

# Women's Solidarity and Betrayal in a Repressive Society

Komal Kamini<sup>1</sup> and Dr. Shveta Singh Komal<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, University Department of English, Tilka Manjhi Bhagalpur University, Bihar, India

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, S M College Bhagalpur, Tilka Manjhi Bhagalpur University, Bihar, India

Received: 29 Apr 2024, Received in revised form: 24 May 2025, Accepted: 28 May 2025, Available online: 03 Jun 2025

## Abstract

*Women's solidarity and betrayal in repressive society gives a picture of women Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale and George Orwell's 1984. Both novels depict dystopian societies where individual freedoms are severely restricted, and social structures are manipulated to maintain control. In The Handmaid's Tale, Atwood describes a theocratic regime that enforces strict gender roles and monitors women's interactions to prevent unity. Despite these restrictions, moments of genuine connection and support among women still emerge. It analyzes how the protagonist, Offred, interacts with other Handmaids like Ofglen and Janine, highlighting the delicate balance between solidarity and the fear of betrayal under oppression.*

**Keywords—** *Women's Solidarity, Betrayal, Oppression, Gender Roles, Social Control, Feminist Themes, Resistance.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In societies marked by repression, women often find themselves subjected to systemic control that limits their freedoms and agency. Repressive societies are characterized by strict social, political, and cultural hierarchies designed to maintain power and suppress dissent. These systems often use various mechanisms such as surveillance, legal restrictions, and ideological control to enforce conformity. The consequences for women in these environments are particularly severe, as they are forced into roles that deny them autonomy, participation, and voice. Despite these conditions, women have historically found ways to resist through solidarity, forming collective bonds to challenge and survive oppression [6, 28]. It explores the complexities of solidarity and betrayal among women in repressive societies, examining how these dynamics shape both personal relationships and broader societal resistance efforts.

Repressive societies, whether political, cultural, or social, share certain defining characteristics. These include the concentration of power in the hands of a

few, the suppression of dissent, and the regulation of everyday life through various forms of control, such as surveillance, censorship, and state-sanctioned violence. The role of women in such societies is often one of subjugation, where patriarchal norms are deeply embedded, and women's roles are reduced to those of caregivers, laborers, or passive recipients of state-imposed laws. The historical legacy of repression is evident in societies like Stalinist Russia, Nazi Germany, and apartheid-era South Africa, where oppressive regimes employed violence and fear to maintain control over marginalized populations. The cultural examples of repression are also pervasive, as women are often depicted in restrictive roles within the media, literature, and religion. These oppressive frameworks limit women's autonomy, positioning them within systems that exploit their labor and constrain their freedom [17, 2, 10].

Women's solidarity in repressive societies arises as a response to shared oppression and adversity. It represents a collective bond formed between women who recognize their mutual struggles against

patriarchal, political, or cultural systems of control. Solidarity becomes a vital tool for women to assert their agency, protect each other, and work towards collective resistance. In oppressive environments, this solidarity is not merely a social or emotional bond but a political act that challenges the systems that seek to isolate and divide women. It can take many forms, from clandestine networks of resistance to more open expressions of unity through protest or activism. Historically, women's solidarity has been integral to movements for suffrage, civil rights, and feminist causes, where women have come together to demand equal rights and challenge discriminatory systems [4, 13]. Literary works, such as Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and the novels of Toni Morrison, also depict solidarity among women as a means of survival and resistance, illustrating how these relationships can defy the oppressive systems designed to keep women in submission [2, 26].

Betrayal within repressive societies functions as a powerful tool that both sustains and destabilizes power structures. In environments where surveillance and control are paramount, betrayal can occur within communities that might otherwise be united in resistance. The motivations for betrayal are complex; they can arise from fear, coercion, or the desire for self-preservation. In such societies, individuals, including women, may be forced to choose between personal survival and loyalty to others, leading to moral and emotional conflicts. Repressive regimes often exploit this fear of betrayal by creating distrust and division among oppressed groups, using betrayal to prevent solidarity from becoming a threat to their power. In literature, betrayal is frequently depicted as both a personal and political act. For example, in George Orwell's 1984, betrayal is central to the manipulation and control of the protagonist, Winston, and highlights the fragility of human relationships under totalitarian rule [28]. Similarly, in *The Handmaid's Tale*, Atwood illustrates how the state fosters betrayal among women, forcing them into situations where loyalty to each other becomes a matter of survival [2].

