The Choate Inquiry.

Includes...

Legacy Admissions
Drugs for Therapy
Celebrity Activism
Aid to Ukraine

Fall 2023
Dear Choate,

As you flip open this issue, we would like to remind you that time is approaching the one-third-of-the-year benchmark! We arrived on campus at the tail end of summer, and now we brace ourselves upon the cusp of freezing winter. Fall almost always breezes by too quickly—but before signing off, we hope you can spend some time reading this issue.

This edition features writers across all four forms. Contrary to purely informative articles, the style of our authors complements and completes the argument. We ask you to listen closely to the passionate convictions, personal anecdotes, and delightful quips of each narrator. Every one of them bears a unique take and distinct voice that will, we hope, convincingly sway your thoughts between opposite viewpoints until you arrive at your own.

We selected pertinent topics that might confront stances near and dear to your heart. For every line from the position that reinforces your beliefs, perhaps venture to the other side and see what you think. Yes, we aspire to trouble and complicate your straightforward “agrees”, “disagrees”, or simply “I don’t knows.” We aim to set off sparks of curiosity that will take you down rabbit holes of no return. Here’s one more suggestion—read this issue with a friend and chat about what you both make of it. We anticipate that conversation to be animated and intriguing!

This letter could go on for quite a while, but we will waste no more time keeping you on this page. Go ahead, yes! Flip over and dive in!

Your Co-Editors in Chief,
Katherine Chong’25 & Carter Linardos’24
Did I earn my spot at Choate, or was it handed to me? This question often leaves me doubting my place on this campus. My brother is an alum, and I can tell you firsthand that admissions like mine do more harm than good for all parties involved. That is not to say I am not content with my education, but I am discontent with the ambiguity surrounding how I attained it. For those unfamiliar with the term, legacy status refers to the preferential treatment given by schools like Choate to applicants who are relatives of alums, resulting in a higher likelihood of their acceptance. In part, my admission could be another one of these products of privilege rather than pure merit, and this reality torments me every day. While I take pride in my achievements and am confident in my sense of self, I know Choate was not entirely earned; it could not be. It is impossible to fully embrace the opportunities Choate has to offer, as I am constantly reminded of the uneven playing field that got me here. I recently learned of Choate’s motto “Fidelitas et Integritas.” Even after staring at these words for some time, I did not recognize these values reflected on our campus. These are more than just random Latin jargon. They are our foundation, a reminder of the ideals we strive to live by, yet in many ways fail to. What do fidelity and integrity even mean to us? How can we speak of integrity when opportunity is not equal? How can we espouse fidelity when our actions close doors on the deserving yet disenfranchised? Choate’s current admission policy systematically perpetuates bias, prioritizes familial connections at the expense of individual merit, and fosters imposter syndrome in those it purportedly benefits. Only by dismantling this antiquated, elitist, and overall awful practice can we embody the principles our educational system was built upon and become the community we hope to be.

My first point of contention with the continuity of legacy admissions is that it compromises Choate’s proclaimed commitment to academic excellence. Choate, a school renowned for its rigor and world-class education, has rightfully earned its position as the third-ranked boarding school in the United States (according to Niche). Choate is celebrated for its advanced course offerings, but even more so for its community’s curiosity and academic prowess. Nonetheless, with Choate’s current admissions paradigm, its demise is inevitable. Legacy admission boosts confer an unearned advantage to a subset of applicants, resulting in an arbitrary admissions process and a dilution of academic standards. The institution deviates from a merit-based selection process by allowing familial connections to influence decisions. To cultivate an intellectually stimulating community, Choate must reconsider, and ultimately discontinue, these preferential admissions policies. It should go without saying that Choate should admit the most qualified or promising candidates, regardless of their familial affiliations. That is what the role of admissions is: to find the best students, athletes, and musicians, not the most well-connected ones. This much-needed reform would guarantee a fair and impartial process, assessing each candidate solely on their potential contributions to the school, not their relatives. As a Gold Key ambassador, I am made aware of a prospective student’s alum relation status before each tour. The tour guide screen, which includes the visitor’s name, gender, and hobbies, identifies whether they are connected to the school,
equalizing it to a part of their identity. Their family defines them. It is time we separate the person from their parents and recognize them for who they are, not who they know.

