

THE HORACE MANN Review

Imperialism & Civil War



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Letter from the Editors



Hello Horace Mann! We are thrilled to present Issue 2 of Volume XXXIII of The Review.

Battle—our world is ridden with it in the 21st century. Often, it can consist of two sides: the oppressor and the oppressed. This exists not only within a country, but between one country and another. In light of recent events regarding such conflicts, our feature for this issue explores imperialism, which results in inter-country oppressor-oppressed conflicts, as well as civil war, an intra-country oppressor-oppressed conflict. This feature builds on that of Issue 1, which highlighted War and Protest in Eurasia.

In addition our writers share opinions on international events such as global election cycles and humanitarian crises. Domestically, our writers discuss the presidential election and the possible effect of recent court rulings, abortion, and more locally the NYC migrant crisis.

Finally, in our Sci-Tech and Economics sections, our writers explore cryptocurrency, climate change, artificial intelligence's impact on the job market, and the technological/economic consequences associated with the Taiwan-China conflict.

As always, we are grateful for the dedication and effort of the publication's entire staff, from our enthusiastic editors to our hard-working writers. We are grateful to continue to serve as a platform for open discourse and student opinion. We hope you enjoy the issue!

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Table of Contents

FEATURES

Civil War in Sudan: Displacement, Violence, and Apathy
Gabrielle Hayden page 3

Conflict Continues in Myanmar
William Basile page 5

The Harmful Effects of Cobalt Mining in the Congo
Keagan Morrison page 7

INTERNATIONAL

The U.S. Needs to Relearn How to Help Haiti
Clara Medeiros page 9

Iraq's Anti-LGBTQ+ Policies
Lizzie Strasser page 11

This Year's Elections: The Fate of Latin American Democracy
Henry Stevanovic page 13

Understanding the Indian Election
Sharanya Raman page 15

DOMESTIC

Tracing the Roots of Polarization in the Upcoming U.S. Election
Maddie Brooks page 19

Weinstein Overturned: Implications for Donald Trump
Ella Dauer page 21

SCOTUS Decision on Trump Ballot Exclusions
Michelle Grinberg page 23

An Overview of the NYC Migrant Crisis
Sienna Tolani page 25

The Arizona Abortion Ban: Why We Need to Act Now
Anya Sen page 27

ECON

The Volatile Past and (Potentially) Stable Future of Crypto
Ethan Furman page 29

Facing the Unavoidable Economic Impact of Climate Change
Matthew Simpson page 31

SCI-TECH

Tech Layoffs: What Role Does AI Play?
Helena Zhang page 33

Taiwan-China Conflict: The U.S. Stance
Jacqueline Shih page 35



CIVIL WAR IN SUDAN: DISPLACEMENT, VIOLENCE, AND APATHY

Gabrielle Hayden

Since gaining independence from joint colonial occupation by Egypt and Britain in 1956, Sudan has existed in a constant state of conflict. Tensions began as a power struggle between two opposing organizations, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Upon becoming an independent nation, the Sudanese government vowed to establish democratic governance. However, bias-driven battles over political control have indefinitely postponed plans for democracy. Sudan has been a hotspot for ethnic and racial conflict. In the north, the population is primarily composed of wealthy Arab and Muslim inhabitants. The developing South has a larger Christian and Animist population. There have been two grand-scale civil wars between these regions. From 1983 to 2005, the rival sides fought for political authority. In 1989, Omar al-Bashir led a successful coup, assuming the role

of Sudan's first dictator post-colonialism. Bashir's rule was notoriously oppressive with restricted interpretations of Islamic law, local militias, morality police, and persecution based on religious background. The first civil war culminated in the Darfur War, which was later deemed a genocide against non-Arab populations, in 2003. During Bashir's rule, the country split into two states, establishing the existence of the Republic of South Sudan. Officially fracturing Sudan into separate states was a mere formality; polar hostility since Sudan's inception has shattered any sense of unified national identity.¹

Bashir continued to rule until 2019 when SAF and RSF joined forces to overthrow his leadership. Together, the organizations aimed to create a transitional government and security council. Abdalla Hamdok, a civilian economist, was appointed as Sudan's prime minister. He was charged with the task of stabilizing the

nation's volatile economy and presenting a facade of security to foreign countries. Two years later, Hamdok was arrested and removed from his role as prime minister. In response, international organizations, like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, ceased all relief imports to Sudan. Foreign institutions hoped that pausing relief funds and products would encourage Hamdok's reinstatement. Instead, the government offered a transitional plan to civilian leadership with democratic elections. The plan was proposed in 2022 but had an estimated completion date of 2024. This long-term project quickly became unappealing to citizens who yearned for the ability to assert control over their nation's political status. The proposal also allowed the security sector, composed of organizations like SAF and RSF have been engaged in a continual battle for power. In 2024, the UN Security Council called for a complete cessation of violence in



Sudan, but the demand garnered no such result. SSRSF, to retain certain powers. As civilians protested, exercising their ability to engage in free speech, militant authority called for violent crackdowns. Since Bashir's removal, the SAF and RSF have been engaged in a continual battle for power. In 2024, the UN Security Council called for a complete cessation of violence in Sudan, but the demand garnered no such result.²

The perpetual presence of conflict in Sudan has made the country no stranger to inhumane activity. Violent airstrikes, bombing, and physical combat make certain regions uninhabitable. Due to the current crisis, over eighteen million Sudanese people are experiencing food insecurity. Parents bring their children into uncharted territory with the hopes of finding somewhere more accepting than the "home" they were forced to flee.³ Further, ten million people have been displaced; this conflict has the greatest rate of internal displacement in history. There have been an estimated fifteen thousand casualties since the civil war officially began on April 15th, 2023.⁴ Beyond expected war devastations, victims of the Sudanese conflict have been exposed to gruesome cruelty. Repeated abuse of power is a systemic condition of life in Sudan. In a previous conflict, certain victims underwent forced cannibalism and groundless public beatings.⁵ Gender-based violence causes an additional concern for female victims. Attempting to quietly escape the grip of brutality in Sudan, women cross regional boundaries. Rather than being greeted with a much-needed safe haven, some women experience a new form of torture.

Bias-motivated soldiers rape and sexually abuse fleeing women, shouting ethnic slurs at their victims. Many women who experienced sexual violence were unable to receive physical or psychological care due to generalized stigma around gender-based concerns in Sudan.⁶ The nation's current status is unbearable.

As safety conditions worsen, so does access to healthcare. Roughly 70 percent of the health facilities in the area of conflict have lost function. Furthermore, the systematic looting of aid resources from international organizations, like the UN agencies, leaves civilians with little to sustain themselves.⁷ There are roughly eleven thousand cases of cholera and four thousand cases of measles, malaria, and dengue fever. All of these diseases require some form of medical care, but it cannot be received. Malnourishment and poor water quality only serve to worsen national health. Expected fatalities in battle are the least of Sudan's concerns; rampant disease, malnourishment, and destroyed healthcare exacerbate the impact of the conflict.

Considering the dire conditions in Sudan, the lack of media coverage on the issue raises questions. Ameen Mekki, an advocate for increased awareness for the Sudanese people, offers his first-hand experience: "We feel ignored... we feel failed by the international community."⁸ Mekki

implies that global apathy towards the situation in Sudan hails from colorism or racial empathy bias, which is the expression of less empathy for the pain Black people experience compared to people of other ethnic backgrounds. William Carter from the Norwegian Refugee Council offers the perspective that limited media interest and humanitarian aid are "not ignorance; it's a case of apathy."⁹ Whether subliminally motivated by racial bias or feeling generally apathetic, the global population has expressed limited concern for the crisis in Sudan. News stations must continue to cover Sudan's situation and heighten awareness about the subject. Emotional and political apathy are epidemics in the twenty-first century, but working to reverse this sense of indifference is not impossible. By forcing people to confront the harsh realities of humanitarian disasters, the comfortable barrier between media consumers and war victims is disrupted; only then can the global community work to support each other. **HMR**





Conflict Continues in Myanmar

William Basile

Myanmar has been embroiled in civil war since a military junta ousted a democratically elected civilian government in February 2021. This civilian government was sharing power with a previous junta, in what was once hailed as a rare example of a peaceful transition to democracy. After a landslide 2020 election, the National League for Democracy party led by pro-democracy activist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi won 397 out of 476 seats in parliament. Fearing their grip on power waning, the junta launched a coup, nullified the election results, and arrested civilian government leaders including Mrs. Suu Kyi, who has been under house arrest ever since. The military responded violently to peaceful pro-democracy protests, who then took up arms against the junta. Ousted politicians

among many other democracy-minded individuals fled junta-held territory for the nation's periphery, much of which is controlled by a diverse array of ethnic militias, some of whom had been resisting the central government for decades. Many of these exiles established the National Unity Government (NUG), a parallel government that oversees dozens of People's Defense Forces (PDFs) militias which have pledged allegiance to it.¹⁰

This state of war is nothing new for Myanmar, formerly Burma. This South Asian country has been in constant internal conflict of varying intensity since independence from Britain in 1948. Most of this conflict has been in the form of militia groups fighting for autonomy or independence for ethnic minorities. Many of these embattled groups have collaborated with

newer pro-democracy groups against their common enemy, the junta regime. The difference between this conflict and past rounds of strife is that this time, the opposition appears to be gaining an edge over an overextended military. Recent offensives by anti-junta forces have captured several military outposts and have pushed into striking distance of the new capital, Naypyidaw, while much of Myanmar's border regions are under de facto rebel control.¹¹

PDFs are not a single armed group, but rather a patchwork of anti-junta militant cells made up predominantly of Barmars, a Sino-Tibetan ethnic group native to Myanmar, who account for the majority of Myanmar's population. When relatively peaceful street protests and civil disobedience campaigns failed, many young people who came of age during the liberalization

period rushed to form PDFs to continue resisting the junta. The PDFs have carried the conflict into Myanmar's Dry Zone, the predominantly Bamar core of the country which had been relatively insulated from previous conflicts around the nation's periphery. Now, the region is undergoing a war of attrition between various PDFs and the junta forces alongside the junta-aligned Pyusawhti militia. The region has been polarized into strict pro or anti-junta camps, with most communities falling into the latter. Both the PDF and Pyusawhti militia are largely composed of civilians who only recently took up arms. Despite the regime's superiority in firepower and air supremacy, the PDFs continue to wage an asymmetric insurgency against the junta with no sign of abating, making use of improvised explosives, small arms, and drones to launch ambushes, assassinations, and IED bombings. Junta forces have retaliated by disrupting communications and burning whole villages suspected of supporting the PDF.¹²

The coup has also reignited conflicts in Myanmar's ethnically and religiously diverse peripheral regions. Conflicts here are not limited to just junta vs. anti-junta forces, but also conflicts between armed ethnic groups (AEGs). In general, these groups

fight for the independence, or at least the autonomy, of a certain ethnic group. Some groups like the Kachin Independence Organization in northeastern Myanmar and the Karen National Union in southeast Myanmar, have aligned with the broader anti-coup movement, actively assisting and fighting alongside PDFs. Other groups like the Arakan Army in the southwestern Rakhine state have stayed neutral due to a ceasefire with the military in place since 2020, thus staying relatively peaceful. In addition to the conflict directly related to the coup, there is further conflict between AEGs, such as in the northeast between the Restoration Council of Shan State and an alliance between the Shan State Progress Party and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army. Groups across the political spectrum are involved in illicit industries such as the production of opium.¹³

As with any significant armed conflict, civilian losses have been immense. At least 26,500 people have been arrested by the junta since the coup. At least 50,000 people have been killed since the coup, of which at least 8,000 are civilians.¹⁴ These figures put the conflict in Myanmar among the bloodiest in the world right now, alongside the wars in Ukraine and Gaza. Yet,

it gets considerably less media coverage than either of them. Why is this the case? I believe that reasons for this boil down to three interrelated points. The first being the sheer distance between Myanmar and us both geographically and economically, so the conflict does not have a significant impact on our domestic security or the security of close and crucial allies like Israel and the European collective. Secondly, the U.S does not have any military alliances with any party directly involved in the Myanmar conflict and therefore we have no obligation to intervene or even provide assistance. Lastly, we do not have significant commercial ties to Myanmar, so the ongoing conflict has much less impact on us economically than conflicts in Europe and the Middle East. Therefore, we pay relatively less attention to Myanmar because the wars in Europe and the Middle East have much greater impact on the U.S both economically and strategically. **HMR**



The Harmful Effects of Cobalt Mining In The Congo

Keagan Morrison

As the larger part of the world continues to progressively electrify, the demand for commodities necessary to support this future also rises. Of these resources, Cobalt, by far, is one of the most (if not the most) valued. Cobalt is a gray, lustrous, transition metal that is known for being toxic to the touch. Additionally, it is used as a catalyst by petroleum and chemical industries, to make airbags in automobiles, and most notably to make rechargeable batteries, specifically in the compositing of their electrodes.¹⁵ This makes the metal essential to support a coveted core function of most electronics, rechargeability.

