

GLOBAL CONVERSATIONS

FALL 2021 ISSUE



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Letter from the Editors-in-Chief

At the start of this year, politicians, journalists, and economists alike predicted that 2021 would bring about the end of the pandemic for most of the world. Instead, an unequal vaccine rollout, economic pressures, emerging security threats, and new variants of COVID-19 have made 2021 a year of collapse.

We asked our writers to reflect on the theme of collapse as they worked on their stories for our Fall 2021 issue. The fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban underscored the continuing failure of post-conflict stabilization missions and the enduring costs of war. Elsewhere, the fragility of global supply chains has exposed some of the fundamental weaknesses of our current economic system. Around the world, human rights are under threat as citizens elect unpredictable, authoritarian regimes that are bolstered by unchecked disinformation and conspiracy theories. And scenes of climate catastrophe dominated the headlines this year, warning of a future punctuated by floods, fires, food shortages, and crumbling infrastructure.

While alarming, the collapse of institutions, systems, and ways of life that we have often taken for granted is not surprising. In many ways, COVID-19 has accelerated existing trends whose foundations were laid well before the pandemic. The failure by world leaders and policymakers to recognize these trends has no doubt played a part in determining where we are today.

As you read these stories, we encourage you to imagine how the events and themes presented in them may impact our future world. In some ways, the destruction wrought by collapse offers us the opportunity to leave behind old systems that brought us to this point. It also offers us the chance to build new systems that serve us in more equitable and sustainable ways. Please join our writers in reflecting on the ways the idea of collapse has played out in 2021, and join the global conversation on how we move forward.

Editors-in-Chief,

Hilary Lawson & Imran Bayoumi

Hilary Lawson & Imran Bayoumi

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INTRODUCTION

Our fall 2021 edition arrives as the world has slowly started to shift back to normal: people are back to class, back to work, and back to at least some semblance of the lives they had before COVID-19. Over the past semester, we've been able to enjoy lunch once again with our friends, converse in class, play sports, and gather after the day is done.

Yet, instead of the hopeful recovery we were promised, the world still feels uncertain. A new COVID-19 variant threatens to undo much of the progress we've made. Climate change continues to advance at a rapid pace and international meetings like COP26 lead nowhere. Countries such as Afghanistan, Venezuela, and Syria have fallen apart. And in the Western world, the cost of living is increasingly becoming unaffordable for all but the upper strata of society.

Our fall addition dives headfirst into these feelings of pessimism and insecurity. The theme is "collapse." We asked our writers to investigate the systems that are deteriorating, failing, and inadequate for the decade of change ahead. They tackled issues ranging from the fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban to the failure of reconciliation in Canada and the deteriorating American election system.

But hopefully, by examining the collapses we see around us today, we will emerge to the other side with solutions to these pressing problems. As history has shown, crises can create opportunity and drive change. The Biden-Harris administration can raise the cap on refugees in response to the worsening humanitarian crises in Afghanistan and Haiti. Canada can rise to the challenge of reconciliation and play a more prominent role in amplifying the merits of democracy worldwide. These are just some of the opportunities discussed in this issue.

We hope that after reading this edition of *Global Conversations*, you walk away with a better knowledge of the biggest challenges ahead. But we also hope that you note that—even in the talk of collapse—that there is a better path forward. None of the problems identified in this issue are beyond solving. In this edition are fresh solutions developed by the next generation of thinkers. One day, they will take us to great places.

We hope you take their words to heart.

Directors of Written Content, Connor Oke & Kristen Pearn

COLLAPSE

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America leaves behind a geopolitical mess in Afghanistan

BY MATTHEW FUNK | GLOBAL SECURITY



EXACTLY one month following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the United States waged its War on Terror against ‘exporters’ of terror and governments who supported them. One such target was the Taliban, which controlled Afghanistan and harboured al Qaeda, including their leader Osama bin Laden. The initial phase of the operation was brief—the Taliban were ousted from Afghanistan within two months—but the ensuing phase of reconstruction became a stalemate spanning the tenure of four presidents. In April of 2021, newly inaugurated President Joe Biden announced that a full withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan would be completed by the 20-year anniversary of 9/11, putting an end to America’s longest war. By mid-August, the Taliban descended on Kabul—the last holdout in their occupation of Afghanistan—prompting a frenzied American exit eerily similar to that of Saigon in 1975.

After two decades, 2.3 trillion USD spent, and countless military and civilian lives lost, America leaves behind a geopolitical mess. While the worst effects will be borne by the Middle East, a potential resurgence in global terrorism and a looming refugee crisis risks destabilizing much of the world.

THE TALIBAN TAKEOVER: HUMANITARIAN IMPLICATIONS

The Taliban, who spent the past 20 years in conflict, have now turned to the more mundane task of governing—something they’re woefully unequipped for. The UN estimates that by the new year, 97 percent of Afghans could be living in poverty, making Afghanistan a contender for the world’s worst humanitarian crisis. Much of the current humanitarian crisis stems from the U.S.’s withholding of aid—nearly three-quarters of Afghanistan’s GDP (approximately 8.5 billion USD) came from foreign aid.

PHOTO SOURCE: UNSPLASH, MOHAMMAD RAHMANI

While the U.S. is relatively insulated from Afghanistan's turmoil, the mounting instability has stoked fear throughout the Middle East, as well as in Europe.

When the Taliban seized power, the aid flow was shut, and separate foreign accounts worth an additional 9 billion USD were frozen. Despite early promises that they had softened their stance, the Taliban appear to be governing with the same brutality as in their previous power stint, which makes Afghanistan's previous donors reluctant to resume aid in the form of cash transfers. As the humanitarian crisis worsens, these donors and the Taliban are in a standoff, and neither wants to compromise.

The U.S., however, is especially unlikely to deliver funds to the Taliban. While continuing to withhold aid will cause Afghanistan to descend into further chaos, it will also mean that the Taliban's grip on power will be short-lived. While the U.S. is relatively insulated from Afghanistan's turmoil, the mounting instability has stoked fear throughout the Middle East, as well as in Europe.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE WIDER REGION

One such fear is that the crisis has provided an opportunity for extremist groups to further destabilize Afghanistan. While the Taliban rules over Afghanistan, the nation's geography makes it nearly impossible to control entirely. This power vacuum is likely to cause a migration for terrorist groups, many of which are now calling Afghanistan "the center of global jihad." With little to no prospects for many Afghans to make ends meet, experts believe that some will be forced to join extremist groups in return for financial relief. Although the new Taliban government has demonstrated allegiance to groups like al Qaeda,

other groups in Afghanistan like Islamic State Islamic-Khorasan (ISK) — the group responsible for the August 26 bombing at the Kabul airport — are sworn enemies with the Taliban.

As terrorist networks gain a foothold in Afghanistan, this increases the risk of attacks against its neighbours Iran and Pakistan, as well as to European countries like France. Additionally, as jihadist groups from opposing factions converge on Afghanistan, the risk of civil war becomes increasingly likely.

Worse still, the spread of violence is likely to worsen the effects of an impending refugee crisis. Afghanistan's neighbours Pakistan and Iran have both announced that they do not have the capacity to accept any refugees, having taken in nearly 1.5 million and 780,000 asylum seekers, respectively, in 2020. With only minor commitments from the U.S. to settle Afghans who helped the American mission, the onus for resettling the refugees will fall largely on Europe. Germany currently houses over 180,000 Afghan refugees and is poised to accept another 40,000 this year.

However, Europe is less willing to accept refugees than it was in 2015 amidst the Syrian crisis as they aim to avoid another populist backlash. With 3.5 million Afghans internally displaced and the UN estimating 500,000 will leave Afghanistan between August and December, it is unclear who will accommodate them. Recently, Europe's migration crisis has been exacerbated by Belarus waging a grey-zone campaign against EU states Lithuania and Poland. To stoke instability, Belarus has been trafficking migrants to the borders and coercing them to cross. A rise in far right demonstrations in Poland indicates that this strategy is working.

A NEW WAY FORWARD

While the U.S. now aims to shift its focus elsewhere, namely towards the South-China Sea, it leaves other countries to inherit its mess. The pattern of chaos that the US has left in its wake requires a shift in its interventionist philosophy. To avoid future fiascos, the US needs to fully adopt the three tenets of the Powell doctrine. The doctrine, developed by the late Colin Powell, dictates that military action should only be taken if

the following three questions are answered in the affirmative: Is a vital national security interest threatened? Do we have a clear attainable objective, and an exit strategy? Have the risks and costs been fully and frankly analyzed? Afghanistan and prior interventions have arguably had negative answers for all three criteria, and certainly for the latter two. After failing to adhere to the Powell doctrine, America must now observe Powell's Pottery Barn rule: "you break it, you own it."

While the U.S. cannot provide financing to a despotic government like the Taliban, there are other ways it can help the Afghan people. In the immediate term, the U.S. should dramatically increase its commitment to relocate Afghan refugees, beyond just those who aided in military operations. While this will ease the burden on its European allies, the U.S. can also provide funding to other neighbours of Afghanistan, namely Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan to house refugees. In the future, America must avoid the temptation to arm Taliban opposition. After all, it was America's indirect meddling during the Soviet-Afghan War that eventually gave rise to the Taliban and al Qaeda. However, internalizing this shift in interventionist philosophy will be a challenge in itself.



MATT FUNK

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Cracks in the foundation: trouble with the American electoral administration

BY ELLIOT SIMPSON | NORTH AMERICAN AFFAIRS



IN April 2021, just as the news cycle was moving on from America's 2020 federal election, the Arizona State Senate hired tech firm Cyber Ninjas to carry out an audit on the results in Maricopa County. For reference: Maricopa County is the fourth-largest county in the nation, Cyber Ninjas had no previous experience auditing federal elections, and the sources funding this audit remain murky.