That said, legacy admissions also hinder the diversity Choate so often boasts. Any system that emphasizes heritage as a significant criterion for acceptance limits diversity of thought and experience within its student body. The implications of this are manifold. Our admissions team tends to favor homogeneity, a broader consequence of the United States' history of systemic racism, which limited education to the affluent, the white, and the privileged. Thus, the beneficiaries of this system are disproportionately white and upper-class, as these applicants are more likely to have ties to alums. In short, legacy admissions privilege the privileged. It reinforces and deepens the inequalities that already exist. Consequently, giving increased consideration to their children takes it away from disadvantaged prospective students, who are equally or more qualified. Education, in general, should aim to democratize knowledge and provide all young minds with the tools and resources needed to navigate the real, diverse world. This preparation is essential to fostering a more culturally cognizant and harmonious society. A myriad of studies show that inclusive pedagogy benefits everyone. Research conducted by Queens University of Charlotte found that diverse environments boost students' productivity, concentration, and zeal for learning. Ultimately, a school that embraces diversity is more effective in fulfilling its educational mission, a front Choate continually fails to achieve.

Even so, the beneficiaries of legacy admissions still do not benefit when others are treated unfavorably. They are left wondering on what basis they were accepted and struggle with the internalized pressure to live up to their family's legacy, exacerbating feelings of imposter syndrome. Choate's lack of transparency leads to a lack of confidence amongst admitted students. How does one differentiate themself from their relatives? How do they put their faith in an inherently unfair system? How do they know what is of their merit and what is due to their privilege? The erosion of trust entails the erosion of the school as a whole. When you lose credibility, you lose Choate.

While alum donations are crucial for a functioning intuition, tying financial contributions too closely to admissions decisions can lead to impropriety and will inevitably undermine the integrity of the selection process. Institutions need to cultivate a culture of giving that is not contingent on admissions outcomes, but is made in the spirit of altruism. Choate must work on authentically promoting school spirit and strengthening mentorship bonds between current and past students, without tainting admissions. Dismantling nepotism will realign Choate's actions with its aspirations and create more opportunities and parity for high-achieving students of all backgrounds. All in all, Choate cannot embrace equality and justice until its admissions reflect these values. Legacy admissions are undoubtedly a tradition that is outdated and needs reevaluation.
In the ongoing debate surrounding legacy admissions in prestigious universities, a nuanced perspective reveals their potential and immediate merits. Legacy admissions, which offer preferential treatment to the children of alumni, have been a subject of scrutiny due to their perceived role in perpetuating elitism and a lack of diversity—especially in the wake of the removal of affirmative action. However, a closer examination may suggest that legacy admissions serve a valuable role in the immediate context of Choate and university operations.

The argument for short-term legacy admissions posits that by giving preference to alumni’s children, universities can ensure a continuous stream of donations. This financial support is essential for offering scholarships to underprivileged students who might not otherwise have access to elite educational opportunities. Consequently, legacy admissions can be viewed as a necessary financial strategy, consolidating the gains necessary to support future generations of scholars.

Legacy admissions, it turns out, do more than just balance the books. They foster a sense of belonging, a connection transcending time and generations. By granting admission to the offspring of alumni, universities weave a strong fabric of community. This enduring connection between alumni and their alma mater often translates into ongoing support, both financially and through valuable networking opportunities. Such a sense of community benefits everyone, particularly students from disadvantaged backgrounds who gain access to a powerful network of alumni, providing them with invaluable support in their educational and professional journeys.

Eliminating legacy admissions might seem like a morally righteous step to promote equality in education; however, giving it up may very well be an excuse instead of actually working towards equitable admissions. This work includes reaching out to schools and neighborhoods that are unfamiliar with certain universities, collaborating with community colleges, recruiting veterans with the same zeal admission officers bring to recruiting athletes, and providing resources and talent to the challenging, multigenerational task of truly educating all elementary school students, regardless of their location.

