

Research Article

# Reconstructing the Social Contract Theory: Inculcating Ubi as the Antidote to Socio-Economic Inequality Among States

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## Abstract

The social contract theory, as articulated by Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, establishes a foundational agreement between citizens and their government, wherein the state assumes responsibility for ensuring safety, equity, and welfare in exchange for collective compliance. However, contemporary socio-economic inequalities exacerbated by globalization, technological disruption, and systemic disparities—reveal significant gaps in this theoretical framework. This study employs a qualitative comparative methodology, utilizing the Most Different Systems Design (MDSD) to analyze UBI implementations across diverse political and economic contexts, including Finland, Kenya, and Alaska. Findings from these case studies demonstrate that UBI serves as a transformative policy tool, effectively reducing poverty, improving mental health, and fostering economic participation. Empirical evidence reveals that unconditional cash transfers enhance well-being and social stability without discouraging employment. The research further highlights the critical role of global governance institutions, such as the United Nations and the World Bank, in facilitating UBI's alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Despite political and logistical challenges, integrating UBI into governance systems presents a viable pathway to modernize the social contract and address 21st-century inequalities. This study underscores UBI's potential as a catalyst for systemic change, advocating for innovative, collaborative policy approaches to achieve equitable socio-economic outcomes.

## Keywords

Universal Basic Income, Social Contract Theory, Global Governance Institutions, Inequality, Government

## 1. Introduction

Literature define a social contract as all the clear or hidden agreements made between important groups in society and the ruler, which can be the government or any other powerful person or group [1]. The social contract theory, explained by thinkers like Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, suggests that people give up some of their freedoms to the government in return for safety, stability, and less inequality [2-4]. This

theory underscores the reciprocal nature of the relationship between citizens and the state, where the state is obligated to ensure the welfare and security of its citizens in return for their compliance and support. The concept of the social contract has evolved over centuries, adapting to changing socio-political contexts. In the modern era, the social contract has expanded to include not only political and civil rights but

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also economic and social rights. Scholars like John Rawls have argued that justice requires institutions to ensure fair opportunities and resources for all individuals [5]. Amartya Sen's capability approach further emphasizes the importance of enabling individuals to achieve valuable states of being and doing, thus linking economic security to the broader framework of social justice [6].

Despite the advancements in governance and the establishment of various welfare systems, economic insecurity and inequality remain pervasive issues in contemporary society and the global realm. This suggests a potential shortfall in the state's fulfillment of its obligations under the social contract, particularly in addressing the basic economic needs of its citizens. For instance, the rise of precarious employment, technological disruptions, and stagnant wages have exacerbated socio-economic disparities, challenging the effectiveness of traditional welfare models [7, 8].

In today's world, economic inequality is growing quickly, both within countries and between them, putting pressure on the traditional social agreement. Throughout history, governments have taken on the duty of caring for their citizens' well-being. However, globalization has worsened inequalities, bringing wealth and power to a small group of people while leaving many countries and individuals behind [8]. This brings up an important question: how can the social contract be reimagined to address the growing socio-economic inequalities in an increasingly globalized world?

Universal Basic Income (UBI) appears to be a promising answer. Universal Basic Income (UBI) has emerged as a bold and innovative policy proposal aimed at addressing economic insecurity and promoting social justice. UBI involves providing all citizens with a regular, unconditional sum of money, ensuring a basic standard of living irrespective of employment status [9, 10]. Universal Basic Income (UBI) is a social welfare program that gives people living in a city, state, or country a basic income without any conditions or requirements [11]. Additionally, the International Monetary fund (IMF) defines Universal Basic Income (UBI) as providing financial support that is meant for everyone (or most people) without requiring many conditions. At the national level, Universal Basic Income (UBI) can help governments meet their responsibilities to citizens by providing a basic level of financial security, lowering poverty rates, and promoting social unity [9]. Additionally, the literature [12] argues that UBI can reduce poverty, enhance economic stability, and foster greater civic engagement by alleviating financial stress and providing individuals with more freedom to pursue education, entrepreneurship, or other productive activities has been tested in different situations, including the Finnish UBI experiment, which showed that it helped improve the well-being and mental health of those receiving it [13]. Likewise, pilot projects in Namibia and India have demonstrated that Universal Basic Income (UBI) can greatly decrease poverty and enhance economic involvement [14,

15].

However, inequality is not merely a domestic issue; it is a global challenge. Disparities between states are exacerbated by unequal access to resources, inequitable trade practices, and the dominance of powerful nations in global economic systems [16]. To address this, global institutions such as the United Nations (UN), World Bank, and International Monetary Fund (IMF) must actively promote UBI as a global policy. These organizations could facilitate resource transfers from wealthier to poorer nations, ensuring that the benefits of globalization are more equitably distributed [17]. For instance, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasize the reduction of inequality within and among countries, and UBI could serve as a practical mechanism to achieve this objective [18]. Additionally, a study [19] mentioned that employing UBI to help us break free from the cycle of consumerism would probably lead to other positive outcomes. Replacing intangible social achievements with material consumption would likely relate to responsible consumption and production (SDG 12). This shift could help the world work towards its goal of lessening the harmful impacts of climate change (SDG 13). Besides supporting health and wellness (SDG 3), the extra free time from Universal Basic Income (UBI) could spark more innovation (SDGs 9 and 11). This is because people would have the opportunity to explore different and creative interests instead of being stuck in an office. The broad use of UBI would help fight against job loss caused by technology, which is a positive side effect that supports SDG 8. Even though it's hard to measure the benefits mentioned above, they would probably outweigh any negative effects that could come from Universal Basic Income (UBI). Regarding the obligation of the state to its citizens in the social contract theory, the above-mentioned SDGs are to be carried out by the state to the state upon giving former the mandate to steer their affairs.