The conversation about voting in the United States, and the headlines that sell the conversation, focus on the availability of polling stations, voter suppression, and gerrymandering. These are all worthy of attention and symptomatic of democratic backsliding. But the more insidious threat is that many of the election officials that upheld the results and Joe Biden's subsequent win risk being replaced before the next election.

But will the system hold in 2024?

Six months and seven million dollars later, Cyber Ninjas could not find any fraud or other reasons to overturn Joe Biden's win in Maricopa County. In the hearing held afterward to assess the audit, Cyber Ninjas' CEO, Doug Logan, was invited to defend his firm's handling of the audit. He declined, not willing to do so under oath. The election results have been upheld in over 60 separate court cases, and America's electoral machinery has held firm. But will the system hold in 2024?

THE FUTURE THREAT TO ELECTORAL INTEGRITY

The Constitution gives states much latitude in how they administer elections. Subsequently, election oversight varies greatly across the country but has generally remained outside of the national conversation. This is because it has always been seen as above reproach and so fundamental to American democracy that, by norm, it has remained apolitical and non-partisan.

For many Democrats, the fear is that Republican statehouses are restricting efforts to "get out the

vote” to limit turnout. These fears are well-founded: as of March 2021, 250 laws have been proposed in 43 states to restrict voting by mail and even early- and election-day voting. As such, the majority of Democrats’ efforts to push back in Congress have focused on fighting against this perfidious effort to suppress the vote. This effort includes the current fight in Texas, where the Justice Department has sued Texas over its new voting law, which allegedly violates civil rights and limits voting access unfairly other groups in Afghanistan like Islamic State Islamic-Khorasan (ISK) — the group responsible for the August 26 bombing at the Kabul airport are sworn enemies with the Taliban.

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While any effort to disenfranchise voters is worthy of outrage, political scientists are unsure whether such voter suppression laws have any effect. For instance, a recent study by the Quarterly Journal of Economics found that voter ID complaints of “selective disenfranchisement,” have little to no negative effect on voter registration or turnout.

This battle being waged is an important one, and many aspects of it grab headlines and hold the public’s attention. But at the same time, it diverts attention away from the more granular aspects of election administration that are likely to have more effect when Americans return to the polls.

AFTERMATH OF THE 2020 ELECTION

In an interview with *The Economist*, Auburn University’s Kathleen Hale, who trains and certifies election officials across America, affirmed that the 2020 Election was a resounding administrative success. Election officials, she says, were asked to “build the machine while they were flying it,” citing the exceptional challenge they faced in running a pandemic election and then during subsequent audits and recounts. However, Hale worries that these same officials are receiving death threats from individuals wishing to overturn the election.

Other officials have seen their faces taken from their office website and posted on social media in the crosshairs of a gun, while others have had protesters picketing outside their house. While some officials are being replaced, others are too traumatized to work the next election. In Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and elsewhere, election officials are quitting or retiring early.

Secretaries of state have significant sway and control over how elections are administered and how votes are counted — and races to this important office are underway in several key states. Of the 15 Republican candidates for secretary of state in five battleground states, ten have declared that the 2020 election was stolen, or else have called for further investigation. Worryingly, only two believe that Biden won the election fairly.

In Georgia, current Secretary of State Ben Raffensperger famously denied President Trump’s request to “find” him 11,780 votes, facing so much backlash and threats that he and his family had to go into hiding temporarily. He will face Jody Hice in next year’s race for secretary of state. This man famously tweeted “This is our 1776 moment,” regarding the American Revolution on January 6, 2020, just before the Capitol Hill riots. Indeed, most of Hice’s campaign for secretary of state is based on his belief that the 2020 election was fraudulent. As of today, he is seen as the frontrunner ahead of Raffensperger, more than doubling his fundraising total.

Secretary of state races in Arizona and Michigan, both vital swing states, are being run on similar themes with prominent and sometimes leading candidates running on a “Stop the Steal” ticket.

This is happening at all levels of election administration. For example, in Michigan, Republicans are trying to replace canvassers and other election officials with candidates who believe Joe Biden stole the election.

MOVING FORWARD

The battle is also playing out at the legislative level – as Republican states have passed laws making it easier to find, prosecute, or replace election officials. On top of the death threats many election officials have received for upholding the 2020 results, this has made the job unpalatable for some. Job vacancies for local election officials abound, opening the door for some to take the job who, rather than seeing it as an apolitical role as it has always been, may use it as an opportunity to swing results towards their candidate.

America is very narrowly divided, and it can no longer rely on norms such as the losing candidate conceding or the certification of votes being an apolitical process. The process by which America votes, and counts these votes, did not collapse in 2020 – but the guardrails now seem shaky. While voters have rarely had to worry or even think about electoral administration, with it shifting into the political realm, this now seems strangely naïve.

Donald Trump has begun to hold rallies for the 2024 election, broadcasting the same lie about his stolen victory to anyone who will listen. It is clear that Americans interested in maintaining free and fair elections need to look at who is able to vote, but in the end it may be who counts the votes that really matters.



**ELLIOT
SIMPSON**

Elliott is a second-year student at the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy at the University of Toronto. He graduated from the University of Edinburgh in 2016. Then worked with Deloitte Canada’s Public Sector Transformation Team. In 2019, Elliott joined the team at Ritual and launched the app in Montreal. He has worked in several industries including telecommunications and marketing, and spent some time consulting within the Scottish Parliament. Elliott’s interests lie mostly in the sphere of global security, and defence – and he has been conditionally accepted to the Royal Canadian Navy reserve unit at HMCS York.

The collapse of global democracy and Canada's role in saving it

BY THOMAS CHAN | CANADA AND THE WORLD



IN their 2021 annual *Freedom in the World* report, Freedom House, a non-profit research and advocacy organisation focused on democracy, political freedom, and human rights, outlined a worrisome trend for global civil liberties. For the fifteenth consecutive year in a row, the global state of liberal democracy and political freedom has deteriorated. Nearly three quarters of the world's population, almost six billion people, live in a territory that has experienced some level of erosion of democratic values, norms, or systems in the past year. Democracy's ability to guarantee the political rights and representation of its citizens has weakened, public trust in institutions is dwindling, and authoritarian actors are gaining power and influence. States once considered to be progressing towards becoming politically "free," including Russia, Hungary, and Myanmar, are returning to authoritarian tendencies. Autocratic leaders have also taken advantage of COVID-19 to consolidate power via emergency decrees that limit public gatherings, free movement, and increase surveillance, often under the initial guises of public health measures.

CANADA'S DEMOCRACY GROWS STRONGER AS THE WORLD WEAKENS

Despite these global trends towards democratic decline, Canada has remained as one of the strongest democracies in the world (behind only Finland, Norway, Sweden, and New Zealand). With strong democratic institutions, norms, and values in place to sustain political freedoms, Canada is well suited to serve as a champion for sustainable democracy for the world. Canada's political leadership has signalled their intent to bolster the promotion of democracy and human rights abroad. Since remarking that Canada was "back" on the world stage after first taking office in 2015, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's foreign policy has prioritized giving Canada a more prominent role in international affairs. Becoming a champion for democracy and political freedom would serve as a noble foreign policy pillar for Canada, and one that if executed properly, could return it to the prominent role of an effective international player it has long sought to be.

PHOTO SOURCE: BBC WORLD NEWS

Since the end of the Second World War, successive Canadian governments have consistently underlined the importance of promoting democracy abroad as part of their foreign policy agenda. Support for democracy has also been codified into some of Canada's multilateral commitments, such as the Charter of the Organisation of American States and the North Atlantic (NATO) Treaty. Likewise, promoting democratic governance has been a significant policy goal across many of Canada's international efforts in recent years, such as attempts to establish democratic institutions in Afghanistan, and restore democracy in Venezuela through coordination within the Lima Group. These efforts have demonstrated Canada's interest in strengthening democratic values, albeit with mixed success.

Canada must recognize that it is unable to reverse global democratic backsliding alone.

CANADA'S RENEWED SUPPORT FOR STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY ABROAD

Canada's renewed support and advocacy for liberal democracy abroad benefits larger strategic goals. In defending democratic values and systems abroad, Canada would be supporting groups, movements, and states that share similar values, such as commitments to human rights and the rule of law. For proponents of the democratic peace theory, the prevalence of democratic powers would result in international stability, less conflict, and greater prosperity, thus strengthening the rules-based liberal international order that has prevailed since the end of the Second World War. Stronger support for democracy could be an opportunity for Canada to take a pivotal role on a global stage with increasing tensions between democracies and non-democracies. In this era-shaping divide, one that American President Joe Biden has deemed "a battle between the utility of democracies in the between

the utility of democracies in the 21st century and autocracies," Canada's democracy promotion could be an effective way to increase its status as an influential middle power.

Canada's commitment to strengthening democracy abroad could be pursued through multiple pathways. Supporting free and fair elections are but one component of strong democracies, and Canada must therefore focus on supporting aspects that underpin free and fair societies as well, such as an empowered civil society, a free press, and respect for minorities. Politically, Canada should provide clear and consistent support for those demanding human rights and political freedom, while condemning or "express[ing] grave concerns" for states and authorities that seek to impede democratic or violate human rights. Investing in access to independent information would be another method of official assistance, such as by providing funds and training for independent media outlets and journalists while decrying violations of press freedom.

Canada's ongoing support for political representation in Belarus through statements, significant funding to civil society organisations, and targeted sanctions provides a roadmap for how foreign policy can prioritise strengthening democracy abroad. Extending this aid to movements that seek to expand civic participation, including women's rights, LGBTQ₂, and ethnic and cultural rights activist groups are additional ways of cultivating an open society. Increasing federal funding for the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) would be a straightforward method to achieve these goals. Additionally, requiring democratic progress as a condition for development assistance and support could reinforce the need for concrete actions that support democracy and civil society in developing countries. Indeed, the latest Trudeau government committed to many of these actions under its party platform during the recent federal election.