In the intricate tapestry of legacy admissions, a bitter irony also emerges. As the landscape of higher education has evolved, affirmative action played a pivotal role in expanding the community of alumni to include individuals from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Thanks to these initiatives, a number of alumni of color have emerged, forming a more inclusive and representative alumni network. However, it would be a disheartening twist of fate if, just as the door of affirmative action is now closing to the colored students, the legacy
they could take advantage of is kicked away as well. The elimination of legacy admissions might inadvertently thwart the progress in promoting diversity and inclusion, placing an unforeseen obstacle in the path of alumni of color whose children are now finally candidates for this privilege.

This points to the fact that the idea that legacy admissions are the primary culprits behind a lack of diversity in elite institutions may be overly simplistic. Yes, they often correlate with a lack of diversity, but causation is not always clear. The path to diversity lies in comprehensive efforts such as affirmative action and community outreach. Eliminating legacy admissions might not be the panacea for creating a more diverse student body and may hinder the financial resources available for scholarships and financial aid.

Legacy admissions, it appears, are not a one-dimensional tale of privilege. They are a nuanced story, deeply entwined with the survival of prestigious universities and the dreams of less privileged students. They may not be the heroes of the diversity and inclusion saga, but they are far from being the villains. In the grand narrative of higher education, they serve as a pragmatic means of consolidating the financial resources required to maintain excellence and provide scholarships (at least in the short term). Legacy admissions are part of a broader and more complex issue related to diversity and inclusion in higher education. To address these challenges, universities should adopt multifaceted strategies that extend beyond the admissions process. Legacy admissions, while subject to criticism, can play a role in ensuring that legacy kids' support continues to fund scholarships for deserving, less privileged students.
Ladies and gentlemen of the Choate Inquiry. The time has come to be enlightened, and to break down the barriers surrounding the legal status of psychedelic substances in the United States. For many many years, the popular stigma surrounding psychedelics involved recreational use for hippies and degenerates alike. However, groundbreaking research alongside out-of-the-box thinking has provided some excellent reasons for legalization.

There are three main benefits that come with the responsible use of certain psychedelics.

1. Psychedelics are promising tools for mental health and battling addictions.
2. They are safer alternatives for other recreational substances.
3. The psychedelics industry could create economic opportunity and open up entirely new fields of research.

Mental health disorders are becoming alarmingly common in this day and age, and psychedelics will provide a solution. The World Health Organization reports that depression is now the number one cause of disability, especially for young people. Over 264 million people are affected by depression every day, but research indicates that psychedelics such as psilocybin and MDMA have shown irrefutable potential in treating these mental health disorders. Magic mushrooms and ecstasy treating mental health? It might sound like bogus, but clinical trials demonstrated that psilocybin therapy can lead to unprecedented reductions in depression and anxiety symptoms. In a Johns Hopkins University study (which may or may not have been conducted by David Hallal), 67% of participants reported significant decreases in depression symptoms after a single dose of psilocybin. Alongside psilocybin, MDMA therapy has also shown excellent promise in treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Another Johns Hopkins study found that 67% of participants who received MDMA therapy no longer had diagnosable PTSD after just three sessions. One dose? Three sessions? Entire lives can be easily changed with the therapeutic potential of psychedelics. To add a cherry on top, Johns Hopkins researchers also discovered that after 6 months of monitored use of mushrooms, 80% of subjects reported 100% abstinence from smoking cigarettes. That is almost 50% higher than the leading smoking cessation drug. Research on addictions to heroin and alcohol also proved promising, and there is evidence to suggest psychedelics could be applicable in treating personality disorders such as narcissism and paranoia.

Legalizing psychedelics can contribute to harm reduction by providing safer alternatives to dangerous illicit drugs. To no one’s surprise, statistics reveal deadly risks associated with the unregulated recreational drug market. The CDC reports that overdose deaths via synthetic opioids such as fentanyl have surged upwards in recent years. On the other
hand, there have been minimal deaths via psychedelics. A regulated market would ensure that consumers are accessing clean psychedelics in controlled amounts, massively reducing the danger of consumption.