The primary challenge lies in persuading states and international actors to embrace this expanded social contract. How can global governance institutions contribute to an effective implementation of UBI on a worldwide scale to mitigate inter-state inequality? Theoretical frameworks such as cosmopolitanism suggest that global justice requires redistributive mechanisms that transcend national boundaries [20]. However, the political feasibility of such measures remains contentious, as it requires a reconfiguration of global power dynamics and a commitment to shared responsibility [21].

In my opinion, if these steps are not taken, the social contract risks becoming obsolete in an increasingly unequal world. The urgency of this issue is underscored by the growing body of literature on global inequality and the need for innovative policy solutions [10, 22]. UBI, as a transformative policy tool, offers a pathway to modernize the social contract and address the socio-economic disparities that threaten global stability.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Research Approach and Design

This study employs a qualitative comparative methodology to examine how Universal Basic Income (UBI) can reconstruct the social contract theory to address socio-economic inequalities between states. The comparative method is particularly suitable for this research as it allows for the analysis of relationships between variables that are different or similar to one another. Specifically, this research utilizes the Most Different Systems Design (MDSD) approach by comparing various implementations of UBI programs across different political and economic systems while identifying common outcomes that demonstrate its effectiveness in addressing inequality.

The research design is structured around three interconnected phases: (1) a comprehensive review and analysis of social contract theoretical frameworks, (2) an examination of UBI implementation cases and outcomes, and (3) a synthesis that connects UBI principles with the reconstruction of social contract theory in the context of global governance.

### 2.2. Analytical Framework

The analytical framework developed for this research draws on three dimensions:

*Theoretical Dimension:* Analyzing classical social contract theories (Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau) and their contemporary interpretations to establish a foundation for understanding state-citizen obligations.

*Implementation Dimension:* Examining UBI pilot programs in Finland, Kenya, and Alaska to identify common outcomes and implementation challenges across different contexts.

*Governance Dimension:* Evaluating potential roles of global governance institutions in facilitating UBI implementation across state boundaries to address inter-state inequality.

Data extracted from the literature was analyzed using content analysis techniques, identifying recurring themes, arguments, and evidence related to UBI's potential to address inequality through reconceptualizing the social contract. The analysis employed classification schemes to categorize findings according to theoretical foundations, practical implementations, and governance implications.

### 2.3. Conceptual Development

The study develops a conceptual framework that integrates UBI principles with social contract theory through an iterative process of synthesis. This framework is developed by:

- 1) Identifying the limitations in traditional social contract theories when addressing contemporary economic inequalities.
- 2) Mapping how UBI mechanisms align with or transform

social contract obligations.

Theorizing a global social contract that incorporates UBI as a means to address inter-state inequality.

- 3) This approach allows for a systematic examination of how UBI can serve as a practical mechanism to fulfill state obligations under a reconstructed social contract, particularly in addressing socio-economic inequalities within and between states.

## 3. Understanding the Social Contract Theory

### 3.1. Thomas Hobbes Notion of the Social Contract Theory "The Leviathan"

Hobbes, in his book "Leviathan, 1621" explains that in the state of nature, there were no clear rules about what was right or wrong. People grabbed everything they could, and life was said to be "lonely, poor, unpleasant, harsh, and brief." The natural state of humanity was like being in constant conflict. This situation could only change if people decided to give up some of their freedom to a ruler, agreeing to do so only if their lives were protected by that ruler. According to Hobbes, the sovereign has total authority, which means that no power is higher than the sovereign, and whatever the sovereign decides is the law. However, this does not mean that the ruler has complete control: people still have the freedom to act as they want when the ruler does not say anything (in other words, when the law does not cover the action being taken). Social contract lets people leave the state of nature and join a civil society. However, the state of nature is always a potential danger and comes back when government power falls apart. However, since the authority of Leviathan (the political state) is not challenged, it is very unlikely to fall apart. It only happens when it can no longer keep its people safe.

### 3.2. John Locke's Notion of the Social Contract Theory (The Two Treaties of Government)

Locke had a different view than Hobbes. He believed that the state of nature was not a time when people could do anything they wanted. Instead, he thought it was a situation where people are free, equal, and independent, but they must follow the law of nature and respect each other's rights to life, freedom, and property. People, however, decide to create a commonwealth (which means they leave the state of nature) to set up a fair authority that can settle disagreements and fix wrongs. Locke believed that people must follow the civil government because of the social contract, if the government protects everyone's natural rights, which include the right to own private property. Rulers who broke these rules could be rightfully removed from power. Locke explained an important idea of political liberalism:

people cannot be controlled by power unless they agree to it. However, once a political society is formed, citizens need to accept the choices made by the majority. The legislature makes these decisions for the majority, but the people hold the ultimate power to choose their legislators. Even so, the legislature's powers are not unlimited because the law of nature acts as a lasting guideline to protect against unfair authority.

### 3.3. J. J Rousseau's Notion of the Social Contract Theory "Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité"

In his 1755 book, "Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité" (Discourse on the Origin of Inequality), Rousseau claimed that in their natural state, people lived alone but were also healthy, happy, good, and free. Rousseau called "nascent societies" the groups that formed when people started living together as families and neighbors. This growth brought about harmful feelings like jealousy and pride, which then contributed to social inequality and bad behavior among people. The creation of private property was another move towards inequality because it required the formation of laws and a government to safeguard it. Rousseau expressed sadness about the harmful idea of property and the terrible consequences that came from moving away from a time when the land was shared by everyone. Rousseau believed that civil society was created for two main reasons: to help everyone live peacefully and to protect the property rights of those who are lucky enough to have belongings. So, it provided some benefits for everyone but mainly helped the rich. It changed their unofficial ownership into official ownership, while still leaving the poor without anything. It was truly a dishonest agreement because the poor received much less from it compared to the rich. Rousseau also thought that a real social contract could happen, where people would give up some of their independence in return for a better type of freedom—specifically, true political or republican liberty. In "Du Contrat social" (The Social Contract, 1762), Rousseau explained that true freedom comes from following what he called the *volonté générale*, or "general will." This general will be a shared desire focused on what is best for everyone or the common interest. Rousseau viewed citizenship as something more natural and much less focused on the individual compared to Locke's idea. Giving up natural freedom for political freedom meant that all personal rights, like property rights, are less important than the will of the majority. According to Rousseau, the state acts like a moral being made up of its members. Its laws come from the general will, and its main goals are the freedom and equality of all its citizens. When a government takes away the power from the people, it breaks the social contract. This means that citizens do not have to follow the rules anymore, and they have a responsibility to fight back.