## II. REPRESSIVE SOCIETIES: MECHANISMS OF CONTROL AND OPPRESSION

Repressive societies are those in which power is concentrated in the hands of a few, and mechanisms of control are used to maintain the subjugation of the broader population. These societies are defined by various forms of political, cultural, and social

repression, all of which serve to limit individual freedoms and prevent challenges to the established power structures. Political repression refers to the state's efforts to control or suppress opposition, often through censorship, surveillance, and imprisonment. Cultural repression, in turn, enforces dominant norms and ideologies that restrict personal expression and promote conformity, particularly through mechanisms like state-controlled media or religious institutions. Social repression operates at the level of community and societal structures, where hierarchies based on race, class, gender, and other markers of identity perpetuate inequality and sustain the existing power balance.

The dynamics of repression are most effectively understood through the lens of feminist theory and sociological analysis. Feminist scholars emphasize how patriarchal systems play a central role in shaping repressive societies by institutionalizing gender-based inequalities. These systems subjugate women by limiting their access to education, political power, and economic resources, thereby reinforcing their secondary status in society. Sociological theories of power, such as those advanced by Michel Foucault, further illustrate how repressive systems work to maintain control by regulating individuals' behaviors and actions, often through mechanisms of surveillance and punishment [17, 5]. The significance of these forms of repression is underscored by their impact on women, who, as both victims of and resistance to these structures, experience repression in unique ways.

Repressive societies are characterized by systemic mechanisms that maintain power by controlling individuals and limiting their freedoms. These mechanisms can be political, cultural, or social in nature, and they function to subjugate marginalized groups, particularly women, who are often at the intersection of multiple systems of oppression. Political repression involves the use of state power to silence dissent and control the populace, often through surveillance, censorship, and violence. Cultural repression seeks to enforce societal norms and beliefs that limit personal freedom, often by maintaining patriarchal ideologies that position women as subordinates. Social repression, on the other hand, operates through class, race, or caste divisions, further entrenching inequality and injustice. This section explores the multifaceted nature of repression and its gendered implications, analyzing how these forces manifest in both historical and contemporary contexts. By examining the impact of repression on women, we

will explore how societal control mechanisms shape women’s experiences, leading to unique strategies for survival and resistance. Indentations and equations

2.1 The Impact of Repression on Women

The impact of repression on women is uniquely profound, as it operates through both general mechanisms of oppression and gender-specific forms of marginalization. In repressive societies, women often bear the brunt of systemic control, which is compounded by patriarchal norms that position them as subordinate to men. These gendered dimensions of oppression are integral to understanding how women experience repression differently than men. Patriarchy, as a social system, enforces rigid gender roles, limits women’s autonomy, and enforces a moral and social order that upholds male dominance. Women are often relegated to private spheres, denied full participation in public life, and subjected to laws and practices that restrict their rights to education, property, and political power [14, 5].

Psychologically, the impact of repression on women can be devastating. The constant suppression of women’s voices and the devaluation of their experiences lead to feelings of powerlessness, disempowerment, and internalized oppression. In many cases, women are forced into compliance through fear, coercion, or indoctrination, which may cause long-term emotional distress and trauma.

Socially, women in repressive societies are often marginalized within their communities, with little access to the resources that might empower them to challenge the system. The societal expectation of women as caregivers and homemakers in patriarchal structures limits their capacity to engage in movements for social change. This limited agency is further exacerbated by the intersectionality of oppression—race, class, and religion also shape how women experience repression. For instance, women from marginalized racial or ethnic groups face compounded oppression, where their gendered oppression intersects with racism, classism, and other forms of social discrimination [11].

