and began reform to a multi-party democracy and a united republic.

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US Perpetuation of Wealth Inequality

Kaelin Mastronardi

Abstract: For the past several decades wealth within the United States has been accumulating in the hands of the 1%. The richest Americans have seized the majority of stocks, as well as gained a greater share of aggregate income. All at the cost of the middle class, which is disappearing as a result. The reason for widening wealth inequality largely falls on the US government. As the current public education system lacks classes that teach financial literacy, creating generations of financially illiterate adults. Additionally, patterns displayed by the US government which encourage poor business practices, aggressive monopolistic actions, & tax dodging help worsen the issue by allowing big business to conquer all.

Wealth within the US has been shifting out of the hands of ordinary Americans and filing into the pockets of the ultra-rich as the American government stands by. For decades the cost of living has been rising and outpacing the growth of the minimum wage. Resulting in more Americans struggling and needing financial assistance, particularly young Americans. Further, the lack of financial literacy fails to provide many young Americans with the necessary tools to build wealth and sets them up for financial failure. All this in tandem with the unchecked growth of giant, monopolistic businesses, billionaires lining their pockets amidst a global pandemic, the ability for the nation's top businesses to completely dodge taxes, and the incentivization of moral hazard. Despite the growing wealth inequality within the nation, the government has taken no action on this multifaceted issue to close this gap or slow its growth.

Wealth inequality is a prevailing and ever-worsening issue within the United States, as starting decades ago the cost of living has been on the rise, wealth has been accumulating in the hands of few, and the middle class is shrinking. In just the past year the cost of living, such as food, housing, education, and medical costs, has increased by 2.3% according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Inversely, real wages show no real growth, increasing only .2%, and more concerning is that, when adjusted for inflation, since 2006 there has been a 9% decline. However, the cost-of-living vs wages is not a new issue, rather one that's been getting progressively worse for decades. As in 1950, the federal minimum wage was \$0.75/hour, taking average rent 56 hours of work to pay for. An amount of time both reasonable and achievable. However, when compared to stats from even a decade ago, in 2010, the federal minimum wage was \$7.25/hour, taking average rent 109 hours of work to pay for. Thus, making it impossible for the lower class to achieve any true independence or financial stability. Further, the wealth gap is possibly more easily seen in the vanishing of the middle class. As according to a Pew Research Center article tracking the decline of the middle class the "decrease in the middle-class share was often substantial, measuring 6 percentage points or more in 53 metropolitan areas, compared with a 4-point drop nationally", and that the "decline of the middle class is a reflection of rising income inequality in the U.S.". Now, when looking at the share of U.S. aggregate income, one can also see how wealth is slipping away from the main population and flowing towards the rich. As of 1970, the upper, middle, and lower class had 29%, 62%, & 10% share of aggregate income, respectively. While in 2018 the upper class gained 19%, the middle class lost 19%, and the lower class lost 1%. As even "among higher-income families, the growth in income has favored those at the top. Since 1980,

incomes have increased faster for the most affluent families – those in the top 5%” according to an article by Pew Research. Beyond income, looking at wealth distribution from 1989 to 2019 shows that wealth for the top 10% of Americans has increased by 8.8%, from 60.9% to 69.7%. While the bottom 50% of Americans who within the same time span went from owning 3.6% of all wealth to 1.7%, and the 50-90th percentile dropped from 35.5% to 28.5%, according to statistics provided by the federal reserve. Outside of wealth and income, a “whopping 84 percent of all stocks owned by Americans belong to the wealthiest 10 percent of households” (Patricia Cohen). Most recently, the widening wealth gap can be seen in the fact that as “40 million Americans filed for unemployment during the pandemic... billionaires saw their net worth increase by half a trillion dollars” (Hiatt Woods). The increased cost of living, shrinking middle class, ever widening gap of wealth, stock, & income distribution, and the massive amounts billionaires have made as millions of Americans struggle only goes to show that wealth inequality is an ever-present, as well as a historical problem that has been developing for decades. As inequality hurts economic growth, creating less productive and incentivized employees, and thus in turn hurting the rich. Yet the cause of this inequality is no secret, and in fact, the government has a large role in causing it, starting with the public education system.

Through the lack of required personal finance & economic classes, the United States k-12 public education system has helped perpetuate the growing wealth inequality within the nation, has left generations of Americans ill-prepared for adult life, and created a largely financially illiterate population. Before exploring the lack of financial literacy courses, it is important to understand the United States' current educational focus, and success within teaching said focus. With that said, the United States k-12 public school system has a heavy focus on science, math, and reading, and comparatively does a mediocre job internationally. Proven when looking at a 2015 study in which, according to the Program for International Students Assessment (PISA) the United States ranked a lackluster 38th out of 71 countries in math, and 24th in both science and reading. While these numbers may seem insignificant, these ratings are poor for a nation with a high level of wealth it has. In the same year, testing done by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (otherwise known as NAEP), run by the Department of Education found that math proficiency in both 4th & 8th graders has begun to decline. Even according to the US Department of Education (USDE), “Schools aren’t preparing enough of our students for that reality”, in reference to the fastest growing job opportunities in the nation, and that the “United States has one of the highest high school dropout rates in the world”, and among those who graduate high school and continue on to college “Nearly half require remedial courses, and nearly half never graduate”. While the poor scores, necessity of remedial courses, and high dropout rate may not be entirely the fault of the education system, it is in no way exempt from some responsibility for these facts.