### 3.4. Effects of the Social Contract So Far

Although social contracts are a hypothetical theory, it is the best theory to explain the evolution of civil society. The theory was based on the concept of "teleological reasoning" which states that government must reciprocate exactly what the people need based on giving them their natural rights. For instance, the sole intention behind planting a mango seed is to get a mango fruit in the future. Otherwise, there is no need to plant mango seeds. The social contract has been able to accomplish some of its motives over the years. Conversely, it has drawbacks as well. According to a study [1] social contracts help balance the relationships between the state and society, as well as within society itself, thus bring about social equality. They promote social unity and strengthen connections among people. Additionally, in my unpublished paper "The Lockean Social Contract and Ghana's Constitutional Framework", I made mention of how the constitution of Ghana is based on John Locke's notion of the social contract which is also the genesis of constitutionalism. I explored that "Locke's social contract theory serves as the genesis of constitutionalism by providing the blueprint for constitutional governance, as it grounds political authority in popular consent (evident in Ghana's democratic framework), protects individual rights through codified legal provisions like Ghana's Chapter 5 on fundamental freedoms, and restrains governmental power through institutional checks - all of which align with Locke's fundamental warnings against absolutism, with Ghana's 1992 Constitution exemplifying this Lockean legacy through its Chapter 5 safeguards of equality (Article 17) and property rights (Article 20) that echo Locke's natural rights philosophy, while its Chapter 6 Directive Principles outlining state welfare obligations parallel Locke's conception of the "public good" mandate inherent in legitimate governance". One of the main ways CCN political theory is used today is in the modern government and legal systems. It offers helpful stories and solutions for addressing and resolving collective action issues that come up in overlapping groups and diverse communities. A common idea in The Social Contract of today's sovereign states is that the traditional traits of Hobbes' idea of the sovereign are viewed as gradual improvements. These improvements make the initial, less effective selves better at providing public goods. This process creates a balance that is more challenging than what you would find in single interactions. While the idea of a modern sovereign state is like Hobbes' notion of a temporary ruler doing certain tasks, there are several key actions that help groups push specific parties to act more like they are cooperating in a one-time or repeated prisoner's dilemma situation. These actions include encouraging each other to hold back and show restraint. Whether they realize it or not, internal terrorists and their supporters try to stop efforts that create strong and fair rules to target activities that harm the most vulnerable people in powerful societies. When trying to create open societies, people often take big risks,

including making bold speeches. However, citizens in democracies also have the right to expect actions that help reduce the serious dangers related to rewarding those who fight against global terrorism. Whether they realize it or not, internal terrorists and their supporters work to undermine efforts that seek to put real and fair limits on actions that harm the most vulnerable members of powerful societies. When trying to create open societies, it is important to take bold risks, even if that means giving challenging speeches. At the same time, people in democratic countries might expect actions that help reduce the serious risks associated with properly recognizing the hard work of those fighting against global terrorism [24]. The literature, [24] went ahead to mention that to keep the advantages of living in an organized society, as suggested by common economic beliefs, the ruler is given important duties. The leader has a duty to create and put into action economic policies that meet the current needs of the community. The ruler should not make decisions based on special interests, and he should not take actions just for those groups. His main goal should be to enhance the well-being of society in the best way he can. When economic policies are carried out in a way that supports the government's role in society, they can enhance the well-being of everyone, both the poor and the rich, in the best possible way. It would be a serious error to ignore those who question why leaders, who have taken away people's ability to defend their rights, should offer them any supportive policies. Laws need to be created so that the leader acts on behalf of everyone in the community. While many people support the social contract theory, it has faced criticism from certain groups recently. The challenges come in various types and levels. The criticisms can be grouped into the following main categories. Mistake, error, or wrong focus: People have criticized social contract theorists for either misunderstanding a well-known fact, making a mistake, or giving too much importance to their theory. These critics are not claiming that the social contract theory is completely wrong. They are just highlighting that the theory comes from a simple observation: people live in a society that has rules.

#### 4. Understanding the Universal Basic Income (UBI)

The concept of Universal Basic Income (UBI) has been around for many years but has received a lot of attention in recent times. According to a study [25], Support for universal basic income (UBI) has increased so quickly in recent years that it may seem like the idea just suddenly appeared. The concept dates back hundreds or even thousands of years, and for over a century, activists have been sharing similar ideas more and more often. Unconditional payments (The genesis of UBI) to citizens have existed since ancient times. The initial ideas for providing a regular, guaranteed income for everyone emerged and spread between the 16th and 18th