Finally, the economic benefits of legalizing psychs would be immense. We observe from states that have legalized recreational cannabis, such as Colorado and California, that positive economic effects prevail. In 2020 alone, Colorado collected over $387 million in tax revenue from legal cannabis sales. Legalizing psychedelics will create desperately needed tax revenue which will support vital public services and infrastructure. Additionally, the study of psychedelics would expand tenfold if they were legalized because it would become profitable to research applications of psychedelics. The current infrastructure in place for psychedelics is not driven by profit — it will never be enough to understand the full potential of these substances. Upon legalization, research programs will be founded, and entirely new branches of medicine will develop. Perhaps in 20 years, one could major in psychedelic substance development at Stonehill College or Princeton.
The Psychedelic Delusion: the Wonder Pill, or a Costly Trip You’ll Never Wake Up From?

Picture this: a world filled with Technicolor trees, dancing flowers, and ethereal music - the backdrop of a 60s rock concert. But this isn’t a memory from a bygone era; it’s a world that some want us to venture into (not speaking from experience, of course), in the name of therapy. While my esteemed colleague has waxed poetic about the benefits of legalizing psychedelic substances, let’s dive deep and question whether this is truly the trip we want to embark upon. At the end of this article, even the most adamant supporters of psychedelic legalization will come to terms with the somber fact: while the promises sound super promising and the benefits super beneficial, we simply don’t know enough about psychedelics to legalize them yet.

A Journey to the Very, Very Unknown

First and foremost, we must address the huge elephant or should I say, giant neon caterpillar in the room: mental health. It’s an undeniably serious crisis, and with numbers from reputable organizations showcasing an alarming spike in depression, we are in dire need of solutions. But is the answer really psychedelic therapy?

The studies that our pro-psychedelics friend mentions are indeed impressive. Yet, let’s remember that these are early trials, often with small sample sizes. Large-scale, randomized controlled trials are the gold standard. Have we seen enough of these? And about that 67% from the Johns Hopkins study: 67% of *how many*?

While psychedelics may show promise, they are not magic mushrooms with guaranteed results. Relying heavily on these can overshadow other traditional treatments that are thoroughly tested and understood. Psychotherapy. Antidepressants. Anxiolytics. Magnetic therapy. Heck, changing your sleep schedule or talking to your loved ones. There exist so many tried-and-proven methods to compact mental health issues; why jump the gun and leap to psychedelics as the miracle drug?

This is not to mention the myriad of potential side effects that may accompany the use of psychedelics. These are side effects that have yet to be understood fully, and side effects we are not sure we can mitigate.

A Mirage of Safety is Ultimately, Just a Mirage

My astute counterpart also paints a serene picture of psychedelics being safer than most illicit drugs. But let’s be clear: less harmful doesn’t mean harmless. Psychedelics, like any other substance, can have side effects. Bad trips, anxiety, paranoia – are these the experiences we want our fellow citizens to gamble with? And while overdoses might be rare, what about the potential long-term effects on the brain? There’s so much that we just don’t know.
The primary worry about ketamine, psilocybin and other hallucinogens, like LSD or ayahuasca, is that they can trigger a psychotic or manic episode. While safety data is scarce, anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that the two are linked. Multiple doctors reported that their patients, who used psychedelics, had full blown psychotic episodes post-use. Besides real-life case studies, researchers from prestigious institutions have established together that psychedelic drugs are, simply put, not all that.

Convincing research shows that there is a cardiovascular risk (scary) if the drugs are taken every day or every week, which may become the case if psychedelics are used medically. Most hallucinogens are thought to produce their psychedelic effects by activating two specific serotonin receptors — two receptors that have long been linked to valvular heart disease. Trials published in the New England Journal of Medicine have shown that medications that activate this receptor cause valvular damage in roughly 25 percent of people who take them (very scary). Additionally, two small studies of frequent users of MDMA showed the same signs of heart disease (also scary). Surely, the hardworking taxpayers of America would not want their hard-earned taxpayer dollars to research a topic that has already been found to have incredibly negative effects on users, negative effects that outweigh the potential benefits laid out by my counterpart.