Moving forward with that understanding of the US k-12 public education system, even more disheartening is the nation’s financial & economic teachings. As more than ½ of states have no high school requirement to take an economics course. Further, only 17 states have any type of requirement for personal finance courses. Additionally, according to a report by Champlain College, which addressed states' effectiveness in producing financially literate high school graduates, more than ¼ of all states scored less than a C. With only 10 percent achieving an A. Considering all this, it is clear that the k-12 education system produces disappointing results in what it aims to teach, and for a nation that often considers itself #1, received middle of the pack test results. It is clear that the USDE recognizes the fact that the current system fails to prepare students for the current and incoming job market, and that many students fail to learn the material

within the classes they are taught. It is clear that the United States is lacking classes that teach financial literacy and prepare the incoming generations for the financial expectations and responsibilities that will soon be placed on them. Further, it is proven that students without a financial education are more likely to have low credit scores and other financial problems. This is seen in the 1.6 trillion dollars of student loan debt. This is seen in the fact that 37% of all millennials receive money from home on a monthly basis, and 59% several times a year, and that said money is likely to be put towards basic needs such as rent, phone bills, groceries, etc. This is seen in how more than half of all Americans ages 21-37 have received financial assistance from a parent, guardian, or family member since turning 21. Why the fact that many millennials are struggling cannot fully be blamed on the lack of financial education by the public education system, it leaves one to wonder how much better off the most recent generation of adults would be if there was required, thorough, and applicable financial literacy classes taught throughout the nation. Further, it raises concerns for the incoming and future generations of adults. In total, the public education system's performance is questionable in that which it aims to teach, thus while few states teach any type of financial literacy, the quality of those classes is called into question.

With that said, America has a serious lack of classes that educate its youth with the information to financially succeed which in turn is setting them up for early financial difficulty of which the effects can linger for decades. Such failure to educate the nation's youth on financial literacy only helps grow the widening wealth gap. If the majority of American's continue to struggle with debt and with paying their basic needs, how can they be expected to achieve any form of financial success? How can they be expected to grow wealth during their lifetime? How can they be expected to start businesses, buy homes, and raise children that won't suffer the same fate? Unfortunately, American's lack of financial literacy education is only one portion of the issue, as the government additionally takes little to no action to break apart near monopolies, & rewards bad business practices

The United States Government allows top companies to make off with dodging taxes, incentives aggressive business practices, and allows near monopolies to grow unchecked, all of which continues to help widen the growing gap of wealth inequality within the nation. Perhaps best said by hip hop artist J. Cole "Some things in life you can't escape: Death, [and] taxes", unfortunately this does not ring entirely true for the largest businesses in the nation. As a 2017 report following 258 Fortune 500 companies from 2008 to 2015 shows just how much top businesses are saving through tax loopholes. The top 10 companies with the biggest tax subsidies avoided over 186 billion dollars in taxes during the eight-year period. Further, nearly 40 percent of the companies paid no taxes at all in at least one of the years, and eighteen of which "incurred a total federal income tax bill of less than zero over the entire eight-year period — meaning they received rebates" (Patricia Cohen). In the words of Senator Sanders "The truth is that we have a rigged tax code that has essentially legalized tax dodging for large corporations". This legalized tax dodging further bloats already obese businesses, allows the top earners in the company to line their pockets, and creates an uneven playing field as smaller businesses pay their fair share of taxes. Yet this is just the tip of the iceberg, as congress not only refuses to close tax loopholes, but also encourages aggressive business behavior for short term gain at the cost of any true financial stability.

Seen most recently in the \$25 billion top airline companies received in bailouts, with more being considered. Despite historically bleeding cash during recessions, top airline companies refused to save. Rather "from 2014 through 2019 the big four carriers (American, Delta, United and Southwest) plowed \$42 billion into stock repurchases in the hope of improving their share

prices.” (Roger Lowenstein). Further, said companies spent more on stock buybacks than they had made after considering all expenses. The biggest of them all, American Airlines “poured nearly \$13 billion into stock repurchases despite having negative free cash flow” (Lowenstein). As a result of this spending these companies resorted to massive borrowing, increasing their debt an average of 56% from 2014 to 2019. While American Airlines debt nearly doubled. The purpose of this borrowing binge was to increase stock price, which is tied to executive pay, and thus helped the chief executives of said four airlines pockets just under \$340 million in stock sales over six years. While the bailout came with some conditions “they were woefully inadequate” (Lowenstein). As the government received rights to purchase airline stock, despite the fact that it would have been cheaper to purchase said stocks on the open market. Put differently the “carriers got a very generous deal” (Lowenstein). Further, while restrictions were placed on dividend and share buybacks, said restrictions expire in just two years.

