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Makeshift Memory: Nostalgia as Collective Solidarity in the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and Post-Imperial England

Catherine White
University of South Carolina - Columbia

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**MAKESHIFT MEMORY: NOSTALGIA AS COLLECTIVE SOLIDARITY IN THE
EGYPTIAN MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD AND POST-IMPERIAL ENGLAND**

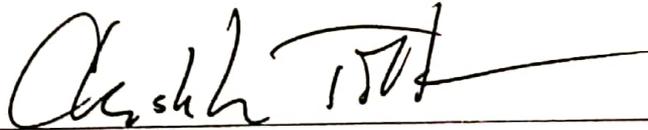
By

Catherine White

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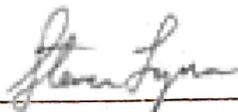
Dr. Christopher Tollefsen

Director of Thesis



Mr. Muhammad Fadel Ahmad

Second Reader



Dr. Steve Lynn

Dean For South Carolina Honors College

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ABSTRACT

Catherine White, *Makeshift Memory: Collective Solidarity in the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and Post-Imperial England*
(Under the direction of Dr. Christopher Tollefsen)

It is a deeply human experience to long for times, people, and places of the past, even pasts we ourselves did not experience. This feeling, which we most often call nostalgia (but has earned many names throughout history) has profound influence especially in how we perceive our collective histories and use these histories to guide us forward. This experience of nostalgia is the underpinning for many of our sources of solidarity (or who we feel loyal or obligated to). However, when we feel these profound connections to the distant past, we often lose the reality of that past in the lenses of rose-colored glasses. In this thesis I explore these qualities of nostalgia, especially regarding the question of whether heralding back to the past in this emotional way pushes us forward or holds us back. I do so by analyzing two opposing case studies, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, and Post-Imperial England, which demonstrate the two predominant ways in which nostalgia is utilized both as a source of collective solidarity and as guidance in the present. The case of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood reveals “restorative nostalgia”, or the use of longing for the past to reconstruct that past. The case of Post-Imperial England reveals “reflective nostalgia”, or how longing for the past is used to create continuity of identity. In both cases, it is clear that nostalgia provides a powerful tool for social and political movements, for better and for worse.

DEDICATION

For my home and those within it on Brookeville Road, which has certainly given me
much to be thankful - and of course, nostalgic - for.

INTRODUCTION

The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living.

- Karl Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Napoleon Bonaparte

One of the things that has separated the human race from other species is the capability to capture throughout life the memories made and the emotions associated with the many personal events that we experience. Beyond this, we have the capacity to pass on the stories and lessons learned by the generations that came before, both verbally and written. Every successive generation adds to an elaborate network of collective memory and knowledge that allows us to continue to evolve and advance as a species, progressing forward at a rate that is unprecedented in our world's history. While we often think of this as creating the opportunity to build on technological, medical, or scientific advancements, there are deeply social and cultural implications that come about from this capability.

Major events in our communities, cultures, countries and even the world can become huge markers in our own individual memories. Every American remembers where they were and who they were with when 9/11 happened. Even though I was just two years old when the twin towers fell and was therefore too young to have any personal memories of the event, I have very strong memories of my parents telling me what I was doing when it happened, and having the collective trauma reinforced each year in school as we watched old news clips of the planes crashing, the bodies falling, and the people screaming.

This power, the power of memory, is transformative of who we are as individuals and collectively as a society. It doubles as an incredible political tool when leaders need to rally a community immediately (per my previous example, President Bush and the sweeping policies he had passed following 9/11 under the fiery phrase “War on Terrorism”), but it is also an essential tool years and years later. This was visible when Donald Trump began to use the rallying phrase “Make America Great Again” as a call to action for millions of Americans looking for stronger tradition and perceived patriotism. But, when America was great, what made America great, and who America was great for is left up to the eyes of the beholder, and this slogan generated powerful collective nostalgia which mobilized the population, rallied the far right, and further polarized American politics. As Andrea Smith and Anna Einstein (2016) discuss, however, nostalgia “can carry motivational force, spurring residents to find ideals in the past that they wish to continue into the present,” and it is this phenomenon which I would like to explore - the ability for nostalgia to both push us forward and hold us back in a variety of cultural contexts.

Nostalgia exists not as a regional phenomenon, but a global one. While there are many cases to learn from, I will analyze specifically the cases of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and post-imperial England. Whatever the previous generations did is a crucial matter because people are inextricably tied to these former generations through an inherited social, cultural, and political identity that goes beyond simply title (i.e., ethnicity, nationality, tribe, etc.). The lives, beliefs, and arguments of those who came before are very personal and remain incredibly relevant to current day life. First, however, it is necessary to dive deeply into the foundation of these experiences: nostalgia itself.

NOSTALGIA

Hiraeth (Welsh) is an unattainable longing for a place, a person, a figure, even a national history that may never have actually existed. To feel hiraeth is to feel a deep incompleteness and recognize it as familiar.

- Pamela Petro, “Dreaming in Welsh”, *The Paris Review*

In a scene which may as well be the modern version of Proust’s madeleines and tea¹, from the beloved animated film, *Ratatouille*, there is an iconic moment in which the cold-hearted food inspector tries the movie’s namesake dish, and he freezes, his eyes open wide, and the camera quickly zooms into his pupils and back out, and when it does, the inspector is now just a young boy at his mom’s kitchen table, being served a bowl of the same dish to comfort him on a bad day. All of a sudden, the inspector is made warm, refreshed, missing what was and filled with gratitude that he gets to experience it once again. This sudden recall of thought, feeling, memory of the world as we once knew it, is perhaps the dominant recognizable feature of nostalgia. And it is this power, the power to stop a person dead in their tracks and remind them of, well, them, and what they hold dear to them, is part of what makes the feeling of nostalgia such an intriguing human phenomenon.

While nostalgia may seem like a simple concept at first glance, it is actually an incredibly loaded term, both historically and socially. The term is a compound of two Greek words: *nostos* (meaning “homecoming”) and *algos* (meaning “pain”), and it first came into use by a Swiss doctor, Johannes Hofer (1669-1752), as he created a diagnosis

¹ In *In Search of Lost Time* (1913), French author Marcel Proust describes how drinking tea with madeleines, as his mother had made him in his childhood, returned him to that beloved past.

for the longing feeling suffered by mercenaries who had to live and fight far away from their homelands, akin to homesickness. In Hofer's *Medical Dissertation on Nostalgia* (1688), as translated by Carolyn Anspach (1934), he described the ailment, its effect and how he would diagnosis it:

Nostalgia may be characterized in four words—sadness, sleeplessness, loss of appetite, and weakness. The nostalgic loses his gayety, his energy, and seeks isolation in order to give himself up to the one idea that pursues him, that of his country. He embellishes the memories attached to places where he was brought up, and creates an ideal world where his imagination revels with an obstinate persistence. (p. 381)

In fact, the nostalgic could suffer so much anguish as a result of their condition, that it could be given as their official cause of death. This clinical origin marks the beginning of the term as we know it and demonstrates the true severity of the impact that the emotion has on our mental and physical well-being.

Since the term was coined, its value as a medical diagnosis has been all but abandoned, but its use as a more general descriptive term has become quite commonplace. Even so, there is little consensus from philosophers, psychologists, etc., on what nostalgia *really* is, or why it is such a powerful force. I think nostalgia is so tricky to define because it acts as a liminal space of sorts. A liminal space is a threshold point, literal or metaphorical, that marks a space of transition from what was to what is and/or will be. Nostalgia acts in a similar way, as it is a state of longing for what was (and is no more), wherein an experience passes through this sort of threshold from present to past, from having been *really* real to *potentially* real.