In pursuing democratic initiatives abroad, Canada must also recognise the limits to what it can achieve. On this critical point, three concerns are apparent. First, Canada should reflect on the costs involved. While funding civil society and election monitoring initiatives are relatively low cost and low risk avenues for change, strategies

with higher risks and greater resources, such as military intervention, should be avoided in virtually all instances. The mixed outcomes of using direct intervention to impose democracy, as opposed to bottom-up approaches, have shown the need to better involve local communities and populations in the processes of democratic transition.

Second, tensions between domestic and international interests must be considered. Canada's political leadership will have to make difficult yet pragmatic choices on deciding whether to encourage democracy in certain regions, especially if it engenders economic, security, or geopolitical concerns. On this point, it is lamentably conceivable that a government would (and perhaps in some cases should) choose to prioritise maintaining diplomatic and trade relations over encouraging democratic reforms or protecting human rights. In addition to larger geopolitical tensions, this reasoning could in part explain the non-confrontational support offered by Canada and its peers to the recent pro-democracy movements in Hong Kong.

Third, Canada must recognise that it is unable to reverse global democratic backsliding alone. Ensuring that ideological allies are willing to also promote their shared values will be a necessity moving forward. Despite emerging challenges such as a contentious guest list, the Summit for Democracy set to be hosted by the United States in December 2021 will hopefully result in a committed multilateral action towards revitalising democracy worldwide.



**THOMAS
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Thomas is a first-year student in the Master of Global Affairs program at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy. He completed his undergraduate degree in Conflict Studies and Human Rights from the University of Ottawa. Prior to Munk, Thomas worked across the federal government, including at Global Affairs Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada, and the Canadian Human Rights Commission. Thomas also served as a political staff member for a federal cabinet minister. His research interests include Canadian foreign policy, diplomacy, press freedom, human rights, climate change, and security.

The great (un)equalizer: The fading illusion of equality

BY SARA DUODU | GENDER & IDENTITY POLITICS



EARLY in the COVID-19 pandemic, many politicians, news organizations, and celebrities touted the virus as being the “great equalizer.” The argument was that since the effects of both COVID-19 and the pandemic did not discriminate based on age, gender, race, sexual orientation, etc., it would be the beginning of a global cultural reset. Yet, inequality continues to persist today and the chasms between groups continue to widen across the globe. As the weeks turned into months, COVID-19 did very little to level the playing field, instead exposing and exacerbating deep divides that have long lay dormant. The “great equalizer” seems to have left more problems than solutions and societies across the globe are more divided than they have ever been.

COVID-19 AND GLOBAL INEQUALITY

On the surface, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement appears to be a COVID-19 success story. The murder of George Floyd while in police custody galvanized people not just in

the United States but also around the globe, in the fight for racial equality. However, when further interrogating the outcomes of the 2020 protests, it is difficult to determine whether they had an entirely positive effect. With the rise of support for the BLM movement, also came more vocal support for alternate movements such as All Lives Matter and Blue Lives Matter. A 2020 Opinion poll found that 55% of adults in the UK believe that the BLM movement has increased racial tensions while 44% of ethnic minorities felt the same.

This movement has not increased racial tensions but has brought them to the forefront of public attention. Black people were not the only ones who faced increased discrimination during 2020. People of Asian descent around the globe experienced increased incidents of racial discrimination and violence as a result of misconceptions about the COVID-19 virus. People were quick to revert to racial stereotypes in the face of the unknown, demonstrating that the “equality” that has been the standard for so long was really no more than an illusion.

PHOTO SOURCE: DAZED DIGITAL

*COVID-19 deepened
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In addition to increased incidences of racial discrimination across the globe, the last 20 months has seen further entrenchment of discriminatory policies. The Polish government has continued to crack down on LGBTQ+ and women's rights, ignoring cries from their own citizens and the European Union (EU) against these repressive policies. Protests have erupted across Poland and there has been public backlash against the LGBT-free zones in certain regions of the country. Despite the backlash, there are many supporters of this government, emboldened by the more overt support for broader oppressive policies across the globe. In the United States, Texas and Georgia have passed regressive abortion laws and voting rights' acts, respectively, putting decades of progress at risk. It would be easy to pass these incidents off as the actions of rogue actors and uncommon occurrences, but the reality is that there is a marked uptick in these kinds of policies in countries that have, to date, made considerable progress towards equality.

Not only have minorities found themselves the active targets of certain social groups and politicians, but they have also felt the effects of the pandemic disproportionately. During the pandemic, women have taken on a larger burden of unpaid care work, they have seen increased incidences of gender-based violence, and according to estimates from McKinsey, job losses for women as a result of the pandemic were 1.8 times higher than those for men. Racialized communities were more likely to get infected with COVID-19 due to a number of factors including their jobs on the frontlines, their housing situations, and their access to healthcare, to name a few. Finally, a study showed that 30.2% of LGBTQ+ people in the United States lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic and due to historical trends, are less trusting of health care professionals potentially

leading them to not seek out testing or treatment in formal health care institutions.

THE DEEPENING OF EXISTING DIVISIONS

This is not to say that COVID-19 is the root cause of all of these social and political issues. While the world has made strides in the fight for equality, there was always a long way to go, and it was only on the surface that equality/tolerance existed. The reality has always been that there have been segments of even the most progressive of societies that have held unsavoury views about gender, sexual orientation, and race. COVID-19 deepened existing divisions and created a strong binary along political lines across the globe.

The deep and ever-growing divisions between the right and the left about COVID-19 policies, such as masking and vaccines, has been an extension of the growing extremism across the globe in the half-decade that preceded it, culminating in these seemingly irreconcilable differences. It also did not help that most countries retreated into nationalism as a result of the pandemic, creating an environment that favoured homogeneity, centred around national identity. The "great equalizer" has not yet led to greater equality and based on the trends since the pandemic began, has served more as a foundation for greater divisions and regression into a world where only certain kinds of people are valued.

REBUILDING FOR A BETTER FUTURE

Despite these concerning trends and the seemingly bleak outlook, there is still hope for a better, more equal world. There are many challenges that countries face that require considerable attention, but it is imperative that the international community does not sideline the fight for equality. It is no longer sufficient for the international community to condemn these developments without any real action.

The EU's consideration of withholding billions from Poland is a small step towards more tangible punishments for states and actors who do not uphold their commitments to democratic ideals and equality. Without proof of any real punishment for backsliding, there no longer exists any real incentive for these more right-wing politicians to maintain this illusion of equality. While COVID-19 itself may not have been the "great equalizer," it has put plainly in front of us some of the divisions that we have taken for granted. By exposing these fissures, we have the opportunity to get to the root of the issue and create the world in which we thought we were already living; however, if left to fester, we might reach a point of irreparable division.



**SARA
DUODU**

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Next exit: the great filter

BY SARAH WHELAN | OUTER SPACE



THE vast expanse of history between nothing and everything—accounting for the past 13.8 billion years—has seemingly only produced us, homo sapiens, to stand in awe of it all. Why is that? As physicist and Nobel laureate Enrico Fermi famously asked in the 1950s, “Where are they?”

Scientists estimate that there are 200 quadrillion stars in the observable universe dispersed within 200 trillion galaxies. So immense is this scale that it becomes hard for the human mind to grasp. Our solar system is but a blip in the Milky Way galaxy. Truly, where is everyone else? The Fermi Paradox, credited to Enrico Fermi, arises out of this observation: so much opportunity for life, but so little life. Is our planet, and our species, really so special as to have been the only planet to foster an environment suitable for abiogenesis to occur—the process through which life arises from nonliving matter—and for life to evolve and thrive? There are two solutions to the Fermi Paradox: either everyone never existed and we are indeed the first and only, or, put frankly, everyone else is already gone.

WHAT IS THE GREAT FILTER?

Robin Hansen of the Future of Humanity Institute postulates the existence of a “Great Filter:” some barrier through which no life has passed before. Analogous is the radio-silence observed throughout the universe. Does this Great Filter lie in our future, and what may it look like? Stephen Hawking suggested in his final book, *Brief Answers to the Big Questions*, that an asteroid collision may be the biggest threat to planetary, and hence human, long-term survival.

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But what other existential threats are lurking— dangers that could be humanity’s Great

Filter? Climate change, weaponized biotechnology, rogue particle physics experiments, and artificial intelligence all pose risks to humanity's continued existence. We all know how the saying goes: "don't put all your eggs in one basket." Humankind are the eggs; the basket is our Pale Blue Dot. Where do we go from here? How can humanity ensure its continued presence in the universe in the face of the lurking collapse of all we've ever known?

The Kardashev scale, proposed by Soviet astronomer Nikolai Kardashev, is a method of measuring a civilization's level of technological advancement. Robert Zubrin has adapted the scale to reflect how widespread a civilization is in space; climbing the ranks of this adapted scale indicates galactic exploration by humans. Extraterrestrial settlements present a solution to humanity's current Earth-bound predicament. But simultaneously, they present extreme technological, legal, and ethical challenges.

THE CHALLENGES OF EXTRATERRESTRIAL EXPLORATION

"The exploration and use of outer space shall be carried out for the benefit ... of all [human] kind; outer space is not subject to national appropriation by claim of sovereignty; astronauts shall be regarded as the envoys of [human]kind," proclaims the United Nations Outer Space Treaty, signed in 1967. Christopher Johnson, space law advisor for the Secure World Foundation cited the treaty as the "most important and most fundamental source of international space law." An uptick in space activity has sparked debate on the need for updated governance of outerspace. As humanity looks to the final frontier, it is imperative to critically reflect on the destruction colonization inflicted on native peoples and native lands worldwide, acknowledging that "those who forget their history are condemned to repeat it."

At the helm of this effort is The United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outerspace (COPUOS), convening annually to review scientific and technical space-related advancements as well as legal issues surrounding space-based activity. Currently lacking is an overseeing of spaced-based military activity. An agenda address-

The exploration and use of outer space shall be carried out for the benefit ... of all humankind.