A similar story was told in 2008 when banks needed to be bailed. According to the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, the government-appointed panel meant to investigate the roots of the financial crisis the financial system was put on a collision course with the crisis due to “A combination of excessive borrowing, risky investments and lack of transparency”. Further, the report additionally “criticised bankers who got rich by creating trillions of dollars in risky investments”. Despite clear incompetence, the banks still received \$700 billion in bailout money. As a result of this pattern, the government encourages moral hazard. Telling top business leaders, that despite irresponsible business practices, and the pursuit of the short term profits at the cost of long term stability, that they will be safe, as the government will always be there to bail them out. Yet the government perpetuating the wealth gap goes beyond indebted businesses, and tax dodgers. As the top businesses in the nation approach monopolistic power go unchecked. Specifically seen as after a 16-month investigation into “competitive practices at Apple, Amazon, Facebook and Google, the House Judiciary subcommittee on antitrust found that the four businesses enjoy monopoly power that needs to be reined in by Congress” (Lauren Feiner). Using Amazon as a specific example the same report claimed that Amazon has a 40-50 percent market share of all U.S. online retail sales. Further, the report wrote that “Amazon has engaged in extensive anticompetitive conduct in its treatment of third-party sellers”. Despite this subcommittee’s report, extensive work, and calls for action to be taken on these companies that “enjoy monopol[istic] power” Apple, Amazon, Facebook, & Google continue to grow unchecked. Once again, looking at Amazon, the company continues to expand its reach through growing its list of subsidiaries while Jeff Bezos continues to grow his personal empire by doing the same, indirectly growing Amazon’s influence.

Most concerning throughout all of this, is the idea that these business’ power has grown so much that it might never be reigned in to any healthy extent. As it should be considered just how much power these companies have, and how incentivized the government may be to take any action, as in 2019 Amazon spent more than \$16 million on lobbying, setting a new record for themselves. However, Amazon is not unique in this aspect, as from 1999-2018 according to a report of the National Library of Medicine website “the pharmaceutical and health product industry recorded \$4.7 billion—an average of \$233 million per year—in lobbying expenditures at the federal level, more than any other industry”. Even stepping back, and looking at the whole picture, in 2019 there was over \$3.4 billion spent on lobbying, the most since 2010. This spending is all not for naught, as “One study found that increasing lobbying reduces a corporation's effective tax rate, with an increase of 1 percent in lobbying expenditures expected to reduce a corporation's next-year tax rate between 0.5 percentage points and 1.6 percentage points” (Feiner), and that is

likely not the whole picture of the effects of lobbying either. In sum, the US government allows the biggest and most profitable companies in the nations to make off with billions in savings through dodging taxes, while some of these companies pay nothing, or even receive rebates. The US government incentivizes moral hazard and poor & aggressive business habits by repeatedly and consistently bailing out companies that set themselves up for failure. As they are too big to fail. The US government is allowing businesses to enjoy monopolistic power, and to continue and spread their reach unchecked. Despite calls from the House Judiciary subcommittee calling for their power and influence “to be reined in by Congress and enforcers”. The US government’s incentivization to do so is called into question as when considering all of this with the fact that over \$3.4 billion was spent on lobbying in 2019 alone. As these issues grow, and the government continues its patterns of action which only make said issues worse, it perpetuates the ever-growing wealth gap in this nation. As big business gets bigger and stifles small & locally owned businesses, making it harder for individuals to break the cycle of poverty, & showing the nation where governments support lies.

In sum, wealth, stock, & income inequality within America has been an issue growing for decades. Only worsening as the public education system sets up the next generation of American adults up for a life of financial illiteracy and hardship. As law makers haven’t closed tax loopholes, incentivize moral hazard, and allow companies to enjoy monopolistic power in their respective domains. All this furthering and perpetuating the wealth inequality as the poorest Americans continue to suffer and the middle class is disappearing.

Post Script

After writing & submitting the above entry, the shorts squeeze on Game Stop (GME) began. The following is a summary of the events, as they relate to the rest of this paper. Additionally, in an effort to keep this entry short, brief descriptions of stock terms will be provided at the bottom of the entry. It is encouraged that the reader take additional time, if need be, to find more in depth explanations.

Summary on issue:

Top hedge funds such as Citadel & Melvin Capital, for some time now, has been shorting GME stock. In fact it is believed that these hedge funds may have naked shorted GME, a largely illegal practice outside loopholes. When users on the subreddit r/WallStreetBets found this out, they rallied behind one another dumping money into GME and attempting to force a short squeeze.

To The Moon & With Diamond Hands

The United State’s biggest Hedge Funds are facing massive losses after naked shorting just under 140% of GME as a reddit forum sends stock prices “to the moon”. However, from suspected collusion, lobbying, the possible conflict of interest with the new Treasury Secretary, to the focus, intentions, & interests of NASDAQ, they might just make it out alive, even if beaten and bruised. Days after r/WallStreetBets sent GME “to the moon”, a popular phrased championed by the group and its followers, the trading app Robinhood prevented users from buying GME and other stocks related to the short squeeze such as AMC, BB, & NOK. Since its creation Robinhood has marketed itself after the heroic outlaw Robin Hood who steals from the rich and gives to the poor. Claiming that they are the investment app for the people, for the retail investors, for the average Joe. The significance here being that many people believed that & downloaded the app because of that. In

which the majority of r/WallStreetBets & its followers used Robinhood as their main or only way of trading. Further, as Robinhood is entirely free, it makes its money through selling user data to large hedge funds, specifically Citadell. In fact Robinhood routes more than half of its customer orders to Citadel, by far its largest market-making partner by volume” (MacMillian & Torbati) wrote Douglas ManMillian & Yeganeh Torbati for the Washington Post. Further they write that “a key part of Robinhood’s business model relies on Citadel and similar companies” (MacMillin & Torbati). In short, Robinhood has no interest in the financial gain or loss of its users & likely has a much higher focus and reaction to the inputs & needs of its largest customer. With this, there is concerns of (yet currently unproven) collusion & market manipulation. As only allowing users to sell out of their position helps to force the price of GME down & could allow short sellers to buy back their positions at a lesser loss. However, the unfortunate truth is that these are not the only cards stacked against the retail investor, as the NASDAQ, Janet Yellen, & lobbying all have a role to play in this.