centuries. After the Industrial Revolution, more people became aware of and supported the idea. Since 1900, the idea of a basic income guarantee (BIG) has gone through three major waves of support, with each wave being larger than the one before it. The initial period lasted from 1910 to 1940, but it was succeeded by a downturn in the 1940s and 1950s. I elaborate on the evolution of UBI from ancient times to the covid-19 era. In the ancient era, ancient Egypt was a powerful and united theocratic state that controlled important sections of its economy. This included granaries that provided grain to the public during difficult periods. In 46 BC, during a celebration of victory, Roman general and dictator Julius Caesar awarded each ordinary Roman citizen 100 denarii. After Caesar was assassinated in 44 BC, he will state that each citizen would receive 300 sestertii, which is about 75 denarii. Later, Trajan, who ruled as emperor of Rome from 98 to 117 AD, generously provided 650 denarii, roughly equal to \$430 today, to every common Roman citizen who requested it [26]. In the 16th century, English politician and thinker Thomas More wrote about a society in his book *Utopia* (1516) where everyone gets a guaranteed income [27]. He suggested that basic income could solve the problem of theft, arguing that "No punishment will stop people from stealing if it is their only way to get food." More believed that instead of imposing harsh punishments, it would be better to ensure that everyone has a way to make a living, so no one feels forced to become a thief or end up dead. Spanish scholar Johannes Ludovicus Vives (1492–1540) suggested that local governments should ensure that all residents have enough to live on, not because it's a matter of justice, but to practice charity more effectively. He also believed that to receive assistance for being poor, a person should show that they deserve help by demonstrating their willingness to work. In the 18th century, Thomas Paine, an English-born philosopher in America, wrote two important pamphlets: *Common Sense* (1776) and *The American Crisis* (1776–1783). These works played a crucial role in shaping thoughts at the beginning of the American Revolution. His essay, "Agrarian Justice," was released in 1797. He suggested specific changes to eliminate poverty. He specifically suggested a universal social insurance program that would include pensions for the elderly and support for those with disabilities, as well as grants for young adults. This program would be financed through a 10% inheritance tax on land. This idea is also seen as one of the first proposals for a social security system. Thomas Paine expressed his opinion by saying, "People did not create the earth." Only the value of the improvements made is considered personal property, not the land itself. Every landowner has a responsibility to pay ground rent to the community for the land they possess. Paine viewed inheritance as a shared resource and believed that a tax on inherited wealth could help add to the citizens' dividend. In 1797, Thomas Spence, an English radical, released a work titled *The Rights of Infants* as a reply to Thomas Paine's *Agrarian Justice*. In this essay, Spence suggests implementing an un-

conditional basic income for everyone in the community. This funding would come from sharing land and the rental income collected by each city. A portion of everyone's income would be taken by the government and distributed to others. In the 19th century, Henry George suggested establishing a pension and disability program, along with a wide-ranging social support system, funded by a single tax on the value of land and natural resources. Social support will be provided to residents as a right rather than as a form of charity. George brought up the idea of directly distributing cash from land rent, but he did not emphasize it. His concepts led to the economic philosophy known as Georgism, or the "single tax movement." This ideology argues that while individuals should keep the value they create, the economic rent generated from land—along with natural resources, public spaces, and urban areas—should be shared equally among everyone in society [28, 29]. Some supporters of Georgism suggest that an unconditional basic income, funded by the single tax, could be referred to as a citizen's dividend, echoing Thomas Paine's idea from the 1800s. In the early 20th century, particularly around 1920, the idea of basic income began to gain traction, especially in England. Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) advocated for a new social system that merged the benefits of socialism and anarchism, emphasizing that a basic income should play an essential role in this new society. In his 1918 book, "Roads to Freedom", Russell stated, "The proposal we are supporting can be summed up like this: everyone should receive a small income that covers basic needs, regardless of whether they are employed or not. Additionally, those who choose to do work that the community values should earn a much larger income, based on the total goods produced [30]. After World War I in the United Kingdom, Dennis and Mabel Milner, a Quaker couple involved with the Labour Party, published a brief pamphlet called "Scheme for a State Bonus" in 1918. They argued about an income that would be paid weekly to all UK citizens without any conditions. They believed it was a moral right for everyone to have the means to support themselves, and that this support should not depend on whether they work or want to work [31, 32]. Douglas was an engineer who grew worried that many people in Britain could not afford the products being made, even though British industry was becoming more productive. He proposed a new social system called social credit as a solution to this paradox, which combined changes to money management with a basic income. In 1944 and 1945, a group called the Beveridge Committee, headed by British economist William Beveridge, created a plan for a completely new welfare system. This system included social insurance, benefits based on need, and guaranteed payments for children. Committee member Lady Rhys-Williams suggested that adult incomes should resemble a basic income model. She was the pioneer in creating the negative income tax model [33, 34]. In 1982, her son, Sir Brandon Rhys-Williams, suggested a basic income to a parliamentary committee. Shortly after, in 1984, the Basic In-

come Research Group, which is now known as the Citizen's Basic Income Trust, started researching and sharing information about basic income. Moving on to the late 20th century, Milton Friedman introduced the idea of a negative income tax (NIT) in his 1962 book, "Capitalism and Freedom" [31]. This concept essentially supported providing a basic income to everyone. He also mentioned this idea during his State of the Union speech in 1964. President Lyndon B. Johnson proposed a law to combat poverty. He believed that by increasing the federal government's involvement in education and healthcare, poverty could be reduced. During this time, the concept of providing a guaranteed income for all Americans gained traction. A significant document, endorsed by 1,200 economists, advocated for this guaranteed income. Additionally, six ambitious basic income trials were launched based on the idea of a negative income tax. President Richard Nixon described its aim as offering a safety net for those in need while also encouraging welfare recipients to find work. Eventually, Congress passed a law ensuring a minimum income for the elderly and disabled. In the mid-1970s, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) emerged as the main rival to basic income and negative income tax. Its supporters managed to persuade enough lawmakers, leading the US Congress to pass legislation in favor of this policy. In 1986, the Basic Income European Network was established, which was later renamed the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN). This organization has hosted academic conferences every two years [35]. Various supporters, including the green political movement, activists, and groups of unemployed individuals, also joined the cause [36]. As the 20th century ended, people began discussing topics like automation, job loss, and the potential for economic growth to coexist with environmentally friendly development. They also looked at ways to reform the welfare state system. Basic income played a significant role in these conversations. At the BIEN conferences, researchers shared papers on basic income from diverse angles, including economics, sociology, and human rights.