When looking at statistics regarding the trade of cobalt, we can see that countries like China, Japan, and the United States, all of whom are at the forefront of technology, are the top buyers. Conversely, the largest distributor of cobalt is the Democratic Republic of Congo, accounting for 59.3 percent of international cobalt distribution in 2022.¹⁶

The Democratic Republic of Congo is a developing, Central African nation that has a long, contentious history with its natural resources. Being one of the most material-rich places on Earth, the Congo, and its people have found themselves at odds with other, more powerful nations as a result of Congolese wealth. Under Belgian colonialism, rubber was used to fuel Europe's bustling industrial revolution. However, in the pursuit of immense wealth, with little to no care for the people living there, the Belgian regime ultimately led to major human rights violations and the consequential death of between five and ten million Congolese. The mid and late 1900's was not much different.



Succeeding the nation's gain of independence in 1960, then president Mobutu Sese Seko nationalized the mining industry and made arrangements with the De Beers Jeweling Center in London as a trade partner.¹⁷ Much of these efforts would not make it into the 21st century, as the Congo Civil War led to the seizing of the diamond industry by several military factions.

Now, in the year 2024, the cycle continues as several thousand Congolese work for paltry wages under horrible conditions, and millions more are displaced. Most legally employed miners are primarily hired by state-owned companies like Gécamines, the successor to the colonial company Union Minière du Haut-Katanga. Furthermore, foreign international mining corporations like AngloGold Ashanti, Freeport-McMoRan, and China Molybdenum Co. also employ Congolese miners.¹⁸ Additionally, local mining coalitions primarily centered in the eastern state of Katanga, engage in similar mining operations, where conditions are far worse, often resorting to child and slave labor.

Efforts have been taken by the state to outlaw all morally corrupt facets of the mining industry. In spite of this, these laws are seldom enforced, and frankly, there is no incentive to. Looking both at the Congo's desperate financial situation and its overwhelming monopoly on the cobalt market, ceasing illicit mining operations would bring just as many logistical troubles as it would humanitarian benefits. On one hand, a valuable commodity is majorly reduced from the nation's already frail

economy; on the other hand, operations that facilitate child endangerment, slavery, and sexual assault are no more. Evidently, it is clear that the corrupt Congolese government has little to no concern for

“Seeing as it is our American industries that continue to fuel this fire, it would be morally bankrupt to turn a blind eye.”

preventing the latter.

Thankfully, this issue has reached international audiences. Currently, it's not uncommon to scroll down your feed on websites like X or TikTok and see posts attached with #freecongo, many of which lead to funds that are donated to promote more ethical mining practices. Additionally, nonprofits like AFREWATCH (African Resource Watch) which primarily operates in the Democratic Republic of Congo continue to lobby for not only ethical mining practices but also citizen involvement in the industry as a whole.¹⁹

The situation in the Congo is an incredibly tragic one that has its roots in economic colonialism, corruption, and consumerism. Seeing as though it is our American industries that continue to fuel this fire, it would be morally bankrupt to turn a blind eye. Therefore it is our duty as citizens of this country to help spread awareness as much as we can. **HMR**





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The U.S. Needs to Relearn How to Help Haiti

Clara Medeiros

In Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, chaos ensues. Corpses are rotting on the street. There is a cholera outbreak threat and a shortage of clean drinking water. Hunger is a constant condition. The outmatched police force has essentially vanished along with Prime Minister Ariel Henry.

In June of 2023, gangs seized control of almost every area of Port-au-Prince, leaving the government in control of only small pockets of the city. Now, it has been 11 months since the gangs first took control of areas of Haiti's capital and over 19 months since the Haitian PM first requested an armed intervention.²⁰ Since then, gangs have taken control of Haiti, exiled Henry to Puerto Rico, and forced him to step down as PM. As gangs commit egregious amounts of humanitarian violations and upend an established democracy, it is time for the international community to alleviate the suffering of those who have been displaced

and affected by the violence, instead of forcibly controlling Haiti's political matters.

Many blame this latest period of violence in the Americas' first free Black republic on long standing poverty, the legacy of colonialism, and European and United States interference. However, it is actually rooted in the earthquake in 2010 that devastated the region leaving 1.5 million people homeless, leading to Haiti's infestation of street gangs.²¹ Since then, many Haitians have been living in poorly built and exposed housing, and more earthquakes, hurricanes, and floods have followed, exacerbating efforts to rebuild infrastructure and a sense of national unity. Politicians and gangs in Haiti began to control the reconstruction process and the funding. Parties that controlled the government used the government for corruption to steal that money, and thus Haiti never fully recovered from the earthquake.

With the country's increased dependence on gangs for reconstruction, gang leaders have grown increasingly violent and empowered, taking advantage of power vacuums in Haiti to grow in strength.²² Therefore, the groups gained more influence over Haiti's industries and government. By not recognizing that Haiti's crisis is a result of incidental and systemic factors, we are blaming external influence for Haiti's crisis and discouraging countries from sending aid to Haiti as they do not want to receive further backlash in case their interference goes south.

When a group of foreign mercenaries, which also allegedly involved Haitian police officers, assassinated democratically elected President Jovenel Moïse in July 2021, Henry, who was prime minister under Moïse, assumed power with the support of several nations, including the U.S.²³ After Henry assumed power, Jimmy Chérizier, a notorious Haitian gang leader, called for

Henry's removal with threats of a civil war and even genocide. If the US intervened in placing a political leader in power of a sovereign nation, then they should have responded, or at least attempted to protect the Haitian people, when a gang leader threatened a population if the U.S. did not pull their support from Henry.

Since Moïse's death, armed groups, which include paramilitary and former police

4,000 prisoners, causing Henry to call for a 72-hour state of emergency, including a night-time curfew.²⁴

Moïse and Henry exemplify a historical trend of center-right, pro-U.S. leaders governing Haiti for extended periods, often with the U.S.'s backing despite corruption and autocratic behaviors. While Henry, appointed rather than elected, promised swift elections to restore democracy, they

Creating a vision for Haiti's future falls on Haitians, necessitating trust and substantial support, both financially and otherwise. The U.S. and its regional allies should cease their controlling actions in Haiti, opting instead to guide, support, and encourage Haitian leaders in uniting for a better future. Despite the challenges, this critical moment offers an opportunity for Haitian aspirations to conquer apprehension, a chance the U.S. must not overlook. HMR

“The U.S. and its regional allies should cease their controlling actions in Haiti, opting instead to guide, support, and encourage Haitian leaders in uniting for a better future.”

officers who pose as community leaders, have been responsible for the increase in killings, kidnappings, and sexual assaults. In the months leading up to Henry's resignation, these groups attacked airports, police stations, sea ports, the Central Bank, and even the country's national soccer stadium. The groups led the raid of two main prisons, leading to the escape of over

never materialized.²⁵ Nevertheless, the U.S. supported Henry as a connection to Haiti's elected leadership, despite criticisms from factions pushing for the promised transition amid growing turmoil and heightened gang activity. So far, the U.S. has failed to help Haiti become a stable democracy, the escalating humanitarian crisis calls for the U.S. to relearn how to help Haiti.





Iraq's Anti-LGBTQ+ Policies

Lizzie Strasser

On April 27, 2024, Iraq passed an anti-prostitution and homosexuality law that criminalizes same-sex relationships with up to fifteen years in prison. Iraq did not previously have a law that directly criminalized individuals for homosexuality. Although this decision was said to be aimed towards upholding religious values, many human rights advocates have claimed this law is a direct attack on the LGBTQ+ community. In addition to this policy, the Iraqi parliament passed a bill to amend a 1988 anti-prostitution law to include acts such as promoting homosexuality, which can result in up to seven years in prison, and biological sex changes based on one's decision.²⁶ Both transgender individuals and doctors who perform procedures on those individuals can face time in prison, excluding cases of medical intervention to treat birth defects. Also, the law bans any organization that promotes "sexual deviancy," which can result in prison or a fine.²⁷ The independent Iraqi lawmaker, Raad al-Maliki, wanted even more drastic measures and severe punishments for par-

ticipating in any of these relationships or gender changes. In August 2023, al-Maliki presented a bill declaring that individuals in same-sex relationships should face life imprisonment and death. Although it was distressing that homosexuals risked incarceration, it is important to consider that only a year prior, legislators had contemplated imposing the death penalty as a punishment.

In Baghdad, Iraq, a member of the LGBTQ+ community, Samar (she is only going by her first name for safety measures), said that the legislation was "unfair" and contributed to homophobia across the country.²⁸ Samar explained that she and her friends have faced multiple crimes against them because of their sexual orientation. She also mentioned that many members of the LGBTQ+ community did not feel safe within their own homes and wanted to leave the country. In one case, one of her friends suffered poisoning at the hands of her family upon their discovery of her lesbian identity. Samar requested help from other countries to put pressure against Iraq's new policy, one

country being the United States. After Samar's statement, a spokesperson for the U.S. Department of State, Matthew Miller, expressed his concern over Iraq's legislation. He claimed that by damaging human rights, new regulations may limit freedom of speech and expression and possibly diminish Iraq's appeal to foreign investors. Miller states the importance of American values that should be applied for citizens of Iraq, in order for the country to appeal to foreign regions. Sarah Sanbar, Human Rights Watch's Iraq researcher, says the new law is "a horrific development and an attack on human rights."²⁹ Sanbar signifies that the law is a violation of human rights and creates an unsafe environment for homosexuals. In contrast, Iraqi officials have been in support of the legislation and their new policies. The Iraqi parliamentary speaker, Mohsen Al-Mandalawi, released a statement claiming that the new laws are necessary to protect the structure of society and to "protect our children from [...] homosexuality."³⁰ Iraq should be focusing on ways to improve the welfare of their country, rather than enacting

laws that limit individual freedom and human rights. Although Iraq claims the new policies are a necessary measure to protect the country's societal values, they are ultimately discriminating against the LGBTQ+ community and making many members feel unsafe or uncomfortable in

ed individuals of these attacks.³¹ Other communities within Iraq, like IraQueer and Human Rights Watch, who support homosexuality and human rights, say the LGBTQ+ community does not pose any threat to Iraqi society. They stated that they "only want to exist in peace."³² These

they were forced to sign documentation stating they were not harmed in any way.

Instead of ignoring these acts of violence, the Iraqi government should implement new policies or investigate reports of discriminatory attacks and actions. Homosexuals should have the ability to feel safe within the hands of their government. Additionally, the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals in Iraq have the potential to improve if the government introduced an anti-discrimination bill that includes the LGBTQ+ community. Homosexual Iraqi lives will continue to be lost if the Iraqi government or other countries refuse to end the violence. **HMR**

“Homosexual Iraqi lives will continue to be lost if the Iraqi government or other countries refuse to end the violence.”

their own homes.

