

UNIVERSIDAD SAN FRANCISCO DE QUITO USFQ

Colegio de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades

**Contemporary power elite and globalization: inside Epstein's
international sex trafficking dynamics**

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sex trafficking dynamics**

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RESUMEN

La siguiente tesis analiza la dinámica del tráfico sexual internacional de Jeffrey Epstein desde el punto de vista de las Relaciones Internacionales. Esta investigación señala la existencia de una élite de poder contemporánea que gobierna el mundo actual a través de la globalización y las relaciones de poder. Además, esta tesis destaca la importancia de los actores no estatales, como Epstein, que tienen infinitas posibilidades, así como cero repercusiones, con su poder y capital. La dinámica del tráfico sexual internacional de Epstein no fue una conspiración y no debe desacreditarse ni dejarse atrás. En lugar de una conspiración, el caso de Epstein es el ejemplo más claro de cómo la élite de poder contemporánea puede situarse por encima de gobiernos e instituciones en el mundo capitalista y globalizado de hoy.

Palabras clave: élite del poder contemporáneo, élite del poder, globalización, actores no estatales, Jeffrey Epstein, tráfico sexual internacional.

ABSTRACT

The following thesis analyzes the international sex trafficking dynamics of Jeffrey Epstein from an International Relations point of view. This research points to the existence of a contemporary power elite that rules today's world via globalization and power relations. In addition, this thesis highlights the importance of non-state actors, like Epstein, who have infinite possibilities and zero repercussions with their power and capital. Epstein's international sex trafficking dynamics were not a conspiracy and should not be discredited or left behind. Instead of a conspiracy, Epstein's case is the clearest example of how the contemporary power elite can position themselves above governments and institutions in today's globalized capitalist world.

Keywords: contemporary power elite, power elite, globalization, non-state actors, Jeffrey Epstein, international sex trafficking.

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INTRODUCTION

The following thesis analyzes the international sex trafficking dynamics of Jeffrey Epstein from an International Relations point of view. This research points to the existence of a contemporary power elite that rules today's world via globalization and power relations. In addition, this thesis highlights the importance of non-state actors, like Epstein, who have infinite possibilities and zero repercussions with their power and capital. Epstein's international sex trafficking dynamics were not a conspiracy and should not be discredited or left behind. Instead of a conspiracy, Epstein's case is the clearest example of how the contemporary power elite can position themselves above governments and institutions in today's globalized capitalist world.

This research explores the following central question: How have the power elite and power relations between non-state actors shaped Epstein's international sex trafficking dynamics? To answer this question,- it is necessary to dive deep into a small group, the contemporary power elite, full of questionable actions and uncomfortable facts. The power relations that Epstein and his former partner Ghislaine Maxwell created, with Epstein's capital and Ghislaine's experience as a British socialite, were across every vital field, such as science, academics, military, royalty, celebrities, and others. Epstein's private properties in the U.S., Europe, and even his private island, Little St. James, and jet infamously called the "Lolita Express," were the chosen places to fulfill their desires and guests' wishes. With their international sex trafficking business, they operated a powerful network that shared complicity. Therefore, they obtained immunity and worked across national borders for almost 20 years. Just when the case went viral and could not be held behind closed doors anymore, the power couple of Epstein and Maxwell began to fall.

Furthermore, it is important to note the difference between the past power elite and the existing one in the globalized capitalist era. This thesis is not historical; it does not focus on the origins of the power elite, aristocracy, or a small group of privileged people who inherited their power position. The investigation finds an appropriate way to redefine the power elite as the *contemporary power elite*. The case of study to explain this is Epstein's case, as it has a unique, never-seen-before nature. In today's world, the XXI century, few non-state actors can position themselves, through power relations and capital, in this immortal small group called the contemporary power elite.

Epstein and Maxwell were exemplary of the contemporary power elite. Their case sheds light on the dark side of globalization, where the boundaries between state and non-state actors blur, allowing individuals like Epstein to collect extraordinary power and influence. In examining Epstein's international sex trafficking dynamics through the lens of International Relations, it becomes evident that traditional notions of state sovereignty and governance are inadequate in addressing the crimes of powerful non-state actors within the globalized capitalist system.

Context and justification

Context.

This investigation analyzes the *contemporary power elite* and their capacities. Epstein's international sex trafficking ring has brought to light what a wealthy pedophile with power relations can do.

Epstein's context is critical to understanding the level and impact of the power dynamics. Jeffrey Epstein was a financier born in New York with a lot of ambition. He held connections with powerful figures in politics, business, and academia. Coming from a middle-class Jewish family, he did not grow up in the power elite, but he sure made his way up to be a member of the elite.

Epstein entered the elite niche when he began working as a mathematics and physics teacher at the Dalton School, one of the most exclusive private schools in New York City. During this time, he developed relationships with several affluent families, later proving advantageous to his career.

In the 1970s, Epstein transitioned into finance and eventually founded his financial management firm, J. Epstein & Company. His clients were mostly very wealthy Americans. He liked working with billionaires and claimed to only work with clients with a net worth of at least \$1 billion.

With those connections, his net worth began to increase rapidly. Then, he entered the philanthropic world. Epstein's philanthropic donations were very notable in the United States academia. That is how he gained relationships with prominent scientists and academics, donating millions of dollars to various institutions, such as Harvard University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and the Santa Fe Institute. He also funded many research projects, mainly scientific ones.

Epstein's personal life and business were different. Many began to suspect that his connections to powerful figures, including politicians, business leaders, and celebrities, were not normal. There was a dark side to it.

However, he did not act alone. His partner, Ghislaine Maxwell, is much more than a girlfriend for him and his business. They were a powerful and influential duo. Ghislaine Maxwell is a British socialite who became embroiled in controversy due to her alleged involvement in Epstein's sex trafficking operations. She grew up in a wealthy and influential family. After her father, former British socialite Robert Maxwell, died in 1991, Ghislaine continued socializing among elite circles.

Maxwell became publicly associated with Jeffrey Epstein in the early 90s and was romantically linked with him for a period. However, their relationship evolved into a partnership, with Maxwell playing a central role in Epstein's international sex trafficking ring.

In addition to her ties to Epstein, Maxwell had connections to influential figures principally in Europe, from politicians to royal members. She was known for her extensive social network and had friendships with essential personalities such as Prince Andrew, the Duke of York.

Hence, this investigation is not just located in the United States. It is an international problem that should have international legal repercussions. Also, its actors do not stay in the United States, just like Epstein and Maxwell. There were many more active actors involved and even some systematic flaws. In short, it is located in the global system, specifically in a selected and limited group of people: the power elite.