-ssing this realm is necessary for ensuring a peaceful transition to becoming inter-planetary, though challenges to achieving this end may arise from the current "crisis of multilateralism." To no surprise, lunar competition has arisen between the United States and a China-Russia partnership. Both are wrestling to recruit states in hopes of forming a global coalition, with plans to construct a lunar base at the moon's south pole. Division between space actors may sow healthy competition, but we should be wary of, and plan accordingly for, disputes that result in military conflict.

WHO WILL LEAD US FORWARD?

Zooming in from the macro, state level to a finer scale – a scale of the individual – it becomes natural to ask who these individuals at the forefront of advancing humanity to the final frontier will be. Pondering this idea may lead one to look to studies of intersectionality and feminist technoscience and what has been learned about the importance of identity representation. Those at the helm of transforming humanity into a spacefaring society should reflect society itself. Efforts in achieving this end are reflected in the subunits of UN COPUOS: Access to Space For All, Space for Persons with Disabilities, Space4Women, and Space4Youth. One can hope that these are more than token projects and that the voices uplifted through these initiatives will visibly shape the plans and policies of the global space agenda.

As Josh Clark has said, "The responsibility for our own lives, for the future of the human race, rests solely in the hands of those of us alive today ... If we [go], so [too do] all the things that make us human." In other words, we are all we've got.



SARAH WHELAN

Sarah is a first year student in the Master of Global Affairs program. She completed her undergraduate degree in Software Engineering at Western University in 2019. During her time at Western, Sarah worked as a Program Coordinator in Engineering Outreach where she focused on increasing diversity in the profession by engaging groups typically underrepresented in STEM. Before starting her Master's, Sarah worked at various technology startups in Toronto with focuses on blockchain, quantum computing, and materials design. At Munk, she is interested in exploring sociopolitical and intersectional perspectives to global development and critically examining the ways in which technology is often thought of as a panacea. Sarah is also a Venture for Canada fellow.

(Un)fair shot: The alarming failure of COVAX

BY FATEMA DIWAN | GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT



ON March 11, 2020, all eyes were on the WHO as it declared COVID-19 a global pandemic and announced that we were “all in it together.” Since everyone was vulnerable, both collective action and cooperation was needed now more than ever. In a way, it was the day of reckoning of multilateralism built over decades. Over the next few months, as borders tightened, supply chains broke, deaths increased, and the world isolated, it was evident that our collective recovery depended on ensuring every person, everywhere is protected. We didn’t just need a vaccine, we needed vaccine equality.

THE COVAX EFFORT TO VACCINATE THE WORLD

GAVI, a public-private alliance that since 2000 had been working behind-the-scenes towards increasing immunization access for children in lower-income countries against several diseases, sprung to the forefront. In April 2020, just a month into the pandemic, it announced COVAX—an international effort to ensure vaccine technologies are equitably shared and vaccines, when developed, reach everyone in every country across

all income groups.

High income countries that comprise only 16% of the world’s population grabbed almost 50% of all doses.

The speed of the COVID-19 vaccine development was only outdone by the speed with which rich countries booked up the available stocks. As per a report by the People’s Vaccine Alliance, high-income countries that comprise only 16% of the world’s population grabbed almost 50% of all doses. High-income countries were able to pre-book stocks while low-income countries put in their first orders almost eight months after the former had made its deals. Major vaccine manufacturers delivered 47 times as many doses to high-income countries compared to low-income countries. Moderna alone has delivered 84% of its doses to high-income countries. For the pandemic to end, 70% of the world’s population needs to be one-dose vaccinated. As of today, 51.6% of the world’s population

has received at least one dose of the vaccine. Only 4.5% of those are from low-income countries.

GAVI and the UN foresaw this massive vaccine inequality right at the start. Then, why couldn't they prevent it?

COVAX SHORTCOMINGS

COVAX stumbled at multiple levels. First, it wasn't clear about its role. COVAX wasn't a platform for vaccine distribution, but rather a collaborative effort to research, manufacture, negotiate pricing, and distribute vaccines. Under COVAX, every country regardless of its ability to pay, would be an equal stakeholder of the vaccine program.

Self-financing or higher income countries would pool money to purchase and donate vaccines through the COVAX facility. COVAX would use this collective purchasing power to negotiate prices with manufacturers; thus, ensuring prices stayed reasonable and lower-income countries weren't left out. Moreover, while self-financing countries could ask for more doses, they would receive it only once 20% of the population across all countries had received their first shots. The goal was equality.

What happened next was anticlimactic. Wealthier countries showed 'interest' in the program but went on to strike individual deals with manufacturers, increasing competition, and hiking prices for COVAX and other lower-income countries. Vaccines were hoarded at a massive scale even while in many countries, frontline workers themselves struggled to get the shot. According to PVA, 100 million doses in G7 countries are set to expire at the end of 2021 and over 800 million will be wasted by mid-2022.

Many countries are unable to efficiently use the soon-to-be expired vaccines.

Seeing a surge in prices and dwindling commitments by rich countries, COVAX turned from financing vaccine equality to urging countries to

donate their leftover or unused supplies. This didn't work out well either. Countries started to throw out soon-to-be-expired vaccines at poorer nations. COVAX has a two-months-to-expiry clause and countries in the Global South often lack the resources for speedy and effective vaccine distribution. As such, many countries are unable to efficiently use the soon-to-be expired vaccines. Just last month, Haiti had to send back 500,000 doses donated by the US because they couldn't be administered before its expiry date.

Second, it failed to empower lower-income countries to battle the right to access or knowledge transfers. Perhaps naively, COVAX relied a little too much on the cooperation and generosity of rich countries. Vaccine equality wasn't just a question of distribution but access. Lower-income countries cannot hope to have equal access if all the approved vaccines come from higher-income countries. (AstraZeneca manufactured by India's Serum institute was a lucky exception and ended up being the largest contributor to the program.) COVAX paid little to no attention to knowledge transfers, building manufacturing capabilities or even confronting vaccine patents—steps that would've built capacities of lower-income countries instead of leaving them at the mercy of others.

Lastly and most importantly, it failed to demand accountability. Member countries have failed to keep up with their pledges, from funding to vaccine distribution. Out of 1.8 billion vaccines promised, as of October 2021, only 261 million doses had been delivered. It also faces a huge funding gap of \$6.4 billion in 2021 despite initial funding commitments.

COVAX is still trying to meet its agenda, but across countries is largely being seen as a failed initiative. So far, it has shipped only 435 million doses, a far cry from its goal of delivering 2 billion doses by the end of 2021.

MOVING FORWARD

The failure of COVAX is an alarming signal not just for the failure of multilateral institutions but also for our collective response to the climate emergency. Failures are also lessons and we cannot afford to ignore this one. Multilateral organi-

-sations need to push beyond being limited to service delivery and funding bodies to being platforms for collaboration, cooperation, and knowledge transfer. This means speaking up against self-interested policies, enforcing accountability, and demanding solid commitments from higher-income countries amongst many others. Just like COVID-19, climate change is affecting lower-income countries disproportionately. A COVAX-like response would be disastrous.



FATEMA DIWAN

Fatema is a first-year student in the Master of Global Affairs program at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy. She has an undergraduate degree in Journalism and a postgraduate degree in Literature. Prior to joining Munk, she spent 4 years consulting and working with nonprofits in India. She has worked on various rights-based campaigns for Amnesty International India, consulted on digital strategy for Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) India, and executed a narrative change and advocacy campaign on adolescent health rights.

The collapse of Haiti and the inadequate American response

BY CHRISTIE MA | MIGRATION



HAITI is undergoing a humanitarian crisis. Recent political and natural disasters have prompted thousands to flee their homes in search of a better life. But despite the chronic poverty and sociopolitical instability, President Joe Biden has expelled thousands of Haitians back to their home country. Biden previously promised a more humane approach towards American immigration policies but has failed to live up to his commitment. Instead, he further destabilized the Haitian crisis.

WHY ARE HAITIANS MIGRATING TO THE UNITED STATES?

The current number of migrants attempting to cross the U.S. Mexico border is the highest in 21 years, but Haitians have been attempting to enter the United States for decades. Many left their home country years ago due to the country's chronic instability fueled by corruption, poverty, and violence. Since the 7.0 magnitude earthquake in 2010, over 1.5 million people were left homeless, prompting many to migrate to neighbouring countries in South America for job

opportunities. However, migrants have continued to make their way north due to immigration restrictions and economic downturns in previously attractive destinations, such as Chile and Brazil. As a result, Haitians travel through South America to reach the United States, which is seen as a safe and secure country with vast economic opportunity.

The recent assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse in July of 2021 was followed by a 7.2 magnitude earthquake that struck the country a month later, killing over 2,000 people. Both events will likely prompt more migration. As climate change leads to an increasing number of extreme weather hazards, such as hurricanes, flooding, and landslides, the U.S. should expect to see a growing number of migrants and refugees.

THE UNITED STATES-MEXICO BORDER

The majority of Haitian migrants travel through South and Central America to get to the Rio Grande Valley border in Texas because rumours claim it is an easy place to

cross the border. In just one week of September 2021, over 10,000 Haitian migrants camped out along the Del Rio border under scorching heat with little access to food, water, or sanitation. By September 24, 2021, federal authorities cleared an encampment that housed up to 15,000 Haitian migrants. U.S. border services deported 2,000 migrants using chartered flights, while 8,000 willingly returned to Mexico.

Over 150 human rights groups have challenged Title 42, claiming its usage is inhumane, baseless, and in violation of U.S. immigration laws

WHAT HAS BEEN THE AMERICAN RESPONSE?

During the 2020 presidential campaign, Biden stopped in Miami's Little Haiti neighbourhood and vowed, "I'll give you my word as a Biden, I'll be there. I'll stand with you." However, he has since sent dozens of Haitians on deportation flights, totalling nearly 8,000 people. Most Haitians were deported using the Title 42 policy, a public health rule enacted during the pandemic that allows border services to turn asylum seekers away at the border. A former Biden administration official claims that Title 42 "was prioritized as a deterrence tool." Officials used deportation flights to break the cycle of Haitian migration to the U.S., as the administration believed that deportees who shared their experiences after returning home would deter future migrants.