In recent times, this idea has gained more attention than ever before. The Swiss referendum on basic income in 2016 received global media attention, even though it was not approved. Well-known figures such as Elon Musk, Pierre Omidyar, and Andrew Yang showed their support, along with prominent politicians like Jeremy Corbyn and Tulsi Gabbard [37]. The Institute for Public Policy Research estimated that in the next three to five years, 59% of jobs currently performed by people could be impacted by AI. Universal Basic Income might help address the issues caused by this "jobs apocalypse." [38]. In 2019, Michael Tubbs, who was the mayor of Stockton, California, launched an 18-month pilot program offering guaranteed income to 125 residents through the privately funded S. E. D initiative. In the 2020 Democratic Party primaries, new politician Andrew Yang [39] highlighted basic income as his main policy focus. His plan, known as the "Freedom Dividend," aimed to give

adult American citizens \$1,000 each month, regardless of whether they were employed or not. On January 21, 2021, California launched Compton Pledge, a two-year program funded by donations that started giving monthly guaranteed income payments to a group of low-income residents who were “pre-verified.” This initiative aims to support up to 800 people, making it one of the largest programs of its kind in the United States among 25 similar initiatives. Cities that are looking into this method of community economics. Starting in December 2021, Tacoma, Washington, launched a program called “Growing Resilience in Tacoma” (GRIT). This initiative offered \$500 each month to 110 families as a form of guaranteed income. GRIT is a component of a broader research project conducted by the University of Pennsylvania’s Center for Guaranteed Income Research. A report detailing the findings of the GRIT experiment will be released in 2024 [40]. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic effects, the idea of universal basic income, along with concepts like helicopter money and cash transfers, gained a lot of attention worldwide. Many countries set up partial unemployment programs that helped support workers’ incomes without requiring them to work. Nearly ninety countries and regions, such as the United States, Spain, Hong Kong, and Japan, set up temporary direct cash transfer programs for their citizens. In Europe, a petition for an “emergency basic income” received over 200,000 signatures, and surveys indicated strong public support for this idea. Unlike the different stimulus packages from the U. S. government, the EU’s stimulus plans did not feature any income-support measures.

#### 4.1. Empirical Application

The empirical evidence from UBI experiments suggests that UBI can have significant positive impacts on well-being, economic stability, and social inclusion. Studies have consistently shown that UBI recipients experience improved mental health, reduced stress, and greater life satisfaction [13, 41, 42]. According to a study [43], one way to tackle poverty and income inequality in the 21st century is through Universal Basic Income (UBI), which is sometimes referred to as unconditional basic income or a basic income guarantee. This system provides income that is given to everyone individually, without checking their financial situation or requiring them to work. UBI is like some social security programs that are already operating in different countries, including the United States. The goal of this system is to ensure that every household in a specific community has a basic income, regardless of how well they perform or whether they want to work. A system like this has been suggested in various situations, serving as a model for both “market socialism” and free market capitalism. Taxation can be a way to implement Universal Basic Income (UBI) in a free market [44]. This means that UBI is not necessarily a socialist idea; it can fit into different types of economic systems [45].

#### 4.2. UBI Application in Kenya

Give Directly is a nonprofit organization based in New York that is currently running a Universal Basic Income (UBI) project in Kenya to help combat rural poverty. Give Directly has committed to providing a regular income for the next ten years to help meet the basic needs of 6,000 individuals in different villages throughout Kenya. The nonprofit organization distributes about \$1000 each year to every household it supports, based on its operating model. This funding, amounting to millions of dollars, is delivered through M-Pesa, a mobile money transfer service. M-Pesa was introduced in 2007 to help with microfinance and money transfers in different countries [46]. By 2011, Give Directly was active in several areas of Kenya, particularly in the western part, where it provided unconditional cash transfers (UCTs). In April 2016, the organization committed to funding these projects for another ten years, aiming to offer a basic income to help people break free from poverty [47]. Between 2011 and 2013, Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) carried out a study to assess how effective unconditional cash transfers (UCTs) were in villages compared to those that did not receive any support. IPA assessed a timeframe that started just before the UCTs were put into effect and continued until about six months after the UBI program ceased cash transfers. Give Directly started its Universal Basic Income (UBI) program in what used to be called Nyanza Province. They chose some of the poorest villages in the district to participate in this initiative and provided them with unconditional cash transfers (UCTs). To set up a case study, the organization chose 63 villages that received financial support and compared them economically to another 63 villages that did not get any financial aid. Furthermore, the households were categorized into three separate groups: UCT, spillover, and pure. The 503 households that received the financial transfer are known as UCT households. The “spillover” households refer to the 505 households that belong to the same community as the 503 households that received cash transfers, but these 505 households did not get any money. The third group, called “pure,” includes 432 households that did not get any money from the UCT program. These households also do not live in the same village as the UCT households, so they probably did not experience any benefits from the increased funds in the area [48]. A study by Johannes Haushofer and Jeremy Shapiro found that unconditional cash transfers (UCTs) had real economic effects. Between 2011 and 2013, families received monthly payments of about \$45 for nine months. Additionally, 245 out of 503 “treatment households” also got one-time payments. Bigger transfer groups received extra funds of about \$1121, paid out in seven monthly installments. During this time, the spending and investment from these communities both increased noticeably, with investment showing a more substantial rise (23% compared to 58%). The researchers found that the spillover households did not experience any

real benefits from the UCTs. The introduction of a UBI in the community successfully accomplished one objective. When people in Kenya who needed financial help got extra money, it led to positive economic outcomes. The observation that the positive impacts did not extend to other households reinforces the link between unconditional cash transfers (UCTs) and the rise in spending and investment.