Nostalgia in the traditional sense seems to be incredibly personal. In Janelle Wilson's, "Here and Now, There and Then: Nostalgia as a Time and Space Phenomenon" (2015), she elucidates why this seems to be the case, as "the active recalling of one's past enables one to see the self moving through time, raising the questions: How did I get to where I am? How have I become the person I am? How is my present self shaped by my former selves?" (p. 481). Of course, we do not all undergo this introspective process in the same way, and as a result, many philosophers have attempted to describe the various "kinds" of nostalgia we may each experience. Fred Davis, renowned sociologist of nostalgia and author of *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (1979), was perhaps the first to capture the various levels of nostalgic experiences, while also being explicit in what experiences qualified in the first place.

Davis expressed the existence of three "ascending orders" of nostalgia -- simple, reflexive, and interpreted. The first regards un-analyzed experiences of nostalgia. This refers to more fleeting moments of nostalgia which we acknowledge but do not initiate deeper introspective consideration about why or if the past was truly better (or, happier, less complicated, more fun, etc.) than the present. Reflexive nostalgia is used in regard to experiences in which we do think more deeply about whether this feeling about the past is accurate and truly representative of the past as we lived it. Finally, there is interpreted nostalgia, which is used to "objectify the nostalgia experienced -- that is, we analyze the feeling with respect to its character and purpose" (Wilson, 2015, p. 480). In the case of the second two orders, which is what mainly relates to this thesis, nostalgia involves an active and present review of the phenomenon. While there are now many

different classifications produced to describe the nostalgia phenomenon, almost all of them have roots in Davis' orders analysis.

Closely related and also highly referenced is Svetlana Boym's (2001) classifications of nostalgia -- restorative and reflective -- which will be crucial in my analysis of the case studies to follow. The former of the two is used similarly to Davis' first order of nostalgia, describing nostalgia experiences which include, "a wistful longing for a past marked by greater authenticity and a desire to reconstruct that time" (Wilson, 2015, p. 480). The latter, which is more alike to Davis' second and third orders of nostalgia, "refers to reflecting on the past for present purposes -- for example, in establishing continuity" (Wilson, 2015, p. 481). This is the form of nostalgia that I am most interested in, specifically the element of continuity which it emphasizes. Reflection on past experiences allows us to evaluate what has happened in our lives and has made us *us*. Without thinking about our roots, we can lose a deep sense of self. What are we without the greater context of what came before us? Much of our society has ways of immortalizing the past that are built into the very framework of our communities and our society. On a small scale, this is the case for school year books, which we then use to remember exactly what was going on, what we looked like, and how we were as an individual. On a much larger scale, we carefully curate and maintain historical sites (even at the risk of hindering those presently alive), museums, and archives, which allow us to imaginatively recreate those pasts for ourselves. We are able to think about our ancestors' place in that history, or what we may have been doing if we were alive at the time of those events. This same experience on the individual scale is true in the context of collective nostalgia experiences as well, as I will demonstrate in the case studies to come.

Nevertheless, despite the clear significance of nostalgia in establishing or enforcing identity, these reflections can also appear to be a destructive force. Whatever aspects of the past that made it significant or memorable enough to make us be nostalgic for it is usually deeply personal. Whatever those aspects are is dependent on every individual and what affected them the most about the experience. And, as we are all different However, before addressing this further, it is important to note some further identifying features of nostalgia. According to Marcel Proust (1871-1922), translated by Harold Bloom (1987) - whose work is also often credited as a pillar of nostalgia analysis - the past acts as its own sort of universe, one accessible only by accident:

It is a labour in vain to attempt to recapture [the past]: all the efforts of our intellect must prove futile. The past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) which we do not suspect. And as for that object, it depends on chance whether we come upon it or not before we ourselves must die (p. 60).

While I do not agree with Proust that our past is only accessible through material objects and their subsequent emotional impacts, I think he was on the right track with the idea of the past being hidden, and mostly inaccessible to reach in any sort of objective sense. And this is truly the crux of the problem: what can we depend upon if it is not our own first-hand, lived experiences?

This question is a concerning one because it paints the past as being a subjective entity and not an objective one, which is how we are usually comfortable talking about the past. Any deep dives into nostalgia almost inevitably lead to this uncomfortable

crossroad, “prompting questions regarding the accuracy of one’s remembrances,” and, “critical evaluation of an objective past and its juxtaposition to one’s subjective remembrance of that past” (Wilson, 2015, p.480). This does not mean there is not an objective past -- in fact, I feel quite certain that there is -- it is just one that, barring the creation of a time machine, we can never quite get to. It is like a line on a graph approaching a limit to infinity - we might be able to get quite close, but we will never quite touch it.

Perhaps now is the time to address a question that has hitherto been bubbling at the surface. What distinguishes memory from nostalgia? Memory, in my view, is our own formulation of the past. Memory, similarly to nostalgia, is very personal to us. However, I believe memory is emotionally removed, as it acts like our own personal history database. Nostalgia is when we take that memory and we look at it through an emotional lens. Memory informs our nostalgia, and our nostalgia can alter our memory. I think that the latter half of that statement may raise some eyebrows, so allow me to elaborate. I think we would likely all agree that emotions affect the way we view our reality. So, when we have an emotional attachment to a certain memory, we are effectively looking at that memory through a warped lens. In cases of nostalgia, which often involve returning to a certain memory or a certain group of memories time and time again, we are subjecting that memory to being more and more warped by our emotional attachment to those memories, thus opening the door for direct alteration of the validity or reality of that memory.

We as humans are dependent on there being real value and truth of the past, not only in our own experiences, but in the experiences of those around us and those who came before us. This trust in the past allows us to build our current progress upon past

progress in a meaningful way. In this way, nostalgia moves away from an individual experience to a collective one. In Davis's book (1979), he distinguishes between private and collective nostalgia. Private nostalgia refers to the feelings we have that are connected to our own lives and lived experience (for example, the ratatouille moment for the food inspector), and collective nostalgia refers to the feeling which arises from the "collective memories of a group of people (e.g., often generational in nature)" (Davis, 1979, p. 479). Critical to this thesis, Davis draws attention to the role of nostalgia in creating a real continuous, seemingly homogeneous social identity, and the resulting use of recall of "our" past in our present (1979).

Davis's analysis is so deeply valued because it was the first work to critically analyze the nostalgia phenomenon as a collective experience beyond an individual one. In a review of his work by Tom Panelas (1982), Panelas captured what made analysis of the phenomenon as a community experience so revolutionary:

The commercialization of nostalgia [in 1970s America] made possible by the passage of several decades in which the principal markers of time were the changing genres of the mass media and fashion industries meant that recollections of the most intimate sort could be evoked simultaneously in millions by the mere regurgitation of the culture industries' file footage. (p. 1425).

Critically, Davis also made a convincing argument for the existence of collective social memory beyond "the aggregate of individual experiences" (Panelas, 1982, p. 1426), something which was previously an unresolved issue in the field. The result is a new way of looking at collective identity, sources of solidarity, and a new way of analyzing social response especially during times of transition.

To me, the key is that with sizable, landmark cultural events, we seem to take the stance that even if we were not *actually* there, we might as well have been. Per my previous 9/11 example, I have no actual recollection of the event, but whenever it is brought up, it feels like there is a very specific, *almost* real personal memory and absolutely real emotions that are stirred. The American society has this memory so deeply ingrained within it, that you really did not “have to be there” to feel deeply connected to it and moved by it. This is not a phenomenon unique to 9/11, nor American society. I wish to explore this phenomenon in the context of three very different social contexts of transition, in which nostalgia is an underlying force of change: Egypt and the Muslim Brotherhood movement and post-Imperial England.

EGYPT AND THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

“The Muslim Brotherhood plays fast and loose with both historical fact and traditional religious interpretation in order to understand their past as they believe it must be understood.”