On May 22, 2021, President Biden announced the 18-month Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitians. The relief program extended temporary protected status to Haitians who had arrived in the U.S. on or before May 21, 2021. This status allows them to live and work without fear of deportation. However, no such protection is available for the thousands of migrants who reached Del Rio in September.

Despite Biden's promises during the 2020 election, Haitian people feel abandoned. The current administration's approach to border security

contrasts the humane immigration system it promised during the election. Instead, there has been mass deportation of Haitians, forcing them back to a crisis-ridden country.

THE PUBLIC RESPONSE

There has been outrage against the Biden administration as the reliance on Title 42 remains highly controversial. Ambassador Daniel Foote, the former U.S. envoy for Haiti, resigned in September 2021 to protest the mass deportation of Haitian migrants. He critiqued the American response as "deeply flawed" and refused to "be associated with the United States' inhumane, counterproductive decision to deport thousands of Haitian refugees and illegal immigrants to Haiti." Foote asserted that deportations are "not the answer" and will only exacerbate the Haitian crisis.

Likewise, over 150 human rights groups have challenged Title 42, claiming its usage is inhumane, baseless, and in violation of U.S. immigration laws. Senior legal advisers, including Harold Koh, a legal adviser and Obama administration veteran, described the usage of Title 42 to expel migrants as "illegal" and "inhumane." Leading public health experts and academics share the advocacy group's concern. Since May 2020, public health leaders argued that Title 42 expulsions themselves could pose a public health threat in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, as people are grouped for days before deportation, heightening the risk of COVID-19 transmission across national borders. As a response, many have been calling for President Biden to reverse the policy since he took office in January 2021.

ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

Former President Trump reversed decades-old asylum policies that allowed for those who arrived at the U.S. border with a credible fear of persecution the right to enter the country and make a formal asylum claim. Instead, the Trump administration barred asylum claims for nearly all migrants from any country and continually lowered the admissions ceiling every year. Lawmakers have urged the Biden administration to restore previous asylum rules rooted in the Refugee Act of 1980 that enabled migrants to seek asylum as long as they can demonstrate a "well-founded

fear of persecution.”

And even for those who do not qualify for asylum status, critics argue their deportation should be deferred. Similar to the Temporary Protected Status, the administration could use another form of relief, known as the Deferred Enforced Departure (DED), which prevents the removal of certain migrants for a designated period of time. President Bill Clinton previously used DED in 1999 to grant a one-year exemption to 20,000 Haitians amid political turmoil and fallout from U.S. military intervention in the country. This grants humanitarian parole to Haitians at the U.S.-Mexico border and provides them with refuge during a time where it is impossible to return to safe conditions.

There is currently little indication that policies used to turn Haitians and other migrants away will change. With the expected increase of migrants in the future, the U.S. must re-evaluate their response and follow through with a long-term, humane strategy that can adapt to the increasing demand for refugee and asylum status. The migration crisis is now knocking on the American border, and the U.S. must adopt these policies to better accommodate and respond to the worsening humanitarian crisis in Haiti.



CHRTISIE MA

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Code green: the COVID-19 waste crisis

BY BRITTANY BARWISE | ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE



THE COVID-19 pandemic has led to the collapse of health care systems, economies, and the further collapse of the environment. While the world celebrated the positive short-term environmental impacts during COVID-19 lockdowns, such as the reduction of air and water pollution, the global waste crisis has raged on. The pandemic caused the production of single-use personal protective equipment (PPE), plastic grocery bags, online deliveries wrapped in copious amounts of plastic packaging, and infected bio-medical waste such as COVID-19 swabs and needles to skyrocket. To make matters worse, the increased waste from the pandemic placed even more pressure on weak waste management systems around the world and as a result, continues to be disposed of improperly. The long-term environmental consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic raise an important challenge: how can the environment remain a priority in the face of a global health crisis?

WASTE GENERATION

An estimated 1.6 million tonnes of plastic waste

have been produced every day since the pandemic began. In Wuhan, China alone, over 240 metric tonnes of COVID-19 medical waste were generated each day, nearly 190 metric tonnes more than pre-pandemic levels. The rising demand for new plastics and declining demand for recycled plastics has led to COVID-19 being coined the “The Plastic Pandemic”, and the belief that “COVID-19 will reverse the momentum of a years-long global battle to cut down single-use plastics.

Fear of catching and spreading COVID-19 and the effectiveness of reusable PPE can in-part account for this increase in plastic waste. A trip to the grocery store could require single-use plastic masks, gloves, a face shield, a plastic bottle of hand sanitizer, plastic bags to wrap produce in, and new plastic grocery bags, all that would be disposed of once home. Single use plastic continues to be seen as the most effective protective gear against the virus, and once worn or used is potentially contaminated. The ability of plastic to protect against viruses like COVID-19 could cause consumers’ to overlook the environmental costs of single-use plastic and

normalize its use once again.

Fear of catching and spreading COVID-19 and the effectiveness of reusable PPE can in-part account for this increase in plastic waste.

POOR WASTE MANAGEMENT

The increase in plastic and bio-medical waste presents two challenges: one, plastic pollutes ecosystems and takes centuries to decompose and two, bio-medical waste can be hazardous to both the health of those in contact with it and the environment when not properly treated.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, managing waste was a significant global challenge, particularly in lower-income countries. Even pre-pandemic, “approximately 2 billion people worldwide lacked access to waste collection and approximately 3 billion lacked controlled waste disposal facilities.” With waste production exceeding the capacity of waste management facilities, waste was being illegally disposed of in waterways, public spaces, and open fires polluting the air, water, and land. In other countries, fears surrounding the transmission of COVID-19 through waste and recycling led countries to halt their recycling services and prohibit COVID-19 positive individuals from sorting their household waste.

At the individual level, the lack of information and spread of misinformation has led to the improper disposal of infected waste around the world. PPE is littered across cities and thrown out with regular household waste where it eventually ends up in landfills or the ocean. The ability of the virus to remain on plastic and stainless steel for three days, places workers at waste management facilities at a higher risk of getting COVID-19. This is particularly an issue in lower-income countries where workers at waste management facilities may not have access to ade-

-quate PPE. The inappropriate disposal of medical waste can spread toxins, disease, and infections to those in close contact.

MOVING FORWARD

When faced with the decision to protect oneself against COVID-19 with effective PPE or to reduce plastic waste to protect the environment, individual health concerns win. The world was already experiencing a waste crisis but now with the pandemic, the value of plastic has increased. It is difficult to critique the environmental sustainability of societies who rely on PPE to protect the lives of themselves and others, but in the long run the increased production and mismanagement of this waste will only create more challenges.

With predictions of more frequent global health crises in the future, addressing the global waste crisis must be a priority. As we saw during the mask-shortage period of the pandemic where people created masks out of available household materials, crises can spur innovation. Currently, the challenge with reusable masks is that they are less effective than single-use plastic medical grade masks – perhaps investing in reusable or environmentally friendly medical grade PPE is one solution.

The world was already experiencing a waste crisis but now with the pandemic, the value of plastic has increased.

A joint publication by UNEP and the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies provides information on current waste management systems around the world and how governments can use this data to ensure biomedical waste from the pandemic is properly treated and disposed of and build the capacity of their waste systems. Similarly, the WHO recommends awareness campaigns and the implementation of new public policies surrounding proper waste treatment and disposal. While these solutions are important, there should be a greater focus on shifting our mindset to the

the long-term consequences of our actions. Rather than simply improving upon current waste management systems and increasing their capacity, countries, international organizations, the private sector, and civil society alike should find ways to improve the overall sustainability of the health care sector and reduce waste production all together.



BRITTANY BARWISE

Brittany is a first-year student at the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy. She completed her undergraduate degree at the University of St Andrews, Scotland with a dual degree in International Relations & Sustainable Development. Brittany's academic interests are diverse and interdisciplinary and include, issues of sustainability and climate change, global development, and leader decision-making. During her summers, Brittany interned at the World Council on City Data (WCCD) in Toronto, researching global cities progress on social, economic, and environmental indicators. At the WCCD, Brittany contributed to the publication, WCCD City Data for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2017, presented at the United Nations in New York.

A rise in hate crimes, a decrease in safety

BY SAMANTHA TRISTEN | HUMAN RIGHTS



IN the last decade, and especially in the last two years, discrimination against East Asians and Jews has increased in North America and Europe. Politicians have demonized both groups, from former U.S. president Donald Trump calling Covid-19 “the China virus” to a Polish law restricting discussion about the country’s role in the Holocaust.

Along with this, there has been a rise of “bottom-up” discrimination. The Anti-Defamation League has surveyed over four billion people since 2014 and found that a quarter of respondents held anti-Semitic views. Similarly, East Asian populations in Europe and North America have reported feeling less safe in their countries in recent years. And, since COVID-19 began to occupy headlines, verbal and physical attacks against East Asians have increased in both continents.

Where do these prejudices come from? While these two groups are distinct with regard to their respective histories and cultures, the recent uptick in anti-Asian racism and anti-Semitism have some mutual origins. Rising ethnonationalism, COVID-19, and Chinese and Israeli politics have

led to more discrimination against Asians and Jews.

ETHNONATIONALISM

In the last five years, nationalism in Europe and North America has become more pronounced. This nationalism is not civic nationalism, which focuses on liberal values like equality and tolerance, but rather ethnonationalism. Ethnonationalism holds that ethnicity is the cornerstone of a country; the emphasis on ethnicity means that people not part of the dominant group often face discrimination.

As minority groups in Europe and North America, Jews and Asians have been victims of this ethnonationalist sentiment. At the 2017 Charlottesville Rally, white supremacists chanted, “Jews will not replace us,” showing that they view Jewish people as a threat to their ideal society. In a 2018 survey by the European Commission, 90 percent of Jewish respondents felt that anti-Semitism had increased in their country, due in part to far-right politics. Indeed, right-wing nationalists perpetuated 90 per cent of anti-semitic attacks docu-

PHOTO SOURCE: UNSPLASH, SOLEN FEYISSA

mented in Germany in 2019.

