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Dual nationality, anti-citizenship, and xeno-racism: Online tropes on migrant (in)gratitude, and (in)adequate Britishness of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe

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Abstract

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, an Iranian-British dual citizen, was detained by the Iranian state from April 2016 to March 2022 and charged with spying and propaganda activities against the Iranian state without due process. After her release and return to the UK, Zaghari-Ratcliffe criticized the UK government in a press conference, which triggered a Twitter campaign using the hashtags "sendherback" and "ungrateful." This campaign claimed that she did not show "enough gratitude" to Britain, the country that "saved" her. In this paper, we investigate the content of the Twitter campaign. Using the concept of anti-citizenship, we focus on xeno-racist discourses around Zaghari-Ratcliffe's dual nationality and how her belonging in Britain is challenged. We explore the role Zaghari-Ratcliffe's Iranian background plays in how her Britishness is rendered suspect, which then enables the racialized tropes in the #sendherback campaign.

KEYWORDS
anti-citizenship, belonging, Britishness, dual nationality, Twitter, xeno-racism

1 | INTRODUCTION

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe is an Iranian-British dual citizen who was taken hostage by the Islamic Republic of Iran (the IRI) between April 2016 and March 2022 as leverage to force the UK government to negotiate over a historic debt to Iran. Her arrest and imprisonment became a high-profile political case and was internationally mediatized. She was eventually charged with spying and propaganda activities against the Iranian state. Zaghari-Ratcliffe's case attracted global media attention because of the highly political nature of her arrest that impacted Iran-Britain relations, and the perceived absurdity and seriousness of the charges brought against her. In addition, Zaghari-Ratcliffe's case remained mediatized, partly because of her husband Richard Ratcliffe's tireless campaign for her freedom, as well as the British government's—notably the now resigned Prime Minister of Britain, Boris Johnson's—mishandling of the negotiations to free Zaghari-Ratcliffe (Kamali Dehghan, 2017).

Zaghari-Ratcliffe was arrested in April 2016 by Iranian authorities at Imam Khomeini airport during a family visit to Iran. Her detention escalated into an international issue, with charges of espionage brought against her, which she denied. The case garnered high-level attention when UK Prime Minister Theresa May addressed it with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani in August 2016. Despite diplomatic efforts, Zaghari-Ratcliffe was sentenced to five years in prison in September 2016. In November 2017, appearing before the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, Boris Johnson made a misstatement by asserting that Zaghari-Ratcliffe had merely engaged in "teaching people journalism." In contrast to that, Zaghari-Ratcliffe herself had maintained that her visit to Iran was intended for her daughter to have the opportunity to meet her grandparents. It was also acknowledged by the UK government and the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention that the visit was purely for private reasons (United Nations, 2016). The IRI, who had accused Zaghari-Ratcliffe of running a journalism course to train people to propagate against Iran, took Johnson's comment as "evidence" of Zaghari-Ratcliffe's role in training spies and propaganda activities (Haslam, 2019) to consolidate the case against Zaghari-Ratcliffe.

Despite a temporary release in August 2018, she was again returned to prison. In 2019, Boris Johnson advocated for her release at the UN in September 2019. But the US assassination of Iranian general Qassem Suleimani in 2020 heightened tensions between Iran and the West. In the meantime, Richard Ratcliffe used different strategies and (social) media campaigns, using the hashtag #FreeNazanin, to plea to the British government to negotiate with the Iranian State. As the campaign's repeated attempts to secure her release by the UK government did not succeed, Nazanin and Richard Ratcliffe went on a series of hunger strikes protesting her unjust imprisonment in 2019 (Baring, 2019). During the COVID-19 pandemic, she was temporarily released in March 2020 due to virus fears in prison. In 2021, Iranian authorities demanded that Britain repay its £393.8 million debt to Iran and take steps to lift sanctions in a meeting with the foreign secretary, Liz Truss (Weaver, 2022), in return for Zaghari-Ratcliffe's release.

Eventually, after a series of negotiations between the two governments, Zaghari-Ratcliffe was freed in March 2022, together with a second dual UK-Iranian national, Anoosheh Ashoori, who was detained on spying and financial charges. The British government paid a historic debt of £393.8 million to Iran in return for the release of the two dual nationals (Wintour & Grierson, 2022). It is argued that the "real" reason for Zaghari-Ratcliffe's arrest and imprisonment from the beginning by the IRI was to force the British government to pay the historic debt (See for, e.g., Amnesty International, 2022; Trew et al., 2022; Wintour, 2021).

Zaghari-Ratcliffe and Anoosheh Ashoori's release from the Iranian State's prison and return to the UK received a great deal of predominantly positive media attention both internationally and in the UK. The hashtag #WelcomeHomeNazanin was used by some Twitter users as soon as the news of Zaghari-Ratcliffe's release was publicly announced. However, while there were many more positive reactions to her release, Zaghari-Ratcliffe was also subject to severe (online) abuse. Some negative comments about Zaghari-Ratcliffe were already present before her release and during her imprisonment, but there was a huge surge in emotional, abusive, and derogatory comments after Zaghari-Ratcliffe's release and her criticism of the UK government for its delay in paying the debt to Iran in order to secure her freedom (See for, e.g., Goggins, 2022).

The surge in comments was caused by her media appearance, during which she openly criticized the UK government for not freeing her earlier. This is in contrast to Anoosheh Ashoori, the other released hostage, who did not raise this criticism and, in turn, did not receive similar negative scrutiny online. In a press conference after her release, following her husband's statement, Zaghari-Ratcliffe stated,

> I don't agree with Richard on thanking the Foreign Secretary, because I have seen five Foreign Secretaries over the course of the six years. I was told many times that we're going to get you home, but that never happened. I'm not going to even trust you.

She continued asking, "How many foreign secretaries does it take to bring someone home?" During Zaghari-Ratcliffe's detainment, Boris Johnson (2016–2018), Jeremy Hunt (2018–2019), Dominic Raab (2019–2021), and Elizabeth Truss (2021–2022) held the position of Foreign Secretary. Zaghari-Ratcliffe was freed during Tuss's tenure.