The case of Jeffrey Epstein's international sex trafficking ring is an alarming and shocking reality. It is clearly beyond abuse of power. Furthermore, it has happened for many decades. Undoubtedly, the most shocking fact about this case is that it involves numerous high-profile individuals, multiple countries, and countless victims. It was a sophisticated network that trafficked underage girls and young women for sexual exploitation.

The roots of Epstein's trafficking ring can be traced back to the early 2000s when allegations of sexual misconduct toward minors began to surface. However, it was not until 2005 that Epstein came under legal problems when she was accused of abusing a minor. Despite evidence suggesting a pattern of abuse and exploitation, Epstein remained free.

Power dynamics and the personal interests of the power elite corrupt justice. Epstein's international connections, philanthropic activities, and money allowed him to continue his illicit activities. He owned multiple properties worldwide which served as secure places for powerful clients, as they could get the "massages" that Epstein's business offered.

Epstein's trafficking ring operated strategically, utilizing a combination of coercion, manipulation, and financial incentives to recruit vulnerable young girls to do the so-called "massages." First, Maxwell and other women who worked with him searched for easy targets for exploitation. Epstein and his accomplices groomed these girls, promising them money, opportunities, and access to the elite lifestyle in exchange for "massages."

Nevertheless, Epstein's reach extended far beyond his private properties. They were crucial pieces in the business scheme: his private jet, known as the "Lolita Express," and his private island, Little Saint James. He owned powerful spaces where he had the privacy to act how he wanted and invite whomever he wanted.

The international nature of Epstein's trafficking ring made it incredibly difficult to uncover and prosecute. Victims are easily frightened due to his powerful connections. Epstein and his high-powered legal team used their influence and resources to silence accusers, discredit witnesses, and manipulate the legal system to their advantage.

This case reveals the extent to which a wealthy individual with powerful connections can exploit and manipulate the vulnerable. Epstein's trajectory from a middle-class upbringing

in New York to a prominent figure in finance and philanthropy provides a crucial context for understanding power dynamics.

Human trafficking, a form of modern-day slavery, involves the recruitment, transportation, and exploitation of individuals for forced labor, sexual exploitation, or other illicit purposes. The involvement of the elite in an international sex trafficking ring adds another layer of complexity and impunity to the problem.

The elite are the owners of today's world. They seem unstoppable, access to vast financial resources, extensive networks of influence, and privilege that allow perpetrators to act with impunity. Thus, their victims are lured with promises of employment, education, or simply a better life. Most of them come from vulnerable backgrounds, and some of them are just looking for money. Others, for something great and incredible to happen. But hope fades as they understand what is happening and who the monsters behind the business are. Victims are coerced, manipulated, and forced into sexual activities. If they are minors, they are offered to leave their families behind to get a completely new lifestyle, and others are being sold. These traffickers use their wealth and connections to recruit victims, transport them across borders, and maintain control over their activities through intimidation.

Furthermore, the global nature of the elite's networks enables them to exploit loopholes in international laws and regulations, making it difficult for law enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute cases of human trafficking. In order for the business to function, there must be an effective, very cautious, operation across multiple jurisdictions. And, most

importantly, it must be very secretive. It must evade detection and escape accountability in every jurisdiction.

Another not-so-pretty realization of this crime is the collaboration of the elite in human trafficking. The privileged circles are dehumanized in their root and consequently dehumanize every victim or "common" people. There is a culture of silence that goes beyond the power elite. News, social media, and many more platforms are also guilty of the culture of silence. Most of these topics are banned from academia, banned from art, banned from the media, banned from events. Banned everywhere. This culture of impunity perpetuates the cycle of exploitation and reinforces the notion that the elite is, and always will be, above the law.

What was mentioned before shows that systemic inequality brings injustice to society. International human trafficking is a business. International sex trafficking is a business. International sex trafficking of minors is a business. In sum, it is a multi-billion-dollar industry that preys on the most vulnerable members of society. The elite are the real clients, dehumanizing ordinary people and treating them like objects they can just buy or recruit. They have the power and influence to purchase anything they want. A jet, a mansion, an island, a 10-year-old girl from Florida, the best lawyer in Manhattan. There are no limits. No boundaries.

When discussing the elite, it should be distinguished from famous Hollywood people. A model who appears on the cover of *Vogue* may not be part of the elite. The real elite are members of the top social stratum. For example, Naomi Campbell could be considered an elite

member of the modeling industry. Not everyone in the media and on red carpets is part of the elite. There is an inner circle inside every small circle.

Another essential aspect present throughout the whole investigation is globalization and the capitalistic reality. There is a concentration of power and wealth in the elite. And, as sad as it sounds, high-profile celebrities may be part of this, too. They have the fame to keep ordinary people distracted. They act like curtains. Despite their fame and influence, these celebrities may ultimately serve as pawns or puppets in the hands of the absolute elite, who operate behind closed doors and exert control over economic, political, and social systems. While celebrities may enjoy superficial privileges and material comforts, they remain subordinate to the power structures that dictate the course of global events.

Furthermore, the media, which plays a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions and narratives, often perpetuates the illusion of choice and democracy while reinforcing the status quo and protecting the interests of the elite. By promoting consumerism, the media distracts the masses from systemic injustices and inequalities, perpetuating a never-ending cycle of ignorance.

If we are going to talk about the elite, we should discuss where the real power is. First, and the most important and influential of all, in politics. Political figures hold a lot of power due to their decision-making. They configure governments and international organizations like videogame settings. What they say is done. Next, the economy is dominated by monopolies, giant corporations, and billionaires that connect their money with political actions. And, as

Maxwell, in a more social area. As a socialite. All three are typically interconnected, as Epstein's case portrays.

Another vital aspect to highlight is the illicit nature behind all of this. International sex trafficking is a crime. However, the elite hold plenty of power and influence to bypass any repercussions about it. Power dynamics are not just a big deal in the elite, it shapes how today's globalized capitalist world works.

Justification.

This investigation is for the general public. Its purpose is to open everyone's eyes towards a ruling class with hidden business and interests. They are the rulers of the world. However, they must be held accountable if they commit crimes, as ordinary people do.

It may have started as a conspiracy theory that turned out to be true. Some will argue that the paper's origin is *Eyes Wide Shut* by Stanley Kubrick (1999) or the Internet's "pizzagate" and "Hollyweird" communities in Reddit. That is not the case. It goes beyond conspiracy. Sure, there is a mystery behind conspiracies, but this investigation will expose the hard truth. Elitism ruling an apparent democracy. How organizations, even democratic ones, can not escape the iron law of oligarchy that shapes today's world.

Investigating aspects related to international sex trafficking, such as globalization, sex tourism, conflict of interests, corruption, and more, has the intention to contribute to many

interdisciplinary theories. Most importantly, it clearly states that, first, there is an elite above us all, and secondly, the elite's active participation in an international sex trafficking ring.

