**Project Title:** **Ethnic Voting Behavior and Foreign Policy: Arab-American Electoral Shifts in Response to MENA Region Conflict**

**Project Background**

This project investigates the quantitative impact of foreign policy shocks on domestic electoral behavior among ethnic minority communities in the United States, focusing on Arab-American voters in Michigan during the 2024 U.S. Presidential Election.

**Executive Summary**

**Scope of Analysis:** We conduct a quantitative analysis of precinct-level electoral data, including vote shares, turnout, and third-party performance across election years. Our focal point is Arab-concentrated municipalities in Michigan (Dearborn, Dearborn Heights, and Hamtramck) contrasted with a demographically similar but ethnically dissimilar control group: Dane County, Wisconsin.

**Control Group Justification:** Dane County was selected as the control due to its progressive political alignment, urban density, and socio-educational comparability, yet with minimal Arab-American presence. This allows us to isolate the impact of identity-linked foreign policy shocks on Arab-majority communities.

**Key Findings:**

* In 2024, Dearborn (with an Arab population share of ~47%) saw a **1300% increase** in third-party vote share (from 605 to 8,359 votes), while Democratic support dropped by over 50% from 2020 levels.
* The control group (Dane County) showed negligible third-party shift (+0.01%) during the same period.
* Roughly **8–11%** of voters in Dearborn precincts appear to have migrated directly from Democratic ballots to Republican, but the overwhelming pivot was toward third-party protest voting.

**Strategic Recommendations:**

1. Micro-targeted ethnic group polling in swing states to detect vulnerability to foreign policy-induced disillusionment.
2. Foreign policy narrative framing: Avoid zero-sum alignments; instead, adopt rhetoric that acknowledges diaspora concerns.
3. Strategic outreach prior to conflict escalation, including relationship-building with local ethnic leaders.
4. Rapid-response messaging teams to deploy nuanced foreign policy stances during active international crises.

**Insights Deep Dive**

**Demographic Context:**

* Michigan has the highest proportion of Arab-Americans nationwide (~3.87%), totaling over 390,000 residents.
* Dearborn alone holds ~47% Arab population—acting as a cultural and political bellwether for Arab-American sentiment.

**Foreign Policy Salience and Attention Shifts:**

* Following the October 7th conflict escalation in Gaza, Google Trends data indicates a spike in Palestine/Gaza-related searches in Michigan—specifically Dearborn, Dearborn Heights, and Hamtramck.
* Comparative attention data from Wisconsin shows minimal increase in foreign-policy-related search activity.

**Electoral Impact Metrics:**

* **Dearborn:** Third-party vote share grew from **1.35% in 2020 to 16.6% in 2024**.
* **Dane County:** Minimal third-party growth (0.01%) despite similar baseline educational and age composition.
* **Arab precincts statewide:** Estimated **16 percentage point increase** in third-party vote share based on DiD regression analysis.
* Turnout contraction in Arab-majority cities: ~6–8%, indicating vote-switching rather than abstention.

**Control vs. Treatment Comparison (DiD Results):**

* DiD regression shows statistically significant interaction coefficient (DiD = +0.158; p < 0.001).
* Model robustness confirmed using HC1/HC2 estimators and continuous % Arab specifications.
* R^2 = 0.995 indicates high model fit.

**Recommendations for Campaign Strategy & Policy Design**

1. **Foreign Policy Mapping to Diaspora Communities:** Establish predictive links between global regions of interest and U.S. ethnic constituencies.
2. **Community-led Listening Sessions:** Empower local civic leaders in diaspora-rich areas to communicate voter priorities ahead of elections.
3. **Policy Modulation Zones:** Treat ethnic-dense municipalities as zones requiring tailored political messaging.
4. **Invest in Identity-Aligned Communication Channels:** Utilize culturally relevant media (e.g., Arabic-language radio) to preemptively address voter concerns.
5. **Early Warning Systems for Salience Spikes:** Monitor digital sentiment signals (e.g., localized search terms) to flag brewing political risks.

**Clarifying Questions, Assumptions, and Caveats**

* **Assumptions:**
  + Voters are accurately represented by demographic clustering.
  + 2024 Gaza conflict is the dominant shock impacting Arab-American voting behavior.
  + Control group is sufficiently insulated from identity-linked salience effects.
* **Caveats:**
  + Limited sample size (N = 8 cities).
  + Potential unobserved variables (e.g., localized campaign events, non-Presidential ballot dynamics).
  + Third-party vote tallies do not always reflect uniform ideological preference (may include protest, strategic, or disaffected votes).
* **Future Research:**
  + Incorporate sentiment analysis from social media.
  + Expand analysis to include Minnesota, Wisconsin, and other Arab-American dense states.
  + Explore longitudinal impacts in midterm cycles.