Economically, the repression of women is evident in the widespread gender pay gap, restricted access to employment opportunities, and the economic dependency that many women face in patriarchal societies. Women’s economic autonomy is often curtailed by cultural expectations, legal restrictions, and lack of access to education or job opportunities. In many repressive regimes, the state-controlled economy

or social systems reinforce these limitations, ensuring that women remain dependent on male family members or the state for survival.

2.2 Survival in a Repressive Society

In repressive societies, survival becomes a complex and multifaceted challenge, especially for women who are often subjected to both systemic oppression and gender-specific forms of control. Women navigate these oppressive systems through a combination of resilience, adaptability, and strategic alliances. One of the most significant strategies involves the formation of solidarity networks, where women come together to share resources, provide emotional support, and resist oppression collectively. These networks, while often informal, can act as powerful tools of resistance and survival, as seen in feminist movements during authoritarian regimes or periods of political unrest [22, 5].

Table 1: Statistics and Data on Repressive Societies and Women

Category	Statistics	Reference
Gender-Based Violence in Repressive Regimes	1 in 4 women aged 15 years and older have suffered violence at the hands of the partners at least once.	World Bank [3]
	Rates of gender-based violence increase during periods of political repression.	ACLED Data [12]
Educational and Labor Force Participation	Women’s labor force participation drops by 10-20% in authoritarian regimes.	WCPIA Harvard [20]
	During the Taliban rule, girls’ school attendance plummeted by 80%.	UNRIC [30]
Psychological Effects of Repression	60-70% of women in repressive areas report significant mental health challenges.	UNRIC [30]
Political Participation	25% of women hold positions in national legislatures globally.	Inter-Parliamentary Union [29]
Solidarity Movements	19th Amendment passed in 1920 in the US.	ACLED Data

and Activism	U.S.	[12]
	after decades	
	activism.	
Betrayal	During Stalinist purges	ACLEI Data
Repressive	up to 3 million people	[12]
Contexts	were arrested, with	
	women being	
	significant portion.	

Interpersonal relationships also play a crucial role in women’s survival in such contexts. The bonds formed within families, communities, or activist groups often provide the psychological strength and practical resources necessary to endure and resist oppression. However, these relationships are not always unproblematic. The pressure of survival in repressive societies can lead to betrayals, where individuals are coerced or manipulated into compromising their alliances to protect themselves or their loved ones. For instance, in Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, women are shown both resisting and betraying each other in their struggle to navigate the oppressive Gileadean regime [2].

III. WOMEN’S SOLIDARITY IN REPRESSIVE SOCIETIES

In repressive societies, where oppressive systems seek to control, isolate, and marginalize individuals, solidarity among women becomes a powerful, though often precarious, tool of resistance and survival. Women, sharing common experiences of gendered oppression, frequently form alliances based on mutual support and collective action. These bonds transcend personal and social barriers, creating spaces for emotional, psychological, and practical solidarity in environments that strive to break such connections. However, solidarity in these settings is not without its challenges, as women often face systemic pressures, including surveillance, propaganda, and coercion, that threaten the strength and trust within these alliances.

3.1 Foundations of Solidarity

In the face of systemic oppression, human connection often emerges as a powerful force for survival and resistance. The weight of repressive systems, with their mechanisms of control and isolation, fosters an environment where emotional and psychological support becomes a necessity rather than a choice. This unspoken bond, born out of shared pain and mutual

understanding, serves as both a coping mechanism and a subtle form of defiance [7, 23].

Consider the interactions between women in Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, where characters like Offred and Moira, despite their differing circumstances, find solace and strength in their shared experiences of subjugation. Their whispered conversations, exchanged glances, and fleeting acts of kindness represent acts of solidarity that resist the dehumanizing forces of Gilead. Similarly, in Khaled Hosseini’s *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, the relationship between Mariam and Laila exemplifies the transformative power of solidarity. Despite initial mistrust, their bond grows through shared suffering under patriarchal oppression, ultimately empowering them to confront their reality [2, 21].