An Economy on High?
We've seen the dazzling figures from the cannabis industry, but is the promise of economic boom post-psychedelic-legalization really a siren call in disguise? Are we really comparing apples to apples here? The market for recreational cannabis and therapeutic psychedelics may differ significantly. We can't just assume that psychedelic sales will match or exceed cannabis revenues. And while psychedelics may lead to the creation of jobs and research opportunities, is economic gain reason enough to rush into legalization? The potential harm legalization may cause is still unknown, and for all we know, it may be devastating. “Economic gain” may only be the disguise of an unprecedented, catastrophic failure in the medical industry. Until we know for sure what is coming, economic gain will always be a feeble, unsubstantiated argument.

The Sky is the Limit
Sometimes, limits exist for good reasons. Sometimes, the actual sky is the limit. There are multiple good reasons we don’t just freely distribute every substance that can induce a high or alter consciousness. Regulation and thorough understanding must should precede widespread adoption.

Without additional research, can we confidently say that we’re replacing the problem with a solution and not another potential problem? The psychedelic realm is alluring, mysterious, and vast. There’s no denying the initial research is promising. However, while the psychedelic journey may be sprinkled with stardust and transformative experiences for some, it’s crucial to remember that every trip isn’t a guaranteed ticket to mental health nirvana. For some, psychedelics are a surefire highway to hell. So, before we get too starry-eyed and leap into this multicolored wonderland, we must ensure we’re not precariously stacking up a house of cards, but moving towards a well-researched, safe, and effective solution for all. As our good friends, the Grateful Dead, once said, “What a long strange trip it’s been.” Without further research, I, for one, am not overwhelmingly eager about the psychedelic bandwagon. Let us make sure we know exactly what the destination is before we hop on board.
Though I do not doubt you are a well educated, woke, vegan, PC, sustainable seventeen year old, your activism stands useless against that of Kim Kardashian’s. You do not have the power, money, or influence that she does. My opposition may say that celebrities tend to oversimplify complicated issues to seem “woke”, however there is simply no denying that they have an enormous effect on how we view the world. Celebrities’ activism transcends borders because they have global audiences and massive outreach in a way that mere mortals like us simply can’t. When celebrities endorse a cause, their fans not only listen to what they’re saying, but treat it with the same emotional gravitas as the news, and sometimes, even more so. Celebrities enjoy the unique privilege of being able to easily connect with a large and devoted audience at the touch of a button. While those of us in the “not-so-famous” category on social media can absolutely join in on the effort to create change, it is important to keep in mind that our words might not carry the same “A-list” sway.

How many times have you heard the phrase “I wore X because *insert notable celebrity here* wore X”? Our favorite celebrities do more than just inspire our wardrobe choices – they have the power to influence societal norms by lending their support to specific behaviors or beliefs. While possessing fame alone can’t make someone best prepared to explain an issue to the world, it can equip them to make people sit up and take notice. With their platform, celebrities can promote anything they deem important. A notable example of this would be Paul McCartney. Not only did McCartney create a protest song and anti-animal experimentation anthem, “Looking for Changes”, McCartney generously donated the 1993 song to PETA’s campaign to end cruel experiments on animals. In the world of celebrity activism, McCartney’s involvement showcases the transformative potential of star power. His contribution to the campaign against animal experimentation sends a clear message that celebrities can and should go beyond raising awareness; they can actively contribute to the causes they champion. It’s important to note that celebrity activism isn’t just a fad either; their involvement in social causes has been a prevalent force for societal change for decades. Historically, celebrity activism has been beneficial for social movements as it reaches a broader audience. In the 80s, “We Are the World” raised tens of millions of dollars for the USA for Africa, and the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge raised over $114 million for the disease in 2014. During COVID, celebrities like Gemma Chan and Benedict Wong used the hashtag, #StopAsianHate to highlight the significant increase in global hate crimes against people of Asian heritage. Celebrities’ impact goes far beyond the red carpet, as they leverage their fame and fortune to shine a light on important causes and drive meaningful progress in our world. So, the next time you choose to wear something because a celebrity did, remember that their influence extends much further than fashion. They hold the ability to inspire change and make the world a better place.