For years, the Iraqi government has refused to accept the prominent LGBTQ+ community within their country due to continuous social conditioning and homophobia. Before these laws were passed, many members of the LGBTQ+ community had already faced discrimination, abduction, rape, torture, and killings by the Iraqi authorities. In fact, the U.S. State Department released a report on Iraqi authorities, who wrongly accused homosexual individuals of public indecency or prostitution as a violation of human rights, however, the Iraqi government has failed to arrest any attackers or protect the target-

human rights groups have interviewed members of the LGBTQ+ community in Iraq about their encounters with armed groups or police. In fact, in eight of these cases, abuse and violence were committed against children as young as fifteen. Some of these armed groups have been identified due to their repeated attacks, including Asa'ib Ahl al-Haqq, Atabat Mobilization, Badr Organization, Kata'ib Hezbollah, Raba Alla Group, and Saraya al-Salam.³³ As a result, LGBTQ+ people were denied access to food and water, and unable to contact family members or get medical care due to their sexual orientation. Others claimed that after being abused by police,



This Year's Elections: The Fate of Latin American Democracy

Henry Stevanovic

Seven Latin American countries are set to hold major political elections later this calendar year. Five of these countries: Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Panama, and Uruguay, will elect new presidents in the coming months.³⁴ Brazil and Chile will hold important municipal elections, choosing mayors and regional officials throughout both countries. As many countries prepare to elect new leaders, the integrity of Latin America's democracies is called into question.³⁵ During this election cycle, many Latin American countries have the opportunity to curtail an alarming trend of democratic backsliding.

In February, President Nayib Bukele was reelected in El Salvador, winning 84.7 percent of the popular vote.³⁶ The New Ideas party, founded in 2017 by Nayib Bukele, also won fifty-four of the sixty seats in El Salvador's unicameral legislative assembly.³⁷ These results warrant a closer examination of the nature of Bukele's democracy. The Salvadoran president has flaunted his blatant disregard for the rule of law and the nation's constitution, calling himself the "world's coolest dictator" and a "king."³⁸ Bukele's complete control of El Salvador's government allows him to play by his own rules. He has silenced journalists, run for reelection despite the country's constitution prohibiting it, and incarcerated tens of thousands of people without due process, all while facing credible allegations of clear



election fraud. Bukele's opponents fear that he intends to serve as El Salvador's president, like neighboring Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega, for the rest of his life.

Mexico has a long history of pseudo-democracy. For most of the 20th century, Mexico was a one-party state, with elections fraudulently manipulated and outcomes pre-decided.³⁹ In recent years, Mexico has been able to strengthen its democracy and reduce corruption, however, today, Mexican democracy is under imminent threat of being dismantled and regressing to the condition it once was in. In 2018, Andrés Manuel López Obrador's populist ideology helped him win the Mexican presidency, and his legislative coalition secured victories in both houses of the Mexican Congress.⁴⁰ Since then, the Obrador administration has been characterized by the erosion of democratic institutions, judicial independence, and transparency. As AMLO's term limit approaches, former Mexico City Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum of Obrador's Morena party now leads the presidential race. Hand-picked by AMLO, Sheinbaum continues his left-wing populist agenda, promising increased spending on social programs and a higher minimum wage.⁴¹ Sheinbaum's main competition is Xóchitl Gálvez, a former senator and tech entrepreneur. She

also promises to continue Mexico's costly but popular social programs if elected. On June 2nd, Mexico's democracy will be put to the test. Will Obrador engineer the election to appoint his chosen predecessor, or will the Mexican people decide their own leader fairly, showcasing a return to democratic principles?

Since the Hugo Chavez era, democracy in Venezuela has been under threat. Serving as the country's president for almost fifteen years between 1999 and 2013, Hugo Chavez's administration was closer to that of an authoritarian leader than a democratically elected president.⁴² His presidency was marked by power-hungry modifications of the Venezuelan constitution, amending the judicial system and powers of Congress, the consolidation of Venezuela's state-run oil company, and strained relations with the United States. Today, incumbent president Nicolás Maduro is running a one-horse race for reelection. This cannot be attributed to overwhelming support from the Venezuelan people or a lack of potential challenges; rather, it is because the first real political threat Maduro has faced in years, María Corina Machado, has recently been barred from taking part in any election for the next fifteen years on accusations of "conspiracy."⁴³ If banning the only real opposition from running wasn't





“The next few months will be crucial in determining whether Latin America can halt the slide toward authoritarianism and reaffirm its commitment to democratic governance.”

enough, the Maduro government has also made arrest orders and detentions against at least thirty-three Venezuelans, including opposition members and journalists.⁴⁴ Ms. Machado reported that three of her campaign staff members were arrested and that her campaign headquarters had been vandalized. Due to political maneuvering, Maduro is also the only politician with the means for a campaign and, as of now, the only candidate with a guaranteed spot on the ballot.

In the Dominican Republic, incumbent president Luis Abinader leads in the polls and seems likely to serve another four years. Panama and Uruguay both have unlikely candidates leading the race. After Panama’s former President Ricardo Martinelli was ruled ineligible for the 2024 election due to a money laundering conviction, maritime lawyer and former security minister José Raúl Mulino was thrust to the top of the presidential ticket. Uruguay’s election promises a shift away from the political ideology that has pervaded the country’s government for the last thirty-five years. Leading contenders who are reshaping Uruguay’s two main political parties, the Partido Nacional and Frente Amplio, include Carolina Cosse, Álvaro Delgado, Yamandú Orsi, and Laura Raffo.⁴⁵ These candidates promise to implement reform

and restructuring, investing in bureaucratic decontamination, globalization, and economic growth.

These elections will not only be pivotal for Latin American democracies, but will also have crucial implications for the United States and the rest of the world. The U.S. and other global powers have a vested interest in stable, democratic governments in Latin America, not only

for economic and security reasons but also for the broader promotion of democracy worldwide.⁴⁶ As the elections draw closer, many countries will continue to see the emergence of messianic outsiders who accelerate democracy’s erosion under the guise of rescuing it from decay. Latin America is now approaching a critical juncture, and the international community, along with local citizens, are watching closely.

The outcomes of these elections could significantly alter the political landscape of the region. If the current trend of democratic erosion continues, it may further destabilize the region, potentially leading to increased migration, economic volatility, and international tensions.⁴⁷ However, these elections also present a possibility for renewal and a return to democratic norms if voters choose leaders committed to transparency, the rule of law, and democratic principles. Ultimately, the power to shape the future of Latin America lies in the hands of its people. With heightened awareness and engagement, voters in these countries can push back against the forces of autocracy and ensure that their democracies not only survive but thrive. The next few months will be crucial in determining whether Latin America can halt the slide toward authoritarianism and reaffirm its commitment to democratic governance. **HMR**





Understanding the Indian Election

Sharanya Raman

Elections in India have been routinely called the Dance of Democracy. India has almost one billion voters in the country (an estimated 950 million voters will exercise their franchise in the 2024 elections between April 19 and June 1, 2024) the size of India's electorate easily outnumbers the entire population of Europe, making it the largest democracy in the world.⁴⁸ Conducting these elections across India is a massive task requiring an independent, impartial, and seamless effort allowing the casting and counting of votes that are acceptable to the voters, political parties, and the various institutions that make up the Indian polity. This essay will delve into the intricacies of the electoral process and why it is one of the most fascinating exercises in human empowerment.

Elections are held in India every five years across all levels. Elections are held

at various levels, starting from municipal councils in cities or village councils known as Panchayats, up to state elections, and ultimately national elections.⁴⁹ The Indian parliament is a bicameral house, based on the British parliamentary system with two houses of government – The Lok Sabha (or the House of Commons) and the Rajya Sabha (the House of Lords). The general elections are held for the Lok Sabha with 543 members across twenty-nine states and seven Union Territories.⁵⁰ To win the general elections for the Lok Sabha, a single political party or an alliance of political parties must win a minimum of 272 Lok Sabha seats to command a simple majority. India uses a system called “first past the post”, or the FPTP to determine the winner of each single-member parliamentary seat. The FPTP system is a plurality-based voting system where multiple candidates from different political parties vie for one

single seat and voters cast their vote for a candidate. Under the system, the candidate with the maximum votes wins the seat. Since there are multiple candidates for the same seat, likely, that the winner may not win the majority (less than fifty-one percent) of the vote but still win.

In India, citizens over twenty-five can run for elections independently or with a party. There are twenty-nine states, seven union territories, and numerous political parties. Eligible voters must be Indian citizens, eighteen or older, and registered with a valid voter identification card issued by the Election Commission of India. Indians holding foreign citizenship can neither vote nor stand for elections. In India, there's no postal or absentee voting; citizens must return to their constituencies to vote. In 2024, around 960 million Indians are registered to vote, up by 150 million from 2019, with almost 200 million

new voters in the last five years. There are over 2500 political parties, each with a unique symbol. The ruling party, Bharatiya Janata Party, BJP, has a lotus as its symbol, while the oldest party, The Indian National Congress, has a hand.

The size of the Indian population and the wide spread of the country make India's elections a massive process and a logistical nightmare. The 2024 election started on April 19th and will be held across seven phases with the last date of polling slated for June 1st. Votes will be counted on the fourth of June and the results announced on the same day. While voting takes place across almost forty-five days, the counting of votes and the results is very swift since the voting and the subsequent counting are done through electronic voting machines or EVMs. The EVMs allow for a smooth voting process and significantly reduce the opportunity for malpractices.

India's electoral rules mandate a polling station within 1.2 miles of every habitation, leading election workers to trek across diverse terrains, from glaciers to jungles, to ensure access to all eligible voters. Even the sole inhabitant of Gir National Park has his own polling station with an electronic voting machine. The Election Commission of India deploys about fifteen million staff and security personnel who traverse glaciers, and deserts, and use various modes of transportation including boats and helicopters to reach voters. This extensive logistical effort, unique to India's size and topography, contrasts with the United States where elections are conducted in one day. However, electronic voting ensures swift result announcements.



Additionally, Indian elections are fair and transparent due to the independence of the Election Commission. The Model Code of Conduct discourages malpractices and hate speech once elections are announced. India granted women voting rights from its first elections in 1950, leading to a female head of government within twenty years, unlike the US which took nearly a hundred and fifty years to grant suffrage to women.” In India, voters have the right to protest through the “None of the Above” (NOTA) option, with almost 1 percent of the national vote in 2019 going to NOTA.⁵¹ While in the US, where one political party has questioned results for the past two elections, the validity of results declared

by the Election Commission of India has never been doubted. Even candidates losing by one vote have accepted results, though some have filed election petitions for corrupt practices by opponents.

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi won 303 seats in 2019. Overall, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) won a total of 352 seats, giving it a commanding majority. The BJP has allied with like-minded parties in various states and has ruled the country's government since 2014 under the National Development Alliance (NDA). The Indian National Congress (INC) headed by Mallikarjun Kharge, is the BJP's only pan-Indian rival. The Congress Party has suffered two consecutive disastrous election performances, winning just forty-four seats in 2014 and fifty-two



“What has worked well for India is a fully empowered but fiercely independent and neutral election commission.”



seats in 2019. However, the INC is the oldest Indian political party and enjoys national consciousness and acceptance. It is considered the only national alternative to the BJP and while it may not have the funds to win the elections on its own, if the BJP does not get sufficient seats, any opposition alliance would support the Congress to form the government. Other than the two primary national parties, several regional parties such as the Trinamool Congress

such as secularism versus communalism, women's empowerment and protection, and lastly, caste-based development. Opinion polls conducted before the polls widely indicate that the BJP will come back to power, on the back of the enduring popularity of Mr. Modi and his electoral plank for development and fundamentalist agenda. The predictions on the margin of victory vary widely and given the range of issues at hand, some pollsters predict a

forms the legislative branch comprising of the House of Representatives and the Senate; and the Executive branch, which is headed by the President of the U.S.⁵³ In the U.S., while most officials are elected directly by the voters, the President of the U.S. is elected indirectly through the Electoral College, which comprises the legislators elected at the state and federal levels. Unlike the FPTP, the U.S. elections are a "winner takes it all" system that allows for small margins at a state level to allocate all electoral college votes to a particular candidate. This leads to a disproportionate impact from a few states (called swing states) that ultimately decide the elections. For example, the 2016 elections were decided by a very small margin in Michigan (<12000 votes) or Pennsylvania (<45000), which despite the small margin awarded the entire state to President Trump.⁵⁴ Similarly, in 2020, President Biden won the elections with similarly small margins in Arizona, Michigan, and Georgia.