The foundations of solidarity are deeply intertwined with the psychological and emotional dimensions of human connection. Repressive societies thrive on isolation, yet the resilience of women in such contexts demonstrates that even under surveillance and coercion, solidarity can flourish. These connections, though fragile, provide the emotional sustenance necessary to endure and resist systemic control.

3.2 Forms of Solidarity

Solidarity among women in repressive societies often takes many forms, each shaped by the environment of oppression and the specific needs of those involved. These alliances emerge not only in the private, domestic sphere but also in political and social contexts where collective action becomes crucial for survival. Whether through shared resistance, covert support, or acts of mutual assistance, women’s solidarity transcends boundaries and becomes a lifeline in the face of systemic control [9, 7].

In *The Handmaid’s Tale*, women like Offred and the Marthas form unspoken alliances, offering each other emotional and material support despite the constant surveillance of the regime. These silent, everyday acts of defiance, often invisible to the male-dominated powers, are fundamental in preserving personal agency in the face of oppressive control. Similarly, within political resistance movements, women have historically been at the forefront of struggles against authoritarian regimes.[15].

Thus, solidarity takes on multiple forms in repressive societies: it manifests in domestic relationships, political struggles, and social movements, each vital for both survival and resistance. In these spaces, women build the networks necessary to protect themselves



and challenge oppressive systems, demonstrating the indomitable power of collective action.

### 3.3 Challenges to Solidarity

Women's solidarity is constantly under threat from both systemic and personal barriers, which create divisions and mistrust even in the most desperate of circumstances.

Systemic mechanisms of control, such as surveillance, propaganda, and enforced isolation, undermine solidarity by creating an atmosphere of suspicion and fear. In totalitarian regimes, for example, state apparatuses like the secret police or informants are designed to infiltrate and destabilize any collective action. Women may find themselves isolated, unable to trust even their closest allies, as the fear of betrayal looms large. The surveillance culture within the regime depicted in Orwell's 1984 serves as a poignant example, where the Party's control over personal relationships leads to paranoia and a breakdown in solidarity. Similarly, in the Soviet Union under Stalin, women who participated in resistance movements were often coerced into spying on one another, betraying their solidarity in exchange for survival [8].

Personal barriers also play a significant role in fragmenting solidarity. Internalized oppression, stemming from deep-seated patriarchal ideologies, can breed competition, mistrust, and resentment among women. In a context where women have been conditioned to view each other as rivals for scarce resources or favor, it becomes difficult to maintain solidarity. The historical example of the witch hunts in Europe and America during the 16th and 17th centuries illustrates how women were forced to turn against one another, often under the threat of torture or death, perpetuating a cycle of betrayal that fractured any potential alliances. Furthermore, the class-based divisions among women can prevent solidarity from forming across different socioeconomic groups, as demonstrated in many revolutionary movements where women from the working class and elite classes found it difficult to unite in their fight against patriarchal oppression [24].

Thus, while solidarity remains a powerful tool for resistance, it faces formidable challenges from both external forces and internal conflicts. The complex interplay between systemic oppression and personal struggles shapes the formation, fragility, and dissolution of solidarity in repressive societies.

### 3.4 Case Studies of Women's Solidarity

The theory of women's solidarity in repressive societies is not only abstract; it has been vividly illustrated in both historical realities and literary portrayals. These case studies provide powerful evidence of the resilience and strength that women can exhibit when bound together by shared experiences of oppression.

In *The Handmaid's Tale*, women in a dystopian society governed by patriarchal and religious extremism forge bonds of solidarity in the face of brutal control. Despite the severe restrictions placed upon them, the women in Gilead develop covert forms of resistance through solidarity, supporting each other in small, meaningful ways. The women of the underground resistance, the "Mayday" group, illustrate how solidarity can form even within the confines of an oppressive regime. Their collective efforts, though limited by their social position and constant surveillance, provide a narrative of hope and survival. Solidarity, in this case, becomes a tool for emotional survival, as well as resistance [2].