Naturally, this scenario may cause some rejection in a "not-so-woke" public that believes in democracy and the legitimacy of institutions and influential people. Let us imagine planet Earth as the Moon for a second. There is a well-known phrase around the Moon: that there exists a so-called "dark side of the Moon." However, it does not refer to the lack of sunlight. The phrase represents the asteroid's unseen, unexplored, and unknown far side. Earth functions the same way. All is visible due to sunlight reflecting in every part of the world. Still, it has a dark side. This paper exposes the dark to the light.

We cannot talk about a world order and Epstein without discussing politics. There are many political aspects related to international sex trafficking. For example, how politics corrupt international law. The law system through history has shown us how weak legislation can be. There is no justice for human trafficking victims. Even worse, there is no justice for children and teens who have been victims of these crimes.

Big personalities make the biggest decisions, not only for them but also for the common people. Behind the curtains, an elite is configuring everything everywhere. Hence, society should know the true nature of this small group with the capacity to shape global dynamics. One of the goals of this investigation is for the public to reflect on how flawed the system is and how society must not allow the government of a few.

Another goal is to hold accountable who should be accountable for their actions. In this case, their crimes. Power can feel so good and overwhelming that it grows into greed, selfishness, and needing to be above everyone. Imagine you are above the International Court of Justice, not just above the judge of your local court, but even above your country's constitution. It is an absurd amount of power for just one individual. Jeffrey Epstein held that quantity of power and used it to run an international sex trafficking ring for decades.

Epstein and Maxwell were the CEOs, a powerful duo. However, their clients held equal, and sometimes even more significant, power than them. Hence, it must be clarified that the elite circle has not been dismantled yet. The network is still there but not visible to the common eye. A picture of exotic elite encounters, like the Rothchild family parties, comes to mind. For others, the MET gala comes to mind. From bankers to Hollywood, the elite can be from anywhere, and their net worth may vary. A similarity that clients of the infamous international sex trafficking ring run by Epstein and Maxwell had was pedophilia.

Jeffrey Epstein was a white American privileged man that took a sip of power and could not stop. To remain powerful, he knew he needed more wealthy friends to keep up with the affluent lifestyle. Hence, he must have asked himself: What can the rich buy that ordinary people cannot? Minors.

The elite has robbed the innocence of the victims, and not only that, but abused their bodies and minds. Pedophilia is repulsive and unacceptable. There is no justification for such

a wrong action or thought. Minors cannot give consent, no matter the circumstances. This investigation intends to keep this clear from the beginning.

Also, to discuss this as an international crime, we need to talk about sex tourism and other sex-related problems that exist worldwide. First of all, how can such crimes happen on a global scale? Laws change in every state and country, and a pretty standard sexual matter that varies is the age of consent and the repercussions a sex offender gets. Many people have taken advantage of this, even ordinary people. A pedophile can travel to Canada and get consent from a 16-year-old for sexual activities. Thus, imagine the world of opportunities for a member of the elite.

Epstein had that in mind. He was a personality full of wealth, power, and self-importance. He had his own private jet, the "Lolita Express," a private island called Little Saint James, yachts, and properties in the United States and Europe. He reflected his acquisition power in his side business. He dehumanized his victims. However, humans are not things.

Even if Epstein is dead, we cannot just skip the page and move on as a society. Unraveling this case to understand its significance even more clearly is essential. A ruling order that is painting the world as a democratic system when, in reality, it is taking advantage of its power to get what it wants.

This investigation has a unique theoretical contribution. On the one hand, many concepts and theories of International Relations, Political Science, and other disciplines will

be reimagined from an innovative perspective. On the other hand, the role of international law in this problem and the direction it must follow from now on will be re-evaluated. Hopefully, this paper will appeal to the general public, who is interested in transparency, and will prevent an atrocity like what Epstein did from happening again.

Questions and objectives

Central question:

How have the power elite and power relations between non-state actors shaped Epstein's international sex trafficking dynamics?

Secondary questions.

To what extent does the power elite position itself above international law and institutions via Epstein's international sex trafficking case?

How do non-state actors perceive power relations concerning international sex trafficking dynamics?

How does Epstein's international sex trafficking case shift international relations theory on non-state actors?

Main objective.

Analyze the concept of "power elite" and the power relations between non-state actors via Epstein's international sex trafficking case.

Secondary objectives.

Identify how the power elite positions itself above international law and institutions about Epstein's international sex trafficking case.

Determine the power relations between non-state actors and the power elite in Epstein's international sex trafficking case.

Analyze how Epstein's international sex trafficking case shifts international relations theory on non-state actors.

Positionality and reflexivity

Positionality.

I identify as a 22-year-old woman. I am Ecuadorian from Guayaquil but moved to Quito to study at Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ). My education in Guayaquil was at Unidad Educativa Particular Javier, a private Catholic institution. However, I am not catholic. Another important aspect of my studies is that I participated in the IB diploma program during the last two years of high school. Since that moment, I have become more interested in what happens outside Ecuador. Therefore, I chose to study outside of Guayaquil and applied to various universities to get my bachelor's degree in International Relations, including USFQ

with a scholarship and three Canadian universities where I got accepted, and scholarships. Nevertheless, the COVID-19 pandemic came, and I chose to study at USFQ. Since USFQ in Ecuador is the only university of liberal arts and the most western-orientated, they offered courses that interest me.

For the past four years at USFQ, I have mixed my International Relations studies with Political Science courses. Throughout my studies, I have felt more orientated to the qualitative side of these disciplines and a more theoretical one. My interests began to develop as I took courses such as contemporary international relations theory and contemporary political theory. There, I felt intrigued by neo-Marxism and the contemporary world.

Reflexivity.

Considering that my studies have always been focused on topics present, for the most part, in the Western world, I feel a strong interest in investigating the same type of topics. I recognize I have started this investigation with an external point of view. I am an Ecuadorian citizen and have always lived in said country, so I tend to look at the existence of a power elite from the perspective of someone from a territory controlled by it.

My main approach to this issue is through a contemporary lens. However, I do not ignore the role of history as the foundation and active agent in the world. I lead this investigation from my belief in the existence of postmodernity.

Furthermore, I do not consider democracy to be the most adequate regime under which humans can operate. There are too many inequalities in this way of interacting with politics. There is a lot of imbalance between the control people from the power elite have over those who are not a part of it and their individuality. I do not think democracy lives up to the ideal of freedom it is presented to be. This leads to my interpretation of the issue presented as one that goes further from the existence of a power elite. "the key is not be found in the elites themselves, but in the broader systems, processes, and structures of which they are part" (Ward & Jones, 1999, p. 309). This investigation questions the system that allows a small group of people to control the economy, politics, and critical institutions.