Voting is an important process in a democratic government without which a national government would be less likely to be truly representative of its citizen's choices. Citizens must participate in their elections to see their country run the way they want it. What has worked well for India is a fully empowered but fiercely independent and neutral election commission. The biggest reason for the success of the Indian system is extreme simplicity. Taking all factors into account, Indian elections stand as a model for much of the world, demonstrating the power of democratic processes in large-scale governance. **HMR**

“Taking all factors into account, Indian elections stand as a model for much of the world, demonstrating the power of democratic processes in large-scale governance.”

(West Bengal), The Samajwadi Party (Northern India), Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (Tamil Nadu), Aam Aadmi Party (Delhi and Punjab), and Telugu Desam (Andhra Pradesh) are very important players in their respective states.⁵² These parties rule their state governments and also play an important role in determining the central government. Given the surging popularity of PM Modi and the surging support for the BJP and its perceived fundamentalist agenda, more than two dozen opposition parties announced an alliance called INDIA (Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance) to wrest back power from the NDA. Key election issues for the 2024 elections are economic growth, unemployment, national security, infrastructural benefits such as roads, electricity, and water, and other issues

change in government as well.

Both the U.S. and India are vibrant democracies with long traditions of fair elections. However, their election processes differ significantly. In India, voters choose parliamentary legislators from various political parties. The party or alliance winning a majority (minimum 272 seats) forms the government, with their leader becoming Prime Minister. Under the Indian parliamentary system, the Prime Minister is the country's leader, and the President is a titular head of the executive with vested powers, but largely restricted to ceremonial duties.

In the U.S., the electoral system functions within the framework of a federal republic and a presidential system, with three different branches that share powers at a national level; the U.S. Congress, which





Tracing the Roots of Polarization In the Upcoming U.S. Election

Maddie Brooks

With the 2024 presidential election less than six months away, it's impossible not to feel a looming sense of political dread. During the nomination process, nearly 49 percent of Americans agreed that they did not want a rematch between Trump and Biden.⁵⁵ However, those fears have been all but quashed at this point. As Trump's court trials rage on and Biden's continued questioning of his fitness to serve simmers, it feels as though there must have been some blip in our political system. In other words, millions of Americans are left questioning, "How did we end up here?" In a system that prides itself on representation, equality, and democracy, there is an apparent lack of all three in the current election. Moreover, when what's at stake is our liberty, economic health, and position on the global stage, this vast feeling of political isolation and polarization is more relevant now than ever before. This,

in turn, begs the question—what is the diagnosable problem? This issue hasn't been one that our democracy, or others, have experienced in an incredibly long time. To have two deeply disdained, distrusted, and unpopular candidates at the helm points to a crisis in American democracy—polarization.

It's impossible to pinpoint the single moment that this polarization began brewing in American politics. Still, one of the most significant starting points was the Growth & Opportunity Project, more commonly known as the RNC autopsy, conducted in 2012 after Obama's reelection. 2012 was a central shifting point in the culture, outlook, and attitudes of American politics. With Obama securing a second term, the Republican party started introspecting on why their party was consistently underperforming in national elections. They hadn't won a majority vote in a first-term presidential election since H.W. Bush's election

in 1988 and were increasingly losing their majorities on state-level and local-level politics. Their solution: Appeal to a broader, more diverse base of Americans.

This autopsy served to shift the Republican party from being the party of predom-

“Moreover, when what's at stake is our liberty, economic health, and position on the global stage, this vast feeling of political isolation and polarization is more relevant now than ever before.”



inantly wealthy, white men to a party that was for average Americans. This envy can be best summed up by the former Speaker of the House, Kevin McCarthy, when he said, "...I look over at the Democrats and they stand up. They look like America. We stand up. We look like the most restrictive country club in America."⁵⁶ Although accepted by many in the establishment, this plan became detested by more radical party members. With the emergence of the Tea Party movement in the Republican party and the further radicalization of Republicans who wanted to stop Obama at all costs, there emerged a radical sentiment that pushed back against the original RNC autopsy. That sentiment reached a breaking point in the 2016 presidential election when Donald Trump, a figure who embodies and is almost a caricature of wealthy, white, masculine America, won the nomination. With his success secured, the original autopsy was dead.

From there, Trump, being the polarizing figure he is, galvanized populist, right-wing Americans to enter the mainstream of politics—and with this emerged a sentiment, especially amongst younger voters, that America needed a more left-oriented democratic party to counteract the right. As a result, far-left politicians such as AOC, Ilhan Omar, and others began increasing in popularity. While these figures garnered and still garner popularity from younger voters, especially from women and people of color, they failed to appeal to older Americans. The result of these two forces is that the Republican and Democratic parties are fractured into varying extremities.⁵⁷

The Republicans and Democrats are both in internal tensions over what their party stances ought to be—they are still in the process of figuring out how far on the political spectrum they are willing to subscribe to. The truth of the matter is that moderate Republicans and Democrats today share more in common with each other than they share with their party's respective extremities. And both the Republicans and Democrats are attempting to compensate for this issue in vastly different ways.

The Republicans, believing that they still have a more solid base than Democrats, are appealing to the extreme. They are letting the far right control their party and hoping that their base is loyal enough to come along for the ride. Even if large swaths of Republicans detest Trump, they think Republicans will vote Republican and Trump supporters will stick with

Trump. In other words, their best hope to win is still to appease Trump and give him the keys to the party.

On the other hand, Democrats, believing that the middle of the political spectrum is more up for grabs now than it has ever been before, are appealing to older moderates. They are letting the centrists control the party and giving small concessions to the far left to keep them content enough to where they will be motivated to go to the polls. Hence, despite Biden's vast unpopularity, he has been able to make it through two primaries relatively unscathed, especially considering very few people think that he is the best candidate.

This resulting state winds up disappointing right-leaning moderates and people on the left who both feel like the political system in America is ignoring them. They feel like they are picking the lesser of two evils as opposed to a candidate who genuinely excites them for the future. This resulting state has left America with a political malaise. Despite the vast majority of Americans agreeing that another Trump versus Biden presidential race would not be ideal for this country, it has come to be the case regardless. However, politics does not necessarily have to be this way. While the presidential ticket may be disappointing, we can see that these trends all start on more local levels. Rather than direct all your focus on the big ticket elections this November, begin educating yourself on congressional, local, and state elections that you can get involved in—because it's those grassroots movements that can help pull us out of this slump and restore democracy in America. By engaging locally, you can be a catalyst for change, shaping the future of our democracy. HMR



Weinstein Overturned: Implications for Donald Trump

Ella Dauer

During the first week of the so-called “hush money” trial of former president Donald Trump, the New York State Court of Appeals overturned the verdict of another famous – or perhaps infamous – man: Harvey Weinstein. The Court of Appeals held that the trial court in Weinstein improperly let the prosecution present to the jury certain kinds of evidence of prior misconduct. Because prior misconduct will be admitted in the Trump case, the decision in the Weinstein case could have implications for the trial of the former President Trump.⁵⁸

In 2020, Harvey Weinstein, the once-renowned entertainment mogul, was convicted of several sexual assaults against three women and was sentenced to 23 years in state prison.⁵⁹ Four years later, on April 25, 2024, the Court of Appeals overturned those convictions and ordered a new trial. The Court concluded that the trial judge improperly permitted certain evidence and deemed it too prejudicial and, therefore, violated Weinstein’s right to a fair trial.⁶⁰

The right to a fair trial is directly correlated with the principle of “innocent until proven guilty.”⁶¹ A person accused of a crime need only defend himself against the crimes charged in the indictment. Therefore, prosecutors are generally unable to present evidence to a jury of a defendant’s prior bad acts, even if there are parallels between past crimes and the current one. This law aimed to alleviate the potential for a jury to convict under the belief that the defendant has a propensity to commit a given crime, not because there is actual evidence for the current crime. *People v. Molineaux* set out the rule against admission of prior uncharged acts when their only purpose is to show that the defendant has a propensity to commit a crime.⁶²

The concerns about propensity evidence are real. Suppose a person is accused of stealing and blurry video footage is the primary evidence of the charges against them. The identity of the person who committed the theft is the issue at trial. Imagine, along with the video, the prosecution presents



“Because prior misconduct will be admitted in the Trump case, the decision in the Weinstein case could have implications for the trial of the former President Trump.”

evidence of the defendant’s past thefts on three separate occasions. In that case, the jury might simply conclude that the defendant is guilty because the defendant has stolen before and has a propensity to steal. In the criminal justice system, people cannot be convicted of crimes based on their reputations and propensity for criminality. All evidence presented must have direct relevance to the case presented.

However, there are exceptions to the general rule against admitting prior bad acts of a defendant. In New York, evidence of past crimes can be considered to prove the instant crime if the uncharged bad acts

tend to establish an element of the crime, such as motive, intent, or the identity of the person charged.⁶³ The trial court in the Weinstein case allowed prosecutors to introduce evidence of other sexual assaults allegedly committed by Weinstein (but not charged in the instant case because they were old or out of the jurisdiction) under a *Molineaux* exception.

Harvey Weinstein was charged with coercing women into having sexual intercourse without their consent. The prosecutors not only had to prove that the victims did not provide consent, but also that Weinstein understood that the victims did

not consent and intended to have sexual intercourse anyway. The prosecutors wanted to show that Weinstein wasn't under a mistaken belief that the women consented to have sex.⁶⁴ The trial court judge ruled that prosecutors could introduce other claims of sexual assault perpetrated by Weinstein to show that Weinstein wasn't mistaken about the women's lack of consent in this case. Showing lack of mistake and intent is an exception to the Molineaux rule against admitting evidence of uncharged crimes.

Unfortunately, the Court of Appeals disagreed with the trial court's reasoning and held that the admission of the uncharged other sexual assaults was too prejudicial. Rather than proving intent, the Court held that the only purpose those uncharged acts could serve was to show that Weinstein had a propensity to rape women. The Court reasoned that the jury could have convicted Weinstein under the belief that since he had raped women before, he must have done it in the instant case.⁶⁵

While the Molineaux error was the decision of the Court of Appeals, it overturned the conviction based on a second violation of Weinstein's right to a fair trial.

In the criminal justice system, defen-

dants have the right to defend themselves and can testify in their own defense. If defendants testify, the prosecution can try to impeach their credibility on cross-examination by asking questions relating to their truthfulness. Therefore, a defendant may be asked about prior events in their lives which show them to be untruthful. If, for example, a defendant had previously been convicted of perjury, and now stands charged with an entirely unrelated offense, a prosecutor can question a defendant about their past perjury conviction. Those questions are meant to prove the unreliability of the defendant's testimony.⁶⁶

In the case of Weinstein, the trial court made a ruling about the topics the prosecution could question Weinstein about to prove his lack of truthfulness. It permitted the prosecution to cross-examine Weinstein on topics such as bullying employees and restaurant workers, throwing staplers at people, and punching his brother at a business meeting.⁶⁷ The Court of Appeals held that these actions should not have been permitted to be the subject of cross-examination because they did not bear on Weinstein's credibility – his truthfulness – but rather the “appalling, shameful, repulsive conduct could only

diminish the defendant's character” more generally.⁶⁸ In other words, questioning about the conduct may show Weinstein to be loathsome, but not necessarily a liar. Therefore, the Court of Appeals held that the trial court's ruling essentially made it impossible for Weinstein to testify on his own behalf, and therefore, he did not have a fair trial.⁶⁹

The legal reasons that led the Court of Appeals to overturn Weinstein are at play in the unfolding Trump trial. Donald Trump is charged with falsifying business relating to a payment to Stormy Daniels, a porn star with whom Trump had an affair, in exchange for her silence. Prosecutors allege that the payment was an illegal effort by the former president to influence the 2016 election. Part of the prosecution's theory is that Trump colluded with a media company to bury stories that made him look bad. He would have the media company buy up stories from people that could tarnish his reputation and then never publish them. In order to show this agreement, the trial judge is allowing the prosecutors to introduce evidence of other uncharged bad acts, such as an affair with a Playboy model and an allegation that he had a child with an employee at his company, for which the media company also made hush money payments.⁷⁰ The theory is that these bad acts go to the motive, intent, and conspiracy to sway the election. This is permissible under Molineaux. The Trump trial judge also allowed Trump to be cross-examined on (if he chooses to testify) instances including a fraud conviction against his company and convictions for defamation. This makes sense since fraud and defamation speak to truthfulness, or the lack thereof.⁷¹

The Trump trial has a long way to go, and the prosecution will proceed with evidence of uncharged acts. Time will tell whether the admission of these acts is appropriate. **HMR**





SCOTUS Decision on Trump Ballot Exclusions

Michelle Grinberg

In December 2023, the Colorado Supreme Court made an unprecedented and monumental ruling to remove presidential candidate Donald Trump from the Colorado Republican primaries ballot.⁷² The court based this decision on the 14th Amendment which disqualifies anyone guilty of inciting an insurrection from the ballot. The court ruled that due to Trump's role in the January 6 insurrection in 2021, he was ineligible to run in the election. It is important to note that the ruling did not address or affect Trump's eligibility for the general election, but only restricted him from the primary ballots. This decision, reached by a narrow 4-3 decision, sparked major controversy throughout the country. Immediately afterward, Trump and his legal team voiced their intention to appeal this decision to the Supreme Court.