The criticism directed at the UK government for paying Iran to release two dual nationals had started before the press conference. Mark Pompeo, the US politician and ex-secretary of State, accused the UK government of paying "blood money" to Iran to release the two detainees (Gordon, 2022). However, the criticism did not have the intensity and personal nature of what followed Zaghari-Ratcliffe's press comments. Zaghari-Ratcliffe's statements sparked a wave of online critique on social media, specifically Twitter, calling her ungrateful.

In this paper, we use qualitative methods of analysis to address the content of the Twitter campaign against Zaghari-Ratcliffe's press conference. The case study focuses on discourses around dual nationality and its significance in Twitter users' interpretations of Zaghari-Ratcliffe's arrest, imprisonment, and release and sometimes direct reactions to her refusal to thank the Foreign Secretary. We aim to explore what role Zaghari-Ratcliffe's Iranian background plays in these discourses and how, because of her dual nationality, her Britishness is rendered suspect and contingent. The paper contributes to the existing scholarship on the intersections of xeno-racism, dual nationality, and (anti-)citizenship in exclusionary discourses of national and immigrant belonging, as well as the empirical studies of (online) racism in connection to Britishness.

2 | BACKGROUND: DUAL IRANIAN NATIONALITY AND IRI'S HOSTAGE-TAKING PRACTICES

Individuals may desire second citizenship for various reasons, whether political, social, economic, or a combination of these. Once considered a moral abomination, dual citizenship has become more commonplace in globalization (Spiro, 2017). Interest in obtaining a second citizenship is not distributed evenly among individuals and groups of all nationalities and is shaped by the position of individuals/groups in the global citizenship hierarchy. The hierarchy is not inherent to the status of each citizenship but results from global and regional geopolitics in a way that the second citizenship can operate as "compensatory citizenship" and make up for limitations in dual citizens' first citizenship (Harpaz, 2019). Dual nationality is of interest to those whose initial nationality affords them less geographical mobility (Harpaz, 2019) and is of less concern to those with "privileged" citizenships who are already part of the kinetic elite and have privileged access to international mobility (Costas, 2013).

For Iranians, specifically, after the 1979 Iranian Revolution, second citizenship from countries with strong passports is often a huge "upgrade" in mobility, as acquiring foreign visas remains a great challenge when traveling outside their country. However, as dual citizens of Iran are targeted by powerful states, their birth nationality sometimes restricts the mobility gained by their second citizenship (Malek, 2019). For instance, on January 27, 2017, the United States president started a series of executive orders restricting travel from Muslim-majority countries (Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen) (Todoran & Peterson, 2020). These orders called the "Muslim Ban" or "Travel Ban" in the United States, impacted dual nationals of the six countries named above in a

way that their second "privileged" nationality became void (Spiro, 2017), as their birth nationality was rendered problematic and used to limit their mobility. The United States courts halted the implementation of these orders, but a series of new executive orders with similar content followed. Eventually, in September 2017, the United States administration released a presidential proclamation to enhance vetting processes and issued travel restrictions for citizens from Chad, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Syria, Yemen, and Venezuela (Todoran & Peterson, 2020), irrespective of any potential second citizenship. Thus, currently, Iranian dual nationals are required to go through visa appointments and increased scrutiny in order to travel to the US, even if the co-nationals of their non-Iranian nationality do not have to do so. Dual citizenship is, therefore, not always a purely privileged position compared to single citizens from privileged nations.

Zaghari-Ratcliffe was not the first person with dual nationality to be detained by the IRI to be used as a bargaining chip. The IRI notoriously charges dual nationals with far-fetched accusations (Debos, 2020) to negotiate better deals in its international political affairs. In fact, the IRI has used hostage-taking as a political tool since its very foundation, but the practice has evolved since the 1979 Revolution (Ferstman & Sharpe, 2022). Back then, hostages were taken to consolidate internal powers, but more recently, the detainees' foreign/second citizenship has been used to gain leverage in disputes or negotiations and to discourage Iranians from engaging with the West and Israel.

Ferstman and Sharpe (2022) argue that, in addition, the practice of hostage-taking is now carried out under cover of law by using accusations of espionage or threats to national security to subject detainees to spurious criminal charges. State violence against dual nationals in the form of false accusations and unlawful imprisonment has been widely documented (Ferstman & Sharpe, 2022; Malek, 2019; Rahbari, 2022b). Partly to justify such arrests, Iran's policies reveal a continued suspicion of the allegiances and loyalties of dual nationals and concomitant security fears of espionage, terrorism, and treason (Malek, 2019). The State's approach to its nationals, under the new articulation of nationalism established after the 1979 Revolution, is defined in direct opposition to "the West" (Rahbari et al., 2019). Hence, it considers dual Iranian-Western nationality to be the ultimate form of betrayal as far as dual nationalities are concerned (Rahbari, 2022a). Dual nationality, however, also serves an instrumental purpose since individuals could be used as bargaining chips within the Iranian State's geopolitical calculations (Debos, 2020).

While the legitimacy afforded by these legal processes is superficial, statements by the detainees' other/second country of nationality consolidate the Iranian narrative of "Western interference" in its domestic affairs (Ferstman & Sharpe, 2022). In addition, it is known that trials are held in secret and are full of due process violations, such as denying accused persons access to legal counsel of their choice or sometimes any lawyer at all (Ferstman & Sharpe, 2022). But dual citizens' precarious conditions are not always caused by (geo)politics of their country of birth or their first nationality, as dual nationals also face (xeno-)racism, non-belonging, and accusations of partiality and disloyalty in their countries of second nationality. We will address this in the next section.