I gained interest in the Epstein case in 2018, thanks to online forums made and conformed by so-called conspiracy theorists that would reveal his crimes even before he was convicted. However, when he died in his cell on August 10, 2019, I stopped digging on the topic. Afterward, I found myself interested again in the case when Ghislaine Maxwell got arrested in 2020, an intrigue that came back when her trial began by the end of 2021. I have remained interested in the case ever since.

From my political viewpoint, human beings have been reduced to mere luxuries. That is why capital can help someone acquire both inanimate objects and property over people. This power, given to people by the fact that they have large amounts of money, is crucial to the boom of the mega-business of international sex trafficking. Moreover, globalization has helped the spreading of this industry, being the facilitator of the creation of practices such as "sex tourism."

Literature review

This investigation uses many concepts to explain the roots of how Epstein's international crimes could take place in today's contemporary world. The most important one is the power elite, present in every part of this investigation. This concept was first published in the mid-90s in the book "The Power Elite" by C. Wright Mills. The power elite is a small group of people occupying dominant positions in a dominant country's three pillar institutions (economics, politics, military). This tripartite nexus of power serves as the fulcrum upon which the broader social order pivots, shaping the contours of governance, wealth distribution, and societal norms. Hence, the country must be powerful and part of the ruling New World Order. This refers to the countries that will shape the future of international politics. The United States of America is a powerful country in the contemporary world, especially since the end of the Cold War. Still, Mills, in his book, refers to the American power elite and explains its origins. There are "two sides of the same coin" in these political concepts and theories. The conspiracy side and the political side.

Other concepts utilized in this investigation are linked to politics but specifically defined in the international relations discipline. These terms are globalization, international sex trafficking, and the contemporary aspect of the investigation. The nature of Epstein's crimes is international. Therefore, many actors are involved in its power dynamics and are not necessarily American like Epstein. This is possible in today's contemporary globalized world, where the power elite rules from the northern side of the globe.

Who is Jeffrey Epstein? A Wall Street financier and a pedophile. Who is Ghislaine Maxwell? A British socialite and also a pedophile. The two together? They are a compelling

couple. They are not just simple members of the power elite. Their lives revolved around establishing powerful relations and meaningful connections. Bill Clinton, Donald Trump, Prince Andrew, Les Wexner, Alan Dershowitz, Stephen Hawking, and more, were among their "inner circle". Where was Epstein's office? Harvard. He did philanthropic work among academics. This Ivy League institution, among the best universities in the world, gave a well-known registered sex offender a personal office. The impunity they had went beyond institutions and laws. Thus, the complicity. A network so powerful that they had the power to traffic young girls across borders. Across skies. And across seas.

Power elite.

The exploration of Epstein's international crimes within contemporary power dynamics necessitates a thorough examination of C. Wright Mills' "The Power Elite," which is a foundational framework for understanding the intricate interplay between power structures and globalized crime.

Mills' examination of the American power elite unveils the intricate networks of privilege and patronage that underpin the nation's ruling class, tracing its origins to the consolidation of wealth and power in the aftermath of World War II. Within this elite cadre, a symbiotic relationship between corporate interests, political incumbency, and military hegemony emerges, perpetuating a cycle of elitist consolidation and societal stratification.

Moreover, Mills elucidates the dual nature of power within contemporary society, distinguishing between the overt machinations of political governance and the covert

operations of conspiracy and intrigue. In doing so, he underscores the symbiotic relationship between the visible institutions of power and the shadowy networks that operate behind the curtains.

Central to Mills' analysis is the concept of the "New World Order," a hegemonic framework through which dominant nations exert their influence and shape the trajectory of global politics. In this paradigm, the United States emerges as a preeminent force, leveraging its economic, political, and military prowess to assert its dominance on the world stage.

Yet, while Mills' focus is primarily on the American power elite, his insights resonate far beyond national boundaries, offering a lens through which to understand the broader dynamics of globalized power. Indeed, in an era of transnational capitalism and interconnected networks of influence, the hegemony of the power elite extends its reach across continents and cultures, perpetuating inequalities and exploitation on a global scale.

Within this context, Epstein's international crimes serve as a stark reminder of the dark underbelly of globalization, wherein illicit networks of exploitation thrive amidst the veneer of progress and prosperity.

Moreover, the nexus between globalization and international sex trafficking highlights the complicity of global power structures in perpetuating systems of exploitation and marginalization. Epstein's nefarious activities, spanning multiple continents and involving a

web of complicit actors, underscore the porous nature of borders and the inadequacy of conventional legal frameworks in combating transnational crime.

In this regard, the power elite emerges not merely as a static entity but as a dynamic force that adapts and evolves in response to changing geopolitical realities. Furthermore, the contemporary aspect of Epstein's case underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of power dynamics in the digital age, wherein information asymmetry and algorithmic manipulation serve as potent tools of elite control. In an era of mass surveillance and social media manipulation, the boundaries between public and private spheres blur, enabling elites to exert their influence with unprecedented precision and impunity.

Thomas Bottomore's "Elites and Society" provides a complementary perspective to Mills' analysis, offering valuable insights into elite power and privilege's social and structural dimensions. At the heart of Bottomore's thesis lies the notion of elite reproduction. Through inheritance, education, and social networking, elites perpetuate their dominance across generations, reinforcing existing inequality and exclusion patterns.

Furthermore, Bottomore elucidates the role of institutions in perpetuating elite domination, highlighting how state apparatuses and regulatory frameworks consolidate and entrench the power of ruling elites. Through lobbying, campaign finance, and regulatory capture, elites co-opt state institutions to further their interests, undermining democratic governance and accountability.

Moreover, Bottomore's analysis extends beyond the national borders, offering insights into the dynamics of power elite networks and transnational capitalism. In an era of neoliberal globalization, the mobility and concentration of capital have facilitated the ascendance of a power elite class.

Within this context, Epstein's international sex trafficking serves as an example of patterns of elite behavior and impunity, highlighting the interconnectedness of global power structures. As Bottomore argues, elite dominance is not merely a function of individual agency but is deeply embedded within the structural dynamics of capitalist society.

G. William Domhoff's "The Higher Circles: The Governing Class in America" explores elite power structures in the United States. His analysis offers valuable insights into the social stratification and institutional entrenchment that underpin the American power elite, complementing and enriching the perspectives articulated by Mills and Bottomore.

At the core of Domhoff's thesis lies the notion of the "higher circles," an exclusive group of individuals who occupy the pinnacle of socioeconomic privilege and political authority. Members of this elite perpetuate a cycle of elite reproduction that sustains their hegemonic position within society.

Additionally, Domhoff's examination of elite social networks illuminates how informal associations and interpersonal connections facilitate the consolidation and perpetuation of elite privilege. From exclusive social clubs to Ivy League alumni networks, these interpersonal

bonds serve as conduits for the exchange of social capital and the reproduction of elite status, reinforcing existing patterns of exclusion and inequality.