### 4.3. UBI Application in Alaska

The Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend, while not a full UBI, provides valuable insights into the effects of unconditional cash transfers. The dividend has been associated with reductions in poverty and income inequality, without significant negative impacts on employment. According to [43], In 2014, Alaska distributed \$1,884 to every resident who lived there year-round, which came from the fund's total net income of \$6.8 billion. A portion of this net income was distributed as a dividend to 640,000 citizens. In the figure above, PFD refers to the Permanent Fund Dividend. The value of the PFD has varied significantly throughout the years of this legislative policy. This initiative is clearly different from the other examples mentioned, as it does not focus on tackling economic inequality or poverty. Instead, it is about using funds for the long-term benefit of the community. Although there are debates about whether this funding should keep going and if it is the best use of taxpayer money, there is no strong proof that this type of basic income has harmed the economy for people in Alaska.

In conclusion, a study [43], notes that there is clear evidence that when UBI is implemented by either the government, international organizations or nonprofit organizations, it has a positive economic impact on the specific groups and areas it aims to help. Although many more studies on Universal Basic Income (UBI) are expected in the coming years and even decades, there is already strong evidence that supports the use of UBI to help fight poverty. These examples, which include initiatives in Namibia, Brazil, Canada, and other places not mentioned, offer real-world evidence that supports the idea of basic or unconditional income. Only a small number of programs showed clear negative impacts on a community's economic growth or individual motivation.

## 5. Dimensions of Global Economic Inequalities Manifest

Global economic inequality, which refers to the financial disparities between different countries and regions, is one of the major challenges we face in the 21st century. Therefore, it has turned into a significant concern for economic security. It causes severe poverty even though many wealthy countries and areas have plenty of resources. It is also the source of many worldwide issues, including human trafficking, the growth of slums, the spread of diseases, and the international networks of radicalism, extremism, and terrorism. Due to its

worldwide nature, the planet must adopt fresh viewpoints to tackle global economic inequality and its harmful effects [49]. In addition to differences in wealth, inequalities also affect people's access to good education, healthcare, and technology, which continues the cycle of disadvantages [6, 16]. In terms of education and employment, it remains a critical determinant of economic mobility. Developed nations have extensive educational infrastructure, providing opportunities for skill development and high-paying jobs. In contrast, many developing countries face inadequate schooling systems, limiting workforce potential and perpetuating cycles of poverty. Employment disparities further compound inequality, with marginalized groups facing barriers to fair wages and stable careers. With healthcare and social Protection Inequality, disparities in healthcare access reinforce economic inequalities. High-income countries invest heavily in medical research, universal healthcare, and social security systems, ensuring a higher standard of living. Meanwhile, lower-income nations grapple with inadequate healthcare facilities, leading to higher mortality rates, preventable diseases, and reduced economic productivity. Additionally, with Technological and digital divides as mentioned by Stiglitz, [16], digital revolution has widened economic gaps, as access to technology remains unevenly distributed. Wealthier nations and communities' benefit from advanced technological infrastructure, automation, and artificial intelligence, while poorer regions struggle with limited internet access and outdated equipment. This divide restricts participation in the global digital economy, preventing equitable economic growth. A study [50] mentioned that Broadband internet from space could change the lives of half the world's population that currently lacks access to it. There is a possibility that the economic gains from exploring and using space will mainly go to a few countries with many commercial space companies, mainly the United States. This could increase economic inequality around the world. Lastly, another dimension Global economic inequality manifest is environmental and climate change disparities; Climate change disproportionately affects poorer nations, despite them contributing the least to global carbon emissions. Rising sea levels, desertification, and extreme weather patterns threaten livelihoods, particularly in Africa, South Asia, and island nations. Meanwhile, wealthier countries, despite being the biggest polluters, have the resources to mitigate climate-related damage through advanced infrastructure and adaptation strategies. According to the literature, [51] there is a strong chance that human-caused climate change has raised economic inequality among different countries. For instance, the average gross domestic product (GDP) per person has decreased by 17–31% for the poorest 40% of the population when looking at country-level GDP. This change has created a gap between the wealthiest and the poorest groups that is 25% wider than it would be in a world without global warming. As a result, even though inequality between countries has reduced over the last fifty years, there is about a 90% chance that global

warming has hindered that progress. The main factor is the parabolic link between temperature and economic growth. Warming tends to boost growth in cooler countries while reducing growth in warmer countries. While it's unclear if historical warming has helped some wealthy temperate nations, there is over a 90% chance that, for most poorer countries, the per capita GDP today would be higher if global warming had not happened. In the recent trends in Global Economic Inequality, authors like Hung [52] argues that since the 1980s, globalization has decreased inequality between countries but has led to greater inequality within countries in many places. There has been a discussion about whether global inequality, which includes both differences in wealth between countries and within countries, has grown or shrunk. Thanks to better and more recent data gathered over the last twenty years, this debate has been resolved. Global inequality clearly decreased during the era of globalization. The decrease in overall global inequality is mainly due to China and India moving up into the middle class of the world's income levels. At the same time, the income of the working class in wealthy nations has remained flat, and inequality has been growing both in poorer and richer countries. This change in how income is spread around the world led to new geopolitical tensions and a pushback against globalization in developed countries.