In March 2024, the Supreme Court of the United States heard Trump's case in

Trump v. Anderson, which attempted to reverse the decision the Colorado court reached earlier. The case presented several complex legal issues, as the sections of the constitution in contention were highly ambiguous. Debate ensued even before the trial began. Many conservatives denied any culpability of Trump in inciting the events of January 6 and many democrats were outraged that a 6-3 conservative majority court, many members of which were appointed by Trump, were responsible for this ruling.⁷³ Additionally, legal scholars argued over the constitutional interpretation of the amendment and speculated about how justices would rule.

Ultimately, the court ruled unanimously in favor of Trump. Let's step back and look at the constitutional arguments made by both sides. Surprisingly, the case did not focus on whether or not Trump helped to incite an insurrection, but rather on how this constitutional provision should be

interpreted. Jonathan Mitchell, Trump's lawyer, presented two main arguments in Trump's defense.

His first argument is rooted in the wording of the amendment and has two main parts. He contends that the amendment does not apply to Trump because the term, "Officer of the United States," used throughout the Constitution, applies only to appointed officials, and Trump was elected. Additionally, he highlighted a part of the amendment that reads, "No person shall be a senator or representative in Congress or elector of president and vice president or hold any office, civil or military, under the United States."⁷⁴ Mitchell argues that although if found to be an insurrectionist, Trump may not hold office, he may run for and be elected to office, after which Congress can lift the restriction by a two-thirds vote.⁷⁵ Thus, Trump has the right to run, because hypothetically, congress can rule to overturn this restriction.

Jason Murray, the lawyer for the six plaintiffs from Colorado, challenged these two interpretations. First, he argued that the interpretation that the section of the Constitution that Trump's lawyers highlighted disqualifies all insurrectionist politicians except the president is nonsensical and that there is no rationale to explain why the Constitution would be written in such a way.⁷⁶ If any other appointed official cannot be an insurrectionist, why can the president, even if the president is elected instead of appointed? Murray also pointed to the fact that states have the power to safeguard their ballots by excluding non-citizens and minors and thus should also have the power to ensure that the people of their state are not wasting their votes on someone who is constitutionally barred from holding office. The argument of how much power states have to maintain and run elections is incredibly important and comes up frequently throughout the case.

Initially, it seemed that justices were going to vote against ideological lines, with the three liberal justices voting against Trump. Conservative justices Neil Gorsuch and Samuel Alito were open to the originalist arguments made by Trump's lawyer, while the liberal justices seemed wary of Trump's arguments. Justice Kagan seemed

to buy Murray's argument that there was no reason to disqualify all insurrectionists with the exception of the president. Justice Sonia Sotomayor, who is also liberal, made an interesting observation about the idea of presidents not being included. She described it as a "gerrymandered rule," as almost all other presidents in American history are subject to removal by the clause, as they were once appointed officials. Since Trump was a businessman before his political career, he conveniently never took an oath unlike Joe Biden and almost all previous presidents.⁷⁷ Surprisingly, the third liberal Justice Katanji Brown argued that Trump's case actually made sense, because of the historical origins of the clause. This section of the amendment was not written with the president in mind, but rather to prevent confederates from being appointed to lower rungs of the government. Thus, it wasn't accidental that the section was written in this way, but rather reflects the fear lawmakers during the Civil War had about Confederates infiltrating the government.

The second main argument made by Trump's lawyers focused on whether individual states are entitled to disqualify presidential candidates. Trump's team asserted that Congress should be the one enforcing the constitution and that individual states

cannot decide to exclude a candidate from the ballot.⁷⁸ Murray rebutted this by saying that it is, in fact, the role of the states is to safeguard the ballot. Chief Justice Roberts responded that leaving this up to the states is antithetical to the entirety of the 14th Amendment, which sought to restrict the power of states. Alito pointed out the danger that this precedent could cause in today's hyper-partisan and polarized country. What was to stop all conservative states from removing Joe Biden from the ballot for his own insurrectionary crimes, and all liberal states from removing Trump?

The court ultimately ruled unanimously in Trump's favor. Their ruling was largely rooted in the justice's belief that leaving the power to remove a candidate from the ballot to the states would have negative repercussions. **HMR**



An Overview of the New York Migrant Crisis

Sienna Tolani



Since March 2022, New York City has encountered an unprecedented influx of migrants into its five boroughs, totaling about 183 thousand people. This number surpasses that of multiple American cities and is growing by the day. Having overwhelmed the increasing number of emergency shelters across the city, migrants are forced to sleep on the cold sidewalks, build encampments, and pack into scrapped tents. This chaotic “new normal” in NYC has been blamed on various factors such as, unstable international politics prompting citizens to migrate to the U.S., the federal government welcoming migrants unable to legally work, and the Right to Shelter which requires New York’s shelters to provide a bed to any homeless person who inquires. However, regardless of the cause, New York City is still struggling to recoup and handle the

ongoing crisis.

In the spring of 2022, the first “pioneers,” passengers of the first migrant bus sent to New York by Texas Governor Greg Abbott, arrived in D.C.. Six of these passengers continued into New York City with the assistance of Catholic Charities. These immigrants marked the start of the city’s migrant influx. In the following months, thousands began to arrive as COVID-19 subsided and countries like Venezuela faced a rocky political landscape. Sent from the streets to homeless intake offices, these migrants quickly caused the vacancy rate of family shelters to fall below a mere 1 percent. Going into and throughout the summer, shelters struggled to keep up with immigrants who kept coming, fearing that they would be breaking the law by violating the Right to Shelter, a regulation oddly only pertaining to New York City.

At this time, Mayor Adams was confident that the federal government would lend its assistance in the coming weeks, welcoming the migrants and claiming that NYC had a “moral—and legal—obligation to house anyone...experiencing homelessness.” By August, Abbott had sent more immigrants to New York City, though the crisis was only worsening. Each had hoped that they would find prosperity in the city “where immigrants could make it,” disillusioned by word of mouth and NYC’s history of accommodating immigrants. Increased media coverage of the arrivals caused shelters to turn into a race for beds rather than ideal safe havens, NYC defying its international status as a symbol of liberation and opportunity.⁷⁹ Such events call into question whether this image of New York is accurate in modern times, especially as rent prices have skyrocketed and the native

homeless population already surpasses the thousands. Furthermore, should the media continue such intense coverage and would it be more beneficial for it to depict NYC as rejecting immigrants? On one hand, a negative reputation would subdue the crisis but it would also illustrate New York City to be poor in morals.

Efforts to establish more emergency shelters continued and by January 2023, the immigrant population amounted to twenty-seven thousand people. City administrators offered some tickets to other cities and even to Canada, making any plausible effort to cope with the growth of the migrant population. Still not having received any federal assistance, in a closed-door meeting later in January, Adams urged a White House official to take action.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, to his devastation, the federal government lacked a plan and immediately disregarded his requests for increased resources. However, after his continued begging, they finally succumbed to his pleas, providing \$156M in aid. Still, this investment isn't significant enough; Adams mistakenly believed the issue would require \$12B through the fiscal year of 2025. Following the federal government's action, the state government invested \$2B in the migrant response and City Hall proposed that it implement a statewide decompression which would spread migrants into other counties of New York.⁸¹

Despite the millions of dollars and hours spent in an attempt to resolve the issue, it is evident that the city has been working at a slow pace. Applying for shelter is an intricate process which is one of the only options available to immigrants who seek a paid job. While it had requested the federal government to speed up work authorization, the city administration failed to focus resources on assisting immigrants

“Instead of pointing figures at one another or living in ignorance, these governments should have been collaborating sooner to formulate a sensical plan before the migrant population began to multiply.”

find work themselves when doing so would allow for availability in shelters and save up to \$1B. In fact, a help center for shelter inhabitants was only opened in late June of 2023 by the city, much to the discontent of the mayor's administration, “We are a municipality doing the federal government's job,” lamented Ingrid Lewis-Martin, the mayor's chief adviser.⁸² In truth, the migrant crisis necessitates the action of municipal, state, and federal governments to stock resources and fund solutions. Furthermore, instead of pointing figures at one another or living in ignorance, these governments should have been collaborating sooner to formulate a sensical plan before the migrant population began to multiply. Now, they must cooperate with one another to relieve not only the migrants of egregious living conditions but also the city's native citizens of the stress of the climbing homeless population and the city of the billions of dollars being spent. To note the stark swelling costs, in the fiscal year 2023 alone, New York City spent more than a whopping \$1.45B to fund shelter, food, and services. Also, it was estimated in December 2023 that the city was paying an shocking average of \$400 for each individual sheltered migrant family per day.⁸³

Moreover, since May 2023, Adams has tried to enforce legislation to relax the Right to Shelter mandate. He initially proposed legal absolution from ensuring shelter for migrant adults and families when the city's resources were inadequate. Within the same month, he issued an executive order that declared that migrant families no longer had to be placed in private rooms with bathrooms and kitchens as they had been prior. Later, in October, he advocated for the removal of the regulation for single migrant adults, citing that the original 1981 legislation instigated by the Callahan v. Carey case did not foresee the current crisis. While his request was not accepted, New York City commenced time limits on migrant stays in shelters: 30 day limits for single adults and 60 days for families, with the open option of reapplication. However, in a settlement passed on March 15th, 2024 with the Legal Aid Society, these time restrictions were expanded. The agreement stipulated that shelters should limit the stay of single migrant adults older than twenty-three to thirty days and sixty days if they are aged eighteen to twenty-three. The migrants can reapply for an extension only under extenuating circumstances

evaluated by the city on a case-by-case basis, giving the city greater power to free up the shelters. These special cases may include if the migrant has a disability or has a lease on a home in the next few weeks. In addition, the settlement will only remain for the duration of the crisis and migrant families with children are exempt from it as families can reapply once their sixty days are up. These terms appealed to homeless activists as the Right to Shelter is protected and will be reenacted to its full extent in time.⁸⁴ However, the agreed-upon terms are not completely flawless. A majority of these migrants do not have any clear plans to obtain housing due to poverty therefore, once their limit has been reached, they will be abandoned on the cold streets unable to reapply for shelter. This discrepancy was highlighted by New York Immigration Coalition President Murad Awawdeh who stated that such behavior was unlawful and inhumane.

“Immigrant workers do not take jobs away from New Yorkers; they fill roles that need to be filled.”

In contrast, economists are arguing that the migrant crisis may be beneficial to the overall economy as they serve as workers, entrepreneurs, taxpayers, and consumers. For instance, in 2021, immigrants in New York paid \$61B in taxes and owned \$138B in spending power, fueling American businesses. Furthermore, it was found that a 10 percent decrease in immigrants would result in a \$8.9B loss to the American economy and \$1.5B loss in taxes. Arguably, it is these immigrants that allow for economic growth and keep NYC running in terms of improved infrastructure and essential workers. Additionally, the immense immigration compensates for declining birth rates and slow population growth which would otherwise lead to a reduced workforce in the city. Immigrants compose 36 percent of the NYC population and a significant 43 percent of the municipal workforce; immigrant workers do not take jobs away from New Yorkers; they fill roles that need to be filled.⁸⁵ HMR

The Arizona Abortion Ban: Why We Need to Act Now

Anya Sen

On April 9th, 2024, the Arizona Supreme Court passed a ruling that upheld a law from 1864 that banned nearly all abortions in the state.⁸⁶ The court ruled in a 4-to-2 decision, communicating that there is no federal or state law banning Arizona from passing a near-total ban on abortions. Physicians were already informed that they were to provide no abortions to anyone “except those necessary to save a woman’s life.”⁸⁷ In other words, even if a woman is raped or pregnant by incest, she will still not be permitted to have an abortion. Even more, the law is supplemented by a prison sentence of two to five years for anyone who provides an “illegal” abortion.⁸⁸

The law is set to be officially enforced starting June 8 of this year at the earliest. Thus, medicals are expected to continue providing abortions all through May. Given that the law does not go immediately into effect until at least another month and a half, Arizona residents, reproductive freedom fighters, and people all over the nation need to take action against the ruling.