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Similarly, ethnonationalism has also targeted East Asians. As Dr. Jennifer Ho of the University of Colorado Boulder demonstrates, white supremacy is a key source of anti-Asian discrimination. Some experts believe that the Atlanta spa shooting in March 2021 - where six of the eight people killed were East Asian women - was motivated by white supremacy. The East Asian community in France also noted the ethnonationalist undercurrent of their society, which may have laid the foundation for increased violence when COVID-19 became a global issue.

To be sure, ethnonationalism has targeted minorities in general, not just Jewish and East Asian people. And, as East Asians and Jews have been stereotyped as 'model minorities,' the prejudice against these two groups demonstrates that their 'model' behaviour matters little to ethnonationalists. The rise of ethnonationalism endangers all who do not fit ethnonationalists' narrow scope of which groups 'belong' in their countries.

COVID-19

The Covid-19 pandemic has created difficulties for many, but East Asian and Jewish populations worldwide have had to navigate racist hostility in addition to health guidelines.

As the coronavirus originated in Wuhan, China, conversations surrounding COVID-19, especially its outbreak, have focused on how the Chinese government handled the initial crisis. Early on, the rhetoric expanded to blame the Chinese population worldwide. In February 2020, a Chi-

-nese woman was hospitalized after being physically attacked in Berlin. In the same month, classmates beat up an 11-year-old Swedish boy of Chinese descent, calling him names such as "spreader" and "virus." In another incident, a woman snapped a picture of the man sitting next to her on a plane and sent it to a contact who replied, "Oh no, is he Chinese?" The woman later texted her friend complaining about the number of Asians on the plane.

It is not only Chinese people who have been targeted due to COVID-19. East Asians, regardless of their nationality or ethnicity, have experienced increased verbal and physical harassment. For example, in Finland, two women - one of Vietnamese ancestry, the other from Japan - mentioned that people went out of their way to avoid proximity to them. Additionally, the majority of Asian-Canadians surveyed in 2021 reported experiencing racist discrimination in the past year, with 28 per cent saying that such incidents occurred "often" or "all the time."

Much like the European Jewish population being blamed for the Bubonic Plague centuries ago, anti-semites have scapegoated the Jewish community for COVID-19. In Canada, the U.S., and Europe, people have claimed that the virus is a Jewish-led conspiracy, while others have voiced hope that the virus would eliminate the world's Jewish population. Moreover, some people have equated vaccine and mask mandates to the Nazi regime, belittling the Holocaust's legacy.

DIASAPORA AND THE HOME COUNTRY

Finally, the political situations in Israel and China have led to more discrimination against their diaspora populations. In both cases, people equate a government's actions with its diaspora, despite the individual's lack of responsibility for the actions of another government.

When Israeli-Palestinian tensions escalated into armed conflict in May 2021, Jewish populations in North America and Europe experienced increased discrimination, with a 115 per cent increase in anti-Semitic incidents compared to May 2020. Israeli politics played some role in this, as victims reported attackers citing the Israeli-Palestinian

conflict as their motive. One pro-Palestinian activist in Germany allegedly said, “we will burn you like Hitler did,” and another in London threatened sexual violence against Jewish women.

There is a correlation between polarizing Israeli politics and anti-Semitism. For example, during the 2014 Gaza Crisis, there were increased reports of anti-Semitic incidents. But the motive behind it - blaming the global Jewish population for Israel’s actions - is an unfounded bias. Indeed, most Jews in North America and Europe are not Israeli citizens, and those who are have little ability to affect Israeli affairs beyond voting. Regardless of what one thinks about the Israeli government’s actions, the global Jewish population is neither representative of, nor responsible for, Israel’s policies.

As China has become a more powerful and controversial player on the global stage, East Asians have suffered discrimination inspired by anti-China sentiments. While this has been particularly pronounced since COVID-19, demonizing East Asians for China’s actions occurred prior to the pandemic and will likely continue afterwards.

Much like the Jewish diaspora vis-a-vis Israel, it is senseless to equate the Chinese diaspora to Xi Jinping’s China. For one, as China is not a democracy, even Chinese citizens cannot vote out Xi or the Communist Party. Moreover, as mentioned, non-Chinese people of East Asian descent have been targeted out of hatred for China. It is baseless (and racist) to vilify Chinese people and other East Asians for China’s policies.

WHERE SHOULD WE GO FROM HERE?

The recent rise of anti-Semitism and anti-Asian racism share certain roots: ethnonationalism, COVID-19, and the false equation of Asians to China and Jews to Israel. Identifying the origins of these bigotries helps contextualize the issue but also offers possible avenues to combat said bigotries. In order to mitigate these two types of racism, individuals must challenge their origins. To all reading this, please be vigilant when you witness discrimination.



**SAMANTHA
TRISTEN**

Samantha is a second-year Master of Global Affairs student at the Munk School, pursuing a dual emphasis in Global Security and Human Rights & Global Justice. Previously, she earned her B.A. and M.A. in History, both from the University of Toronto. Samantha’s academic interests include democracy protection, geopolitical risk analysis, diplomacy, conflict resolution/mediation, and terrorism/counter-terrorism, and she hopes to pursue these interests in either the private sector or the think-tank world. This past summer, she interned as a Junior Research Fellow with the Canadian International Council, and works part-time as a humanities teacher at The Abelard School. In her free time, Samantha enjoys reading (especially fantasy and biographies), salsa dance, and drawing.

Meta platforms and the threat of digital collapse

BY KATIE BENNETT | TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION



FACEBOOK and its associated platforms (Instagram, Messenger, and WhatsApp) went offline for nearly six hours on October 4, the worst social media outage since 2019. During this time, the 3.6 billion active users across these platforms were unable to access their accounts. Meta Platforms (formerly Facebook Inc.), the services' parent company, released a statement apologizing for the inconvenience allegedly caused by an internal technical issue.

In the same week, whistleblower Francis Haugen released thousands of documents detailing the harms of Meta Platforms' sites, throwing the digital conglomerate into another PR scandal.

The impact of these events further exposed the world's increasing dependence on digital platforms and the influence that digital life can have on consumers. As the world moves into 2022, Meta Platforms is rebranding itself and announcing major plans for its ecosystem of applications. As technology integrates itself further into our lives, how can individuals protect themselves from the threat of

total digital collapse?

IMPACTS OF THE OUTAGE

The uses of social media are diverse. These platforms are not only a place to connect digitally but are a main method of communication and a driver of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) across the world. Small businesses and informal economies in the Global South (Brazil, India, and Mexico, for example) rely especially heavily on free messaging platforms like Messenger and WhatsApp in everyday life and to operate businesses and connect with customers.

Though the outage occurred overnight in India, countries such as Brazil and Mexico were not so lucky. Businesses in these countries saw online engagement fall drastically and overall sales plummet. This trend was broadly reflected across the world, even in the Global North, where businesses generally rely less on digital messaging services to reach consumers.

Facebook, Meta's most popular platform,

generated more than 98 per cent of its total revenue from advertising in 2019. About six percent of that figure came from the 100 highest-spending brands, such as Coca-Cola or Starbucks. SMEs were responsible for the remainder of that revenue. The number of users on the site allows for highly accurate audience targeting at a relatively low cost.

*According to Haugen,
Meta Platforms’
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our democracy.”*

For SMEs, marketing products and services over Facebook is a no-brainer. Today, Facebook accounts for a quarter of all online advertising globally, and the platform has positioned itself as an integral tool for 21st-century businesses. This reliance has ramifications, however: each hour Meta Platforms spent offline saw a loss of \$13 million in advertising alone.

BAD PRESS

Around the same time as the Meta Platforms outage, whistleblower Francis Haugen, a former Facebook product manager, disclosed internal Facebook documents to The Wall Street Journal and the Securities Exchange Commission. These documents included details on systems that exempt high-profile accounts from general Facebook rules, internal investigations that found Instagram harmful for young women, and Facebook’s inconsistent attempts at quelling divisive content.

According to Haugen, Meta Platforms’ policies “harm children, stoke division, and weaken our democracy,” ultimately putting profit over moral responsibility. Haugen’s disclosures add to years’ worth of Facebook scandals, notably including conducting digital psychological tests on thousands of unconsenting participants, promoting misinformation around the 2016 American presi-

-dential election, and improperly harvesting data from its users to facilitate ad targeting.

THE THREAT OF MONOPOLIZATION

The impacts of the Meta Platforms’ outage and Francis Haugen’s disclosures expose different challenges that the company and its consumers will face moving forward. The six hours that Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Messenger were offline saw Meta Platforms’ market value drop by \$50 billion USD.

The outage alone, however, is unlikely to permanently ward off investors. Past outages have shown that conglomerates like Meta Platforms tend to financially recover from these types of incidents, despite incurring significant losses. Instead, the outage is likely to have a greater impact on users, highlighting the threat that overreliance on monopolized platforms poses to individuals and businesses across the world.

Haugen’s disclosures, however, may have a more permanent impact on Meta Platforms’ standing. After her first public interview, Meta Platforms saw a five per cent stock value drop. Hearings and investigations into the company are likely, potentially compromising the long-term security of the company’s public image and impacting investor buy-in.

REBRAND AND RAMIFICATIONS

Looking to refocus consumers’ attention away from the impacts of outages and disclosures, Mark Zuckerberg’s announcement of Facebook Inc.’s rebrand came at a pivotal time for the company. In his most recent Founder’s Letter, Zuckerberg detailed Meta Platforms’ plan to enact its goal of giving people the power to share and make the world more open and connected through the creation of, what the company has dubbed, the “Metaverse.” In this digital realm, users will be able to get together with friends and family, work, learn, play, shop, and create.