The Global North-South divide is still clearly visible, with developed countries enjoying historical benefits in trade, investment, and technology. In contrast, many developing nations struggle with obstacles that hinder their growth [53, 54]. In many countries, growing inequality is associated with neoliberal policies, tax evasion, and a decrease in workers' influence [22]. Additionally, factors like gender, race, and ethnicity make economic exclusion worse. Marginalized groups often experience systemic discrimination when it comes to jobs and owning assets [55, 56]. Even with global agreements such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the effort to lessen inequality is still inconsistent. This is due to issues like tax havens, heavy debt loads, and imbalanced global governance [57, 58]. According to a study [17], Over the past two hundred years, global income inequality has risen, but it is now starting to decrease. The authors made an illustration (Look Below Paragraph for the illustration) which depicts the conclusion of a lengthy period in human history marked by rising global inequality. Beginning with industrialization in North-Western Europe, people in this region began to see their incomes rise, while the rest of the world continued to face low levels of material wealth. While certain countries embraced European industrialization, such as Northern America, Oceania, and parts of South America first, followed by Japan and East Asia later, many nations in Asia and Africa continued to struggle with poverty. As a result, global inequality rose over an extended time. During the time depicted in this visualization, a significant change occurred: as many countries in Asia and Latin America experienced fast growth, the overall distribution of in-

come around the world became more equal. The earnings of the poorer half of the global population increased more quickly than those of the wealthier half [17].

## 6. The work of Global Governance Institutions

The idea and the challenges of global governance are not new. The concept of global governance involves working together in leadership, where national governments, international public organizations, and community groups collaborate to reach shared objectives. It offers a clear plan and then brings together everyone's efforts to tackle worldwide issues. For it to work well, it needs to be inclusive, adaptable, and capable of crossing national and sector boundaries as well as various interests. It should function using soft power instead of hard power. It ought to be more democratic rather than authoritarian, more transparent in its politics than focused on bureaucracy, and more unified than divided into specialties [59]. According to research [60], since the UN was founded in 1945, a wide range of global and regional organizations has developed, along with many non-governmental groups and advocacy networks that aim to shape international public policy and its direction. While a world government is still a dream, there is a developing system of global governance. This system includes countries, international organizations, and both public and private networks and agencies. Together, they work in different ways to support, manage, or step in on issues that affect all people. Studies [61] stated that the effect of multilateral institutions on development is widely discussed, but there is little disagreement about their strength and influence. The authors later mentioned of Global Institutions and Development as it suggests that, ideas can be used either intentionally or unintentionally to advance the interests or perspectives of influential countries or organizations. I will talk briefly on the roles of some global governance institutions. The United Nations (UN) is a key player in global governance, promoting international collaboration through its main bodies. The Security Council, even with political challenges, approves peacekeeping missions and sanctions to help reduce conflicts [62]. At the same time, organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) establish health guidelines and manage responses to pandemics, as demonstrated during COVID-19 [63]. At the same time, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank offer tools for financial stability and help with development. However, their structural adjustment policies have been criticized for making inequality worse in the Global South [16]. Economic governance is mainly overseen by the World Trade Organization (WTO), which helps resolve trade disputes and encourages free trade. However, its failure to balance the interests of developed and developing countries has hindered significant negotiations since the Doha Round [64]. Regional organizations such as the European Union (EU) support

global institutions by enhancing cooperation in areas like trade, migration, and environmental policy. However, there are ongoing tensions between national sovereignty and the authority of these larger bodies [65]. Non-state actors, such as NGOs, multinational companies, and advocacy networks, are increasingly influencing governance by making institutions accountable, like how Human Rights Watch monitors the UN, and by addressing shortcomings in areas like climate action [66]. However, these institutions encounter ongoing difficulties. The power imbalances, especially the control that Western countries have in the UN Security Council and the IMF, weaken their credibility [67]. Compliance is inconsistent, as shown by breaches of the Paris Agreement and Security Council resolutions [68]. Critics claim that organizations such as the WTO make decisions in a technocratic way that is not very transparent or democratic [69]. Even with these challenges, global governance organizations are essential for organizing joint efforts to tackle crises, such as financial emergencies and climate change. Their development will depend on changing governance systems to match today's power dynamics and increasing involvement from marginalized nations and civil society [70].

## 7. Global Governance, UBI Implementation to Address Global Inequality

The persistent issue of global economic inequality highlighted by conspicuous disparities in wealth and access to essential services calls for a concerted and structured response from international governance mechanisms. Universal Basic Income (UBI) emerges as a promising policy framework capable of alleviating this inequality by providing a financial safety net for the most vulnerable populations. However, the successful implementation of UBI is contingent upon the proactive engagement of global governance institutions. By harnessing the capabilities of multilateral organizations and enhancing cross-national collaboration, the global community can make strides toward a more equitable distribution of resources [71]. The key role played by global governance institutions such as the United Nations (UN), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO) is undeniable in shaping economic policies essential for tackling inequality. These organizations can push the UBI agenda forward through several strategic avenues. One critical area is establishing robust funding and redistribution mechanisms. Wealthy countries, alongside international financial bodies, might set up global UBI funds financed through various tax mechanisms such as a Tobin tax on financial transactions or progressive global wealth taxes to support UBI initiatives in lower-income nations [7–54]. Furthermore, the IMF and World Bank could consider providing conditional grants or low-interest loans to pilot UBI schemes focusing on direct cash transfers and pov-