In 1973, the ruling from *Roe v. Wade* protected abortion as a fundamental right. Despite the overturn of this decision on June 24, 2022 through the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* decisions, abortion advocates have been very successful in fighting against the overturn. Specifically, abortion has been on the ballots in seven states since the decision (which was less than two years ago). Anti-abortion advocates have lost in red and blue states alike.⁸⁹

And just like then, it is actually possible for the ruling to be overturned now. In fact, in the majority opinion of the ruling, the justices commented that a “policy matter of this gravity must ultimately be resolved by our citizens through the legis-



lature or the initiative process.”⁹⁰

In other words, the state legislature has the power to repeal the ban, and even if they don’t, voters can overturn it in November. How would this work? Abortion rights groups can attempt to place a measure on the ballot to ensure abortion protections in the State Constitution. To get on the ballot, the proposal would need approximately 400,000 signatures by July 2024. Given that the ballot suggests abortion access until “fetal viability” rather than a complete reversal of the ban, getting it on the ballot can actually be realistic—if we act now and raise awareness. Arizona for Abortion Access, a coalition working towards this goal, said that they already surpassed their target for acquiring the required number of signatures.

Nevertheless, it’s important for other organizations and people in general to keep rallying others to support this proposal and raise awareness about the ban. On April 17, lawmakers from the Republican-controlled Arizona House of Representatives voted against a repeal of the abortion ban. Likewise, on April 17, right before this voting session, the House Gallery filled with anti-abortion supporters who were directed by activist groups to arrive early to oppose the repeal effort. Thus, it’s important to continue raising awareness about the ban.⁹¹

There are other ways to demonstrate support as well. Almost directly counteracting the anti-abortion groups, abortion rights supporters gathered outside the Statehouse in Phoenix on April 17, carrying colorful and vibrant posters with phrases such as “Abortion is Health Care,” “Freedom to Decide,” “Arizona for Abortion Access,” and more.⁹² Even by publicly

rallying support, these activist groups are not only raising awareness among other citizens about the ban but also physically demonstrating pressure and opposition to the Republicans who voted to enforce this new ban.

On a broader and larger scale, one way to attack the ban is through the government. Many Arizona Democrats are eager to flip control of the state House and Senate, where Republicans currently hold one seat majority. As State Senator Priya Sundareshan said, “Only [if control is flipped] will we be able to codify abortion access and stop Republicans from interfering in our medical decisions ever again.”⁹³ In addition to the House and Senate, the Democrats hope to win the presidential race and control of the state legislature.

Even if the Democrats are not able to flip the control, they are still hopeful that Republicans may still be frustrated by the “draconian [extremely harsh or severe] abortion laws.”⁹⁴ Democrats and Republicans may actually be unified over the extreme totalitarian law, meaning that voter frustration in November may lead to overturning the ban. Even more, Democrats and Republicans alike agree that the proposed ballot has the power to influence the result of the overall presidential election.

In general, considering strategies to overturn the abortion ban is not only important for Arizona, but for all over the nation. Twenty other states either have a total abortion ban or restrict the procedure earlier in pregnancy than the standard originally set by *Roe v. Wade* in 1973.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, this can be changed. The time to take action is now. **HMR**





The Volatile Past and (Potentially) Stable Future of Crypto

Ethan Furman

From record-breaking highs to heart-breaking lows, cryptocurrency, the new decentralized digital currency shaking up the market, has become synonymous with unpredictability. Cryptocurrency, or simply crypto, is a digitally encrypted and decentralized medium of monetary exchange based on “blockchain” technology.⁹⁶ In its most simple form, the blockchain is a public record of all transactions and assets that are hosted on a specific exchange. Blockchain’s security comes from the fact that it can be independently verified by users, which means it is much less susceptible to fraud.⁹⁷ Crypto is different from other currencies in that it has no ties to any central organization, bank, or nation to back it. The value of cryptocurrency is completely

determined by supply and demand, investor and media sentiment, and government regulations. This has meant that the cryptocurrency has been extremely volatile and unpredictable.⁹⁸ For example, Bitcoin, the leading cryptocurrency, reached a high of \$69,000 in November 2021 before falling to less than \$20,000 in January 2023, and then again to an all-time high of over \$70,000 this year.⁹⁹ Not only is the fiscal aspect of cryptocurrency volatile, but the people and corporations that are at the forefront of the industry can be as well. Nowhere is this clearer than in the stories of Sam Bankman Fried and Changpeng Zhao. However, with recent legal challenges and shifting public opinion, the time of chaos in the world of cryptocurrency may be coming to an end. Nevertheless, that doesn’t mean that crypto

will become more usable or appealing as a stable means of investment.

Recently, Sam Bankman-Fried, the founder of the cryptocurrency exchange FTX, was found guilty of fraud and conspiracy in an alleged plot to steal more than \$10 billion from FTX customers, and was subsequently sentenced to twenty-five years in prison.¹⁰⁰ This was not the first action of its kind taken by the Department of Justice. In February 2023, the US government brought charges against Do Kwon, creator of the Terra-Luna cryptocurrency, for similar reasons.¹⁰¹ At its height, FTX was valued at more than \$32 billion and Bankman-Fried himself was worth about \$26 billion. However, this all came crashing down in 2022 when FTX filed for bankruptcy. It became public that FTX was

using its funds for business and personal matters, including buying luxury real estate, making political donations, and more. Before filing for bankruptcy, FTX was considered to be a reliable crypto exchange. Bankman-Fried's trial revealed not just that FTX was completely unreliable, but that most of the cryptocurrency industry is built on questionable business practices and chaos. During his trial in November, Bankman-Fried attempted to showcase this situation as an unfortunate accident, and himself as unknowing of FTX's widespread fraud. However, the prosecution painted a thoroughly convincing picture of organized fraud and skirting of regulations, all at the behest of Bankman-Fried.¹⁰² Beyond Bankman-Fried's own punishment, this trial also most likely means that the SEC and other governmental regulatory bodies across the world will start paying much closer attention to the goings-on of cryptocurrency exchanges like FTX.¹⁰³

In this same vein, Changpeng Zhao, the founder of Binance, also ran into legal troubles because of his business methods.¹⁰⁴ Under Zhao's leadership, Binance rose to become the world's largest cryptocurrency exchange. Zhao was a clearcut example of the free and rebellious nature that has become popularly associated with cryptocurrency. However, a criminal indictment filed against Zhao after rising tensions between Binance and American federal regulators stated that he often "prioritized growth and profits over compliance" and took advantage of the regulatory "gray zone" surrounding cryptocurrency.¹⁰⁵ Previous run-ins with the government had worried Binance investors and users because any criminal charges against the company or Changpeng Zhao could have potentially crippled the exchange, due to the fact that Binance is not tied to any centralized power. In November, Binance negotiated a deal with the US Department of Justice that avoided severe legal action in return for paying a \$4.3 billion penalty, an agreement to operate under tightened supervi-



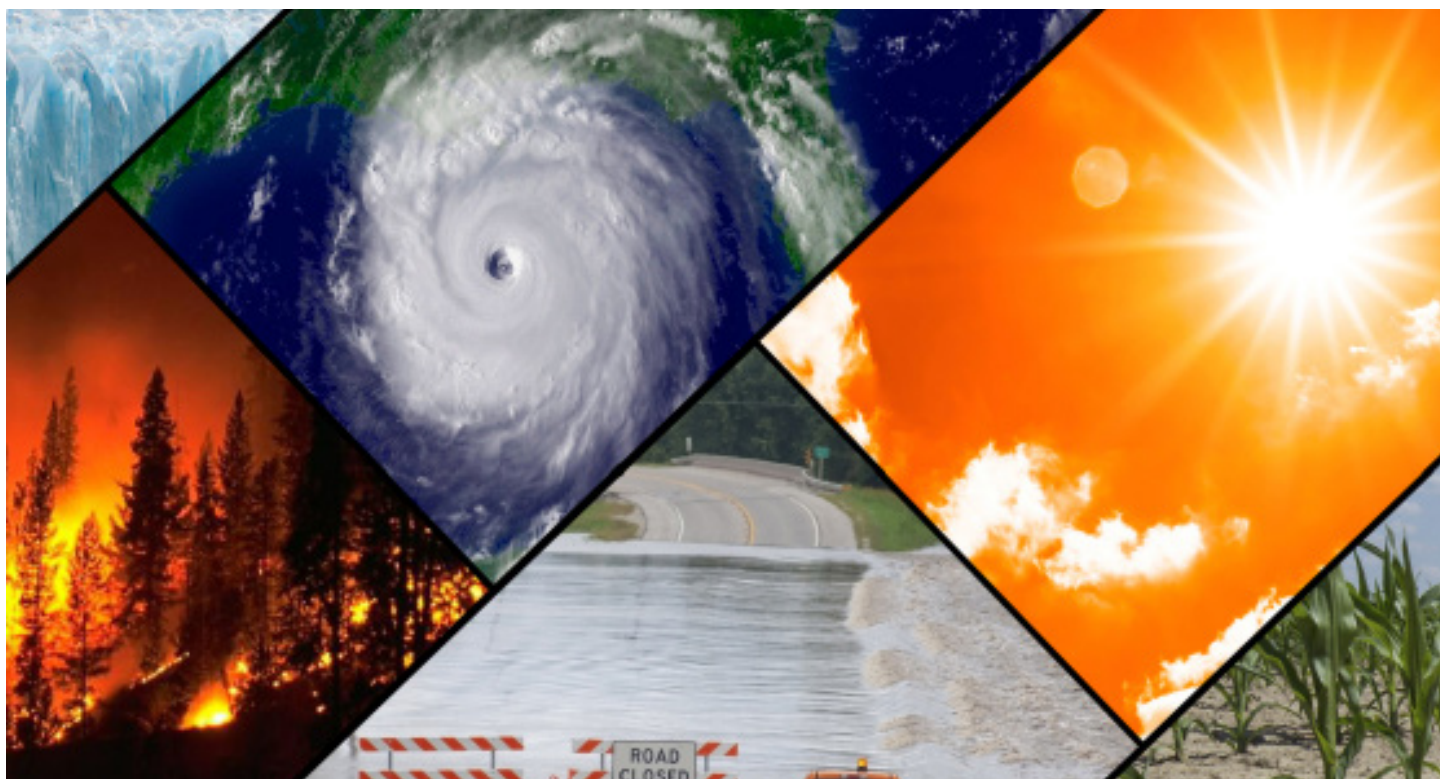
sion by US authorities, and remove Zhao as CEO.¹⁰⁶ Contrary to Bankman-Fried, who has become ostracized from the technology industry, Zhao already has several plans for his future business ventures, including investing in artificial intelligence.¹⁰⁷ Many see the messaging behind this deal as an agreement by Binance to follow the rules and put an end to its era of chaos and regulatory noncompliance. It's a sign that Binance, and most likely many of its competitors, are looking to cooperate and work with regulators, rather than against them.

Generally, these scandals prove that cryptocurrency operates differently from other industries. It is built on media hype, morally gray business practices, and the will of a few executives driving entire businesses. One promising advancement in the world of crypto that could circumvent these problems is stable coins.¹⁰⁸ Stable coins are a type of cryptocurrency whose supply is controlled by an algorithm in order to match demand and maintain a fixed price-per-coin, regardless of media scrutiny and investor attitudes.¹⁰⁹ While this unpredictability can be a positive attribute for some investors, most see cryptocurrency's inability to maintain value and remain a viable investment over long periods of time as dangerous. These stable coins fix this issue while retaining the decentralized and encrypted aspects of traditional crypto coins. Blockchain technology, outside of cryptocurrency, could also have many future applications in industries ranging from artificial intelligence to government resource management.¹¹⁰ However, many investors

are still wary of cryptocurrency as a general concept, as well as its use of resources and capacity for environmental destruction.