– Mary R. Habeck, Foreign Policy Research Institute

The Middle East (defined here as the countries spanning from Egypt to Iran) is often taught in America as a hectic, confusing social and political landscape, and not much more. Assumptions and stereotypes on a social level, as well as intricate and complicated political interventions on a governmental level, make the region difficult to approach. Almost every conflict in the region revolves around various levels and kinds of minority and majority. Each distinctive group is sensitive and conscious of their long history, regardless of how complex or controversial their role (or their community's role) in it may have been. In order to understand the Middle East it is necessary to understand the fundamental sources of collective solidarity (who is loyal to who over whom) that have formed in the region and that continue to drive social and political movements there. After a venture into the history of Egypt in regard to the greater context of world affairs during the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood, I will detail how both the ideological and organizational structure of the movement utilized nostalgia and the desire to be brought back to the past in order to achieve their widespread success. I will strengthen the argument by analyzing the past as it truly was versus as the Muslim Brotherhood painted it to be, which shows how manipulatable the narrative is when viewed through a nostalgic lens.

The desert land which encompasses most of the Middle East- specifically the Arab peninsula, but also large parts of northern Africa, Israel, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq- is a defining geographic factor which has led to age old conflicts over natural resources in the region. It is the presence of the desert that made nomadic life necessary during the early days of the Middle East and it is this nomadic life that led to the development of tribal family structures. This is important because the tribal unit was the primary source of collective solidarity in the early Middle East, something which would have profound long-term implications. Even throughout urbanization of the region, those that left their nomadic way of living still maintained their tribal loyalties. This is significant in the politics of many Middle Eastern states because the tribal level of solidarity is still viewed as the fundamental source of solidarity in the region, although it is certainly not the only source.

It is impossible to discuss the Middle East without also acknowledging the incredible importance of religious and ethnic solidarity. The majority are those who are ethnically Arab as well as religiously Sunni Muslim. Any other combination of ethnicity and religion (i.e. - those who are Arab Christian or those who are Sunni Muslim but not Arab) are considered minorities. The conflict between religious and ethnic minority and majority is *the* most significant cause of disunity in the Middle East, as exemplified by the continued fervent oppression of religious and ethnic minorities in every state of the region.

It is important to clarify why nostalgia is an interesting case in the Middle East compared to the nostalgic experience of, say, Americans. After all, Americans are no strangers to their leaders heralding back to a time long past with vague, yet hyper-personal significance meant to invigorate the masses. However, we are a nation of our

own creation, with borders we determined. Our ancestors decided they did not like the rule of England, so they fought for independence, declared the colony land as their own, and established a system of government which they believed in. Our borders shifted through pursuance of land through conquest of indigenous people and treaty negotiation with other governments, however unethical the process may have been. America represented a land and government created for acceptance, freedom and perhaps most critically, opportunity, and as a result, waves of immigrants have flocked here since. Essentially, while we certainly have internal conflict over majority and minority, history, ethnicity, and religion, we are a melting pot of our own accord.

The borders in the Middle East were not achieved through such pursuits. Instead, they were manufactured in the offices of European government officials. The decisions regarding the placement of borders were not made with the diverse cultures, peoples, age old conflicts, etc., of the region in mind. They were made with the intention of divvying up land, resources, and access among imperial powers. For example, the British occupied Iraq during World War I (as they occupied most of the Middle East), and it was they who decided to combine the three existing Ottoman provinces into the state of Iraq after the end of the War and the collapse of the great Ottoman empire. This land encompassed very diverse populations, including the Kurdish (ethnic minority), a slight Shiite Muslim majority (just over 50%), a slight minority of Sunni Muslims (just under 50%), as well as many other small religious groups.

After creating this state, the British first had to determine who would rule it, a task which fell upon the then British Minister of the Colonies, Winston Churchill. Churchill brought in Faisal, a member of the Hashemite family (a powerful/influential Sunni Muslim family). Faisal would become the King of Iraq in the late summer of 1921.

The rationale behind this decision seemed to be that the British did not want to create a controversial Shiite state in a dominantly Sunni Middle East. However, both the decision to make a state which had so many different populations within it and the decision to put a Sunni Arab on the throne in a majority Shiite state would have grave consequences for the future of Iraq. A decision made in foreign offices essentially created a perpetual identity crisis which internally fractures the state.

Tribal, ethnic, and religious solidarity are certainly incredibly powerful forces in the Middle East, but I think that nostalgia provides a common thread between all three which should be explored. Loyalties based on tribal relations, ethnicity and religion are formed very intentionally with a strong sense of pride for personal heritage, even if it is an assigned-at-birth identity (like ethnicity). The Muslim Brotherhood arose from the very same context that caused long-standing issues within Iraq - Western (namely British) over-influence into their social and political spheres, the feeling that their culture and history was in the shaky hands of others, and the desire to return to the ideals that had been glorified in times of old. With this background in mind, I would like to explore specifically the case of the Muslim Brotherhood, the pan-Islamic movement originating in Egypt. It is, of course, a matter of importance to describe the exact historical context which led to the Muslim Brotherhood's inception in order to analyze its nostalgic roots, so what follows here is an incredibly brief summary of Egypt's roughly five-thousand-year long history.

Egypt, unlike its counterparts in the region, has had the benefit of occupying the same geographic territory from its inception to today. This continuity of geographical location is significant because this has lent Egypt a significant amount of political legitimacy, and, due to the aforementioned frequency of conflict and intervention that

has been ongoing in the region, the battle for legitimacy is a critical one. In the 7th century Egypt was a Christian country and gradually the population was transformed from being only Christian to being about 90% Sunni Muslim (*Egypt - The World Factbook*). From early on, Egypt was a center of Sunni Islam, reflected by the fact that Cairo is home to the religious institution that is frequently considered the most important in the Sunni world, al-Azhar. Further, Cairo has always been considered one of the main centers of Islamic life and power, a fact which Egyptians are very proud of due to their significant role in Islamic history. Egypt, like the rest of the Middle East, was occupied by the Ottoman empire between 1514-1517. However, unlike other territories occupied by the Ottomans, the entire country of Egypt was kept as one province which covered the same territory as Egypt is today.

Nearly 300 years later, in the late 18th century, Egypt would become involved in the issue of the Franco-British Rivalry, due to no choice of their own, which would have profound consequences on the rest of their history and identity as we know it today. When the French finally recovered from the chaos of the French Revolution and then became arguably the most powerful military nation in Europe (mid-1790s), the idea that they should settle scores with England became a significant part of their foreign policy. Invading England, however, was off the table as it was viewed as impractical, and so France instead opted for an attack on the British Empire outside of Europe. Napoleon Bonaparte, who had already proven himself as a brilliant general and had become immensely popular in France, was chosen by the French leadership to attack the British empire, and the target was Egypt.

Egypt was not picked for its own significance, nor was it picked as an effort to damage or attack the Ottoman empire (which Egypt was still a part of at this time). It

was picked out because France wanted to proceed from Egypt via land all the way towards India which was, at that time, an integral part of the British empire. This marks an important turning point for the region as a whole because it was the first time since the end of the Crusades that the Middle East would become a target of European politics and interests. While the French invasion itself only lasted for three years (1799-1801), it left a lasting impact on Egypt. After the French withdrew from Egypt in 1801, a power struggle began in Egypt between various Ottoman factions as to who would control the country. Muhammad Ali was sent by the Ottomans to help support their army in Egypt, and, after seeing firsthand the weakness of the Ottomans, Muhammad Ali decided, as the newly declared leader of the province, to build a military force that was capable of defending against future invasions. However, very quickly, he confronted the problem that would become an issue throughout the Middle East later on: how could they borrow from the West's military technology without being influenced by its religious and cultural values?

In Ali's early years, he invited foreign experts from Europe to train his army but restricted them solely to their duty as military trainers. However, he understood that building a strong army would also require other sciences beyond the military, so he started sending students to Europe. To help remedy the weakness of their education, arts, and sciences, Egypt under Ali opened up Egypt to business with the rest of the world. So, as of the 1820s and 40s, far before it happened in other Middle East countries, Egypt was subject to growing European influences that would change the face of the country in years to come.