3 | ANTI-CITIZENSHIP, RACIALIZATION, AND INTEGRATIONISM

Even if it is not always an acceptable state of citizenship in many countries worldwide, dual nationality has become more tolerated and regulated (Harpaz, 2019). It, however, remains a source of anxiety for States (Askola, 2022) and is suspected of causing a conflict of loyalty as the dual national is assumed to become divided in their dual nationalities (Schlenker, 2016). Despite this, dual nationality is tolerated by many countries because it leads to the political incorporation of immigrants and facilitates the maintenance of ties with diasporic communities (Fekete, 2004). In the UK, for example, dual nationality was once part of the imperialist sentiment that not only wanted to keep ties with diasporas in Britain but also aimed to disseminate "British values" (Hansen, 2002). In spite of not having the same status as single nationality, dual nationality has some benefits for both individuals and states for many reasons. For states, it enables the threat of denationalization of undesirable persons (Harpaz, 2019) and is

instrumentalized against them as a punitive measure. States can strategically employ nationality deprivation to discipline and exclude dual nationals suspected of or have committed terrorist acts (Gibney, 2020). The pervasiveness of concerns over the loyalty of dual nationals suggests that loyalty issues have certainly not disappeared from states' top priorities (Askola, 2022). When security is evoked as the priority within a state, dual nationality can no longer be tolerated, for it suggests an equal allegiance elsewhere. Even speaking a language other than the national one may suggest latent disloyalty and lack of patriotism (Fekete, 2004), and lead to the categorization of the dual national as an "anti-citizen."

According to Khosravi (2010), an anti-citizen is someone who constitutes a risk to the well-being, virtue, values, and norms of society. The notion serves not only to mark those who do not belong to the nation but also to recreate and maintain a unified conception of the national identity. The construction of national identity and citizenship is often linked to cultural differences and racial characterizations, which shape perceptions and narratives about what defines the members of a nation. The fact that the nation-state is viewed as the creator and protector of a racialized and sometimes fabricated national homogeneity (Goldberg, 2008) makes it possible to establish a distinction between citizens and anti-citizens. The usage of cultural differences and a need to integrate to qualify as worthy citizens implies a hierarchy along ethnonational and often color-coded lines (Lentin, 2008).

Anti-citizens, such as undocumented migrants (Khosravi, 2010) or non-assimilating migrants (Inda, 2008), are subject to various disciplinary practices, including nationality deprivation. In the UK, nationality deprivation was used in the case of Shamima Begum, a British and alleged Bangladeshi citizen. Begum left Britain when she was a teenager to join the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIL) and, as a result, was stripped of her British citizenship in February 2019 (Masters & Regilme Jr, 2020). Shamima Begum's case led to a citizenship controversy that fueled discussions about migrant and Muslim populations' place in the UK (See, for e.g., Murphy, 2021). Begum's anti-citizenship relied on the supposed repudiation of her own citizenships by conducting a war against citizens (through joining ISIL) (Joppke, 2016).

Deprivation of citizenship is not the only disciplinary method employed against anti-citizens. Inda (2008) discusses how anti-citizenship technologies—from projects that attempt to ethically "improve" to containing and incapacitating– are used on those identified as anti-citizens. These technologies focus not on empowering or activating the self-governing capacities of marginalized subjects but instead on the abjection and exclusion of individuals and populations that are considered particularly troublesome. The suspicion against dual nationals and attempts at "fully" integrating them can be considered one of such anti-citizenship technologies. This notion relates to what Arun Kundnani calls integrationism, a discourse that accepts non-white presence in Britain conditionally on its assimilating to the national culture (Kundnani, 2007). Kundnani, similar to Goldberg (2008), discusses that the assumption of a homogeneous national identity rests on the foundation that the nation could only be held together by a core of cultural sameness, which can then lead to a normalization of anti-immigrant racism when the migrants are perceived as non-conforming (Kundnani, 2007). While integrationism promises "belonging" if the migrants assimilate to the nation's cultural norms, in practice, it does not guarantee such belonging. Instead, it provides a disciplinary and external tool to measure the conformity (and, in the UK, Britishness) of the supposed anti-citizens.

This trap in the integrationist discourse is addressed by Abdelmalek Sayad, who argues that full integration is never considered possible (Sayad, 2004). Sayad argues that integration is a myth because it follows the form of the asymptotic curve of the exponential function where it is possible to get close to a value (i.e., true citizenship) but never reach it no matter how high on "integration." This means that more integration within the current racialized regimes (Avallone & Molinero Gerbeau, 2021) will not guarantee "true citizenship." As in the asymptotic curve, the distance between the migrant curve and the population axis will get close to zero but never reach an absolute zero, leaving an ever-present (minute) gap between the status of an integrated migrant and a "true" citizen. Integrationism as an anti-citizenship technology, therefore, not only does not succeed in including but, in the process of containing and incapacitating anti-citizens, reinforces racialized assumptions of cultural difference.

In addition to this formulation of failed integration as anti-citizenship, sociologist Stuart Hall's notion of race as a floating signifier can help understand how the racialization of dual nationals will not cease to occur after

integrating into the national linguistic or cultural habits of their second nation nationality. Hall invokes sociologist W. E. B. Du-Bois's reasoning on race that argues racial classifications are poorly correlated with a genetic difference and, on the other hand, impossible to correlate significantly with cultural, intellectual, or cognitive characteristics of people (Hall & Jhally, 1996). Hall then argues that race is instead a discursive category that is grounded neither on scientific, biological, or genetic grounds nor on purely cultural and linguistic grounds (Hall & Jhally, 1996). The floating signifier of race can fluidly shift direction from the former to the latter and vice-versa, as long as racism and the hierarchical classification of humans exist. Hall's formulation of race explains forms of racism that utilize cultural or national differences as justifications for discrimination rather than skin color-based modes of othering. This notion of race is, therefore, inclusive of xeno-racism, which, as Sivanandan (2006) explains, is a form of xenophobia that bears all the marks of the "old racism," except that it is not color-coded. This form of racism manifests itself, for instance, in some anti-Muslim racism as well as racism against light-skinned Eastern European populations in Britain (for more on xeno-racism in Britain, see, Cole, 2009; Cole & Cole, 2017; Cole & Maisuria, 2009). Xeno-racism, therefore, justifies discrimination beyond skin color and extends it to language, accent, clothing, or religious practices, which are all mobilized to mark individuals as "others."