Over the past few years and months, the world of crypto has undergone immense changes and challenges. It remains to be seen if Binance, FTX, and other crypto exchanges will come out better for it on the other end, if these "broken eggs" can be made into a delicious (and profitable) omelet. While these changes don't mean that crypto will suddenly become a perfect asset, they are a step towards stability. As cryptocurrency and blockchain technologies become more widespread and commonplace, we can anticipate innovative solutions beyond traditional finance. With ongoing research and development, the possibilities for crypto applications are boundless, promising to reshape industries and redefine the way we interact with digital assets. **HMR**





As the twenty-first century continues, my understanding of climate change has changed from theoretical ideas to an urgent reality with present-day economic problems. With more evidence and studies surrounding climate-related issues, my views as well as others become far more informed. Though it is a daunting crisis that could have generational impacts, I think that the current era of technological advancements will allow us, the human species, to fight off climate change and return to a state of normalcy sometime in the future. That being said, I am aware that such technology is not cheap and not accessible in all parts of the world, meaning that the impacts of climate change become intertwined with the topic of economics and financial feasibility. The consequences on world economies are severe and can affect all aspects of society, as the flow of currency helps to run the world. Thus, I believe that although change may be costly, it is inevitable and that as humans, we should embrace change rather than fight it by pooling global resources and distributing technology as needed.

Firstly, I want to discuss agriculturally related topics as they are a foundational aspect of our society and critically important for issues like food security as well as contributing to the flow of money. This industry now faces a great deal of unpredictability due to climate change.

Uncertain weather patterns such as severe droughts and floods have lowered agricultural output.¹¹¹ For example, the lessened production of vital crops like corn and wheat in important agriculture where the local community relies on these crops.¹¹² This not only leads to economic repercussions on a global scale but, also increases reliance on food imports, which subsequently inflate consumer prices. In terms of economic impacts, I would argue that agricultural product distribution is an aspect of global markets that would have detrimental effects on a wide range of societies. Although the only current method of mitigating the effects of climate change in this sphere is to create an artificial environment for crops, I would suggest that these greenhouses are a worthy investment for the future, in the case that we cannot find another solution. For these reasons, I find it essential to discover new ways to adapt to evolving weather patterns as well as to engineer new ways of cultivating crops; I would posit that if humans were unable to fulfill these requirements in the near

Facing the Unavoidable Economic Impact of Climate Change

Matthew Simpson

future, some societies could have major food crises and international markets may be left in turmoil.

When it comes to infrastructure, costs are constantly rising due to labor shortages and demand for materials and resources. Specifically, I want to focus on coastal communities, which are especially vulnerable to natural disasters and have to spend a lot of money building defenses like sea walls, raising infrastructure above expected flood levels, and preparing structures for the possibility of worse extreme weather.¹¹³ These critical upgrades demand significant investments and continual maintenance, only adding to the already high cost. I think that one positive is that with the pandemic, many workers lost their jobs, and this project could supply many job opportunities. Unfortunately, the financial load stretches communal budgets thin resulting in higher taxes and insurance costs.¹¹⁴ Based on this

information, I can infer that the economic prosperity of these areas is harmed since other crucial community services would be sometimes sacrificed, in order to divert funding. Despite its high cost, I support the proposition of large structural projects that aim to protect coastal cities. Even still, I want to remind you that it is important to remember that all new things take time and that nothing happens overnight, but I see it as crucial to prepare for the future.

While referring to energy and related problems where economic growth is closely linked, switching from fossil fuels to renewable sources is both necessary and expensive. It will cost a lot of money upfront to implement renewable technology like wind farms and solar panels. Although I see this shift promising significant long-term benefits such as lower emissions and reduced maintenance costs, the immediate economic investment will be challenging for regions dependent on traditional energy industries. Along with journalists and scientists at the EIA, I share the view that wealthier nations with excess resources could help fund less wealthy countries that have a more desperate need for these sustainable energy sources. Additionally, the implementation of this technology will raise many employment opportunities, boosting the economy rather than harming it. Conversely, much of the workforce will need to be retrained as a result of this shift which could temporarily raise the unemployment rate as well as the costs to employ able professionals. Changes to sustainable energy sources are already occurring and it becomes evident to me that relying on the sun for example, rather than finite resources for our energy is far more practical considering we have the technology to do so.

Additionally, susceptible to the effects of climate change are the global and national financial markets. In my opinion, the complexity of risk introduced by the growing unpredictability of climate change makes it more difficult to value assets and investments. Popular assets include land or houses, both of which I believe can be subject to intense weather and extreme conditions. The rising severity of natural disasters is causing insurance companies to revise their risk models resulting in higher premiums to ensure that the companies don't lose money. I would infer that this means the average citizen who uses insurance will have to spend more money annually just to have security about the risks involved with their assets. A wide range of stakeholders

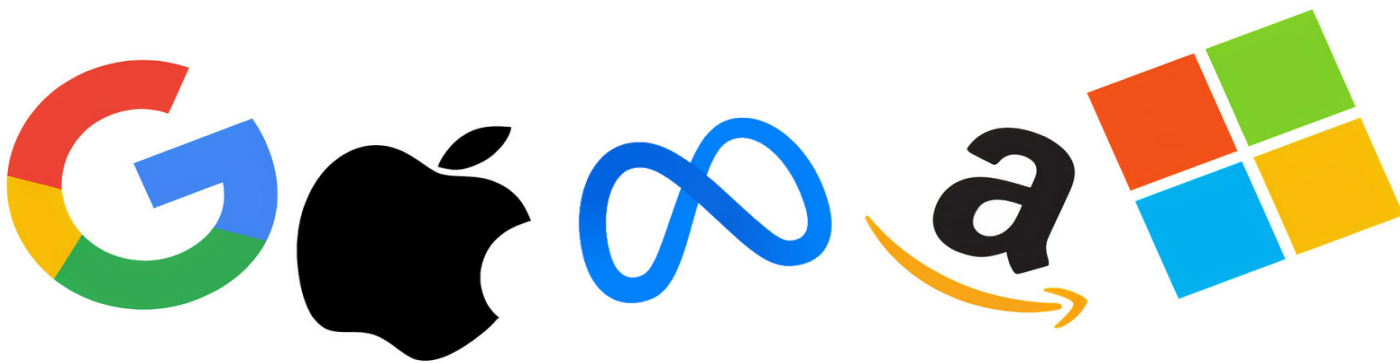
are impacted by these changes including homeowners and companies that mostly depend on insurance to manage operational risks and with the evolving climate it is becoming more difficult to maintain these assets. Unfortunately, with my understanding of business modeling, it seems likely to me that it will take a lot of time and effort before insurance companies can discount the impacts of climate change as it poses another serious risk to the safety of a client's assets.

Global economic imbalances describe a large disparity between two countries' GDP and economic power. My thoughts are that these imbalances are worsened by the uneven distribution of the economic effects of climate change on a global scale. Richer countries or communities may be able to adjust and mitigate some of the economic pressures with their extensive pool of resources, but less wealthy areas will continue to face significant difficulties. In the future, if this trend continued I predict that this disparity has the potential to increase the overall worldwide economic strains and accelerate large-scale migrations, which could initiate disputes over the earth's diminishing resources.¹¹⁵ An almost comical conflict over finite materials that communities could use to benefit their own economic well-being. I would argue that climate change is an issue on the global level and should not have different effects based on region and community. Therefore, I propose that the UN discuss these problems since the solutions for climate change-related problems generally overlap between regions, so it would not take any additional effort to donate already existing resources to less financially secure communities who

need them.

From my perspective, the economic consequences of climate change present a complex and multifaceted challenge with potentially catastrophic implications across all sectors and regions. Not only are the consequences of inaction high due to an ever-evolving climate, but the costs of adapting and maintaining a new style of life could prove to be just as expensive. Being proactive with adaptability is essential, not just a choice despite the uncertainty in costs. As the effects of our neglect of the environment worsen, it is more important than ever to develop quick and practical solutions. I believe that fostering international collaboration in order to address these pressing economic problems is the most effective way to solve our global problems as a species. The cost of continuing to do nothing is much higher than the cost of adapting. For these reasons, I think that sustainability must be given top priority in our future economic plans if we are to build a thriving future that can survive the difficulties brought on by climate change. **HMR**





Tech Layoffs: What Role Does AI Play?

Helena Zhang

It is no surprise that artificial intelligence has begun to revolutionize a multitude of industries, a trend best exemplified by the technology sector. In 2023, alongside breakthroughs in AI such as the launch of Google's chatbot Bard and Meta's open-source language model Llama 2, the tech industry laid off nearly 263,000 tech employees, averaging to about 720 layoffs each day. As of May 2024, more than 75,000 employees have been laid off this year, averaging to about 810 layoffs each day.¹¹⁶

The cause? Executives cite overhiring during the COVID-19 pandemic, high inflation rates, high interest rates, and dwindling consumer demand.¹¹⁷ For most of the pandemic, near-zero interest rates emboldened companies and inspired rapid growth in tech employment. From 2020 to 2022, employment in the tech industry grew at a rate of 7 percent according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, a number which later fell dramatically to 0.7 percent in 2023.¹¹⁸ Coupled with this rapid but unsustainable growth in the workforce were high inflation rates, which increased sharply towards the end of the pandemic and peaked at a 40-year high of 9.1 percent in June 2022 as well as high interest rates. Since March 2022, the Federal Reserve has raised and maintained interest rates at a two-decade high and as a consequence, many companies have made cuts to reduce expenses given that high interest rates are typically associated with riskier invest-

ments.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, many economists predicted that an economic recession would occur in 2023, providing companies with yet another incentive to reduce their staff. While this predicted economic downturn ultimately did not occur in 2023, market forecasters report that current unemployment rates are a strong indicator of a potential recession in 2024.¹²⁰ However, as the mass layoff wave continues in spite of economic recovery, improved consumer confidence, and stabilizing inflation rates — which have fallen to 3.1 percent as of January 2024 and continue to approach the Federal Reserve's target of 2 percent — it is clear that there is still more to the story: the stock market, strategic efficiency moves, and AI.¹²¹

Current layoff patterns reflect a continuation of Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg's "year of efficiency" management theme, in which companies reduce their workforces to restructure themselves in hopes of maximizing their performance.¹²² Unfortunately, this vision of efficiency tends to favor profitability at the expense of dedicated employees and often hurts the company itself because job cuts typically reduce its innovative capacity. On the other hand, many tech companies that conducted layoffs were rewarded with rising stock prices for their cost discipline. This has encouraged other companies to follow their example in hopes of receiving the same

response from the stock market.¹²³

Perhaps the most significant factor behind tech layoffs is the push for the incorporation of AI, a trend that has begun to emerge throughout virtually all industries in some shape or form. As layoffs increase throughout various other key sectors such as in finance and media, a long echoed concern becomes evermore pressing: will AI facilitate productivity and innovation, marking an era of rapid technological advancement, or will jobs be wrenched from thousands as AI ushers in an era of automation?

The answer is a mix of both. Since the release of AI chatbot Chat GPT in November 2022, other companies have been racing to churn out their own AI models, investing in chips and servers with the expenses saved from job cuts. In other words, many of these investments are made at the expense of employees who are deemed replaceable by companies with the technology they are investing in. However, companies have been ushering in AI too hastily when the vast majority of AI tools are not yet sophisticated enough to replace human employees. Sacrificing quality and refusing a gradual and ethical integration of AI in favor of so-called "efficiency" and profit is likely to be a fatal move in the long run.