Zuckerberg vaguely states that the Metaverse will not be created by one company but by builders and developers who will work together to “unlock a massively larger creative economy.” The letter then states that in the next decade, the Metaverse

will host billions of dollars of digital commerce and support jobs for millions of creators and developers.

Meta Platforms is looking to centralize all aspects of life into one digital platform where consumers can connect within virtual reality. This utopian vision fails to address the risk that complete reliance on one system can pose. If the Metaverse succeeds in becoming the technological intermediary in financial, social, and creative interactions globally, any platform outage could severely impact society. As we grow more dependent on digital platforms such as the “Metaverse,” any collapse could prove disastrous to the global community; policymakers must ensure the safety of citizens over the lure of new innovations.



KATIE BENNETT

Katie is a first-year Master of Global Affairs student at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy. She completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Western Ontario in Media, Information, and Technoculture where she studied the ties between technology, identity, and global power. As an undergraduate, Katie served on the University Students Council where she represented her faculty on multiple standing committees and working groups. Her research interests include digital espionage, information warfare, and decentralized journalism.

The collapse of oil extraction, the rise of green imperialism, and the perpetual colonial systems

BY REBECCA SEWARD-LANGDON | SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN



THE oil extraction industry was hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. As the demand to switch to sustainable energy and discussions of “net-zero” goals at COP26 take place, there are many questions that arise from an Africentric perspective. Will expedited policy shifts lead to the collapse of the oil industry? How will divestment affect African countries?

THE ANSWER: GREEN IMPERIALISM

If the oil industry ever collapses, the colonial nature of the international system will still find a way to exploit African countries and leave them at a disadvantage. For example, Lee Wengraf points out that oil which was exported from Europe to Nigeria, exceeded European Union pollution limits as much as 204 times. Meanwhile, Africa as a whole contributes less than four per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). Africentric perspectives are left out of global debates and discussions far too often.

GREEN IMPERIALISM AND COLONIALISM

African lands have been exploited for resources since the dawn of the international capitalist system. Wealthy countries used oil, copper, cobalt, and other resources to industrialize and modernize. Meanwhile, African countries became dependent on resource extraction but did not receive equitable benefits from the oil-intensive systems and technologies which benefited the “Global North.” The oil that fuelled capitalist production and wealth accumulation did little to support the people on the land it was taken from. Even now, when wealthy countries discuss how they should reduce oil consumption, oil-dependent African countries risk losing a major component of their GDP.

Companies with colonial attitudes, such as Tesla, promote the shift to sustainable energy. However, they obtain their resources from mining companies (like Glencore) which exploit children to extract cobalt, an important mineral needed for electric vehicles. Colonial attitudes continue to permeate the international system. Kofi Koduah Sarpong, CEO of Ghana National Petroleum Corporation stated that “developed nations are being

PHOTO SOURCE: THE CONVERSATION

hypocritical. They now focus on persuading us, the emerging countries, to leave our new-found hydrocarbons stranded and borrow from them to develop renewable energy.”

NET-ZERO’S IMPLICATIONS FOR AFRICAN COUNTRIES?

The climate crisis was predicted to affect African countries the most, and the world is seeing this in real-time. It is already affecting Africa disproportionately, with warming temperatures, accelerated rising sea levels, and extreme weather such as flash floods, landslides, and droughts. These events have caused high levels of migration to neighbouring countries, leaving migrants, particularly women and children, vulnerable to human trafficking and exploitation.

The effects of climate change, let alone poverty alleviation and development strategies, are even more challenging to respond to because of political instability and low political will. These considerations need to be brought to the forefront of conversations implicating policy changes in African countries.

Countries with high levels of poverty will need to increase their consumption of oilbased technology in order to develop.

Addressing the climate crisis in Africa is much more complex when considering the political and development challenges the countries face. In fact, the climate crisis in Africa cannot be addressed without first confronting the electricity crisis. Much of the African population lack access to electricity and basic energy for household use. Wood and charcoal are mainly used for energy but are also the cause of deforestation of valuable forest coverage.

Despite this, Africa still has low GHG emissions, and there is still a push for policies enforcing a

switch from big oil to renewable energy. Global policies pushing countries to reduce GHG emissions have major ramifications for the development of African countries – the most significant being that African countries cannot take the same route to net-zero emissions as rich countries.

Contrary to what the Global North wants, countries with high levels of poverty will need to increase their consumption of oil-based technology in order to develop. An IMF working paper, *Building Back Better: How Big Are Green Spending Multipliers?*, found that current renewable energy technologies are intermittent, unpredictable, have limited storage, and have limited capacity depending on the weather. The renewable energy technology needed to support development in African countries is not yet available.

THE WAY FORWARD

Despite significant challenges, there are optimistic options for Africa. Some leaders are calling for a transition from reliance on coal to natural gas as the main energy source. Discussions during the African Energy Week held in Cape Town explored this route. Natural gas would be able to meet energy needs while also providing decarbonizing effects.

Gyude Moore, a senior policy fellow at the Center for Global Development, believes in the principle wherein the largest polluters should pay the most for the cost of the transition to renewable sources. The global response to climate change should not leave the burden on Africa, especially since Africans already experience the disastrous effects of climate change itself.

Global financing in green energy infrastructure is another viable option. Samaila Zubairu, President and CEO of the Africa Finance Corporation, indicates that Africa risks being cut out of the evolving global financial architecture in order to reach low emissions targets. He further suggests that there is potential in Integrated Industrial Parks, which is a type of Special Economic Zone (SEZ).

The NKOK Industrial Park in Gabon was recently certified as the first carbon-neutral region in Africa. The project manufactures raw timber exports into valuable finished veneers and furniture.

Projects like this localise manufacturing, thereby cutting unnecessary shipping and associated emissions, all while supporting local economies and businesses.

The Royal African Society, International Crisis Group, and African Confidential presented five recommendations for African governments to consider and take to COP26. These include better measurement of environmental change and pressuring big emitters like the U.S., Europe, China, and India. They also recommend encouraging multilateral agencies and foreign governments to invest in mitigation and adaptation strategies, coordinating efforts nationally, and target investment.

Overall, it looks like there is a strong push to encourage wealthy countries (which are also the major GHG emitters) and global financiers to financially support the transition to green energy infrastructure in African countries. While there may be disputes about what kind of infrastructure to turn to, there is no doubt that a transition is needed.

Solutions that address both the challenges in access to energy sources for household use, as well as the effects of climate change, are preferred. Most of all, rich countries should not impose their own ideas of climate action on the global stage. Africans must lead the discussions affecting policies in their own countries.



REBECCA SEWARD- LANGDON

Rebecca is a Chinese-Canadian adoptee living on the shared land of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples. She is a second year Master's student at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy and holds a B.A. in African Studies and Political Science from Carleton University. She is also the Events Executive for the Environmental Working Group at the Munk School and a writer for Trad Magazine. With a passion for human rights, social justice, and anti-colonialism, Rebecca uses her various roles to disrupt colonial thought and single stories of Africa.

No stock available: The collapse of global supply chains

BY ELIZABETH GALLAGHER | INTERNATIONAL TRADE & BUSINESS



SUPPLY chains will play a starring role in shopping this holiday season as rapid demand increases and backed-up supply chains threaten inventories. Empty shelves and long delivery times have been an increasing worry among consumers as the holiday season approaches. Companies have already begun to warn customers about the product shortages consumers will face as they undergo holiday shopping. Some product categories will be harder hit than other industries, including appliances, toys, and furniture. Issues along supply chains have been going on since the beginning of the pandemic; however, there does not seem to be an end in sight for the full restoration of supply chains.

WHAT ARE THE CAUSES?

Millions of minor interruptions throughout supply chains and surging consumer demand have created a bottleneck in supply chains. Coupled with labour issues, factory closures, and raw material shortages, this has resulted in a worldwide crisis. Many individuals have made significant changes to their spending habits throughout the pandemic by reducing

their expenditure on services and increasing the demand for household products. Additionally, augmented online shopping has created new challenges for businesses' demand forecasting. A survey found that 23% of consumers reported doing most of their shopping online, a considerable change from pre-pandemic trends. Estimating the demand necessary to fill instore orders as online demand rises continues to be a challenge for businesses.

Labour issues and factory closures have also played a prominent role in supply chain issues. When COVID-19 hit, it impacted the labour market, putting many people out of work. Today, these shortages are still impacting much of the world as the OECD reports millions of job vacancies across countries around the world. Additionally, countries in the manufacturing and supply chain industries are being hit hardest by labour shortages as employees move to more attractive sectors. For example, the two largest exporters in the world, China and the United States, are experiencing large numbers of job vacancies in the manufacturing industry.

Factories In China are having an increasingly difficult time attracting workers despite above-market wage rates, free meals and accommodation. In the United States, a report conducted by Deloitte and the Manufacturing Institute found that 77 percent of manufacturers were having problems attracting and retaining workers. As a result, many companies worldwide cannot manage orders leading to shipping delays.

*The shortages
have already led
55% of companies
to downgrade
growth outlooks*

Finally, raw materials shortages are also significantly impacting global supply chains. Specifically, semiconductors used in millions of products today are in short supply for several reasons, including manufacturing complexities and the rise of 5G technology that dramatically increased the demand for microchips. The supply of semiconductors is not likely to be resolved soon, as it costs billions of dollars and a significant skilled workforce to build new chip factories to meet demand. Plastics are also becoming scarce in supply, as raw materials used for production have been weakened. As the demand for plastics continues to rise, the supply of products such as personal protective equipment items and takeout containers is at risk. Overall, many factors are causing global supply chain shortages, and the implications are far-reaching.