Along with outreach, celebrity activism can also prolong the urgency of the cause they are bringing awareness to. Celebrity activism can leave a lasting legacy for a cause that might
otherwise be forgotten if not highlighted in the public sphere. While a celebrity’s popularity may fade over time, the causes they support can continue to benefit from the resources and attention they brought to the table. When celebrities join in with platforms, they’re not just adding a few more voices to the choir – they’re cranking up the volume, ensuring that these pressing issues continue to receive the sustained attention and vital resources demanded. Furthermore, celebrities often donate considerable sums to causes that they support, not only amplifying the cause, but allowing the cause to thrive independent of promotion. Celebrities hold an incredible influence with massive followings, and with that power many feel the responsibility to use it to champion the greater good. To propel progress, every person needs to advocate their beliefs, and this duty becomes even more crucial for those who have a significant presence.
If you have been online for the past few years, you are probably aware of the BBL epidemic. Thousands upon thousands of people flocked to surgeons to enlarge their buttocks. BBLs are a risky surgery that have been known to cause the fat to travel through the bloodstream and into the heart and lungs of patients. A survey from the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery reports that the number of people receiving BBLs globally has increased by 77.6 percent since 2015. Behind this baffling trend is Kim Kardashian, a well-known reality TV star.

Celebrities like Kim have a hold over the masses. They can influence global culture with one tweet, TikTok, or surgery. Social media is a pressure cooker of low self esteem and bodily insecurity, and celebrities are a catalyst for this. When someone sees an influencer like Kim Kardashian, there is an immediate thought; why don’t I look like that? The societal influence that people like Kim Kardashian have does not just extend to easily botched surgeries for bodily enhancement; they have the power to seriously persuade or hinder social issues. Celebrity activism is not beneficial to social movements because of its often performative nature. When celebrities realize that a movement is generating friction, they jump on the ability to put their name in the mix. This leads to many causes being left behind when they are no longer “trendy.”

Many celebrities engage in performative activism, which involves supporting a social movement mainly for likes and clicks. Remember the boom of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in 2020? Global protests followed the death of George Floyd. People were outraged over Derek Chauvin’s unspeakable act of police brutality: He suffocated Floyd by kneeling on Floyd’s neck for around 9 minutes. To protest the heinous killing and the larger issue of racially motivated police brutality, Blackout Tuesday took place on June 2, 2020. BLM supporters posted black squares to social media as a sign of solidarity. Celebrities, along with the masses, joined in. The issue is that for some celebrities, posting a photo was mostly to convince their followers of their dedication to the BLM movement. In actuality, nothing was being done to advance the cause. Many celebrities did not even take care to educate themselves about the issue. They only wanted to be affiliated with BLM to stay relevant. Public figures do not help social movements but rather, dilute them with lackluster shows of support.

Celebrities can also view social movements as “trends” and silently abandon the cause after a certain amount of time. During the BLM movement, public figures were frequently posting themselves at protests. Some of these posts were made to genuinely promote the cause, while others were mostly for optics. But over time, conversation about the BLM movement died down. People had seemingly moved onto another issue. The biggest concern of a celebrity is losing relevance. Therefore, they will stop publicly backing a cause when the
noise is dying down. If public figures actually cared about an issue, you would think that they would keep pushing for action. But since performative activism is rampant in Hollywood, many “trendy” causes have faded into obscurity. Social movements often recede from the spotlight and people’s attention when celebrities and the masses stop discussing and promoting them. With the influence that public figures have, they could single handedly revive a cause. However, they are not inclined to do so, which further contributes to the demise of social movements.