Beyond the initial concerns from the actions of Robinhood, there is also fear of the possible actions of NASDAQ, and Janet Yellen. While the main form of trading for those following r/WallStreetBets, Robinhood, restricted trading, there’s the point that these individuals could trade on any other platform. Now while this is largely besides the point, & outside of the issue of transferring money and getting used to a new platform, this is true. However, at one point it was the ability of retail traders to make purchases was further threatened as ”Nasdaq CEO Friedman says the exchange will halt trading in a stock if they link unusual activity to social media chatter” (Grafteo) wrote Emily Grafteo for business insider. Beyond NASDAQ, the new Treasury Secretary, Janet Yellen’s, possible involvement also raises concerns. As “Yellen, a former Federal Reserve chairman, was paid \$810,000 by hedge fund Citadel for three events in 2019 and 2020, according to disclosure forms”(Nelson) according to Steven Nelson for the New York Post. As of writing this, neither party has taken any action on the matter, yet the statements made & arising conflicts of interest are present. Yet the reach of hedge funds and even Robinhood is further than just Janet Yellen.

Further called into questions is the position of prosecutors & possible legal actions of the U.S. government. As many Americans call for action to be taken against Robinhood & Citadel for alleged collusion, the retail investor is going up against hundreds of thousands of dollars spent lobbying. As “Last year, Robinhood... spent \$275,000 lobbying the federal government and hired lobbyists with ties to a Wall Street regulator and congressional oversight committees”(MacMillian & Torbati) while “Citadel spent \$520,000 on lobbying in 2020 and counted a former Treasury Department employee and a former tax aide on Capitol Hill among its lobbyists”(MacMillian & Torbati). As bankers got off in 2008 & the already written about effects of lobbying and encouragement of bad business practices, it would be no surprise if Robinhood and Citadel get nothing more than a slap on the wrist.

Lastly here, I’d like to finish off with nothing other than my own enlightened opinion as I sit on a throne of knowledge and so graciously offer you, the reader, my profound insights as a college student. Much of the informal media I have consumed on this topic is from retail investors in on GME and similar short squeezes. Much of the shared sentiments among these individuals is less about making money, if anything that is an accidental upside to this. Rather their focus is on bankrupting the hedge funds, hurting Wall Street any way they can, and showing the upper class how much they hate them. As these retail investors feel that these hedge funds, their supporters, & Wall Street as a whole are nothing other than a collective of leeches, crooks, and individuals who would turn on them in a second. Now, not to be mistaken, the original goal of r/WallStreetBets

was indeed financial gain. However I believed it has progressed past that as individuals promise the “hold with diamond hands” and as I continue to read the sentiments of the many who would lose all they invested if it meant these hedge funds took a hit. Further, as it has been argued that what r/WallStreetBets is doing is nothing other than market manipulation. However, for anyone who makes such a comment, I ask them to explain how their actions are different from those of hedge funds. As they pool together massive sums of money to possibly short more stocks than exist in an effort to drive price down. This hypocrisy I see within the media, calling foul on the retail investor, while keeping quiet on the actions of the rich, is nothing short of disappointing. Now while the dust has yet to settle, but if nothing comes from this as far as Robinhood and Citadel escaping collusion charges, or if the called for calls for regulation (which were never there before this incident) are now inacted as soon as the retail investor manages to flip the game on its head. I fear that Americans will view this as another example of how the system is not designed to work for them, and how money and influence can buy get out of jail free cards.

In conclusion, while there is much ambiguity about the situation, the actions of Robinhood are illegal at worst and immoral at best, the comments made by the CEO of NASDAQ are questionable, the loyalty of government officials to the people they serve has been called into question regulation is only now being called for that the big hedge funds have been caught with their pants down, & as soon as the retail investor finds a winning path it gets closed.

Terms:

Short/Shorting: Borrowing a stock that one believes will decrease in value in the future. In doing so, one immediately sells the borrowed stocks & buys them back before they have to return them to the borrower. If the stock has decreased in value, the individual profits the difference minus the borrowing expense. If the stock rises, the individual loses money as they have to buy the stocks at a higher price than they sold them for.

Short Squeeze: Occurs when a stock rapidly jumps in price, forcing traders who shorted said stock to buy them back at a greater price. Creating more upward pressure on the stock.

Naked Short: To short a stock without first confirming that said stock exists.

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Retaining the Royals: What is the Future of the British Monarchy?

Benjamin Blevins

Abstract: The future of the British Monarchy is something of much contradiction in recent times, with the death of Princess Diana in the 1990s and the fall of popularity for the heir apparent Prince Charles, it is without question that the monarchy's ability to render public support will be hindered after the death of Queen Elizabeth II. There is a lot of public scrutiny on the Queen to skip her son and move to Prince William who will become heir once or if Charles takes the throne. The Queen is currently 94 years old and she has faced many a scandal in her years on the throne. She has also faced political uncertainty as head of state from Winston Churchill to Margaret Thatcher to Theresa May and now to Boris Johnson. Also, she has faced a lot of public uproar regarding Britain's exit from the European Union and her ability to stop it. The royal family has faced and will face more complex issues in the years to come, the question being, can this monarchy stand the test of time? The monarchy has been in power since William the Conqueror invaded England from France, notwithstanding the overthrow in the 1600s and the subsequent restoration.