International sex trafficking.

Contemporary international sex trafficking represents a complex and interconnected web of exploitation, facilitated by the complicity of influential individuals, like Epstein's case, and legal challenges in prosecution. The articles by Jasper (2023), Erickson and Dalley (2020), and Smith and Smith (2011) collectively shed light on the multifaceted nature of this global atrocity, offering insights into its dynamics.

Jasper's (2023) publication about the alarming growth of child sex trafficking underscores the pivotal role played by wealthy and influential individuals in perpetuating pederast practices. These individuals, shielded by their influence and resources, not only turn a blind eye to trafficking but actively participate in and profit from it. This narrative of complicity resonates with Erickson and Dalley's (2020) proposal for the implementation of aggravated human trafficking statutes, which aims to address the challenges in prosecuting traffickers, particularly in cases involving high-profile perpetrators like Epstein. By enhancing legal mechanisms and penalties, such statutes seek to disrupt the impunity enjoyed by these powerful traffickers.

However, the efficacy of legal interventions in combating trafficking is contingent upon broader systemic factors, as highlighted by Smith and Smith (2011). Their analysis of the unintended effects of United Nations intervention underscores the need for a comprehensive

approach that addresses the root causes of trafficking, including poverty, inequality, and conflict. The pattern of Epstein's victims is girls from poor neighborhoods. They were offered the opportunity of their lifetimes: easy money just to give massages to important people. But, of course, there was a colossal trick. They were asked to do more than just massages. This interconnectedness between legal frameworks and socioeconomic dynamics underscores the complexity of combating sex trafficking and the importance of a holistic approach that considers all the factors.

Furthermore, the globalization of sex trafficking amplifies its complexities, transcending national borders and legal jurisdictions. Traffickers exploit gaps in law enforcement and regulatory frameworks, capitalizing on the interconnected nature of the global economy to exploit vulnerable populations and evade detection.

Globalization and the iron law of oligarchy.

The issue of contemporary international sex trafficking is deeply entwined with the dynamics of power and globalization, as illuminated by insights from Raymond (2019), Cook (2023), and Michels (1969). These articles collectively reveal a complex landscape characterized by the concentration of the power elite, the global expansion of illicit networks, and the perpetuation of systemic injustices.

Raymond's (2019) examination of Jeffrey Epstein's case serves as a stark reminder of how the power elite can exploit globalization to perpetuate exploitation and evade accountability. Epstein's immense wealth and connections enabled him to have many facilities

in sex trafficking dynamics, like his property in Paris, Palm Beach mansion, "Zorro Ranch" in New Mexico, two private islands (Little Saint James and Great Saint James), and even a private jet, infamously called "Lolita Express." This portrayal underscores how globalization facilitates the mobility of capital and individuals, creating opportunities for traffickers to exploit legal systems and regulations disparities.

Raymond's analysis sheds light on the complicity of various institutions and actors in perpetuating Epstein's impunity. From law enforcement agencies to prosecutors and politicians, Epstein's wealth and influence shaped the response to trafficking crimes and undermined efforts to hold him accountable. This shows the nature of the power elite, whose interests are maintaining the status quo and protecting their privilege.

Cook's (2023) article highlights the challenges prosecutors face when confronting powerful individuals like Epstein, whose wealth and connections can sway legal proceedings and influence judicial decisions. Cook's analysis reveals how the power elite can manipulate the legal system to their advantage, perpetuating a culture of impunity.

Furthermore, Cook's examination underscores how power differentials intersect with gender and race, shaping the experiences of victims and the response to human trafficking crimes. Marginalized individuals, young, poor girls in this case, are disproportionately affected by exploitation and face additional barriers to accessing justice. This intersectional analysis reveals the interconnected nature of power dynamics and systemic inequalities.

In today's flawed democratic system, the iron law of oligarchy presented by R. Michels (1969) is a reality today's organizations cannot escape. His work offers valuable insights into the structural conflicts underlying globalization. The oligarchic tendencies identified by Michels manifest in various aspects of trafficking, from the disproportionate influence of wealthy individuals like Epstein and what he can do with his capital capacity. In today's society, there are systemic inequalities that perpetuate vulnerability and exploitation everywhere, so there is no such thing as a modern functioning democracy. This failed system even creates more inequalities. Hence, Epstein's case could occur in the XXI century. Moreover, Michels' analysis highlights how political parties and institutions can become vehicles for elite consolidation, further entrenching the power differentials that enable the international sex trafficking of minors.

This investigation into contemporary power elite dynamics within the framework of globalization, particularly within the context of Jeffrey Epstein's international sex trafficking network, presents a multifaceted analysis that draws upon various theoretical approaches and empirical insights from seminal works such as "Elites and Society" by Thomas Bottomore, "The Power Elite" by C. Wright Mills, and G. William Domhoff's "The Higher Circles: The Governing Class in America." Additionally, perspectives from Jasper (2023), Erickson and Dalley (2020), Smith and Smith (2011), and Michels (1969) further enrich the understanding of the intricate interplay between power, globalization, and sex trafficking.

Bottomore's exploration of elite reproduction is particularly pertinent in Epstein's case, where his vast wealth and influence allowed him to perpetuate exploitation and evade accountability. Moreover, Bottomore's insights into the role of institutions shed light on the

complicity of various actors, including political, legal, and financial institutions, in enabling trafficking networks to thrive. Some institutions that facilitated Epstein's crimes are JP Morgan, Harvard University, Wall Street, Elite Model Management, CIA (Former OSS), and even Mossad, the intelligence agency of Israel. Some ties were made not even by the powerful couple Epstein and Maxwell but by Robert Maxwell, Ghislaine's father. Her family has been part of Britain's power elite for many generations. This power couple established over the years connections with celebrities, scientists, academics, attorneys, and many more influential individual actors.

Mill's concept of the power elite offers a critical lens through which to analyze the concentration of power among a select few individuals who occupy dominant societal positions. Epstein's case exemplifies how this power elite operates across multiple pillars of power, including economics, politics, and the legal system, to maintain their privileged status and perpetuate exploitation. The power elite want to be above the law and somehow manage to obtain it. Moreover, Mills' distinction between overt and covert operations of power underscores the clandestine nature of trafficking networks, which operate in the shadows of society, shielded by the influence and connections of the power elite.

In addition, Domhoff's examination of the governing class in America further shows the mechanisms through which the power elite is consolidated and maintained. The concept of the power elite underscores the interconnectedness of economic, political, and social spheres and how a few wealthy individuals can navigate through them and take those institutions under their control. Epstein's ability to navigate and manipulate these power structures, as documented in Raymond (2019) and Cook (2023), underscores the pervasive influence of the

power elite in shaping the response to trafficking crimes and perpetuating a culture of impunity. Hence, this is a big problem in today's world since everyone is connected on social media, and there is no doubt that some influential celebrities complain about distracting the public's and media's attention from important news to some new gossip.