For example, following Elon Musk's acquisition of social media company "X" (formerly Twitter), the platform has faced various complaints from users regarding increases in hate speech, frequent outag-

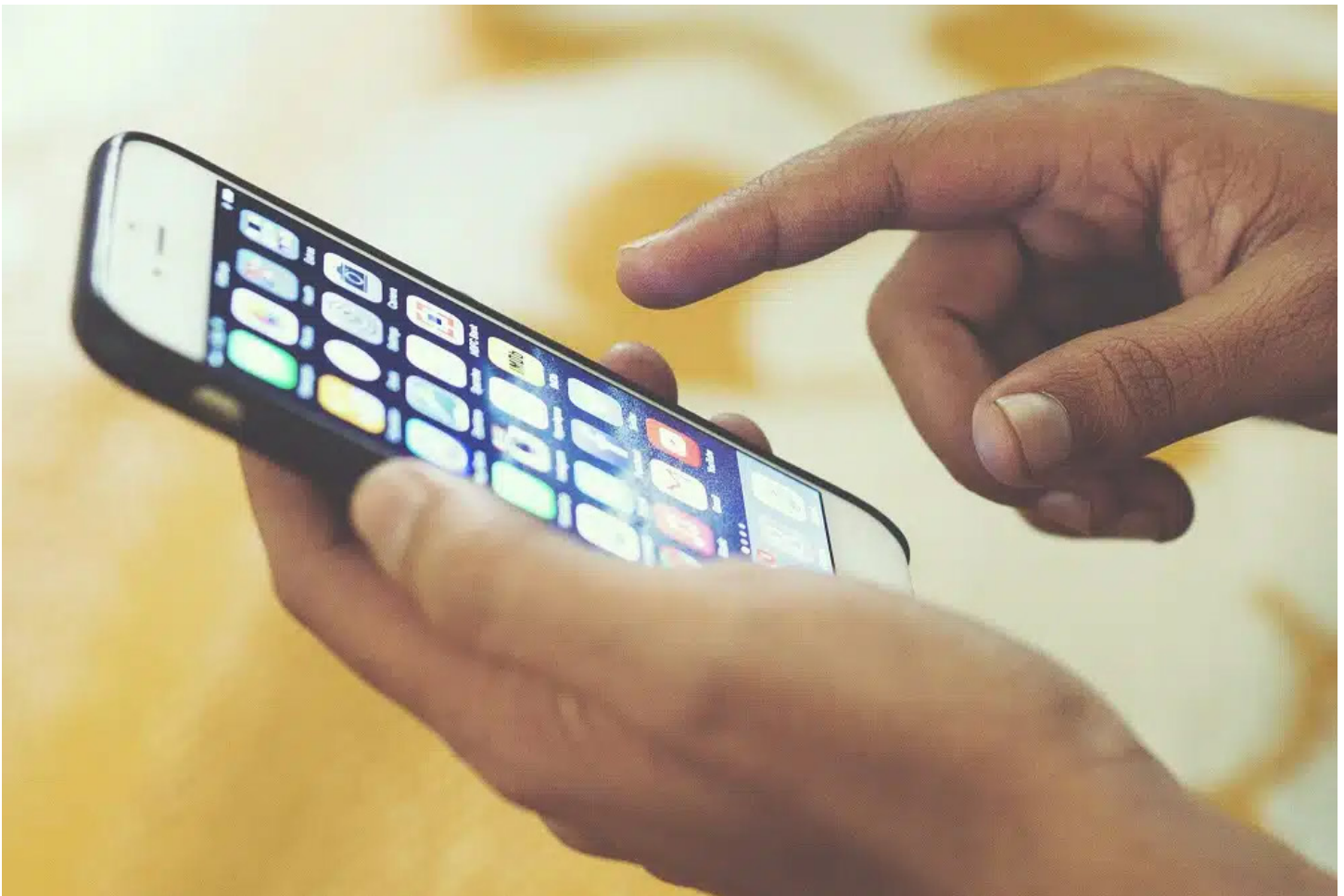
es, and other performance issues, with AI playing a large role in the platform's demise.

In November 2022, Twitter disassembled its ethical AI team, which had focused efforts on combating algorithmic bias among other initiatives, and laid off 15 percent of its trust and safety department.¹²⁵ In December 2022, the company dissolved the Trust and Safety Council, an advisory group consisting of civil, human rights, and other organizations that addressed issues such as hate speech, child exploitation, suicide, and self-harm.¹²⁶ In the same month, Twitter's new head of trust and safety Ella Irwin stated that the company had begun to rely more on AI to identify and evaluate harmful content. As a result, since Musk's takeover, the usage of hate speech on the platform has increased significantly.¹²⁷ In response, advertisers pulled back on spending due to increased reputational risks, with six of the top ten categories of U.S. advertisers on Twitter reducing spending by 53 percent in the first quarter of 2023 compared to in 2022.¹²⁸ In 2023, the company constantly failed to meet its U.S. weekly sales projections; from

April to May, Twitter's U.S. advertising revenue had plunged by 59 percent from its sales in 2022. Ad revenue is crucial for the company, accounting for 90 percent of its total earnings, and many indicators show that Twitter's value has plunged from \$44 billion when it was acquired by Musk to less than \$20 billion.¹²⁹ Twitter's decision to dissolve its ethical AI team and the Trust and Safety Council and replace their roles with AI have proven detrimental, not only to the platform's safety and user satisfaction but also to the company's success.

The effects of AI are not all negative; this technology still has the potential to create new jobs in the tech industry as companies shift their hiring priorities. With the development of AI will come the need for more AI specialists, such as data scientists, machine-learning specialists, and other professionals who have a degree or advanced experience in computer science, mathematics or data science. Some companies are beginning to advertise positions with salaries that range to as high as seven figures, and the demand for AI practitioners continues to grow at a dramatic pace.¹³⁰ However, to truly max-

imize the benefits of AI and minimize its harms, companies must prioritize ethical decision-making above short-term profit. Ultimately, AI should be used to facilitate progress instead of as a cost-cutting tool that is still far from capable of replacing the vast majority of professions. **HMR**





Taiwan-China Conflict: The U.S. Stance

Jacqueline Shih

Historically Taiwan and China have maintained stale relations. In the 1950s, conflicts between China, the People's Republic of China (PRC), and Taiwan, the Republic of China (ROC), led to armed clashes over key islands in the Taiwan Strait. During this decade, the PRC launched bombings on two different occasions targeting islands held by the ROC.¹³¹ Recently, tensions have escalated between Taiwan and the mainland due to disagreements about Taiwan's status. The situation regarding Taiwan could become a critical issue in the relationship between the U.S. and China.

Recently, the Chinese Coast Guard (CCG) normalized patrols around Kinmen, a Taiwan-controlled island with a large military garrison (3 km from the coast of PRC), and on April 29, the CCG

carried out law enforcement patrols in waters near Kinmen which have violated Taiwan's maritime borders.¹³² These updates prompted discussion on U.S. involvement. Considering the high stakes, it's essential for American leaders and citizens to comprehend their primary interests and goals in the Taiwan Strait. Is the existing American strategy effective in safeguarding these interests? Should the United States reconsider its longstanding "strategic ambiguity" stance and the "One China" policy? Is conflict inevitable or can it be prevented? How should the U.S. play its part to maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait?

For context, Taiwan, officially known as the Republic of China (ROC), is an island separated from China by the Taiwan Strait. Since 1949, Taiwan has been governed

independently of mainland China, officially the People's Republic of China (PRC). Despite this, Beijing views Taiwan as a part of its territory and has vowed to eventually "unify" Taiwan with the mainland, using force if necessary, under the "One China policy."¹³³ Taiwan is currently ruled by Democratic party leader President Tsai Ing-wen and was formerly ruled by President Ma Ying-Jeou.¹³⁴ As a leading democracy and a technological powerhouse, Taiwan is a key U.S. partner in the Indo-Pacific. Though the United States does not have diplomatic relations with Taiwan, they have a robust unofficial relationship which greatens tensions between the U.S. and China and the U.S and Taiwan.¹³⁵

In fact, the U.S. has held commercial ties with Taiwan that have been maintained and have expanded since 1979.¹³⁶ Examples

include the financing assistance through loans such as the Export-Import Bank financing and Overseas Private Investment Corporation guarantees, and trade benefits such as normal trade relations (NTR) status, a legal designation for free trade with another nation, and ready access to U.S. markets by Taiwan.¹³⁷ Additionally, the United States and Taiwan share similar values such as democracy and freedom which form a basis for their strong alliance. In contrast, The People's Republic of China (PRC) considers Taiwan a rebellious province and is committed to eventually "reuniting" the island with the mainland under the One-China policy.¹³⁸ Taiwan, which boasts its own democratically elected government and a population of twenty-three million, has

heightened tensions between the U.S. and China. In 1979, the United States officially established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC).¹⁴⁵ The US terminated diplomatic connections and nullified its mutual defense treaty with the Republic of China (ROC).¹⁴⁶ However, the United States sustains a strong informal relationship with Taiwan and continues to supply military equipment to its armed forces.¹⁴⁷ Beijing has consistently called on Washington to halt weapon sales and discontinue communication with Taipei.¹⁴⁸ The U.S approach is primarily guided by the One-China policy, which is outlined in many documents such as the three U.S.-China communiques in 1972, 1978, and 1982, the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979, and the recently declassified "Six Assurances"

stability in the Taiwan Strait through its signature strategic ambiguity, and it has implored both Beijing and Taipei to maintain the status quo. Washington says it does not support Taiwanese independence, but President Joe Biden has seemingly rejected the policy, stating several times that the United States would come to Taiwan's defense if China attacked.¹⁵⁰ However much debate within the U.S. surrounds his stance.

In my opinion, the U.S. should adopt a mixture of its long-standing strategic ambiguity but set some things down to ensure transparency with China. The U.S should make it unambiguously clear that if an attack was to occur on Taiwan, the U.S.-China "rich, broad, mutually beneficial relationship that it built with the United

“As a leading democracy and a technological powerhouse, Taiwan is a key U.S. partner in the Indo-Pacific...which greatens tensions between the U.S. and China and the U.S. and Taiwan.”

diverse perspectives among its political leaders regarding the island's status and its relationship with the mainland.¹³⁹ Tensions have been increasingly rising between Taiwan and China. China has employed a variety of coercive tactics short of armed conflict, and it has ramped up these measures since Tsai's election in 2016. For example, China has increased the frequency and scale of patrols of PLA bombers, fighter jets, and surveillance aircraft over and around Taiwan.¹⁴⁰ They have also increasingly sailed its warships and aircraft carriers through the Taiwan Strait in shows of force.¹⁴¹ China's objective is to wear down Taiwan and prompt the island's people to conclude that their best option is unification with the mainland.¹⁴²

The United States plays a major role in the Taiwan-China conflict. U.S. involvement in the Taiwan-China conflict began in the 1950s. On two separate occasions during the 1950s, the PRC bombed islands controlled by the ROC; in response, the United States supported the ROC through financial and military means.¹⁴³ Over the decades, despite the US acknowledgment of the "One China" position on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, US policy has not recognized the PRC's sovereignty over Taiwan, nor has it recognized Taiwan as a sovereign nation. U.S. policy considers Taiwan's status as unsettled.¹⁴⁴ This ambiguous stance has

conveyed to Taiwan by President Ronald Reagan in 1982. These documents articulate that the United States (1) Recognizes the Chinese stance that there is a single China and that Taiwan is a part of China, with some U.S. officials underscoring that the term "acknowledge" doesn't necessarily imply acceptance of the Chinese position (2) Rejects the use of force to resolve the disagreement (3) Maintains cultural, commercial, and other connections with Taiwan through the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) (4) Commits to selling arms to Taiwan for its self-defense, while retaining the capability to defend Taiwan without explicitly committing to do so, a policy known as strategic ambiguity.

States over several decades" would face repercussions. Especially since U.S.-China trade remains near record levels in value, specifically following Trump's presidency. However, we should remain ambiguous on how the U.S would step in, whether that be direct supply or indirect support as seen with Ukraine. We should remain ambiguous and non-committal to the point of war to ensure and strive for peace, the threat of U.S. China relations alongside the microchip industry, "silicone shield" in Taiwan should be enough to lessen tensions and ensure peaceful relations between the nations for now, and "de-risk" the possibility of conflict. **HMR**



Endnotes

CIVIL WAR IN SUDAN: DISPLACEMENT, VIOLENCE, AND APATHY

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