Is the British Royal Family still relevant in modern day? A very complex question with a very complex answer. As an American this is an interesting subject as the United States has never had a monarchy for the simple fact that we quite literally ran away from one. The United States stands on principles such as representative democracy and liberty. Monarchy is the absolute opposite of those principles. The current monarch and sovereign of the United Kingdom (as well as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and a number of other states) is Queen Elizabeth II. She has been on the throne since 1952 after her father, George VI, passed away suddenly. Throughout this essay we will analyze why in some cases the monarchy has helped the UK and in others it has caused great chaos for the island nation as well.

To understand the relevance of the monarchy we have to begin with the history of the family itself and of the United Kingdom. The modern British family did not truly begin until the invasion of William the Conqueror in 1066 from King Harold of Norway. 900 years later during the reign of King George V the royal house became the House of Windsor, what it currently is today. The royal house was originally styling as House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha but after the abdication and later execution of Nicholas II, Emperor of Russia, George V needed to restyle the house to more Anglo-Saxon likeness. Therefore, the House of Windsor was born under the reign of George V. Elizabeth II reigns under the House of Windsor and heir apparent, Charles Prince of Wales, will reign under the House of Windsor.

The British monarchy has withstood incredible tests of its power and strength over the past couple hundred years. Including being overthrown and then restored, the death of an extremely popular leader (Princess Diana of Wales), and the separation of Prince Harry and Megan from the royal family (Megxit). The problems that face the Royal Family are numerous as

our world moves into a more online state, especially with the impact COVID-19 has had on our governments.

The Royal Family costs approximately \$86,000,000 dollars, this is based off of the last “Sovereign Grant”, the grant from the government that gives the monarchy finances. The modern role of the monarchy has certainly changed since Charles I was executed in the 17th century.

Currently the series, which has installments once a year portraying ten years at a time, is portraying the period of time in which Princess Diana and Prince Charles marriage appears to collapse. Prince Charles is not portrayed in a good light in this season of *The Crown* and his namesake is receiving a lot of heat. The couple has even gone so far as to disable comments on their official social media accounts due to the hate that fans have been leaving for them. It is not known at this time if the couple, who has received a lot of negative attention during their marriage, will speak publicly on the series or simply attempt to wait it out. This is simply one example of the modern challenges the royal family faces. Another which just occurred is the separation of members from the family itself.

This is seen from the view of Prince Harry. Prince Harry married Megan Markle in 2017, this was a huge departure from the normal style of marriage for members of the royal family as Meghan was born in Los Angeles not England or Europe in general. Megan, like Diana, was very keen on retaining her privacy after marriage to Harry. However, just like what happened to Diana, Megan was vilified in the media and her privacy was not respected. In a speech Prince Harry laid the blame at the feet of the press calling them “a powerful force.”

On January 8th, 2020 the royal couple announced on Instagram their intention to “step back as ‘senior’ members” of the British royal family.⁵ What was interesting about this is that they didn’t inform anybody; Prince William and Duchess Kate were very shocked to hear the news along with the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh. After this decision was announced a meeting was held on January 13th at Sandringham Castle where an agreement was announced. Both Harry and Megan will cease to use the style of “Royal Highness” in exchange for them to be able to step down as working members of the royal family.

The rarity of not consulting the head of your family on a decision of this magnitude was considered a very big slap in the face to the Queen. This “Megxit” was also different than every other scandal that has affected the royal family as it has been extremely in the public eye and it has led to very public response. The Queen was also praised on her ability to be a crisis- manager even at the age of 93. An interesting point of the final agreement however was that the couple would spend most of their time in North America rather than Britain. March 31st was the date in which this agreement would come into affect. Since that agreement, the ripple affects felt on the British people and the institutions within England.

Boris Johnson, Prime Minister for the United Kingdom, attempted to distance himself from the news by saying, “the royal family is one of the great, great assets of this country. I’m sure they are going to sort it out and I don’t think it’s necessarily helped by commentary from me.” There was also the view that since leaving the royal family or “stepping down” the British taxpayer would still be paying expenses for them living in Canada.

The Queen was swift too ensure that any expense paid by the Sovereign Grant to any aspect of Harry and Meghan, they would need to repay, including 2.4 million pounds for renovations to their residence in England. It was also announced that Canada would not foot the bill for the security they received since they arrived in late 2019. The couple would also not be allowed to represent the Queen in any setting, informal or formal, this was however a contrast

from what the couples' webpage had originally shown.

These challenges are just some of the many that the family faces in the modern world. The 21st century along with all its changes brings with it advancements in technology that the royal family has never faced before. Technology breeds transparency in some ways with advancements in photography, videography, and cinematic. These changes have quietly shaved away at the great gates of monarchy and bringing them back down to our scale which was never something that was supposed to be done in the first place. There was a documentary made in 1969 originally made to "humanize" the monarchy that caused disastrous effects to the institution itself.