On the other hand, Jasper's (2023) investigation into the global atrocities of child sex trafficking sheds light on the complicity of the power elite in perpetuating their power to abuse and exploit their victims. Following the same line, Erickson and Dalley (2020) offer a response that may solve this issue. They propose to implement some type of control that may stop some human trafficking dynamics. Influential individuals like Epstein, who exploit legal loopholes and wield influence to evade punishment for their crimes, cannot be taken down by, for example, the local police in his Palm Beach mansion jurisdiction. By advocating for enhanced international legal mechanisms and penalties, Erickson and Dalley seek to disrupt the impunity enjoyed by the power elite, thereby increasing accountability.

In the International Relations field, Smith and Smith's (2011) analysis of the effects of United Nations intervention in human trafficking addresses its complexities and the root causes of exploitation. The article highlights how interventions can make locals even more vulnerable, particularly in conflict-affected regions, underscoring the need for comprehensive and context-sensitive approaches to combating trafficking.

Finally, Michels' (1969) exploration of the oligarchical tendencies of modern democracy offers insights into the structural dynamics and the iron law of oligarchy. The

concentration of power among a small elite perpetuates inequalities and injustices within democratic systems, creating fertile ground for exploitation and abuse. That is how the iron law of oligarchy works. Modern democracy and neoliberal governments may look very democratic at first. However, this "democracy" will eventually and inevitably develop some type of oligarchic tendencies, like the power elite.

To sum up, the integration of theoretical approaches and empirical insights from these works provides a comprehensive understanding of the contemporary power elite dynamics within the context of globalization, Epstein's case, and sex trafficking. The perspectives displayed by the authors show an interconnectivity that goes beyond the limits of International Relations. The nature of Epstein's crimes holds a never-seen-before multidisciplinary interconnected power relations dynamics.

Discussion

Epstein's case clearly shows how the power elite can position themselves above international law and institutions. Moreover, it sheds light on a new power elite: the *contemporary power elite*. This small group has the power, privileges, wealth, influence, and connections to go above any law anywhere in the world. Also, the concentration of capital they hold is critical to understanding this. Epstein's properties, like his private jet and his private island, allowed him to bypass any jurisdiction and commit atrocities against young girls under his care. Therefore, powerful non-state actors were drawn into these spaces because they trusted confidentiality in Epstein's properties and genuinely thought there would be no repercussions for their acts.

The contemporary power elite share a lot of things. They hold a lot of capital, so they do not want what ordinary people can get. They are extravagant and want to own exotic things or people. Thus, Epstein viewed a massive opportunity in utilizing young girls for his networking. Epstein's access to minors is correlational to his growing elite status. Once he entered the contemporary power elite, they allowed him to evade accountability and receive preferential treatment in the legal system. Thus, the shared complicity. This makes it clear that the contemporary power elite can corrupt the system. Hence, topics that will be discussed in this section are: 1) Epstein and the contemporary power elite, 2) the globalized dynamics of international sex trafficking, and 3) how Epstein's case shifts international relations theory towards non-state actors.

First, about Epstein and the contemporary power elite, it is important to talk about the person who helped Epstein access minors, Ghislaine Maxwell. She approached young girls in vulnerable neighborhoods to offer them a job that would change their lives. This power couple commercialized sex acts from young girls. Maxwell's predatory behavior not only enabled Epstein's criminal activities but also highlighted the complicity of individuals within the contemporary power elite in perpetuating such heinous crimes. Thus, she helped him climb the contemporary power elite's ladder.

Moreover, Maxwell's background as a British socialite with ties to European aristocracy added another layer of complexity to the transnational nature of Epstein's criminal enterprise. By unifying European socialites with the wealthy American world Epstein inhabited, Maxwell expanded their network of influence and protection, further highlighting the interconnected

nature of the contemporary power elite in shaping global dynamics. The collaboration between Epstein and Maxwell exemplifies how individuals within the contemporary power elite can exploit their status, connections, and resources to manipulate legal proceedings in their favor. By hiring high-profile lawyers like Alan Dershowitz, whom he met at Harvard, and leveraging his relationships with powerful individuals, Epstein had the necessary means to continue his crimes and please his guests for more than two decades.

In addition to the points mentioned, Epstein's case underscores the intricate challenges and problems that arise when addressing transnational crimes committed by individuals or non-state actors with plenty of resources and connections. One key aspect that complicates such cases is the issue of jurisdictional boundaries and the lack of harmonized legal frameworks across different countries. Hence, there is a broader systematic problem regarding international sex trafficking dynamics (Smith and Smith, 2011).

Next, analyzing the globalized dynamics of international sex trafficking, transnational crimes, like the international sex trafficking ring managed by Epstein, often transcend national borders, making it difficult to determine which legal jurisdiction should take precedence in prosecuting the perpetrators. This jurisdictional ambiguity can create opportunities for individuals with power and influence to exploit legal loopholes and evade accountability by strategically navigating between different legal systems. Additionally, in the U.S., there are different jurisdictions between states. Therefore, Epstein's house in West Palm Beach is not in the same jurisdiction as his New York City townhouse.

Furthermore, the globalized nature of the dynamics invites to cooperation to effectively address these transnational crimes. However, cooperation does not work if there is corruption. In Epstein's case, his connections to high-ranking politicians and influential figures from various countries further complicated coordinating efforts to hold him accountable. Cooperation is implied in democracy theories, which is not always the case. When the system is corrupt, like the present international system, the interests of the power elite are prioritized and protected over anything else.

The intersection of power, privilege, and exploitation in international sex trafficking underscores the urgent need for a comprehensive approach that addresses not only the immediate criminal activities but also the underlying power dynamics and structural inequalities that enable trafficking to thrive. By recognizing and challenging the power imbalances inherent in trafficking dynamics, society can work towards creating a more just and equitable system that prioritizes the protection and empowerment of vulnerable individuals (Raymond, 2019).

Moreover, power relations in international sex trafficking dynamics are complex and multifaceted. Investigators outside the power elite on the matter often highlight the power imbalances that exist between traffickers and victims, as well as the broader structural inequalities that perpetuate trafficking. Mills' analysis of elite networks and their influence on societal affairs illuminates the challenges of transnational crimes, which transcend national jurisdictions and necessitate international cooperation (Mills, 1956).