Such constructed categories of otherness often intersect and contribute to the hierarchies of anti-citizenship. Introducing the notion of intersectionality, Kimberlé Crenshaw has encouraged the understanding of matrices of domination as intersectional (Crenshaw, 1991; Khrebtan-Hörhager, 2019), meaning that xeno-racism manifests itself in intersectional ways and is based on a combination of axes of identity, such as race, gender, class, and religion. Xeno-racism is specifically relevant to the case of Iranians (among other Middle Eastern populations), who often pass as Caucasian but are culturally considered not to be sufficiently white (Khoshneviss, 2018). In this paper, we use Khosravi's (2010) and Inda's (2008) formulation of anti-citizenship and Hall's (1996) and Sivanandan's (2006) notion of xeno-racism to make sense of the way intersectional racialization is at work in relation to dual nationality and Zaghari-Ratcliffe's Britishness.

4 | METHODS

This case study relies on qualitative methods to analyze the racist discourse on Twitter. Initially, netnography was used to explore qualitative tweet patterns in the #sendherback and #ungrateful campaigns. After extracting tweets, we employed content and discourse analysis (Based on Janks, 1997) to analyze user-created tweets. The Twitter API was used to obtain relevant tweets. The search criteria were any tweets that (i) mentioned the name of Nazanin Zaghari-Radcliffe and (ii) were posted between the beginning of March 2022, when the campaign started, and mid-July 2022.

We used the "Nazanin Zaghari Ratcliffe" query and included all tweets for initial sampling. The start date for data collection was set about 2 weeks before Zaghari-Ratcliffe's freedom—which happened on March 16, 2022—in order to cover tweets and news about her potential release before she was allowed to leave Iran. This method of selection resulted in a total of 243.923 tweets being extracted. In the next filtering step, which we performed with the programming language R, we removed all retweets and all duplicate tweets. After this step, the sample was reduced to 23.219 (a combination of 18.220 original tweets and 4.999 quoted tweets). Twitter reactions predominantly originated from the UK. This was determined not only by the usage of language but also by tracing markers in user profiles such as profile descriptions, including names of cities, locations, and symbols such as the British flag, as well as by interpreting the content of the comments. This method has clear limitations because it relies on our interpretation and not self-reported data. More than 90 percent of the obtained tweets were in the English language. Since the other 10 percent consisted of a multitude of other languages, with no language standing out as significantly more present than others in Twitter reactions, we focused only on the tweets in the English language. This selection is also empirically justified since the analysis is focused on the notion of Britishness and online racist tropes in British social media.

The analysis and identifying recurring themes included open coding of tweets until data saturation was reached after analyzing 500 tweets. The rest of the data was then analyzed with these themes in mind in an iterative process. After reviewing the whole data, three major themes of "(un)gratefulness and victim-blaming," "racism and sexism," and "Tory versus Labor divide" were identified, with each section including different code categories that we will discuss in the findings section.

The analysis was conducted to answer the study question of how Twitter users reacted to Zaghari-Ratcliffe's statement, and "based on the textual frequencies, modes, and patterns, what can be said about the relationship between Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe's double nationality, Britishness, and the public Twitter response?" In order to anonymize the identity of private Twitter users, we have abstained from quoting direct tweets or parts of the tweets that could lead the reader to the tweets and break the user's anonymity and have instead reported paraphrased or smaller sections of the tweets. This type of anonymization has been conducted on all tweets posted by private individuals. Reported tweets did not get anonymized only when they belonged to journalists and public persons such as media or political analysts whose tweeted opinions leaked to other publicly accessible platforms or if their Twitter reactions were reported by other publicly accessible media such as online newspapers. When references to media pieces were made in the elected tweets, we also included these media pieces in the analysis. It is noteworthy that the use of cyber warfare, bots, and disinformation on social media is a common strategy used by states, including the Iranian state, and while many users appeared to be genuine individuals, it is not possible to rule out the possibility of state-run or influenced social media accounts.

It is noteworthy that the 27 tweets that received the most likes were news pieces and messages welcoming Zaghari-Ratcliffe to the UK, together gathering a total of 365.575 likes, indicating a generally positive reaction to Zaghari-Ratcliffe's release by the users. While having a limited thematic focus and not being generalizable because of its empirical foci, this case study has the potential to reveal discursive patterns relevant to studying dual nationality and racism in other contexts.

5 | FINDINGS

5.1 | The ungrateful migrant and victim-blaming

Two recurrent themes in reactions to Zaghari-Ratcliffe's press conference were in relation to Zaghari-Ratcliffe's supposed "ungratefulness" and blaming her for visiting Iran. Some users mentioned that Zaghari-Ratcliffe was ungrateful for not showing "enough gratitude" to the country that saved her from prison (Allegretti, 2022). This was the most common trend among the tweets against Zaghari-Ratcliffe. Hashtags #sendherback and #ungratefulcow were employed by users. Some users suggested that the debt paid by the British government should be taken back. One user mentioned "the ungrateful little speech of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe" and asked other Twitter users to vote if they would "like the £400m back."

Zaghari-Ratcliffe was blamed for causing her own predicament, and users criticized her visit to Iran because of the supposedly obvious risks of traveling to Iran, even though when she traveled to Iran, there was no advice against British (dual) nationals visiting Iran (advice against visiting Iran was issued only years later after Zaghari-Ratcliffe was arrested). Some users wrongly claimed that there was British government advice against travel to Iran, which cautioned British passport holders the IRI could be hostile to them merely because of their passports. This group blamed Zaghari-Ratcliffe for her detainment because she "went back to Iran against all the advice" and called her imprisonment a "self-inflicted ordeal." Another user said, "[t]he truth of it is that she traveled to Iran against the travel advice at the time… it was her own fault. She shouldn't have gone there then. She's ungrateful."

Many other users expressed similar opinions. Some users called Zaghari-Ratcliffe selfish for traveling to Iran and claimed that the UK government was not obligated to make an effort to bring her back to the UK. A user stated that the UK had no obligation "to spend so much time negotiating the release of utterly ungrateful Nazanin Zaghari-

Ratcliffe." And that "It was her stupid, selfish choice" to visit Iran. Another user similarly expressed that she "has only herself to blame." There was substantial critique regarding the payment of the debt to Iran in relation to the ungratefulness discourse, with some users suggesting that the "taxpayer" money was wasted on Zaghari-Ratcliffe and that the UK should return her to Iran and ask for a refund of "our money."