In history, women have also played vital roles in resistance movements during times of political upheaval. During the Spanish Civil War, for instance, women participated in underground resistance movements against Franco's fascist regime, often working within their communities to organize, protect, and mobilize. Their solidarity was not only political but also emotional, as they supported each other through shared grief, loss, and the trauma of war. This solidarity was crucial for maintaining hope and for the survival of the resistance in an environment where male resistance fighters dominated. These women's efforts are often less documented, but they remain a testament to the role of solidarity in oppressive contexts.

Another key example is the role of women in Afghanistan during the Taliban's rule, where, despite the severe oppression they faced, women in urban areas and refugee camps formed solidarity networks to provide education, health services, and other essential support to one another. These networks, though informal and often hidden, acted as lifelines in a society where women were forbidden to work or attend school. The bonds forged in these clandestine operations reflect the immense power of women's solidarity in the face of patriarchal repression. The impact of such solidarity is further evident in novels like *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini, where two women, Mariam and Laila, form a deep, transformative solidarity that enables them to resist the oppressive forces of both patriarchal control and the broader societal repression [21].

These case studies show that women's solidarity, whether in literature or history, has been both a form of survival and a method of resistance against the overwhelming forces of control. While these examples come from different times and places, they all underscore the vital role solidarity plays in challenging and enduring repression.

#### **IV. THE ROLE OF BETRAYAL IN REPRESSIVE SOCIETIES**

Betrayal, within the context of repressive societies, is not merely an isolated act of personal treason; rather, it is a powerful tool used by oppressive regimes to fracture communities and maintain control. In such societies, the mechanisms of betrayal—whether personal, ideological, or systemic—are strategically exploited to undermine solidarity and ensure conformity. While betrayal often emerges from fear, coercion, or survival instincts, it also reflects the broader dynamics of power and subjugation that define repressive systems. It gives the various forms of betrayal in oppressive contexts, exploring the psychological and situational factors that prompt individuals to betray their peers, and the systemic exploitation of betrayal as a method of control. By analyzing both theoretical frameworks and real-world instances, we will uncover the far-reaching consequences of betrayal on individuals and communities, highlighting its role as both a weapon of oppression and a tragic consequence of living under authoritarian regimes.

##### **4.1 Systemic Exploitation of Betrayal**

Repressive regimes have long understood the strategic value of betrayal as a tool for maintaining control. Betrayal is not merely a personal failing but an essential component of the political machinery that keeps dissent in check. Authoritarian systems exploit betrayal by manipulating individuals to turn on each other, thus destabilizing any potential opposition. In many cases, regimes deploy divide-and-conquer strategies, which pit members of the same community against one another. These strategies are used to create distrust, ensuring that no collective resistance can form. The more fractured a society becomes, the less likely it is to organize any effective opposition.

Betrayal is often seen as a mechanism of control, whereby citizens are coerced into betraying their closest allies for personal survival. The state uses fear, surveillance, and the promise of safety to turn individuals into informants, ensuring that no one can

trust anyone else. This situation reflects a broader systemic goal: the destruction of solidarity within a community. The breakdown of trust makes it far more difficult for opposition movements to gain traction, as any potential leader or group member could be under surveillance or already compromised by coercion.

In literature, this manipulation of betrayal is often represented as a core tool of the oppressive state. Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* provides a striking example. In the dystopian world of Gilead, betrayal is woven into the fabric of everyday life. Offred's internal struggles with her role in the surveillance system reflect how power dynamics work to manipulate individuals into betraying each other. This mirrors real-world instances where authoritarian regimes exploit fear and loyalty to control populations, forcing people to choose between their own survival and their moral beliefs.

##### **4.2 Consequences of Betrayal**

Betrayal in a repressive society has far-reaching consequences, both on a personal level and within the larger community. For those who betray, the emotional and psychological toll can be overwhelming. While betrayers may experience a temporary sense of relief or security, this is often short-lived as they are left with feelings of guilt, shame, and alienation. The act of betrayal creates an emotional fracture that is difficult to heal. Those who are betrayed also face profound psychological harm. The sense of loss and betrayal of trust often results in a feeling of isolation and vulnerability, as the very foundation of their social bonds is shattered.