There is a significant power differential between traffickers and victims. Traffickers often use coercion, deception, and violence to control and exploit victims, leading to a profound imbalance of power. Also, in the article by Erickson, K. F., & Dalley, L. A. (2020), another element is used in coercion: drugs. “Victims are forced to take drugs; thus, the victims become even more dependent on their trafficker, as they also work as their dealers.” (p. 159)

However, international sex trafficking dynamics are not just about individual crimes but are also influenced by broader structural inequalities such as poverty, gender inequality, lack of education, and limited economic opportunities. These factors create vulnerabilities that traffickers exploit. On the same hand, another systematic issue is the dehumanization of people, which has normalized abuse. With even more people participating in the sex buying market, sex tourism, and pornography industry, the legislative has failed humanity and made specially women and children in vulnerable statuses go for this easy money in exchange for their human rights.

Hence, there is a demand for commercial sex that drives trafficking. “The commercial sex industry is impervious to prohibitions and cannot be eliminated.” (Hakim, 2015, p. 342) Thus, there should be more robust legal and policy frameworks to address power imbalances in commercial sex. Often the commercialization of sex hides plain-in-sight trafficking dynamics.

On the same line, another alarming international sex trafficking dynamic is child sex tourism (CST). Although illegal everywhere, “the implementation of extraterritorial laws and

strategies to fight the issue remains a challenge.” (Hulsbergen & Nootboom, 2023, p. 28) Furthermore, authors Hulsbergen & Nootboom (2023) analyzed ambiguous spaces in Bali, where CST occurs regularly without repercussions. Similar to the nature and disguise of Epstein's crimes, the authors found "spa massage parlors" as one of those ambiguous spaces where the sexual exploitation of minors takes place. Like Epstein's business, the sexual workers are underaged masseuses.

The industry of CST, child trafficking, and sexual exploitation of children is growing at an estimated rate of 20 percent per year worldwide. (Hulsbergen & Nootboom, 2023) The victims must be heard and rescued from these dangerous dynamics. By empowering victims, lawyers advocating human rights aim to rebalance the power dynamics and give agency back to survivors. Cook (2023) discusses the challenges faced by survivors of sexual abuse in seeking justice and healing. Victims often confront stigma, disbelief, and revictimization when coming forward with their experiences, further exacerbating their trauma (Cook, 2023). This highlights the importance of providing survivors with comprehensive support services and legal assistance and holding perpetrators accountable for their actions.

On the other hand, non-state actors involved in sex trafficking often perceive power through financial means. The ability to generate significant profits and power relations like Epstein from trafficking operations can give them a sense of control and influence over vulnerable individuals. Hence, the traffickers gain a sense of ownership through constant subjugation. “The more oppressed people are, the easier it is for an oppressor or a class of oppressors to sustain dominance.” (Choi-Fitzpatrick, 2017, p. 58) The social class of the

oppressors is the contemporary power elite, an immortal group that sustains dominance internationally in every discipline and above any institution.

Additionally, the contemporary power elite can be seen as oligarchs of today's world. Thus, this small group operates within extensive networks that provide them with resources, protection, and opportunities to expand their criminal activities (Michels, 1969). These networks enhance their perceived power and influence in the trafficking industry, enabling them to wield significant control over various aspects of the trade. Consequently, these powerful individuals possess the ability and resources to corrupt officials, law enforcement agencies, jurisdictions, and other key stakeholders (Michels, 1969). This corruption permeates the international system, undermining the facade of democracy and revealing the reality of oligarchic rule. In essence, the iron law of oligarchy manifests within the global framework, wherein a small, privileged group dictates the course of events and perpetuates its dominance unchecked.

Thirdly, power relations and power dynamics must be analyzed to explore how Epstein's case shifts international relations theory towards non-state actors. Intimidation and coercion are key to power relations between non-state actors. Epstein's power and influence extended to his ability to intimidate and coerce victims and potential witnesses. By leveraging his wealth, connections, and resources, he planted fear in those who might have spoken out against him, further perpetuating a culture of silence and complicity. Alexander Acosta, former U.S. attorney, let go of Epstein in 2008, and it is seen as a great example of this corruption laced with the U.S. legal system. Epstein did a lot more damage to young girls in the remaining 11 years he had free due to Acosta's poor judgment.

Also, Epstein's international sex trafficking dynamics were facilitated by his connections to a network of enablers, recruiters, and co-conspirators across multiple countries. These non-state actors played a crucial role in facilitating the trafficking of victims, coordinating logistics, and covering up their crimes. Some non-state actors apart from the contemporary power elite that facilitated these are model agencies and travel agencies that work with minors.

Moreover, Epstein's ability to manipulate media narratives and public perception through strategic PR campaigns and intimidation tactics emphasizes the influence wielded by non-state actors in shaping the discourse surrounding their criminal activities (Domhoff, 1970). His relationship with celebrities was like a smokescreen. The Prince Andrew interview is just the tip of the iceberg, and many more influential people are immune to any legal system.

Also, with the advancement of technology, non-state actors leverage digital platforms and communication tools to facilitate and expand their sex trafficking operations. This technological power enhances their reach and impact in the global trafficking market. Technology is vital to globalization, and not just surface technology. There are child porn sites like forums, blogs, and social platforms where pederasts interact and consume child sex-related content. Thus, there is a globalized interconnectivity between predators; what would you expect from the contemporary power elite?

The contemporary power elite perpetuates their control through the subjugation and exploitation of women, children, and marginalized communities. This exploitation underscores the group's capacity to capitalize on vulnerable individuals for personal gain, effectively commodifying sex acts for networking purposes (Mills, 1956).

The Epstein international sex trafficking case has the potential to shift international relations theory on non-state actors in several ways. Traditionally, international relations theory has focused primarily on the interactions between states and the role of state actors in shaping global politics. However, Epstein's case highlights the significant impact that non-state actors, such as wealthy individuals with transnational influence, can have on international affairs.

Epstein's wealth, connections to influential figures, and ability to operate across borders demonstrate how individuals outside traditional state structures can shape global dynamics. The specified challenges the traditional state-centric view of international relations and emphasizes the need to consider the impact of non-state actors on global affairs. Epstein's case poses unique challenges regarding jurisdiction, cooperation between legal systems, and ensuring accountability regardless of an individual's status (Domhoff, 1970).

Also, the case sheds light on the challenges of holding non-state actors accountable for transnational crimes. The allegations of sex trafficking across international borders highlight the complexities of addressing crimes that transcend national jurisdictions. The indicated raises questions about the effectiveness of international legal frameworks in dealing with non-state actors who engage in international illicit activities.

This international crime, child sex trafficking, is not only a grave violation of human rights but also a highly profitable criminal enterprise. According to Jasper (2023), the exploitation of children for sexual purposes has become one of the fastest-growing criminal industries globally, generating billions of dollars in illicit profits each year. This industry thrives due to the involvement and protection of influential individuals with the resources and connections to shield traffickers from law enforcement and evade justice.