Besides the negative tone of such comments putting the blame on Zaghari-Ratcliffe, they also did not accurately present the British government's advice on travel to Iran. The current advice on travel to Iran (in 2023) is a strongly formulated note of caution stating, "The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) advises British nationals against all travel to Iran," the advice on travel to Iran in 2016 was substantially more limited. The 2016 advice was,

> 'At present the British Embassy can only offer a limited consular service. If you need routine consular assistance in Iran, you should contact the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Reestablishing full consular assistance is a priority, and we hope to be in a position to offer this within the next few months'—extracted from the 'Foreign travel advice' on the official website of the British government using the Waybackmachine.

This latter relatively hopeful note about reestablishing consular assistance is because of the positive developments in the United States and Europe's successful negotiations with Iran over a "nuclear deal" that led to the oil and financial sanctions being lifted on Iran in January 2016 (European Council, 2023). Therefore, unlike the online users' claims, the relations between the two countries in 2016 were not only not as critical as they are today but were even growing in a positive direction, and the advice against travel to Iran developed in years after, partly because Zaghari-Ratcliffe was detained in Iran.

Comments that blamed Zaghari-Ratcliffe potentially reflect ignorance about the systematic way the IRI violates its (dual) nationals' rights and reveal the level of obliviousness about—if not hostility toward—the hybridity of migrant identities and lives (Foroutan, 2013). By doing this, they prescribe immobility or selective mobility to migrants by assuming that migrants can always agentively "choose" the types of mobility they practice or cut ties with their birth/home countries and people (in this case, first-degree family members) due to perceived levels of risk.

Zaghari-Ratcliffe's birthplace and Iranian roots were also scrutinized by some users. One user used Zaghari-Ratcliffe's birth country (Iran) to compare her to Shamima Begum and Terry Waite. Terry Waite was a white British citizen who traveled to Lebanon to try to secure the release of four hostages kept captive by an extremist militia group but was himself kidnapped and held captive from 1987 to 1991. The user expressed that they found it strange that "Shamima Begum is British and not welcome back in the UK, but Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe is Iranian… she was born in Iran as we welcome her came back…in the end, she's so ungrateful […]." The user implies that because Zaghari-Ratcliffe was not born in the UK, the British government was not responsible for returning her. The comment, thereby, effectively renders her British nationality invalid because of her birthplace. The comparisons drawn between Zaghari-Ratcliffe, Begum, and Waite indicate how her credibility as a genuine victim was questioned. To deny her victimhood, doctored photographs of her with her husband, Richard Ratcliffe, and their daughter circulated at this time, depicting Zaghari-Ratcliffe smiling and her husband and daughter frowning. The images were altered to portray Zaghari-Ratcliffe as manipulative and her husband and daughter as the true victims. As Khosravi articulated it, one of the binary ascriptions of citizenship/anti-citizenship is moral/amoral and trustworthiness/deceitfulness. The manipulation of the photographs was, therefore, done in order to "prove" Zaghari-Ratcliffe's anti-citizenship.

Twitter campaigns against Zaghari-Ratcliffe also used the popular anti-migrant "return" discourse by saying that Zaghari-Ratcliffe must be sent back to Iran. One user suggested that the British public start a crowdfunding page for a return ticket because of her lack of gratefulness to the country that "saved her." Many others used the #sendherback hashtag to support returning Zaghari-Ratcliffe where she "truly" belonged. Such discourses around

sending back and returning only make sense within an anti-citizenship discourse where the dual nationals' true nationalities are questioned and when their loyalties are considered to lie elsewhere. Different reactions to Zaghari-Ratcliffe's release and statements were an indication of the competing views of Britishness held by the users online (to which we will return in the discussion section), with the exclusionary version of it dominating in the #sendherback campaign and the cosmopolitan version celebrating Zaghari-Ratcliffe's return.

5.2 | The intersection of racialization and sexism

Intersecting discourses of racialization and sexism were recurring themes in tweets reacting to Zaghari-Ratcliffe's press conference and her critique of the UK government. Some comments were clearly sexist, such as one calling her the "ungrateful bitch" of the year. Other racializing patterns harboring anti-Muslim racism were also present. Some users suggested that Zaghari-Ratcliffe has been "radicalised" or that if she were secretly video recorded, she would be found praying on a mat, referencing the Muslim prayer that often takes place on a mat. Such comments alleged that Zaghari-Ratcliffe was brainwashed by the IRI and hence would be a danger to Britain. In these comments, Zaghari-Ratcliffe was called Iran's spy, stupid, Manchurian candidate, brainwashed, radicalized, selfish (bitch), and Muslim, among other names and slurs. The word Muslim is, therefore, also being used with an offensive intent; an indication of the present anti-Muslim racism in some user comments. Other users accused Zaghari-Ratcliffe of being a British spy. She "works for MI6. Why else would you pay £400 million to Iran?" claimed one user. Another user raised the question that Zaghari-Ratcliffe may have, in fact, been a British spy and, hence, rightfully arrested in Iran. It is noteworthy that according to our cyberethnography, the accusations of spying are a trend that existed even before Zaghari-Ratcliffe's release, albeit on a much smaller scale. Such accusations could be partly spread by bots or the cyber army of the Iranian state.

Other comments with sexist and racializing undertones focused on Zaghari-Ratcliffe's appearance and attitude. She was considered too assertive by some users. One user commented, "We know who wears the trousers in this relationship," referring to Zaghari-Ratcliffe's press comment that she did not agree with her husband. Another user criticized "the look she gave him." These comments concluded that Richard was victimized by Zaghari-Ratcliffe. Also note the altered pictures of the family mentioned in the previous section, which implied that Zaghari-Ratcliffe —a female dual national—victimized her white British husband and British-born child. Others used media imagery of Zaghari-Ratcliffe after her release to claim that she looked too "good" and "healthy" to have been in detention, implying that if she had been treated badly by the IRI and had been in "real danger," she would have looked differently. One user commented that she "looked like a model." Another user compared Zaghari-Ratcliffe's looks with how Terry Waite (see the previous section for an introduction) looked upon his release, implying that Zaghari-Ratcliffe had lived in good conditions in Iran. There were conspiracy theories about Zaghari-Ratcliffe having stayed in a "£2-million-pound mansion" instead of a prison cell during her detention.