The documentary entitled *Royal Family* brings the camera in to Buckingham Palace and shows what the Queen and other senior members do on a day to basis. The fear however was that in the short-run, yes, the film was great in humanizing the family and becoming more familiar with them. However, in the long-run, it hurt the aspect of the monarchy due to the fact that it was demystified. Monarchy and the aspect of monarchy is supposed to be divine. This documentary was an example of one of the modern challenges that the royal family faces as it was at first perceived to be a good idea however in retrospect it actually hurt the aspect of the monarchy.

Aside from the, what seems like, many downsides of the royal family the monarchy does have a lot of redeeming qualities which have led to the cementing of its position in the government of the United Kingdom. The sovereign remains a constitutionally needed figure in government operation. They have a variety of obligations that might seem ceremonial but are actually constitutionally required in nature. The most important one that most people see and believe is that she appoints the Prime Minister, who serves as the head of government.

There has been a lot of public outcry in matters where the Queen can choose to exert royal authority to stop government processes. The most recent example comes to mind when the British people voted by an extremely slim margin to leave the European Union. A lot of groups called on the Queen to dissolve parliament and choose to stay in the Union, this of course would be seen as a gross use of her royal ability. Another ability of the Queen is to grant royal assent to bills in order for them to become law, this is truly just a formality.

The role of the monarchy has been seen largely for stability in times of chaos. The crown is a clarion voice of light, stability, and reason. Something it has tended not to be in the past, but it is today. The office of Prime Minister can change daily but there is only one sovereign. The Queen however has had amazing approval rating throughout her reign and is seen as one of the greater figures in politics and government for her role as head of state.

The monarch holds a lot of authority in regard to symbolism, the Queen appears on all currency produced by the United Kingdom. Instead of rotating Prime Ministers, the reigning monarch is placed on all currencies and postage stamps. You might not know who is in Downing Street, but you will always know who will be on your money. One of the biggest perks to monarchy is stability and tradition.

In conclusion, throughout it all the monarchy remains a steady force within the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom operates under a constitutional monarchy in which the monarchy plays a much greater role in society than other governments like it. (i.e., Sweden, the Netherlands, Norway, etc.) The role of the monarch has shifted quite a bit since Charles I and continues to receive speculation on if the money would be put to better use for the average British taxpayer. It is the opinion of this paper however that the British royal family *does* hold value, even if it is just for the media to speculate on.

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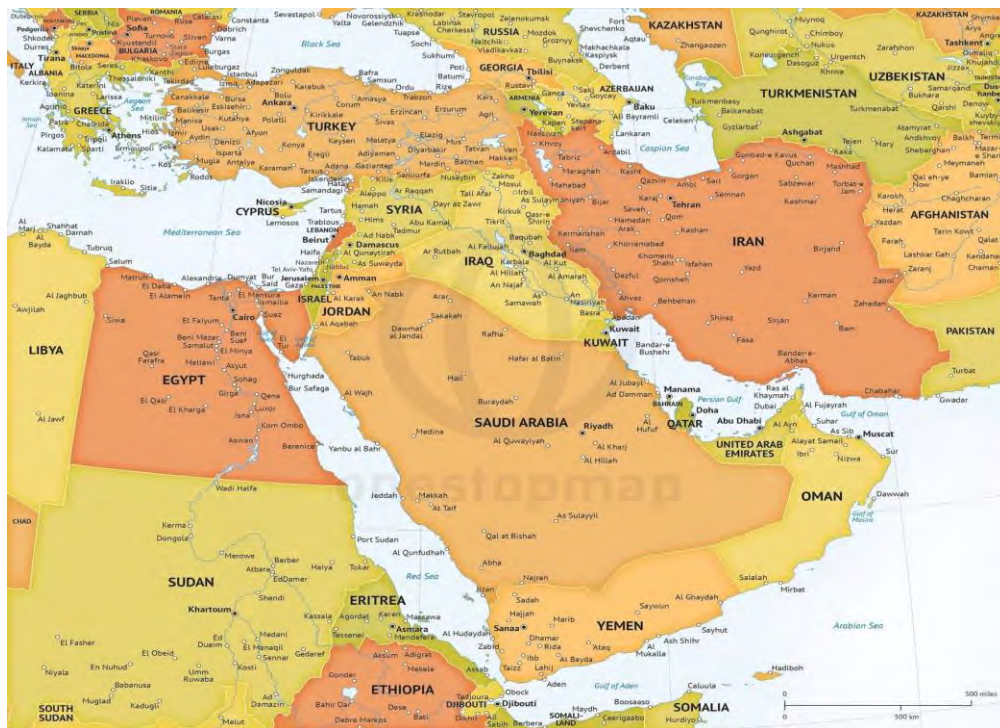
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The Middle East and New Zealand: A Contemporary Analysis of New Zealand's Impact on the Middle East

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Abstract: This paper explores the unique history of the Middle East and New Zealand as well as how the efforts of New Zealand through military efforts, targeted aid, and diplomatic support have directly shaped the Middle East. Through a thorough analysis of previous military campaigns, examples of targeted aid and its longstanding influence, and critique on its diplomatic aid, this paper addresses their history while directly defining why it is that New Zealand has such an influential role in Middle Eastern politics.