The next important chapter in the history of Egypt would be the opening of one of the most famous water passages in the world, the Suez Canal. The Suez Canal connects

the Mediterranean to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, considerably shortening the distance from Europe to the far East. The particular project of the Suez was not a British idea, but a French idea, and the work on the construction of the canal started in the 1850s and continued until 1869 when the canal was opened. Once it was opened, Egypt became much closer to Europe and the opening of the canal would attract the interest of European businessmen in Egypt, and, as a result, Egypt would start absorbing a lot of Europeans. However, the canal itself also attracted the inevitable attention of the British empire as a state enterprise.

Six years after the opening of the canal, in the year 1875, when the French company which built the canal went bankrupt, the British Prime Minister Benjamin De'Israeli (1804-1881) purchased (on behalf of the British government) all of the shares of the company. As a result, Britain effectively became the owner of this company and the canal, and this meant that from now on Egypt would be a key country in the overall British imperial strategy. It is here that the seeds of the Muslim Brotherhood would be sown, as it was six Egyptian Suez Canal workers and a schoolteacher who would found the movement.

In 1882 Britain decided that the best way to defend and protect the Suez Canal was to occupy Egypt altogether. The immediate reason for that was the fact that the Suez Canal naturally became an attraction to businesses from all over Europe and this posed a cultural dilemma to Egyptians. Egypt started to witness a huge influx of newcomers - namely, Europeans and Christians - and that led to growing bitterness and hostility on the part of the Egyptian people. In the early 1880s, there were growing signs that this bitterness would lead to an overall Egyptian rebellion against the West, and England could not risk losing the canal as an asset. In September of 1882, the British army

landed in Egypt and, within a very short period of time, took over the country and started an unofficial occupation of Egypt that would last until the middle of the 20th century. Formally, the British kept Egypt as part of the Ottoman empire, but in reality, Egypt would develop separately as a result from this point forward.

The fact that a liberal government in England, which was *supposed* to be less colonialist-oriented, ordered the invasion is an indication of just how significant Egypt was in the eyes of the British empire. However, from an Egyptian and Middle East perspective, the greatest significance of the occupation was that from now on Egypt would be a “freer” country than the rest of the countries in the region, attracting political dissidence from the rest of the Ottoman empire who would move to Egypt where they could operate more freely under the British. Egypt would thus become the first Middle East country to virtually come out of the control of the Ottomans.

The British control in Egypt meant that more attention was given to economic development of the country than was given by the Ottomans to their other countries in the Middle East. As a result, in World War I the population of Egypt remained mostly loyal to the British and did not follow the course of the Ottomans in the rebellion against the infidels, and that was considered an indication that many Egyptians *wanted* their country to be developing in a different manner than the rest of the region. There were no following of the Ottoman calls for Jihad against the British, and further, Egypt was used as a forward base for the British army from which they invaded the rest of the Middle East, eventually destroying the Ottoman Empire.

Immediately after the end of the WWI, there was talk about independence, an expectation that was backed up by a sense that Egypt deserved a reward from the British for their loyal behavior during the War. A delegation of four Egyptian leaders, the Wafd,

led by Sa'ad Zaghlul (1856-1927), spoke about Egypt as being detached from the rest of the Middle East and the Islamic world, a concept that got more traction with the collapse of the Ottoman empire. They made emphatic the sense that a new identity beyond Islam was needed. This heightened sense of Egyptianism also became more popular due to archaeological discoveries in the early 1920s connected with the pyramids, something which enhanced the sense of Egyptian history and pride which preceded Islam. The Wafd can be considered as a party of Egyptianism, but the British refused to accept independence of Egypt. After a period of violent Egyptian resistance in the early 1920s, the country became more peaceful and the system of government became formally the Muhammad Ali regime which continued, but the actual control remained in the hands of the British military and Commissioner. This dual system of government was not satisfactory for almost anyone in Egypt because it meant that the country continued to be under occupation and made it difficult for the Egyptian people to have any real say in their governance. Then, in 1928, a new political movement would emerge that would arguably become the most important political movement in Egypt ever since, the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Muslim Brotherhood's name is a very significant statement of their basic ideology, which is *not* Egyptianism, but instead a coming back to Islam as being *the* source of collective solidarity. This meant no unity with the Christians of Egypt, and also meant going beyond the boundaries of Egypt, as in the old days of the Ottoman empire. They did not call themselves the Egyptian Brotherhood, or the Arab Brotherhood, because they wanted to emphasize specifically their religious connection of Sunni Islam. Their ideology was that Islam was *not* defeated with the fall of the Ottoman empire, and that Islam continued to be *the* solution and *the* "right" religion -- it was *not* Islam that

was defeated with the Ottoman empire, just bad Muslims that did not live up to their religion as it should be. This was a strong statement in the late 1920's because there was a sense among many Muslims that the defeat of the Ottoman empire may have meant a defeat of their entire way of life.

The Muslim Brotherhood glorified the early history of Islam as the model period that should be imitated in modern times; and here enters nostalgia. It arose as, "the accumulation of collective emotions of isolation and frustration paired with a totalitarian and Manichean worldview" (Holtmann, 2013, p. 200). As a community, the frustration of foreign intervention was a tension bubbling at the surface, and the Muslim Brotherhood saw this as the perfect time and opportunity to spread their message and build their support. The Manichean worldview was inherently tied into this - they were "good", and the foreign cultures and religion were "evil". They very quickly found support among Muslim Egyptians who accepted their message, but what made them so popular was the fact that they went beyond words into an attempt to build a model Islamic alternative society that reflected the aims and goals of the "old" or traditional Egypt. As a result, the Brotherhood was also particularly successful among the huge masses of migrants from the rural areas who settled in the big cities - people who had been uprooted from their traditional way of life and were thrown into a society which had already been divided between people who had accepted the Western way of life, and those who still maintained the traditional way of life.

The primary concerns for the Brotherhood were centered around the issues of, "the domination of Egypt by foreign powers, the poverty of the Egyptian people, and the declining morality they identified in both the Egyptian state and the lives of individuals throughout Egypt" (Munson, 2001, p. 489). They tied the significant large scale social

and cultural tensions of the time to the secularization of the state and the behavior and personal conduct of Egyptian individuals. They claimed that the only way to get back on track as a society was a mass return to Islam, in its true form. If each individual could make a similar return to Islam, their society might just prevail against the “new” influences they were being subject to. They also communicated with the Egyptian people in old and, “familiar Islamic idioms and widespread views,” (Munson, 2001, p. 504) which was welcome in comparison to the cold outsiders, the British, who were seemingly on a mission to disrupt their country as they knew it.

It is clear, however, that it was not just the distancing of the general populace from a more orthodox version of Islam, but also the general cultural influence of the West that was changing the face of the country and its values, which then created a desire to expel the new and return to the familiar times of old. Carrie Wickham (2013) explores in her analysis of the Brotherhood’s early years the elements which were of particular frustration:

The secular models of law and education borrowed from Europe were out of touch with the religious beliefs and sentiments of Egyptian society; likewise, the “cheap,” “lewd,” and “suggestive” content of popular media, films, and music undermined traditional values and created moral and sexual problems for youth... as indicated, among other things, by the free mixing of their women with unrelated men at private parties... [and] the spread of alcohol, gambling, and prostitution. (p. 22)

In order to combat this attack on their values and way of life, the Muslim Brotherhood mobilized use of restorative nostalgia as described by Boym (2001), aiming to “restore” or replicate the aspects of the past they wanted back. They began to establish religious

schools, medical services, and welfare organizations in big cities like Cairo, providing to the people what the government did not. This personal care was reminiscent of the community values upheld in times of old which distinguished the Brotherhood from the distinctly cold and 'other' treatment given to the Egyptians by the British (Wickham 2013). The organization would not take on a more political tone until after the Arab general strike in Palestine (1936), in which the Muslim Brotherhood supported the strike, stimulating Egyptian sympathy and fundraising to support the strike effort. Its newsletters to its supporters started to become very critical of the existing political regime in Egypt, especially the quasi-colonial British control of the country (Munson 2001).