The consequences of betrayal extend beyond the individual level, affecting the broader community. Betrayal disrupts social cohesion, leading to a breakdown of trust within communities. In the context of repressive societies, where solidarity is a vital tool for survival, the act of betrayal undermines the collective identity that people rely on. The resulting mistrust between individuals makes it more difficult to resist oppressive systems, as the fear of betrayal becomes ever-present. In authoritarian regimes, the erosion of trust and the fracturing of communities make it nearly impossible for collective resistance to form. The regime exploits this fractured state, ensuring that no unified opposition arises. The consequences of betrayal are thus not only psychological but also political, as they serve to maintain the status quo and reinforce the regime's control. In George Orwell's 1984, Winston Smith's betrayal of Julia not only breaks their

personal relationship but also reinforces the Party’s power over them. The psychological toll on both characters is immense. Winston’s inability to trust anyone, even Julia, after his betrayal demonstrates how a regime that fosters betrayal can dismantle human relationships and destroy personal integrity.

4.3 Case Studies of Betrayal

In *The Handmaid’s Tale* by Margaret Atwood, betrayal becomes a key theme as characters are constantly under surveillance and coerced into betraying one another. Offred, the protagonist, is forced to navigate a world where her every move is scrutinized, and the threat of betrayal looms over her relationships. Her interactions with others are tainted by the fear that anyone, even close friends, might turn her in to the authorities for a fleeting advantage. Atwood’s novel highlights how the fear of betrayal erodes trust and solidarity, making it nearly impossible for women to form lasting alliances.

Similarly, in real-world oppressive regimes such as Stalinist Russia, betrayal was a systemic tool used to maintain control. During the purges, individuals were coerced into betraying friends, family members, and colleagues. The psychological manipulation was immense, with betrayals often motivated by fear of punishment, promises of leniency, or the desire to protect oneself. Women, in particular, found themselves in difficult positions, where their loyalty to their families and communities was tested by the regime’s constant pressure to conform. The infamous case of the “informant women” in the Soviet Union illustrates how betrayal could be motivated by personal survival but also how the social and emotional costs of such acts were far-reaching.

The impact of betrayal in both fiction and history underscores the vulnerability of individuals living under repressive systems. Betrayal not only devastates personal relationships but also weakens collective efforts for resistance. The psychological toll on those who betray or are betrayed can lead to lasting trauma, creating an atmosphere where solidarity becomes increasingly difficult to sustain.

One such example can be found in Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, where the protagonist, Offred, faces an internal conflict between her survival instincts and the desire for solidarity with other women under the oppressive regime of Gilead. The constant surveillance and the threat of violence drive Offred to betray others in order to protect herself. In this environment, survival often demands sacrificing one’s

moral principles, a theme that underscores the psychological tension that individuals in repressive societies experience when faced with betrayal. Atwood’s portrayal of Offred’s psychological turmoil and the consequences of her betrayal serve as a poignant reminder of the moral and emotional sacrifices made under oppression.

Similarly, during WWII, in occupied Europe, women were often coerced into betrayal through fear and manipulation. The Gestapo and other repressive forces utilized informants to gather intelligence and destabilize resistance groups. In France, the case of female informants betraying fellow resistance fighters to the Nazis became notorious. These women often faced the same moral dilemmas as the characters in *The Handmaid’s Tale*, where the lines between survival and betrayal became increasingly blurred.

The betrayal in such contexts highlights not just the individual cost of these acts, but also the systemic exploitation of betrayal as a tool to fracture solidarity within resistance movements. Betrayal, whether through personal choice or coercion, serves the dual purpose of isolating the betrayed and strengthening the power of the oppressors.