Besides these tweets and discussions, many tweets engaged with accusations of racism against a Scottish comedian-writer, Leo Kearse, who publicly commented about Zaghari-Ratcliffe's press release. On March 21, around 5 days after Zaghari-Ratcliffe's release, Kearse was on a news panel on the TV channel GB News, in which Zaghari-Ratcliffe's press conference was a topic of discussion. Kearse drew on the gratefulness discourse, stating, "Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe is Iranian for ungrateful." He added, "I'd rather buy some stinger missiles for Ukraine" to help them battle the Russian invasion (North, 2022).

The comment by Kearse attracted many reactions on Twitter. Users reacted to GB News's coverage of the release, and the panel—with two other presenters besides Kearse—received widespread critique on Twitter. Users questioned what they perceived as inappropriateness and racism in the comment as well as why the other two presenters laughed at the comment, "Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe is Iranian for ungrateful." The critique—which marked a wider political divide between those who interpreted the comment as racist and those who did not— further developed as columnist and presenter Victoria Coren-Mitchell called out Kearse on Twitter for his

comments, clarifying "…Iranian isn't a language. The language is Farsi" (Harrison, 2022; North, 2022). After the accusations of racism, Kearse responded on Twitter by saying,

> According to Victoria Coren Mitchell, my comments about Nazanin Zaghari-Markle are 'racist.' Could anyone explain this? Even putting myself in the mindset of an overthinking self-loathing white saviour wokeist I can't stretch to find the racism.
>
> (Kearse, 2022)

He then added in another tweet, "I didn't even know she was black." Kearse's comment referred to Zaghari-Ratcliffe as "Zaghari-Markle" adverts to Meghan Markle, Duchess of Sussex and a black American member of the British royal family, who has famously accused the British press of racialized bias while she was residing in Britain (Weidhase, 2022). Kearse indirectly rejected the accusations of racism made against her by joking about Zaghari-Ratcliffe's racialized background and implying that one can only use accusations of racism when the victim is black. This could be a reference to Zaghari-Ratcliffe's complexion and skin color. As Khoshneviss (2018) has discussed in the case of the US, the racialization of Middle Eastern populations is based on the perception of them as imperfectly white but Caucasian populations. Racism and racialization, however, do not necessarily start or remain color-coded and are not limited to corporeal features (Khoshneviss, 2018). As the studies of xeno-racism show, racialization has moved beyond limiting racism to bias based on skin tone to include cultural markers, such as clothing, language, and beliefs, as the basis for racism both in the United States and Europe (Selod & Embrick, 2013; Sivanandan, 2006).

The #sendherback campaign was also mentioned in the British media in relation to Zaghari-Ratcliffe being a racialized migrant woman, emphasizing the presence of an intersectional and discriminatory discourse. Journalist Ali Waheed wrote in a piece 1 week after Kearse's comments, "(t)he real reason she faced such vitriol is because she is a brown woman of Middle Eastern descent." In a Twitter analysis of the reactions to Zaghari-Ratcliffe's comments, Owen Jones, a British journalist, traced the tweets using #sendherback and #ungratefulcow (Owen Jones, 2022). Jones concluded that a distinctly pro-Brexit and conservative community labeled Zaghari-Ratcliffe as ungrateful on Twitter. Jones's analysis partly aligns with our findings on the connections of the Twitter campaign to partisan British politics and views on Ukraine, which we will elaborate on in the next section.

5.3 | British politics: Tory versus labor divide

The Twitter campaign around Zaghari-Ratcliffe created a digital battleground between the followers of the two major political parties in the UK: conservatives (also referred to as the Tories) and Labor supporters. Among topics appearing in tweets that divided or connected the two sides were: (i) the role of the British government, especially Boris Johnson as the prime minister in Zaghari-Ratcliffe's release; (ii) the invasion of Ukraine and how it created anxieties for Europe about finding alternative sources of energy other than Russia; (iii) and Brexit.

Zaghari-Ratcliffe's press conference statement was perceived mostly by conservative-voting British users as an attack on Boris Johnson and his administration. Boris Johnson was praised by this group as the person who "went out of his way to secure her freedom." "Boris [Johnson] owes her nothing or her husband," said one user. The party lines were indicated directly in some quotes bashing Zaghari-Ratcliffe because "[S]he is working for the Labor party." Comments on Boris Johnson's government were entangled with the gratefulness discourse, with some users' argument stating that Zaghari-Ratcliffe owed the government gratitude because it was the "Brexit Britain's Tory" government who successfully negotiated for her freedom. There were also calls to the government for further investigation into Zaghari-Ratcliffe and the reason why she was in Iran in the first place. One user stated, "there's no smoke without fire," and another suggested Zaghari-Ratcliffe must be put on a "watch list," both joining conspiracy narratives that claimed she may be an Iranian spy (explained in the previous "The ungrateful migrant and

victim blaming" section). In opposition to these views, Labor supporters criticized Boris Johnson's government for failing to secure Zaghari-Ratcliffe's release earlier.

The discussion on the role of the government and Boris Johnson was also entangled with the UK's role in Ukraine as Zaghari-Ratcliffe's release from an Iranian prison and her subsequent return to the UK occurred concurrently with Russia's attack on Ukraine, which commenced in February 2022. Several Twitter users on both sides of the political spectrum drew correlations between Zaghari-Ratcliffe's press conference and the ongoing Ukrainian crisis. The Labor and Tory divide was once again clear in the way they referred to the money paid to the Iranian State: while Tories called the money "ransom" to emphasize that the money was not rightfully Iran's, some Labor supporters called it a "debt" and pointed out that Iran's claim to the money was legitimate and blamed the UK government for its delay in paying it.