Middle Eastern relations have remained at the center of discussion in foreign affairs because they play a global role in economic stability for many countries around the world. The easy access to energy supplies and petrochemicals have allowed for the Middle East to be a mine of globally important resources. Despite a long history of Middle Eastern political turmoil, the region has remained equally important because of the opportunities and resources there. However, when such an important area is undergoing significant governmental turmoil, it is inevitable that surrounding countries would intervene to protect their economic interests and ensure that they have a say in the development of the region. New Zealand specifically was put under such a pretense when it became one of the first countries to send troops into the Middle East to protect its \$1.9 billion dollar export deals and begin defending a trade route to China which Middle Eastern radicals had jeopardized. New Zealand has maintained ties in the Middle East for generations due to its trade routes to China which it relied heavily upon. While utilizing the trading routes, New Zealand was quick to settle in areas such as Iran, Saudi Arabi, and Egypt in which it set up multimillion-dollar investment deals. New Zealand took part in its first major military effort in the region when the Ottomans first jeopardized their trading routes. From there, New Zealand would be a part of two major military campaigns, set up six diplomatic ports, and host three targeted aid campaigns which required Middle Eastern authorities to directly respond, changing the political climate just as the United States, Russia, and China began looking in the direction of Middle Eastern oil. Because of this initial intervention, New Zealand has played a significant role in shaping the Middle East and continues to do so through military efforts, targeted aid, and diplomatic support.



*Middle East in 2020

New Zealand has pioneered two major Middle Eastern military campaigns: the Sinai Campaign and the Palestine Campaign. The Sinai Campaign was the first campaign launched in which soldiers were sent in to secure a trading port and the land surrounding from the Ottomans. It was also the first time New Zealand sent troops into the Middle East which set a strong precedent of military guidance and peacekeeping in the region. Beginning in 1916 and ending in 1917, the deployment of the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade and the Imperial Camel Corps deployed a total of 1800 troops and forced the Ottoman Army back to Palestine securing the Sinai canal and kickstarting a political future between New Zealand and the Middle East.

The Palestine Campaign was comprised of the three Gaza attacks, the Jordan battle, and the run for Damascus and ES Salt. It was the most extensive military series held that occurred shortly after the Sinai Campaign. Following the Ottoman Army's retreat into Palestine, Britain began to put significant pressure on New Zealand to assist in invading Palestine. Despite global ties being spread thin due to the First World War, the advancements made in the Middle East as well as its valuable trading routes made driving out the Ottomans of international importance. Beginning with the three Gaza attacks, New Zealand faced two crushing losses. The first two attacks led by the Egyptian Expeditionary Force and British troops failed due to their being underprepared and ill-equipped to handle the sandstorms and blazing sun. This, paired with the lack of communication between the two, resulted in New Zealand and Britain retreating in preparation for a third attack. Despite the prior losses, the Third Battle of Gaza was won and ended with the capture of Jaffa. At this point in time, New Zealand had deployed more troops than any previous military campaign in history in the Middle East. To international surprise, however, this was only one part of the greater Palestine Campaign.

After the success in the first part of the Palestine Campaign, New Zealand began its next steps towards securing more Middle Eastern land. Having consolidated its hold on multiple

territories, the Ottoman infantry near Jerusalem had begun impeding upon their outskirts highlighting the need for intervention should they ever consider getting the overarching goal of stabilizing Palestine. To achieve this, the Egyptian Expeditionary Force enacting a series of attacks which captured Jericho, establishing a stronger New Zealand hold in the Middle East. During this attack forces worked to expand territorial hold in the Hejaz railway, another Ottoman stronghold that was directly impacting global economic trade efforts. The confidence gained from this attack allowed for the final part of the Palestine campaign to be implemented known as the Shea's Force Plan.

Shea's Force Plan instructed troops to cross the River Jordan, capture Es Salt, finish crossing the Moab Mountains, capture Amman, and destroy the Hejaz railway facilities. If effective, this would destroy the Hejaz railway link, assist in the Arab Revolt, and set out the British for their next attack allowing for New Zealand to remove its troops from the Middle East. In large part due to lack of environmental consideration, the heavy rains limited troops' visions, mud made the terrain difficult to traverse, and the roads quickly turned into a quagmire resulting in a dramatic loss. With 1348 casualties, it was the greatest defeat in New Zealand's military history in the Middle East. At this point, New Zealand was put in a unique stance – they could either send remaining troops home or continue working with the British to chip away at Ottoman strongholds and eventually get to Palestine which would restore a semblance of peace in the region while also securing their economic investments in the area. Because of the investments made in supplying troops and supplies into the campaign, New Zealand prepared for the final battle of the Palestine Campaign in 1918. Following the battle and the withdrawal of the Ottomans, New Zealand captured Es Salt, Amman fell, Damascus was acquired, and New Zealand secured a victory in what is now considered one of the most decisive warfare campaigns in the modern history of Middle Eastern warfare. However, as time has progressed, New Zealand has remained just as, if not more, involved in Middle Eastern politics albeit through targeted aid and diplomatic support rather than military efforts. However, had it not been for these initial campaigns, New Zealand would likely have never had its stake in the Middle East as it does now. Additionally, the Middle East would likely have been dominated by the Ottomans, had jeopardized the economic investments of global trading partners, and it can be drawn that the United States would have intervened militarily years earlier than it had now had it not been for New Zealand.