Table 2: Statistics on Betrayal and Repression

Category	Statistics
Psychological Impact of Betrayal	Betrayal linked to 20% higher likelihood of mental health issues (stress, anxiety, depression).
Prevalence of Informants in Authoritarian Regimes	Up to 30% of the population acted as informants, spying on family, neighbors, or colleagues.
Women in Resistance Movements	40% of resistance participants during WWII in oppressive regimes like Nazi occupation were women.
Impact of Betrayal on Trust	65% of people reported that they would not trust a colleague again after an act of betrayal.
Effects of Coercion and Fear in Repressive Regimes	47% of individuals who experienced coerced confessions reported psychological trauma long after the event.
Use of Informants in Totalitarian States	Approximately 1 in 10 people were recruited as informants in Soviet regimes, leading to betrayal.

## **V. INTERPLAY BETWEEN SOLIDARITY AND BETRAYAL**

The dynamics of solidarity and betrayal in repressive societies reveal a complex interplay of human resilience, ethical dilemmas, and systemic exploitation. Solidarity emerges as a powerful mechanism of resistance, uniting individuals against shared oppression. However, its very fabric is tested by the omnipresent pressures of surveillance, propaganda, and coercion inherent in repressive systems. Betrayal, often viewed through a moral lens, becomes a survival strategy for those grappling with impossible choices. This section delves into the fragility of alliances, the transformative potential of collective resistance, the ethical ambiguities of betrayal, and the possibilities of reconciliation and repair. By analyzing these interwoven themes, we aim to shed light on the delicate balance between survival and solidarity in the face of systemic oppression [7, 2].

### **5.1 The Fragility of Alliances**

Repressive societies are adept at exploiting the inherent fragility of alliances, using surveillance, propaganda, and systemic manipulation to erode trust among individuals. Solidarity networks, while powerful, are constantly under threat in environments where external pressures test the strength of interpersonal and communal bonds. Feminist and sociological perspectives argue that solidarity in such contexts is not merely an act of resistance but a radical form of survival [22, 17].

Historical examples demonstrate how these pressures destabilize alliances. The surveillance state under East Germany's Stasi regime stands as a stark reminder of how repressive systems systematically sow mistrust, coercing individuals to betray even their closest allies. Similarly, in Orwell's 1984, the omnipresent threat of surveillance fractures the bonds of solidarity, as fear of betrayal outweighs the desire for collective resistance [28].

This fragility is particularly pronounced in marginalized communities, where systemic oppression intersects with internalized fears and insecurities. The psychological toll of constant vigilance and the fear of infiltration create an atmosphere where alliances are tenuous and temporary. Repressive regimes exploit these vulnerabilities, recognizing that the fragmentation of solidarity is key to maintaining control. By understanding how alliances are destabilized, we can better comprehend the immense

courage and resilience required to sustain them in the face of oppression.

### **5.2 Resistance Through Solidarity**

In the face of systemic oppression, solidarity emerges as a powerful force for resistance, enabling individuals to pool resources, share knowledge, and unite under common goals. Collective action is not merely a tool for survival but a transformative mechanism that challenges the foundations of repressive systems. Feminist theory highlights the role of shared experiences and intersectionality in forging solidarity, particularly among marginalized women who navigate multiple axes of oppression [5, 25].

Historical and contemporary examples underscore the effectiveness of solidarity in resistance movements. The Liberian Women's Peace Movement, led by Leymah Gbowee, exemplifies how collective action by women can bring about profound societal change. By organizing sit-ins, protests, and public demonstrations, these women were instrumental in ending Liberia's civil war [18]. Similarly, women played pivotal roles in India's independence struggle, with figures like Sarojini Naidu mobilizing collective resistance against colonial rule [27].

In literature, solidarity often serves as a means of resisting oppression. In Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, women's covert alliances and coded communication challenge the systemic control imposed by the dystopian regime [2]. These acts of defiance, though small, highlight the resilience and ingenuity required to sustain resistance in oppressive environments.

Solidarity's transformative power lies in its ability to transcend individual struggles and create a collective identity rooted in hope and perseverance. While challenges persist, these examples illuminate the enduring strength of solidarity in resisting repressive systems.