At the same time that they engaged in these more mainstream efforts, the Muslim Brotherhood from their inception also used violence in order to advance their causes. As a result, the entirety of their history has been marked by violence against their political opponents and being targets of counter violence as a result. Their own founder and leader, schoolteacher Hassan Al' Banna, was murdered by the Egyptian police in 1949 as retaliation for his followers murdering the Egyptian Prime Minister at the time. They were also engaged in terrorist activities later on, including the famous attempt on the life of Gamal Abd Al'Nasser (President of Egypt 1954 - 1970).

Here lies the controversy surrounding the Muslim Brotherhood since their inception: Are they a religious and social educational movement? Or a violent Jihadist group? The key to their success is that they are both. They are vague enough in aim to instill the mass nostalgic appeal necessary to engender such a powerful, persistent social movement. Hassan al-Banna, their founder, described it himself (1913) as being "a Salafi propaganda, a Sunni way, a Sufi reality, a political body, a sports group, a cultural

association, an economic company, a social thought” (Shahuq, 1981, p.71). This meant that as long as you were a Sunni Muslim, the Muslim Brotherhood wanted to include you, wanted you to feel the sense of community that they had felt was lost since they were subject to such intense foreign intervention, and most importantly, wanted you to be the best Muslim you could be. The reference by al-Banna to Salafism should also not go unnoticed, as Salafism is a faction of Sunni Islam that believes in returning to the Islam of the first three generations of Muslims, the “pious” ancestors, who knew the true way. Further, the organization of the Brotherhood was hierarchical in a manner which both allowed more members to join in a way which made them comfortable, but also ensured only the truly “dedicated” members would be let into the higher tiers of information dissemination.

I believe Phillip Holtmann’s evaluation of the movement in *After the Fall* (2013), describes the duality of the movement between peace and violence quite well:

One of the strategic “behavioural patterns” of the MB is to face repression like a quiet, domesticated cat that sits idle, eats from its owner’s hand, respects the house rules and is aware of the limits of its cage. Yet this “peaceful” behaviour can be deceptive. In Victor Hugo’s words, “God created the cat, so that man might have the pleasure of caressing the tiger.” (p. 198)

So, those who were inspired by ‘the cat’ of the movement would take part in those aspects (social welfare), and those inspired by ‘the tiger’ of the movement would take part in those aspects (Jihad or violence). And, in turn, the movement would show whatever side was necessary to be successful at that time. I want to take a moment here to explain the term jihad as it is intended here, as there are a lot of misconceptions regarding what it means. It does not *mean* violence. Jihad literally translates to

“struggle” or “holy war”, and it is used to represent the struggle to defend Islam. Defense of their faith against adversaries (specifically adversaries who are seeking to destroy or minimize the faith), as well as the necessity to share and expand their faith warrants, in their view, a legitimate use of force. This is not dissimilar from the justification given by Christians for the crusades.

In Ziad Munson’s article, *Islamic Mobilization: Social Movement Theory and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood* (2001), he explains the rise and mass appeal of the movement, usefully comparing its success to the lack of success of similar but non-religious movements in Egypt, like communism. He describes how the multiplicity of the organizations aims was intentionally manifested through the Brotherhood's federalized organization structure. There was a headquarters of the movement in Cairo, but there were also branches of the Brotherhood in each area of the city and across the country so that they could individualize the experience. Further, the movement utilized, “traditional social networks... allowing the Muslim Brotherhood to gain access to lines of communication and commitment originally developed outside of the organization... Access to secondary group affiliations, regional identities, and so forth helped the Muslim Brotherhood cement the loyalty of its members by linking itself to existing belief systems and structures of loyalty in society” (Munson, 2001, p. 498). It is clear here that use of the past in invoking nostalgia was not the only way in which the past informed the present in the case of the Muslim Brotherhood. It not only informed their ideology and goals, but also how they spread this message to the public, which helped to make them much more successful than other such movements.

The Muslim Brotherhood provided a pathway out of the spiral towards Westernization, a return to life before foreign intervention changed the face of their

society, and that pathway was Islam. Not Islam just as a religious movement, but as a political movement as well. They believed Sharia law was a truly democratic form of law that provided a base for democracy inherently superior to the West's. And its huge membership was and is reflective of the fact that everyday Muslims in Egypt desired this pathway not just as a way to get away from the Western world, but as a pathway back to the values of home as they once knew it.

In order to fully see how nostalgia is at work in this case, it is also necessary to assess the validity of the claims that life in "westernized" Egypt was truly worse for those living there, especially those who had been historically oppressed like women and minority populations. I do not wish here to personally make any claims regarding the validity, acceptability, or justification of such oppression under Islam (as this would get us into the weeds of interpreting ancient scripture, which is not the task of this thesis), but simply how certain groups (namely non-Sunni Muslims/Egyptians and women) have, in fact, been treated in Egypt before and after westernization, and that those in power (namely Sunni Muslim men) did, in fact, drive such oppression. These tensions are especially visible during the divisive leadership which followed from Nasser (who was widely viewed as progressive) in the form of Anwar Sadat, the so-called "Believer-President" (President 1970-1981) and reveals that nostalgia for times past allowed for a more rose-colored view than what was the case in the reality of that past.

At the same time that the Muslim Brotherhood was advocating for progressive social initiatives like increased access to medical and other welfare services and eliminating the social and economic inequality that resulted from the opening of the Egyptian economy to foreign trade and influence, they were also extremely anti-Semitic. In the Brotherhood's view, the *only* acceptable religion was Sunni Islam, and their

efforts to return Egypt to its former “un-Westernized”, pre-globalization state, as well as their desire to expand this movement beyond the Egyptian borders *required* that non-believers be excluded.

As a result, the claimed unacceptability of the Jewish people and their receipt of the holy land of Jerusalem as an official state were key issues to the Brotherhood. President Anwar Sadat wanted to make peace with Israel in order to prove Egypt’s new secular nature -- even while he preached his own Muslim-ness, he spent much of his reign advocating for separation of church and state so that his adversaries could not overpower him -- and as such, he flew to Israel in order to sign a peace treaty with them in 1977. The Brotherhood was infuriated by this decision, as Wickham (2013) elucidates in her writing, the:

vein of anti-Semitism that pervaded [the group’s] thinking, according to which the Jews were inherently corrupt and duplicitous, cursed by God, and described in the Quran as an existential enemy of Islam and the Muslim people.

Brotherhood leaders denounced the modern state of Israel as based on the illegal and illegitimate usurpation of Muslim territory and advocated jihad in order to liberate the Muslim holy site of Jerusalem. (p. 33)

It is important to mention that this is an extreme claim on the side of the Brotherhood - most Muslims believe the Qur’an does not take such an issue with both Christians and Jews alike. However, one can imagine, given this view of the Jewish people who existed even outside of the Egyptian state, how difficult life in Egypt was for any non-Sunni Muslims. Given the name “Muslim Brotherhood”, this may be considered unsurprising to some, so I think it is beneficial to also discuss here the stance of the Brotherhood on women and how they should be treated (Sunni Muslim women or otherwise) - or more

appropriately for this thesis, the place they were imagined having filled in the past, and thus what place they should return to at present.

Once again, I do not wish here to get into scripture (neither the Qur'an nor the Hadith) justifications for this treatment because this is an issue of great controversy and contention even among those who are considered experts in the field, which I am certainly not. I simply wish to divulge the reality of the Muslim Brotherhood's actions and philosophies when it comes to women and their role in society. As many countries do, Egypt has a dark history when it comes to the treatment of women. In 1979, President Sadat used his executive privileges to establish what is informally referred to as "Jehan's Law" (referring to Sadat's Western-educated wife), which broadened the rights of women in marriage and divorce (Wickham 2013). The Muslim Brotherhood was enraged by this, and their strong influence caused Sadat to do a complete reversal of this policy, going as far as to confirm Sharia law as being a genuine and legitimate source of law. As a result, the struggle for women's rights in Egypt have been continuously stunted by the Muslim Brotherhood as they aim to preserve the traditional Quranic law of the times of old, including archaic ideas regarding the role of women in society as being subservient to their husbands.