erty alleviation, rather than austerity measures [54]. In tandem with financial infrastructure, policy coordination and standardization are essential for UBI's effectiveness. The integration of UBI into the UN's Sustainable Development Goals specifically SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) would formally advocate for UBI as an essential tool for ensuring economic security [73]. Individual organizations, like the International Labour Organization (ILO), could draft operational guidelines for UBI, ensuring that implementation aligns with upholding labor rights and other social protections [16]. Conducting research and advocacy initiatives is equally crucial; for instance, global institutions should sponsor comprehensive UBI trials across various economic landscapes to gather actionable data on their effects [54]. Despite these promising pathways, substantial challenges impede the global implementation of UBI. Sovereignty concerns are prominent, as many nations resist external economic mandates due to fears of compromising their autonomy. Adopting a voluntary, incentive-based framework such as providing aid for nations willing to trial UBI may enhance political feasibility [72]. Additionally, funding limitations pose a significant barrier; wealthier nations may demonstrate reluctance in contributing to a global UBI fund unless framed beneficially in terms of long-term stability and reduced migration pressures [73]. Moreover, the technological and administrative capabilities required for efficient UBI deployment are often lacking in many developing countries, thus necessitating international support to build such infrastructure concurrently with UBI rollouts [16]. Envisioning a multilateral UBI framework, a Global UBI Compact backed by the UN General Assembly could operate as a non-binding agreement whereby participating countries commit to explore UBI alongside their fiscal capabilities. This could incorporate peer-reviewed benchmarks for designing UBI programs, such as setting the amount as a proportion of national median income and creating platforms for knowledge exchange among nations on best practices in financing and implementation [16]. Low-income countries embracing UBI as part of their anti-poverty strategies could also benefit from conditional debt relief arrangements [54, 16].

In conclusion, to adequately address the inequalities of the 21st century, global governance institutions must adapt and evolve. The concept of UBI offers not merely a potential solution but a pragmatic step forward. By embedding UBI into the international policy framework, promoting financial collaboration, and addressing inherent implementation challenges, the global community can make significant progress toward a more inclusive economic order. While UBI alone may not resolve all issues of inequality, when backed by firm governance structures, it holds the potential to considerably narrow the divides that exist between nations and to reinforce the social contract amidst the realities of an increasingly disparate global landscape [54, 73]. The pressing question is no longer about the feasibility of UBI—as a global society, the focus must pivot to whether we can afford to overlook a

policy capable of redefining justice within the context of a global economy.

## 8. Conclusion

### *Summary of Key Findings*

This research investigated how Universal Basic Income (UBI) can serve as a mechanism to reconstruct the social contract theory in addressing socio-economic inequalities among states. Through a comprehensive analysis of theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence, several significant findings have emerged.

First, the study established that classical social contract theories, while foundational to understanding state-citizen relationships, are insufficient to address contemporary challenges of inequality exacerbated by globalization and technological disruption. The traditional conceptualization of the state's obligations requires expansion to meet the needs of citizens in an increasingly unequal world. Second, evidence from UBI implementations across diverse contexts demonstrates consistent positive outcomes related to poverty reduction, mental health improvement, and enhanced economic participation. The Finnish UBI experiment revealed improvements in participant well-being and mental health [13], while pilot projects in Namibia and India showed significant poverty reduction and increased economic engagement [14, 15]. These findings suggest UBI's viability as a policy tool to fulfill the state's expanded obligations under a reconstructed social contract. Third, the research identified a crucial role for global governance institutions in facilitating UBI implementation across national boundaries. The alignment between UBI principles and the Sustainable Development Goals provides a framework through which international organizations can promote more equitable resource distribution between states.

### 8.1. Theoretical and Policy Implications

This study contributes to both theoretical understanding and practical policy development. On the theoretical level, it reconceptualizes social contract theory by incorporating UBI as a mechanism through which states fulfill their fundamental obligations to citizens. This reconceptualization responds to the limitations of traditional welfare systems in addressing economic insecurity and inequality in contemporary society. From a policy perspective, the research provides a framework for implementing UBI at both national and international levels. It demonstrates how UBI can be integrated with existing social welfare systems and aligned with global development goals to create more equitable societies. The study also highlights how UBI supports multiple Sustainable Development Goals simultaneously, including reducing inequality (SDG 10), promoting health and wellness (SDG 3), and supporting responsible consumption (SDG 12).

## 8.2. Limitations and Future Research Directions

While this study makes significant contributions to understanding UBI's potential in reconstructing the social contract, several limitations warrant acknowledgment. The empirical evidence on long-term UBI effects remains limited, as most implementations have been short-term pilot programs. Additionally, the political feasibility of UBI implementation at a global scale requires further investigation.

Future research should focus on several key areas. First, longitudinal studies of UBI implementations would provide more robust evidence of long-term impacts. Second, research examining the specific mechanisms through which global governance institutions could facilitate UBI implementation across nations is needed. Third, comparative studies of different UBI models and their effectiveness in various economic and political contexts would enhance our understanding of optimal implementation strategies.

### 8.3. Concluding Remarks

The growing socio-economic inequality within and between states represents a fundamental challenge to the social contract upon which modern societies are built. This research demonstrates that UBI offers a promising pathway to reconstruct this contract for the 21st century. By providing unconditional financial security to all citizens, UBI addresses the basic economic needs that traditional welfare systems have failed to meet adequately. The implementation of UBI requires not only national policy changes but also international cooperation through global governance institutions. Without such cooperation, the social contract risks becoming obsolete in an increasingly unequal world. By embracing UBI as a transformative policy tool, states and international organizations can modernize the social contract and address the socio-economic disparities that threaten global stability and human flourishing.

This study concludes that incorporating UBI into the framework of social contract theory represents a significant theoretical advancement with far-reaching practical implications for creating more equitable societies. The urgency of addressing growing inequality demands innovative policy solutions, and UBI offers a viable mechanism to fulfill the state's fundamental obligations to its citizens while promoting global justice.

## Abbreviations

|      |                               |
|------|-------------------------------|
| UBI  | Universal Basic Income        |
| MDSD | Most Different Systems Design |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| UN   | United Nations                |
| IMF  | International Monetary Fund   |
| BIG  | Basic Income Guarantee        |

## Author Contributions

Hafiz Abdul Hamid Salifu is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declare no conflicts of interest.

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