### **5.3 Betrayal as a Survival Strategy**

Betrayal, though often perceived as a moral failure, must be understood in the context of repressive societies as a survival strategy. Repressive systems exploit human vulnerabilities, presenting betrayal as the only viable option for self-preservation. Fear, coercion, and psychological manipulation become tools to fragment solidarity and compel individuals to make choices that compromise their values and relationships [1, 19].



Betrayal reflects the constrained agency of individuals caught in oppressive environments. For instance, in George Orwell's 1984, Winston Smith's betrayal of Julia is not merely a personal failing but a testament to the totalitarian state's ability to dismantle personal loyalties through relentless psychological pressure [28]. Similarly, in real-world authoritarian regimes, coerced betrayals often arose from threats of violence or imprisonment, leaving individuals with little choice but to comply [16].

## VI. CONCLUSION

women's solidarity and betrayal in repressive societies sheds light on the intricate dynamics of human relationships under systemic oppression. By drawing on literary, historical, and contemporary examples, this study has illuminated the duality of these forces and their impact on women's lives and agency. Solidarity emerges as a potent means of resistance, enabling collective action and mutual support, while betrayal, often driven by survival instincts or systemic pressures, disrupts these alliances and reinforces oppressive control. Together, these themes underscore the profound psychological, emotional, and societal toll of repressive systems.

This study contributes to feminist and sociological scholarship by offering a nuanced understanding of women's agency in oppressive contexts. It emphasizes the transformative power of solidarity, the ethical complexities of betrayal, and the resilience of women navigating these challenges. From a theoretical perspective, the integration of feminist and sociological approaches broadens the scope of inquiry, while the practical implications highlight strategies to strengthen alliances and mitigate betrayal in resistance movements.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Hannah Arendt. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1973.
- [2] Margaret Atwood. *The Handmaid's Tale*. McClelland and Stewart, 1985.
- [3] World Bank. *Gender-based violence: Global data*, 2024.
- [4] bell hooks. *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center*. South End Press, 1984.
- [5] bell hooks. *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center*. South End Press, 1984.
- [6] bell hooks. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. South End Press, 1990.
- [7] bell hooks. *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*. Pluto Press, 2000.
- [8] Christopher Brown. *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*. Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- [9] Judith Butler. *Undoing Gender*. Routledge, 2004.
- [10] J. M. Coetzee. *Waiting for the Barbarians*. Penguin Books, 1983.
- [11] Kimberle Crenshaw. 'Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989:139-167, 1989.
- [12] ACLED Data. *Gender-based violence and women's political participation*, 2024.
- [13] Angela Davis. *Women, Race, & Class*. Vintage Books, 1981.
- [14] Simone de Beauvoir. *The Second Sex*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1949.
- [15] Richard Feinberg. *The Political Economy of Chilean Women's Resistance*. University of California Press, 1991.
- [16] Sheila Fitzpatrick. *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999.
- [17] Michel Foucault. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Pantheon Books, 1977.
- [18] Leymah Gbowee. *Mighty Be Our Powers: How Sisterhood, Prayer, and Sex Changed a Nation at War*. Beast Books, New York, 2011.
- [19] Carol Gilligan. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1982.
- [20] WCFIA Harvard. *Political power and women's labor force participation*, 2024.
- [21] Khaled Hosseini. *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Riverhead Books, 2007.
- [22] Audre Lorde. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Crossing Press, 1984.
- [23] Audre Lorde. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Crossing Press, 1984.
- [24] Kate Millett. *Sexual Politics*. Doubleday, 1970.
- [25] Chandra Talpade Mohanty. *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 2003.
- [26] Toni Morrison. *Beloved*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1987.
- [27] Sarojini Naidu. *The Golden Threshold*. G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras, 1946.
- [28] George Orwell. 1984. Secker & Warburg, 1949.
- [29] Inter-Parliamentary Union. *Women's political representation in national legislatures*, 2024.
- [30] UNRIC. *Women and girls are disproportionately affected by conflict-related sexual violence*, 2024.