Essentially, the "old" Egypt, as well as the new Egypt the Brotherhood aimed to create in imitation of it, was really only better for Sunni Muslim men. Not dissimilar to the calls for "Make America Great Again", the Brotherhood aimed to make Egypt "great" again through pushing a broad collective identity based in fighting Westernization, preaching for the broad acceptance of Sunni Islam, and a return to pre-foreign intervention society. The intake of new people and new ideas after Muhammad Ali opened up the country to foreign business meant wider acceptance of religious diversity

and increased rights to women, something which is inarguably a better state of affairs for those included under those descriptions, and a fact which threatened the power of those who had always been at the top of the Egyptian social pyramid, the Sunni Muslim men. The Muslim Brotherhood utilized nostalgia for the old, traditional Egypt under the guise of the widely loved Islam in order to generate the mass appeal necessary to produce such a huge, persistent, and long-lasting movement.

POST-IMPERIAL ENGLAND

We must take stock of the nostalgia for empire, as well as the anger and resentment it provokes in those who were ruled, and we must try to look carefully and integrally at the culture that nurtured the sentiment, rationale, and above all the imagination of empire.

- Edward Said, *Orientalism*

In the previous case of Egypt and the Muslim Brotherhood, we see how foreign intervention by world hegemony, like the British empire, during colonial pursuits created identity crises in the affected nations which resulted in a push to herald back to times previous, thus invoking restorative nostalgia in order to stimulate the masses into motion. However, as always, there are at least two sides of a story, and it feels only right to explore the very different effects nostalgia has had on England after the fall of its beloved colonial empire. Throughout this analysis, I will use the analysis of leading academics on British history, culture, and ideology to show the Brit's collective re-imagining of the past through nostalgia for their previous empirical endeavors, allowing the British society to have a strong continuous identity regardless of the truth of their claims.

England's empirical pursuits are the most iconic of any country in modern, and arguably world, history. At its height, it included about a quarter of the world's population, and earned the catchphrase "the sun never sets on the British empire" due to the sheer landmass it encapsulated. England became the epicenter of the Industrial Revolution in the late 1700's to early 1800's due to their one-sided system of trade with their colonial states, taking their natural resources at a reduced price, manufacturing

them into goods, and then selling those goods back to the colonies. Even after colonies began to gain independence, at the time that the current head of the British monarchy, Queen Elizabeth II, came to power in 1952, they still controlled over seventy colonies abroad.

From its inception in the 16th century, the colonial pursuits of England were a means to catch up with the exploration success of the Spanish and Portuguese. The so-called “Age of Discovery” (which is a problematic title in-of-itself) meant it was a time of going out to find new things to claim as their own, and they were surely proud of what they found. But instead of being like the Little Mermaid innocently collecting old forks forgotten in the sea (look at this stuff, isn't it neat?), they were collecting and utilizing the resources and peoples of any land they could. A few examples include their acquisition of India (in which they monopolized their spice trade with the production of the East India Company), the settlement in Jamestown in the ‘New World’ (which brought them tobacco and brought about what can and should be considered a genocide of indigenous people in North America), the colonization of the following countries in Africa: Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Southern Cameroon, and Sierra Leone, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, South Africa, Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Nyasaland (Malawi), Lesotho, Botswana, and Swaziland (which provided them both natural resources and the slaves with which to harvest the goods in their other colonies), the British West Indies in the Caribbean (which had the ever-valuable sugar cane that would allow the cycle of slave-trade to be so valuable).

The point is, any country which achieves such widespread domination cannot do so with completely pure intentions or without causing significant harm to those who they come to rule. The colony-based economic system is inherently exploitative, either

through direct use of the people in the colony countries, or through use of their natural resources. As such, there has been much contention and frustration regarding the nature and implications of British rule in their formal and informal colony states, namely over the promises made versus what was really the case. It is necessary to explore some of the harms of British intervention in the political, social, and economic spheres of other countries during their colonial pursuits in order to understand the gravity of the present accusations.

There are many examples, but a stark one is the treatment of the Black slaves who fought as Loyalists in the American Revolutionary War. Britain pledged to these slaves that if they fought for them, they would be freed at the end of the war and compensated in England for their efforts. Their contributions to the British were significant, as “Black soldiers took part in active combat, and were used as shock troops. Because of their knowledge of the terrain, some also acted as guides for the British troops, and others fulfilled a variety of roles, working (among other things) as sailors, miners, nurses and labourers” (*The National Archives*, 1775, p. 5). When the British were defeated, all Loyalists regardless of skin color were condemned as traitors, so those slaves who fought alongside them had little choice but to retreat to England. Once they arrived, they were extremely poor, and were granted little to no relief by the British government’s Compensation Board which was *supposed* to support those who had fought for the British. Locals in London were also not happy about the thousands of now destitute, former slaves living in the streets, so they came up with a solution - to send them far, far away. The National Archives (1786) of England show the happenings of this solution:

In 1786, Smeathman [businessman and botanist] proposed a plan that was accepted by the Black Poor Committee and the government. He pledged to transport the 'troublesome Blacks back to Africa' - to Sierra Leone, to be precise. By doing so, he would 'remove the burthen of the Blacks from the public forever'. (p. 4).

The Chairman of the Poor Black Committee was confused why many of the poor Black people did not want to return to Africa - ignoring the fact that for them, this was not a 'return' as they had been born in America and knew little of their historic homeland beyond the fact that it was riddled with slave traders. But, nonetheless, to the Brits, cultural and historical accuracy was not critical in their eyes as it was not their culture and not their history (*The National Archives*, 1786). The government tried a number of ways to force them to go despite their hesitation, making it clear that money and resources would only be made available to those who agreed to go to Sierra Leone. In the end:

The ships left England on 9 April 1787 with 350 Black passengers... During the voyage, 35 of them died. When the three ships reached Sierra Leone, conditions were grim. Heavy rains made it difficult to build homes or grow food. The rations brought from England were exhausted. Many of the new arrivals died of disease. Their settlement was destroyed by fighting between slave traders and a local ruler. By 1791, only 60 of them survived. (*The National Archives*, 1786, p. 8)

Stories like this are rarely discussed by the proud defenders of the British state and its imperial past and are reflective of the dark underbelly of exploitation which was essential to British success and expansion. At the time, the slaves were a means to an end (winning the Revolutionary War), and the validity of promises of freedom did not

matter as long as they achieved that end. But, when they did not, they were quick to absolve themselves of these former defenders of their empire. They were quickly replaced into the category of useless, other, outsider.

Of course, this is just one example of the greater story of shorted promises (at best) and severe harms (at worst) committed by the British Empire. As Robert Spencer (2009) details in “The Politics of Imperial Nostalgia”:

For decades most of the Empire’s subjects in, for example, India and the Caribbean looked in vain for a representative assembly and for the rule of law, and that they certainly never set eyes on a limited state. Only the reference to English forms of land tenure [being a benefit shared] gets close to the truth, though the similarity of the dispossession of Kenya’s Gikuyu people (and the expropriation of their land by a handful of settlers) to the brutal clearances of the population of the Scottish Highlands or the enclosure of English common land might not strike many as a point in imperialism’s favour. (p. 184)

However, since the empire was so successful and did last for quite some time, the idea of being a dominant world force that deserved respect and admiration pervaded deeply into their national ideology. As such, the gradual collapse of their empire provided an identity crisis. And, as we saw in the case of the Muslim Brotherhood, when there is a crisis of identity and a new path must be forged forward for a country, it makes sense for them to ask themselves what was good about their past (specifically here, what do they miss about that past), and how can they maintain that good-ness as they move on. For England, this came in the form of nostalgia for the power, pride, and possessions of their empire. However, given the controversial nature of their empire and the widespread dislike of their rule in their former colonies, this nostalgia and pride also

necessitated the need to both defend their national identity and to try to shift the narrative regarding the actuality of their past, a clear example of reflective nostalgia. As a refresher, Svetlana Boym (2015) described reflective nostalgia as, “refer[ing] to reflecting on the past for present purposes -- for example, in establishing continuity” (p. 481)

Robert Spencer (2009) addresses the implications which arise with the present romanticization of the colonial pasts of empires like England. He argues that nostalgia for this past creates a space in which harmful, even egregious acts can be celebrated in a philanthropic light, reasoned away through claims of spreading education and liberation of those they conquered, something which then generates the existence of an understandable or acceptable elitist ideology. When such ideologies become acceptable and commonplace, we risk succumbing to the selfish motives once again of nations that have accumulated disproportionate military and/or economic might.