Let us give celebrities the benefit of the doubt: what if they are genuinely invested in a cause? The movement can still be hindered by the public’s perception of the figures promoting it. For instance, Oprah and The Rock recently launched a fund for the people of Maui after the wildfires in Hawaii. Many people were displaced after losing their homes in the devastating disaster. To help the Hawaiians, both celebrities donated five million dollars and asked their fans to contribute. Surprisingly, the fund was met with widespread backlash. People did not respond well to being asked for donations from a billionaire and a millionaire. The masses saw both figures as stingy, not willing to use a larger chunk of their fortunes to help the cause. Perhaps Oprah and The Rock meant well, but they unintentionally hampered the success of their fund. Furthermore, celebrities have a tendency to trivialize a social movement when blinded by the prospect of profit. Take the infamous 2017 Kendall Jenner Pepsi advertisement, in which Jenner is taking part in a protest and seems to diffuse the tension between the protesters and the police after handing an officer a Pepsi. This commercial was met with widespread controversy, and the ad was eventually taken down. The advertisement perfectly reflects that celebrities will do anything to join a conversation to not only maintain relevance and ‘wokeness’, but also to gain a profit. Even celebrities that are highly revered could unintentionally do a disservice to the movements that they support. So, celebrity activism could be detrimental to a cause if the general public finds any fault with the celebrities themselves.

All in all, there’s nothing wrong with celebrities showing genuine support of a movement. However, the motives behind their stance can be called into question. Public figures may very well do whatever it takes to stay in the mainstream, even if it involves a pretense of caring. Their actions can also mirror the capriciousness of trends that cycle in and out of relevance. Celebrities can further endanger a cause they support by falling out of favor with the masses: when they are “dethroned” or canceled, and with them, the movements they espouse.
What does it mean for America to be the “leader of the free world?” This phrase is frequently emphasized by many presidents—recently by both Donald Trump and Joe Biden. There seems to be extensive duties associated with this role, most notably being to defend the principles of democracy, human rights, and individual freedoms on a global scale. Now, the United States faces a clear violation of the democratic ideals it has vowed to protect: Ukraine is being victimized under Russia’s rampant authoritarian rule. This critical state of affairs is representative of a larger ideological struggle between republican democracy and totalitarian dictatorship. Within our commitment to uphold the values which make us the leader of the free world, the United States is obliged to send non-military aid to Ukraine.

Why specifically is non-military aid a preferable option over other forms of assistance? Substantial military aid can exacerbate animosity between Russia and the U.S., especially since Russia is already provoked by the U.S.’ involvement in Eastern Europe. Relations between the two countries are beyond delicate, and military aid towards Ukraine might just confirm the possibility of a global conflict. Even more civilian lives would be put at risk. The U.S. must navigate a way to support Ukraine while minimizing further conflict.

The solution is the supplying of non-military aid. The line between military and non-military aid is a fine but necessary distinction, with the supply of non-military aid proving superior in this situation. A common argument against any aid to Ukraine is that it increases the taxes on American citizens. A sole 2.5% of the U.S. defense budget is spent on Ukraine, and this number will dwindle following the increase of non-military aid at the expense of the military. Russia’s attacks have primarily targeted Ukraine’s economy and infrastructure, and these spheres are beginning to exceed the importance of the military.

America’s conundrum with involving in this conflict goes back to the adage - if you give a man to fish, he will eat for a day; if you teach a man to fish, he will eat for a lifetime. Rather than supporting Ukraine military, if the U.S. provides aid to affected financial, humanitarian, and healthcare institutions, Ukraine will help develop resiliency for the in case of a prolonged war or future attacks. For instance, economic aid could help stabilize the economy and create jobs. Ukraine can thereafter strengthen itself with military innovation and readiness and prepare the nation for the long term. Furthermore, the effect of the aid will strengthen European resolve and the commitment to the advancement of democratic ideals throughout the globe. Substantial military aid has already been given by the U.S. along with the European Union, which can prove beneficial in fighting back against expansion. However, as the expansion of Russian forces is slowing down, resiliency should be the main target. The provision of this non-military aid will help prevent future involvement in the Eastern European region; it is a long-term investment in peace in the region by taking an important initial step.
So far, Russia has struck dramatic damage to democracy through its War in Ukraine. From the illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, Russia has proved relentless in its unjustified expansion by taking control of Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson Oblasts with a combined population of over 2.3 million people. The human rights catastrophes directly as a result of Russia’s invasion have been myriad with deaths, refugee crises, and torture of prisoners of war. Russia’s frequent and unjust attacks on civilians and neighboring territories must be answered.