As a globalized industry, Epstein's case has diplomatic implications as it involves individuals with connections to high-ranking officials and influential figures from various countries. The case could strain diplomatic relations between countries implicated in the scandal, especially if there are allegations of complicity or involvement by officials. The above-mentioned highlights the interconnected nature of international relations and non-state actors' impact on diplomatic ties. One of Epstein's most controversial clients and friends was Prince Andrew, a member of the British family, and his ex-wife, Sarah Ferguson. More clients are Patrick Fairweather, British retired diplomat; his wife Marla Fairweather, British socialite; Doug Band, longtime adviser to Bill Clinton; Jimmy Cayne, former CEO of Bear Stearns, Rupert Murdoch, executive chairman of News Corp, Princess Firyal, Jordanian philanthropist, Peter Roth, chairman and CEO of Warner Brothers, Jamie Grant, global chairman of investment banking, JP Morgan, Robert Meister, former chairman of Aon insurance and the man who introduced Epstein to Leslie Wexner, Kerry Kennedy, president of RFK Human Rights, and many more names on the foreign politics field. They are part of the contemporary power elite, not only Epstein, as they can cross borders, evade authorities, and exploit differences in legal systems in their meetings with Epstein. The contemporary power elite do

not act like a group; they are individual actors, each with their contexts on how they got their status. However, their group meetings and networking work in ways beyond the common people's understanding, as they seem to have unlimited access to whatever they want.

Therefore, this affects international relations in many ways. Some potential parallels between the Epstein case and the insights from the Smith & Smith (2011) article on human trafficking and UN intervention illustrate how the Epstein case could influence international relations theory regarding non-state actors.

The comparison between the Epstein case and human trafficking underscores the involvement of non-state actors in perpetrating transnational crimes. The challenges of measuring human trafficking due to data limitations and the role of criminal networks emphasize the importance of recognizing non-state actors in illicit activities within the realm of international relations and the international system. This suggests that the Epstein case could prompt reevaluation on how non-state actors are understood and addressed in global governance and security.

Following the same line, the UN confronts many complexities of governance and regulation in dealing with transnational crimes involving non-state actors. This comparison suggests that the Epstein case could prompt a reassessment of how global networks of non-state actors are managed and regulated in international relations. (Smith & Smith, 2011)

Hence, children's security concerns extend beyond national borders. UN peacekeeping forces on human trafficking have had a low impact on the real data and numbers, and the main reason behind that is that the UN is not looking deeper at the contemporary power elite. Epstein's case could lead to a deeper examination of the implications of non-state actors on human rights and children security issues in the international system.

The existence of the contemporary power elite, and power relations between non-state actors have played a significant role in shaping Jeffrey Epstein's international sex trafficking dynamics. Epstein's case highlights instances of corruption within the criminal justice system, where powerful individuals and institutions were complicit in enabling his crimes. The perceived impunity enjoyed by Epstein and his guests further underscored the influence of the contemporary power elite in shaping the dynamics of international sex trafficking. Systemic failures and complicity allowed such atrocities to persist for decades unchecked.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, this thesis brings a theoretical contribution to literature and academia, the *contemporary power elite*. The contemporary power elite is a small group of interconnected individuals who use their wealth, influence and connections to operate across state borders above and beyond any power structure. Moreover, the thesis highlights how power relations and globalization work along the contemporary power elite.

Furthermore, the role of non-state actors in today's contemporary world is more powerful than ever before. The case study of Jeffrey Epstein utilized in this investigation clearly shows how powerful individuals shift international relations theory. They can hold even more power than states, and systematically position themselves above any institution or law.

In addition to these insights, the thesis underscores the evolving nature of power dynamics in today's world. Traditional notions of power wielded solely by nation-states are challenged by transnational networks' ascendancy, like the contemporary power elite. This shift invites reevaluation of existing International Relations theories towards non-state actors.

Moreover, a ruling contemporary power elite that systematically positions itself above any institution critically reflects on democracy and governance. As power has become increasingly concentrated within a selected few, questions arise regarding real democratic values that have been lost. There is no such thing as an equitable distribution of resources and opportunities in this capital-based governance. On one hand, the contemporary power elite has plenty of accumulated capital; therefore, it has entered a never-ending cycle of

consumption. On the other hand, common people have been reduced to commodities. Hence the strengthening of international sex trafficking dynamics. The massive international sex trafficking industry does not appear to be reduced in size; these practices will never cease under a system based on never-ending financial growth. The maintenance of international sex trafficking as a powerful industry is mainly due to deficient legislation regarding it.

Transnational sex trafficking cases, like Epstein's, are complex due to jurisdictional challenges and the lack of harmonized legal frameworks across countries. In addition, the thesis exposes the vulnerabilities inherent within existing governance and law enforcement systems. It underscores the need for enhanced regulatory mechanisms to address the challenges posed by criminal enterprises run by powerful individuals who operate with impunity across borders.

Furthermore, globalization has facilitated the operation of transnational crimes and corrupt networks. It is easier than ever before to access the sex trafficking market. Also, it is almost trouble-free for predators to find each other and their victims. A great example of this is Epstein's case. His partner, Ghislaine Maxwell, played a critical role in facilitating access to minors, highlighting the complicity of influential individuals within the contemporary power elite in perpetuating these crimes. Therefore, the contemporary power elite and its capacities must be considered. It marks a turning point in how theorists define the impact of non-state actors in International Relations.

The shaping of Epstein's international sex trafficking dynamics has been influenced by financial factors that allowed him to buy off state officials, hire high-rank lawyers, pay off victims and their families, and have access to resources that kept his business going. His

close relationships with powerful people represented immunity for him. Thus, Epstein's "guests" helped him manipulate the media to avoid any narrative that linked him with criminal behavior. Epstein's case underscores the challenges of holding non-state actors accountable for transnational crimes and reveals the influence of non-state actors on power dynamics. Thus, it must raise concerns about the capacities of these non-state actors to position themselves above everything and everyone. Also, it serves as a reminder of how much a capital-based system is unsustainable and unbelievably harmful to society.

The importance of this thesis is exhibited on the following five points: 1) it highlights the existence of a contemporary power elite that is even more powerful and can cause much harm than prior elites due to globalization; 2) it illustrates how easy it is to control and corrupt the legal system and international law according to non-state actors who hold much power; 3) the analysis of Epstein's case helps portray the shift in International Relations theory towards non-state actors; 4) the alarming proliferation of international sex trafficking in today's contemporary world; and 5) it puts forward how influential the contemporary power elite is worldwide, and the necessity of rebalancing power dynamics.

This thesis sheds light on an existing contemporary power elite and serves as a call to action for scholars, policymakers, and civil society to confront the multifaceted implications of concentrated power in an increasingly interconnected world.

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