Beyond military efforts, New Zealand has used targeted aid to assist in the political reorganization of the region. Through organizations such as UNICEF, the World Food Program, the UN Office for the coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Red Cross, New Zealand provides significant aid in the forms of food, water, and medical supplies. Due to the geographical features of the Middle East, farming has been incredibly difficult due to the arid lands. New Zealand has supplemented this issue with its trade deals and aid. As stated by the Library of Congress Regulation on Foreign Aid, "The most recent OECD figures available show that New Zealand's official development assistance (ODA) funding was US\$352.83 million in 2010, which equated to 0.26% of Gross National Income (GNI).^[1] The New Zealand government sought an ODA budget for the 2011/12 financial year of NZ\$586.17 million (about US\$491.55 million) . . ."

From these aid investments, New Zealand has had stake in immigration, political leadership, and organization throughout the Middle East. By restricting medical supply releases in areas of significant turmoil and requiring ultimatums in certain situations, New Zealand has been able to assist in the reorganization process specifically in Iraq and Syria solely through its aid programs. In more recent years New Zealand has set up new internal policies on Middle Eastern immigration to begin addressing the influx of refugees and has begun setting up monetary aid

programs to assist in those processes. With aid divested into the development of immigration policies, New Zealand has overturned its previous anti-immigrant policies to begin furthering its Middle Eastern support specifically in Syria and Iraq. This has also been done in an attempt to address the sectors experiencing skill shortages due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as New Zealand Prime Minister Ardern has explained it, “Even a good move like this, important as it is symbolically, isn’t going to make a meaningful dent in the horror show that is literally millions of refugees waiting for decades with no solution in sight.” For this reason, aid and immigration-based aid will likely be expanded in upcoming years but with consideration to New Zealand’s rocky immigration history with the Middle East and Africa. These changes have already shaped the Middle East and will continue to do so for generations. From providing immigration support rivaling the United States to providing significant capital in resources given to those displaced by wars and political unrest, New Zealand has guided immigration pathways and become a stabilizer in the Middle East. Beyond these aid programs, however, New Zealand has shaped the Middle East through diplomatic support.

New Zealand provides shaping diplomatic support through its six embassy and consular buildings which foster an environment to grow the areas for the betterment of the people while securing their own investments. The first embassy is in Auckland, New Zealand with its service area being the Palestinian Authority. New Zealand, after Palestine Campaign, had significant ties to the Palestinian government and economy. For this reason, it was necessary to have diplomatic support in the area. However, due to the modern turmoil and influence from countries such as the United States of America, China, and Russia it is managed from New Zealand to protect its assets and diplomats. The second embassy is in Cairo, Egypt which serves Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, and Libya. Per the significant economic investments made in Egypt and surround regions, New Zealand provides diplomatic support to these areas as means of political intervention should they deem their investments to be possibly compromised. This is also a strategic point in case British troops decided that intervention in any neighboring regions to be necessary. The third is in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Tehran which serves Iran and Afghanistan. This diplomatic tie has been in place since the Sinai Campaign and remains necessary for military peacekeeping efforts and regional support. The fourth is in Saudi Arabi, Riyadh which serves Jordan, Israel, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. This was set in place following the Palestine Campaign and allows for a strategic placement in relation to Jordan, a significant trading zone, and Israel, a diplomatic and political concern to New Zealand. The fifth is in the United Arab Emirates, Abu Dhabi which serves the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. This was set up in cooperation with the League of Arab States and Gulf Cooperation Council of which New Zealand is apart of. In an overarching effort to provide global support, economic ties, and diplomatic pressure, this service is meant to be a Middle Eastern headquarters for New Zealand as its work with subsidiary bodies such as the World Trade Organization and International Renewable Energy Agency is done there. While meant more so for the New Zealand’s security, these embassies have provided much to Middle Eastern politics. With a people-first mentality, New Zealand diplomatic relations have pressured Middle Eastern politics to consider the importance of their support with the looming threat that New Zealand could withdraw at any time, significantly hurting Middle Eastern economies. Following the US Department of Defense confirmation of Iran’s attack against US military facilities in western Iraq and Erbil, politician Winston Peters made the statement on behalf of the embassy in Iran, “We expect New Zealand, as an influential member of the international community, to once again use its international position in reacting to this wrong approach to have peace and security in the Middle East and the world.”

This statement, however, was not just one of diplomatic intent, it was also a warning to other countries. He further elaborated highlighting the need for diplomacy and for immediate action to not be taken due to the effects it could have on both international and domestic players. This not only deescalated the situation but set a precedent with other countries to not immediately engage in a response. It is from instances such as these that the diplomatic support provided by New Zealand in the Middle East that it is evident how necessary it is to have a guiding voice amidst the chaos and reactions that can occur. Without intervention and support at the time, action would likely have been taken immediately by the United States which would have jeopardized the safety of innocent civilians.

It is evident that through military efforts, targeted aid, and diplomatic support that New Zealand has significantly shaped the Middle East with a focus on protecting civilians in the region and New Zealand's own economic interests. As global relations progress and New Zealand continues to solidify its ties there, it is likely that it will remain at the forefront of Middle Eastern politics. As major powers such as the United States, Russia, and China both stake their claim in the region, based off of its history and continued support in the Middle East, it is unlikely the New Zealand will step back from its guiding role anytime soon. With aid related to the COVID-19 pandemic being a necessity and as countries begin focusing domestically, we will likely see the continued efforts of New Zealand in supplying and benefiting from trade deals with the Middle East – a testament to their continued partnership.

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