Arguably more important, though, is the ideological struggle represented in Russia’s attacks; the situation in Ukraine is not isolated from the global context. Russia is infringing upon the sovereignty of another nation—it is undermining democracy. If the United States does not provide non-military aid, the action, or lack thereof, sets a precedent that competing global powers can encroach beyond military lines to expand control and consolidate power in illegal, modern-day, imperialism. The Taiwanese representative in Washington, D.C., echoes this critical message specifically to Taiwan, explaining that abandoning Ukraine now sends a signal to Taiwan that they are alone and a signal to China that they can attack without punishment. The situation in Ukraine is a microcosm of the potential unjust superpowers that may have on neighboring territories with personal vendettas. If the United States can indirectly shut this down through the essential provision of non-military aid, further encroachment will be hindered while simultaneously not being directly involved in the conflict. Setting this principal precedent is supportive of America’s necessary commitment to diplomacy and conflict resolution. As the leader of the free world, the United States is committed to peaceful resolution. In times where this intention is impossible, aid and intervention must be precautious to not cause further conflict but also effective in accomplishing its intention. The myriad of goals and precautions relating to the issue can be adequately addressed through the provision of military aid.
“If Ukraine falls, Russia will attack us or the Baltic states,” remarked Georgian President Salomé Zourabichvili in an interview with LRT, a Lithuanian TV channel. Thousands of soldiers, tanks, and helicopters surged through the Russo-Ukrainian border on the morning of February 24, 2022. As the first major conflict between large European nations in the 21st century, this invasion would result in massive geopolitical shifts and changes, and with every passing moment, it becomes more imperative that the United States continues its military aid to Ukraine.

It all started when Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014. Neither side took action proceeding these conflicts, and about 13,000 Ukrainian lives were lost in the skirmish. Moving forward to around December 2021, Vladimir Putin began demanding conditions from both NATO and Ukraine, one of which was barring Ukraine from joining the alliance. After these insistences, Russia recognized rebel areas inside Ukraine as sovereign states. On February 24th, 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine from the Donbas area, which leaders worldwide (including those within Russia) condemned. Russia built up these forces over many months, in which Russia claimed to have been exercising its military on the border of Ukraine. USNews reports that around 190,000 Russian soldiers were armed on the border before the invasion. After almost 20 months of fighting, the Ukrainian forces endured countless attacks and have even launched a full-scale counterattack against their aggressors, capturing much land. As November comes around, heavy rains are making the battlefield an impassable mess. Trenches span hundreds of miles across the devastated regions of eastern Ukraine as Russian soldiers dig in to prepare for winter.

On top of this, Russia is expected to launch a counter-offensive to take back previously liberated Ukrainian territories. We have already seen Western-made tech serve a great use to the Ukrainian armed forces. Just recently, 31 American-made Abrams Main Battle Tanks have arrived in Ukraine. These tanks are expected to provide a much-needed boost in firepower for the Ukrainian army. As for the constant air threat that Russia poses with their incessant missiles and airstrikes, the Patriot air defense system has got the skies of Kyiv covered. Down below in the freezing trenches of Donetsk, Ukrainian soldiers are using arms supplied by the west to fend off the Russian aggressors. The battlefields of Ukraine brim with military technologies and aid sent by the US and its allies. Without them, Ukraine could fall in months. Here is why.

First, we must understand the grueling trench warfare. Widely used in the First World War, trenches are long dugouts along an area to defend against invaders. They have become a staple of warfare in the 20th and 21st centuries. This type of warfare is grueling, tedious, and downright awful for those who participate in it. Freezing weather conditions in the
winter, as well as the excessive downpours, will make life in the trenches miserable for both sides.

Putin is willing to fight till the bitter end and discourage the west to stop supporting Ukraine. The United States cannot cease their support—Zelensky simply does not have the resources and manpower to survive in a war of attrition. If military aid is withdrawn, Ukraine could be overrun and devastation will ensue. To put this into perspective, rough estimates of the casualties in Ukraine are around 500,000 military deaths. This does not include civilian deaths nor potential false reports on different sides. Who knows what untold horrors and war crimes might be committed in the following months if the ravages of war spreads? Only one thing is for certain. The consequences will be disastrous.
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