One user criticized the coverage of Zaghari-Ratcliffe's release in the media, stating that the BBC did not focus on the Ukraine crisis as the main and first news item in their coverage and instead covered Zaghari-Ratcliffe's "ungrateful" comment. One user mentioned that there were "British men" fighting for Ukraine and were detained by the Russian army and that these "heroes" should have been rescued instead of Zaghari-Ratcliffe. Other users critiqued the debt paid to Iran, not because of the nature of the debt and because it was paid to the IRI but arguing that the same money could have been better spent to boost Ukraine's defense and provide Ukraine with more missiles. Some users drew connections between the growing concern over an energy crisis in Europe and speculated that the British government paid its historic debt to Iran, entirely or partly because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The payment of the debt was seen as a strategy to facilitate oil and gas business with Iran. The negotiations to release Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe from the Iranian prison were thus seen as a way to mitigate the oil crisis caused by the invasion of Ukraine. One user mentioned that Zaghari-Ratcliffe must "thank Putin" for her freedom, signaling that without an invasion of Ukraine, the negotiations between the UK and Iran would not have happened.

Brexit was also mentioned by supporters of both parties, with mostly Tories claiming that the EU would have been an obstacle in such negotiations. They then argued that Brexit contributed to the successful negotiations between Iran and the UK. There was, however, also a minority who did vote Remain and still participated in the #sendherback campaign against Zaghari-Ratcliffe. One user said they voted Remain but believed Zaghari-Ratcliffe was "ungrateful" and a possible "foreign actor." Ignoring the existence of the latter group may bear the risk of associating racialization entirely with the realm of right-wing and conservative politics. Brexit was most often used by Labor users to call out conservatives who started the #sendherback campaign as racist, using terms such as "Brexiter racists" in comments about those who called Zaghari-Ratcliffe ungrateful.

These Labor users' comments referred to the UK foreign policy and the failure of the government to negotiate Zaghari-Ratcliffe's release. In this context, more specifically, Boris Johnson's role in aggravating Zaghari-Ratcliffe's detention conditions in Iran (explained in the introduction section) attracted many tweets. Some users interpreted Johnson's focus on Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a way to redeem himself and cover up his failure and "incompetence" in negotiating a deal for Zaghari-Ratcliffe and contributing to the aggravation of her circumstances in Iran. Overall, in the #sendherback Twitter campaign, the gap between the voters of the UK's two main political parties was stark, with mostly conservatives (Tories) calling out Zaghari-Ratcliffe as ungrateful and being behind the online campaign and mostly Labor voters supporting and praising Zaghari-Ratcliffe's criticism of the conservative UK government. The reaction to Kearse's comments on Zaghari-Ratcliffe discussed in the previous section, were similarly along political party lines.

In addition, the "us versus them" discourse placed Ukraine in the "us" category and Zaghari-Ratcliffe in the "them" category. Ukraine was considered part of Europe/the Western world, specifically when the perception of threat against Europe as a whole—a whole that is not always so clearly delineated (De Genova, 2016)—is prioritized over the "other." This signifies the limits of citizenship as a framework to create belonging. Zaghari-Ratcliffe may be a British citizen, but within the imagination of a group of mostly Tory-supporting British online users, her Britishness is considered to be inadequate; she remained the other and an alien to the "true" British nation.

6 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this paper, we showed how, after her release and return to the UK, Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe was blamed for her predicament on social media, and users falsely criticized her visit to Iran because of supposedly ignoring the obvious risks of traveling to the country. She was also the target of online abuse for not showing "enough gratitude" to the country that "saved her from prison" (Allegretti, 2022). Calling racialized migrants ungrateful is not new, as migrants/refugees are expected to feel and express eternal gratitude to the countries they migrate to (Iqbal et al., 2021). Additionally, nationalist accounts of citizenship expect "allegiance" to the country one migrates to, expecting that migrants cut ties with their birth countries and "integrate" into their new homes.

Our primary focus in this paper has been on the Twitter content to engage with online racializing and xeno-racist tropes in relation to dual nationality. As the analysis of the tweets showed, dual nationality does not guarantee one's status as a "native" and can even backfire by turning the individual into a "suspect national" with loose and inadequate connections to any nationality precisely because they have more than one. We investigated some (xeno-)racist and sexist discourses online and showed that while xeno-racism is present, racism is only understood in color-coded terms, and xeno-racism remains unrecognized by a segment of the British population (as demonstrated in Kearse's comments). We also showed that the discourse around ungratefulness relies on the premise that once one migrates, their migrancy will dictate the lens through which society sees them, should they deviate from the path of "deserving" citizenship.

The highly emotional nature of many of the tweets about gratitude to Britain and its government can be understood better by being placed within the contextual politics of emotion. In "The Cultural Politics of Emotion," Sara Ahmed showed how emotions such as love, hate, and fear play a role in defining national identity and determining who is included or excluded from the nation. She elaborates on how not only fear and hatred for the marked bodies of "others" but also love for the nation are mobilized to demand that migrants assimilate, implying that their acceptance and reciprocation of love from the nation are contingent upon their assimilation (Ahmed, 2014). But even when such forms of allegiance are demonstrated through linguistic, social, and economic "integration," racialized populations and migrants remain suspect due to their race or sometimes the intersection of racialization with gender, religion (Rahbari, 2018), and other forms of perceived alterity. This shows the limits of the notion of "integration" without considering the racialized and gendered dynamics involved in constructing (non)belonging (Korteweg, 2017). Zaghari-Ratcliffe's non-belonging and the subsequent degradation to an anti-citizen appear at the intersection of xeno-racism, anti-Iranian bigotry, and anti-migrant political views.