As Spencer details, this shifted view of the past allows people to take the easy route, “unable to make out contemporary solutions to problems of deprivation and disaffection, they look back wistfully to an era in which such inconveniences could be tackled (or at least could appear to be tackled) by the unilateral projection of British and American power” (2009, p. 178). In short, they miss when they had so much control over world affairs that they could make quick and easy decisions with little to no consideration of those external to them. But this was a luxury they should have never been afforded - unilateral actions are also almost always unilaterally beneficial. If we value diversity (in the broadest sense of the word), then this state of affairs is not something we should aspire to replicate, and in fact, it should be deeply concerning when it becomes publicly acceptable to wish to duplicate it. Most justifications of these

times are whitewashed, the memory altered by emotion and longing for the power and unity they once had into something which is not truly reflective of the reality of that past.

This dynamic has led to significant tensions within the British state, as those whose nations were incorporated into the British empire began to move to the British Isle to pursue greater work and life opportunities and did not look, believe, or speak as the British did. To say that this was unwelcome would be an understatement (as exemplified by the previously mentioned story of the former enslaved people in London, but also in current affairs). The British wanted to be able to influence the fate of other nations, but they did not wish for it to be a two-way street: they loved their country and did not desire it to change. What the British seem to have a perpetual struggle to understand is that the countries in which they intervene may have felt the same way, and the British imposing themselves would be rightfully frustrating, and that backlash is not just a possibility, but quite likely given the extensive continuous nature of their imposition.

An example of this tension and resulting backlash is that between the Middle East and England, and more specifically the Islamic community and England. Robert Spencer (2009) discusses this specifically through the analysis of the events which led up to the July 7th, 2005 suicide bombings completed by Islamic extremists in London, and the rhetoric from the Conservative British politicians which followed. England, at this point, had long been meddling in the affairs of various countries in the Middle East, both formally and informally. Specific to this example, however, England had ramped up their military intervention into Iraq as a result of President George W. Bush's policies that came about in the wake of 9/11. The claim was that Iraq possessed weapons of mass

destruction and would not disarm. However, between November 2002 and March 2003, the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission failed to find any such weapons even after over 700 inspections in Iraq. Despite widespread public disapproval (including from England and America's close allies, France, and Germany) for intervention, Iraq was subject to a huge show of military might, including the bombings which would overthrow Saddam Hussein's government and leave the country in a chaotic power vacuum. When all was said and done, both American and British forces conceded that much of their pre-war intel turned out to be false, which should be considered unsurprising given the lack of approval from the UN and key allies (*Iraq Timeline*).

As a result, there was a surge of extremist groups in Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East that had been subject to the military strong-arming of England and America, battling both for control of their own countries and pushing against foreign intervention. It is from this context that the 2005 London suicide bombings by Islamic extremists arose. This is not to say that these bombings were justified. Such reckless loss of innocent life is a real and true tragedy - fifty-six people died, including the suicide bombers, and seven hundred were injured. This is without mentioning the rest of those in England who were likely gripped with fear as the events unfolded.

Unfortunately, this is the inherent nature of terrorism. Terrorism, perpetrated by any group, is such a powerful and tempting tool because the attention terrorist acts receive is disproportionate to the group of people who are actually directly affected. In essence, terrorists can send a much larger message and reach a far broader group of people than the number of people they actually injure or kill. This tool has created a venue through which small or large terrorist groups can gain national and international

attention, therefore getting their message much more attention. All of this is simply to say that the bombings did not come about randomly, or without the larger story of England's history of international influence. However, in the time that followed the bombings, there was much loaded rhetoric that sought purposefully to absolve any relation between England and their interventions into Iraq and other nations, the Islamophobic treatment of those both within their borders and beyond, and these bombings. In a statement to parliament on 11 July 2005, Prime Minister Tony Blair presented the recently perpetrated bombings as unprovoked attacks on a united multicultural society: a cohesive nation would emerge "from this horror with our values, our way of life, our tolerance and respect for others, undiminished". There was a distinct effort to paint Britain as a welcoming, diverse place with "altruistic foreign policy objectives" in order to absolve themselves of any and all attachment to the bombings. In the wake of a traumatic event like this, it is not shocking that many were afraid of the perpetrators and what they had sought to represent, and as a result, attacks on those who looked or believed like the bombers became commonplace. Still, this fear does not warrant this treatment of those people - it is a great extrapolation to assume or place blame on all those who looked like the bombers or were Muslim, and certainly a dangerous one.

This fear of the "other" led to a significant public fear and even hate for immigrant and minority populations. As Spencer (2009) details, "commentators and politicians shifted responsibility for minorities' disaffection from racism to a widespread refusal to 'integrate'; from the invidious, unresponsive and unself-conscious practices of the state to the incorrigible separateness and willful marginalization of minority groups" (p. 179). The exclusionary nature of British society is not hard to prove, in fact there are

a wealth of examples across many different ethnic and religious groups (or even just within their own class system), especially originating from their imperial roots. But still, England uses their colonial past as a misguided example of their historical inclusion of many diverse groups, pushing a trope which would likely be laughable to those who lived under their rule in colonial states.

A short month after the bombings, Trevor Phillips, the chair of the Commission for Racial Equality (a title which will prove to be quite ironic), claimed that multiculturalism was “outdated”, while in the same interview re-asserting Britain’s “proud history of tolerance and respect towards people of different views, faiths and backgrounds” (Davis 2005). This claim is an interesting one, because there were many cases of Islamophobia and religion-based discrimination in England leading up to these bombings, especially after the 9/11/2001 attacks on the twin towers in New York. In fact, several newspapers printed headlines in the weeks following the attack with broad claims against all Muslims. One columnist from *The Telegraph*, David Selbourne, even outright said in October of 2001 that, “this war is not about terror, it’s about Islam”. This shows that the outright exclusion of anyone considered to be in the category of “other” was not simply a private activity, but a collective, public endeavor. To the Brits, this “war” originated in the conflict between old and new. Another writer for *The Telegraph*, John Keegan (2001), wrote the article “In this war of civilisations the West will prevail” in which he claimed that this was a conflict between the “settled, creative productive Westerners and predatory, destructive Orientals,” and that it cannot be argued that “peoples of the desert... exist on the same level of civilisation”. In short, England’s “proud history of tolerance” towards those with different views is, at minimum, certainly questionable.

Returning to the wake of 7/7/2005, Prime Minister Blair, “told the House of Commons Liaison Committee that, in order for the state to defeat terrorism, it must persuade ‘the Islamic community’ (defined already by this appellation as a separate grouping) ‘to address the completely false sense of grievance against the West’, a point he had made several times in the weeks following the bombings” (Spencer, 2009, p. 180). Again, this rhetoric which treats the former empire’s impacts on the rest of the world as much-ado-about-nothing, not so subtly removes the blame from their own shoulders and places it squarely on those who had always been “othered” and welcomes the idea that that past would not be a dangerous thing in any way to reproduce. Blair would also go on to introduce the concept of “multicultural nationalism”, which is an oxymoron.