Zaghari-Ratcliffe's case indicates the existence of competing definitions of Britishness. While the notion contains cultural and political intricacies, within the two different lines of reactions to Zaghari-Ratcliffe's release and statements, two visions of Britishness could be identified: One notion of Britishness imagines the nation as "white" and rejects Zaghari-Ratcliffe, despite her successful integration to the nation. The integrationist perspective would argue that Zaghari-Ratcliffe's level of integration into British society—and hence the extent to which she becomes British—impacts the extent to which she is welcomed by "natives." The case of Zaghari-Ratcliffe discredits this vision. Zaghari-Ratcliffe is not considered part of the "us" and, hence, eternally unworthy of Britishness by the #sendherback campaign. But Zaghari-Ratcliffe's ani-citizenship is strongly declared only after criticizing the British government and, therefore, seems to be a result of partisan politics and xeno-racism that, in spite of her social status and phenotype, considers her unworthy of citizenship because of betraying the nation's values, and norms of society (Khosravi, 2010) that expect migrants and dual nationals to be eternally grateful.

The other cosmopolitan/inclusive notion of Britishness, advocates of which celebrate her return, considers Zaghari-Ratcliffe British enough. While there are limits to this notion of Britishness, an intersectional status-class dynamic makes Zaghari-Ratcliffe a part of the imagined nation: she is a middle-class Londoner, fluent in English, married to a British man, and highly educated. In both cases, whether the first definition is based on race-based and skin-deep factors or the one is based on socio-economic and status markers, Britishness is not something that can be entirely acquired and is externally assigned to her. There is, therefore, a risk of losing one's position as a citizen

through anti-citizenship technologies (Khosravi, 2010; Sivanandan, 2006) that define, educate, and, if needed, discipline and incapacitate (un)deserving subjects.

We also observed that the online discussion around the Russian invasion of Ukraine and how the money spent on Zaghari-Ratcliffe must have been spent to defend Ukraine was short-lived. While most of the other arguments (xeno-racism, ungratefulness, challenging money payment to Iran) in the article continue to be had to this day (albeit much less frequently), the Ukraine discussion seems to be the product of the time when Zaghari-Ratcliffe was released, and the news cycle about her statement occurred. Our analysis also indicates that the invasion of Ukraine by Russia invoked Eurocentric us versus them discourses that (re)placed Zaghari-Ratcliffe outside of the "us" imaginary. The attention for Zaghari-Ratcliffe became associated with this sense—the denial of her victim status was an assertion that other things matter more/home issues are being neglected, with Ukraine being part of the imagined us and closer to home. At the press conference, she became another complaining foreigner and an anti-citizen who did not demonstrate love for the nation (Ahmed, 2014). The critique of Zaghari-Ratcliffe, therefore, came from a sense of the "us" being unfairly neglected and marginalized in favor of the "other."

As the case of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe shows, dual nationality can cause conditions of precarity in both the first and the second country of nationality. Social attitudes toward dual nationals are also tainted with nationalist discourses that see them as disloyal (Rahbari, 2022c). Iranian dual nationals can face racism, othering, and legal hurdles precisely because of their dual nationality (See for, e.g., Kruger & Verhellen, 2011; Stasiulis & Ross, 2009). As we showed in this paper, Zaghari-Ratcliffe may not be immediately perceived as the prototypical target of racist discourse. She is a fluent English-speaking, highly educated Caucasian woman. However, her dual citizenship status and other qualifications do not make her immune to racialized discourses that place her in the category of the other (e.g., Muslim, spy, foreign agent, etc.). While the ungrateful Twitter campaign relied on the cultural tropes of migrants' eternal debt to countries they migrate to, this trope appears beside essentializing tropes of race. Stuart Hall's notion of the floating signifier (Hall & Jhally, 1996) is useful for understanding how there is a tendency to fall back into essentialist discourses when falling short on cultural elements. Zaghari-Ratcliffe's integration is difficult to question. Besides the gratefulness discourse, Zaghari-Ratcliffe's racialization can hardly draw on cultural inadequacy discourse. What is raised instead are xeno-racist references to her "roots," implicated in her country of origin, birthplace, and Iranian nationality.

The online campaign against Zaghari-Ratcliffe showed, on the one hand, the limits of citizenship and the migrant integrationist discourse as a solution to bias and discrimination against racialized migrants, and other the other hand, the narrow way racism is understood in British society. Online comments, such as the one made by Leo Kearse, showed that racism is primarily misunderstood as skin-tone bias, whereas, as we argued, xeno-racism relies on intersectional discrimination that is not color-coded. Whether the color-coded definition is intentionally deployed to deflect accusations of racism or genuinely believed in as the only way racism is understood, the consequence is the same: a reductionist approach to racism that hinders a better understanding of how it functions.

To conclude, the significance of the campaign calling Zaghari-Ratcliffe ungrateful goes beyond the realm of social media, as the debate did not remain in the online social media space. It received continued coverage from mainstream media, including TV and different radio shows, where Zaghari-Ratcliffe's (un)gratefulness became a mainstream topic of debate. The British Prime minister's spokesperson and other senior politicians stepped in and commented on the topic, with the former defending Zaghari-Ratcliffe's right to criticize, stating, "[a]s a UK citizen, someone in a free and democratic country, she is rightly able to voice her opinion on any topic she wishes" (Allegretti, 2022). Various prominent commentators wrote pieces reflecting on the legitimacy of expecting her to be grateful and how grateful is grateful enough. The debate had and continues to have a lasting cultural impact on British politics and public debates on the role of the government in situations such as Zaghari-Ratcliffe's.

Although a comprehensive examination of governmental accountability falls outside the scope of this paper, it is imperative to consider the UK government's role in comprehending the public reactions to Zaghari-Ratcliffe's press release. This understanding necessitates analyzing existing cultural stereotypes concerning racialized nationals, non-nationals, and dual nationals and exploring their interplay with the UK government's policies. Further

investigation into the UK government's handling of the case, its negotiations with the IRI, and a more detailed analysis of the British politics of the period when Zaghari-Ratcliffe was in detention would contribute to a better understanding of the underlying socio-political factors sparking such a heated online campaign. It would further be helpful to scrutinize the online rhetoric in relation to the UK government's discourse on citizenship/anti-citizenship in general and its responsibilities toward its citizens, particularly in the context of Zaghari-Ratcliffe's arrest.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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