Blair sees them as outsiders who must demonstrate their loyalty, or even as recreants who are obliged, for fear of accusations of treachery, to act in their communities as emissaries for British foreign policy. Multiculturalism is thus hollowed out until it is reduced to little more than a signifier for multi-coloured conformity to the priorities of the British state. (Spencer, 2009, p. 181)

Phillips would go on to present at the Conservative Party Convention later that year, remarking that, “we can look at our own history to show that the British people are not by nature bigots. We created something called the empire where we mixed and mingled with people very different from those of these islands” (White 2006). Mixed and mingled is, of course, a euphemism, a very clear softening of the reality of what that mixing and mingled entailed. These sorts of euphemisms which downplay the severity of the harms committed as an empire and hold their past in an overly generous light are

reflective of this nostalgic need to preserve identity and pride even if it has little to no historical backing.

These anti-Islam sentiments are not simply a thing of the past. In February of 2021, The Guardian wrote an article about the experience of Muslims who tried to play in local football leagues, in which "Muslim women described how wearing the headscarf made them a target of hostility online from fans as well as offline from other players, and of being held back and not selected by their own team. Others spoke of being unable to source sponsorship, having to seek counselling because of the abuse and of witnessing young children on the sidelines repeat the hatred espoused by their parents". We cannot pretend that this bigotry exists in a vacuum. When politicians can acceptably reason away harms committed by their country and go unchecked, and in fact claim themselves as saviors to those whose affairs they have intervened in, we welcome the breeding of elitism and bigotry that pervades into every crevice of life. As such, it is no surprise that nostalgia for their imperial past has brought about the rather explicit re-writing of that past by current politicians and historians, like the infamous and controversial Niall Ferguson.

In Niall Ferguson's works, he aims to re-establish the grounds for empirical pursuits for countries like America and England, in the process mangling the reality of England's past. He believed the British empire brought, "the modern world a useful precedent for the kind of virtuous power that can engineer the economic development that backward peoples are too feckless to accomplish alone" (Ferguson, 2005, p. xxvi). While these claims are not without cause - British foreign intervention certainly did bring with it British influence, which included modern concepts of democracy being spread. However, sanctimonious rhetoric that cleanly avoids any conversation about

what else accompanied that development, or how that development came to be, is a clear example of painting the past without the nuance it truly possessed, presenting it in a light favorable to them.

It seems as though, in an effort to separate themselves from the horrors of their past while still maintaining the identity of superiority and strength, they have found it easiest to all but forget those horrors. In Abelardo Rodriguez's (2020) analysis of the ripple effects caused within the British identity, he provides further explanation for this collective reaction:

A threat to identity is a threat to who we are: A threat to the ideas, history, and self-image of the dominant forces. Societal security feeds on identity; It incorporates emotions and perceptions. There are exponentially growing fears regarding immigration and the threatened loss of space and competitiveness. The security strategy thus exacerbates the threat of the other and eventually seeks limitations on the rights of immigrants. (p. 20)

Increased speed of globalization, which was perhaps an unexpected side-effect for the Brit's imperial pursuits (but a side-effect nonetheless), meant increased foreign influence on themselves. This meant that their community at home would have to adjust and meld with people unlike them, and as is true for pretty much any community around the world, this change is scary. It is unsurprising in the case of England, where pride for identity and community and tradition were so strong, that this influence would be so strongly unwelcome and pushed against.

Nostalgia for an imperial past has become a tool to do just this, uniting British people under a past to be proud of, one that allows them to skirt around the evolution of their community and culture to something new or unfamiliar. However, renegotiating

the terms of history to make themselves feel more comfortable and proud in their heritage only continues the harms which were started in the former days of their empire. The truth of the past is owed to those who had their futures either, at best, re-shaped, and at worst, taken away altogether.

CONCLUSION

The root of oppression is loss of memory... Indians think it is important to remember, while Americans believe it is important to forget.

– Paula Gunn Allen, Native American Poet

One can only go for so long without asking ‘who am I?’, ‘where do I come from?’, ‘what does all this mean?’, ‘what is being?’, ‘what came before me and what might come after?’. Without answers there is only a hole. A hole where a history should be that takes the shape of an endless longing.

We are cavities.

– Rivers Solomon, African American Author, *The Deep*

In this thesis, I have aimed to demonstrate the connection between memory, nostalgia, and identity in two case studies - the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and England as a post-Imperial state. The Muslim Brotherhood exemplifies use of restorative nostalgia - using longing for the past to establish grounds for recreating that past - as a tool to mobilize a massive, long-lasting social and political movement. The case of England as a post-Imperial state demonstrates the use of reflective nostalgia - using longing for the past to establish or transform a continuous identity - as a tool to shift the narrative about the reality of their past to stabilize or ensure a certain future. The past informs the present and can tell us about both what to expect in our future, but also about what we have come from and what we can aspire to be. It allows us to feel grounded in our heritage, identity, and connectedness with generations that came before and will surely come after.

Nostalgia, the distinct longing for this past, which I maintain is an incredibly valuable force that carries incredible power when utilized, is really a privilege. If we have the ability to herald back to previous generations for guidance in how we move forward, that means we have the distinct benefit of knowing what came before us, whether that has been passed down verbally or through written records of that history. When empires rise, as the case was with the British (but also the Spanish, Ottomans, etc.), and land and people are conquered and forced to assimilate or die, we lose more than I think we can ever fully realize. Those conquered lives (and the generations of lives that lead to them) were as inherently valuable as the lives of the conquerors. Those conquered cultures (and the generations of evolution which lead to them) were as inherently valuable as the culture of the conquerors. The nostalgia that would have guided those conquered peoples was as inherently valuable as the nostalgia that guides the conquerors and the loss of it is something we should all grieve for.

This thesis has prompted much thought for me about America and its collective identity, how it has been forged and continues to develop. The gravity of the collective history, culture, and memory that has been lost by indigenous Americans and the descendants of African slaves brought to the United States is profound, especially when I consider the rampant nationalism they have been forced to endure in recent years. It is easy to point out the flaws in other countries and their national ideologies, but it is somehow still difficult to stomach when faced with it in the mirror. While we may not operate under the title, America is the modern version of empire.

We must consider how much damage we are willing to cause to others in pursuit of this new version of the empire, and we cannot undersell this damage after the fact when all is said and done. If the past teaches us anything, it is that even the greatest and

strongest empires fall eventually. This is not meant to be an argument against Patriotism, but the opposite. If we love our country, then we should love it enough to make it better. We should love it enough to learn from the mistakes (to put it lightly) of those who came before us. We should see how foreign interventions, like in the case of the British in Egypt, can create identity crises that cannot easily be undone. We must avoid the hypocrisy of imposing ourselves on the world without wanting or expecting an equal and opposite reaction. As we grow our military might (seemingly to infinity and beyond with the addition of the Space Force), we should ask ourselves why we feel the need to spend more than the next ten highest military spenders in the world combined (*U.S. Defense Spending*, 2020) in the name of democracy and freedom, all while we seemingly cannot afford to welcome immigrants - many of whom are refugees seeking asylum - in at our southern border humanely, subjecting them to treatment many have called torturous, even effectively a hell on earth (Sukin 2019). If we truly love the ideals America has long aspired to possess, which I certainly do, we should aspire to love this hell out of it.

Perhaps one of our nation's greatest patriots, Abraham Lincoln, in his infamous Gettysburg Address (1863) which dedicated a cemetery to those lost in the civil war, reminded us what those buried before him had died for - the ideals laid out by our founding fathers which were meant to be sought out and pursued:

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal....[This memorial] is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining

before us -- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain -- that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom -- and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

I believe this sentiment, articulated with such grace, must be revitalized in our nation. While we are not in a civil war of the same sort that contextualizes Lincoln's speech, we do seem, nonetheless, to be at a crossroads as a nation. In moments of transition and change such as this, we look back to help us move forward. Nostalgia, as explored through this thesis, can either provide us the stability and continuity to persevere in forming "a more perfect union", or it may provide us the stagnancy of being stuck in an over-idealized past.

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