*One-third of retailers
are expected to pass
price increases to
consumers through
cost-based pricing.*

IMPLICATIONS OF SHORTAGES

The shortages have vast implications for

economies, businesses, and consumers worldwide as backed-up supply chains will increase the price of almost everything. For economies, this means increasing inflation. While the Federal Reserve has argued that recent inflation is “transitory,” inflation does not seem to be going away as supply constraints have gotten worse. For businesses, increasing prices means decreasing profit. This impact on businesses worldwide will significantly impact the stock market. The shortages have already led 55% of companies to downgrade growth outlooks. Large companies have warned about the impacts of increasing labour costs on profits and have started to address the labour shortages through material compensation. The multinational firm Ikea has seen significant profit decreases due to increased transportation and raw material costs. Moving forward, the company plans to issue stating the company has already announced that the company will increase prices going into 2022.

Additionally, one-third of retailers are expected to pass price increases to consumers through cost-based pricing. For consumers, increasing prices could lead to buying fewer products, at least for the time being. Supply chain shortages have wide-reaching impacts. Governments and businesses need to work together to start to build more resilient supply chains.

MOVING FORWARD RETHINKING TRADE

The current supply chain issues highlight the problems with just-in-time delivery and cracks in global supply chains. It is essential businesses evaluate what this means for their production processes. Moving forward, companies will need their supply chains to be more flexible and resilient. To do this, many firms will likely tighten their supply chains and move production closer to home to decrease the uncertainty of their inventory.

Different technological solutions can also play a role in helping businesses build resilient supply chains. Artificial Intelligence (AI) can help firms optimize inventory by finding optimal price points and continually improving omnichannel fulfillment outcomes. We will likely see an increase in small and medium-sized businesses using advanced technologies to meet customer

demand.

Policymakers can also play a role in helping ease the supply chain shortages. Policies made around increasing transparency and information sharing amongst countries could help collaboration between supply chains. Security also plays a significant role in protecting critical nodes, preventing damage and distraction, and protecting intellectual property. Ensuring that countries consult with one another to address security issues, potential shortages, and maintain open markets will help improve supply chain flexibility



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Elizabeth is a first-year student in the Master of Global Affairs program at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy. She recently graduated from the University of Ottawa with an Honours Bachelor of Commerce, International Management. She currently works in the federal government at the Office of the Auditor General of Canada and has worked in the nonprofit sector at Parkinson Canada. Her main interests include the far-reaching implications of the rapidly evolving technological environment in the context of global affairs.

The collapsing façade of reconciliation

BY HANNAH LOEWITH | INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS



PRIME Minister Justin Trudeau’s Liberal Party has entered its third term, shuffled its cabinet, and left Indigenous Peoples living on reserves continually without drinking water. The first year Trudeau entered office, Canadians were buoyed by promises that his government would be receptive to calls from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Final Report. Six years and two subsequent elections later, Indigenous Peoples in Canada are still waiting. The façade of reconciliation is collapsing around Justin Trudeau and the Liberals. Once referred to as Canada’s “woke bae,” we now must come to terms with the fact that this was never true. All the Liberal branding in the world cannot cover up the fact that substantive reconciliation is not in the interest of the ruling party.

TRUDEAU’S RECONCILIATION AGENDA

In 2015 when Trudeau first ran for office, Canadians were met with an ambitious agenda on Indigenous affairs and plans for reconciliation. The official party platform for that election included calling for a “renewed relationship

relationship with Indigenous Peoples.” This plan included an immediate national enquiry into the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada and a renewed “nation to nation approach.” By framing it in this way, the Liberal party signalled their potential willingness to see Indigenous nations as equal political bodies. A nation to nation approach connotes a recognition of the importance of Indigenous self-government, and nods to the respect of specific Charter rights afforded to Indigenous nations as well.

This plan was sparse, but it offered an opportunity to make real progress in rebuilding state relations with individual Indigenous nations. As with all party platforms, it was cut down by the realities of the competing party priorities and the state of the economy. Instead of just whittling down these campaign promises, the complete abandonment of these priorities would soon be made clear. The branding of Liberal care that was acute throughout Justin Trudeau’s campaigning suddenly withered.

THE 2021 CANADIAN FEDERAL ELECTION

The subsequent election saw Trudeau and the Liberal's win a minority government. Perceptions of the party had obviously shifted, with the Liberals losing 20 seats and their majority status. Just this year, the party underwent more scrutiny as Trudeau called a snap election to consolidate power despite pandemic conditions. There was some turnover, but the party only gained 5 seats overall after spending \$610 million, making it the most expensive Canadian election in history and costing "about \$100 million more than the 2019 election." Trudeau successfully consolidated his power for an additional four years instead of only two, but the cost coupled with the frustrations of Canadians and Indigenous Peoples in Canada has mounted. The Liberal party has no incentive to start doing right by its Indigenous constituents after continually not acting on its promises and winning power anyway.

INDIGENOUS ISSUES FALLEN BY THE WAYSIDE

Between 2015 and now, 119 long term drinking water advisories have been lifted across Canada, but 52 new long-term advisories have been added as well, netting a decrease of only 67 advisories overall. Contrast this with the addition of 30 new short term water advisories as of November 3rd, and the supposed progress made by the Liberal party is minimal. Note that "short term" refers to any period less than one whole year, and three of these advisories include "Do Not Consume" warnings rather than boil advisories. The goal of ending all drinking water advisories for Indigenous nations on reserve is still out of reach upon entrance into Trudeau's third term.

2021 has been an especially arduous year for Indigenous nations in Canada with the consistent discovery of Indigenous children's remains at "Residential School" sites. Residential Schooling was a portion of state sponsored forced assimilation that was intended to isolate Indigenous children from their culture and families. It was a tool of the state and the Church writ large to decimate Indigeneity and force Indigenous Peoples to succumb to the will of a white settler state.

It was a powerful tool of genocide, and for that reason, referring to it as "school" at all is misleading. While the Trudeau government has apologized for the role of the Canadian government in running these "schools", he has yet to make substantive progress on tangibly improving the lives of Indigenous Peoples in Canada today. The last Canadian residential school closed in 1996, and survivors and their communities still feel their impacts to this day.

The Liberal party under Justin Trudeau has been unmasked as another government shilling oil and gas at the expense of Indigenous lives and livelihoods.

This is why it is especially heinous that the Trudeau government is again appealing a decision by the Supreme Court that the government had discriminated against Indigenous children in the welfare system. While this discriminatory policy did not originate under Trudeau's rule, it is ultimately his decision to continually fight paying out nearly 55,000 children who are deserving of compensation. This case overshadows others that the Canadian government is currently involved in against Indigenous Peoples, including one "alleging systemic discrimination by a police force in Canada." It is unsurprising that a country founded on a white supremacist settlement system would continue to suffer from deep rooted racism against the very people said state attempted to decimate. Suggesting that this is the fault of Justin Trudeau would be misleading. However, a consistent promise of change without results, and the whiplash the electorate has faced between his focus on reconciliation to appeals in court is very much under his purview.

A TARNISHED LEGACY

The Liberal party under Justin Trudeau has been unmasked as another government shilling oil and gas at the expense of Indigenous lives and livelihoods. The façade of care that Justin Trudeau once utilized so brilliantly can no longer remain

unchallenged. After being invited to sit with Elders on the first day of Truth and Reconciliation, and instead flying over them from his riding to surf in Tofino, we can no longer pretend that his government has any interest in challenging the status quo. Removing gas in the drinking water of Iqaluit is the least of his concerns and why would it be? The Liberal party has learned it does not need to deliver on its promises for Indigenous Peoples to maintain its power. The façade of care is collapsing around the party.

National regulators would also be provided enhanced powers regarding content moderation, allowing them to directly impose fines on firms that do by 2023 at the earliest. Implementation into domestic law and the subsequent legal challenges could further delay the adoption of the directives. Regardless, these proposals represent the beginning of a global shift in the way that tech giants are regulated. Growing concern over competition, privacy, and the ability of tech companies to shape our daily lives and even our beliefs are beginning to be met with legislative responses. While the rapid evolution of digital technologies may be exciting, it has dramatically outpaced the development of regulations needed to minimize the negative social impacts that accompany these technologies.



HANNAH LOEWITH

Hannah is a first year student in the Master of Global Affairs program at the University of Toronto. She started her Undergraduate studies at Mount Allison University, and finished her studies at the University of Western Ontario. She holds an Honours Specialization in Political Science which focussed on International Policy and Regional Politics. She also holds a Minor in Transitional Justice and Post Conflict Reconstruction. During her studies, she had the opportunity to study at the National University of Singapore on exchange and travel through South East Asia. While at NUS, she was invited to attend many speaker series where international experts and top diplomats gave insight on regional interpretations of international politics, which deeply informed her studies. Some of her interests are food sovereignty, anticolonialism, and the intersection between power and accountability.

The collapsing Sino-American relations over Taiwan: the unintended dangers of “neo-containment” strategy

BY ARTHUR SMITH-WINDSOR | ASIA-PACIFIC AFFAIRS



THE formation of AUKUS in September 2021, a trilateral security pact between the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, is the most recent installment in a set of moves to reposition US and allied strategy towards a more hardline stance on China. There is a strong argument to be made in favour of strengthening international coalitions to curtail increasingly assertive Chinese behaviour in Asia. But there is also an important distinction between maintaining strategic balance and engaging in behaviour that increases the likelihood of conflict. The abandonment of ambiguity regarding Taiwan is the latter. High-level official diplomatic visits, billions of dollars in arms sales, the presence of US troops on the island, and mixed signals regarding coming to the island's defence all serve to undo the delicate status quo.

THE STRATEGY OF NEO-CONTAINMENT

Such moves indicate a broader policy of “neo-containment,” one which seeks to deny any possibility of China expanding its sphere of influence. While Chinese ag-

gression in Asia should be met with firm resistance to preserve the status quo, such actions must account for economic and military trends towards multipolarity. China is the dominant economy in Asia and is set to become the world's largest economy, potentially as soon as the end of the decade. It is also engaged in a process of rapid military expansion and modernization. Strategic balancing should serve to manage this structural shift with caution rather than try to stop China in its tracks with an overzealous containment strategy that may ultimately backfire violently.

In raising the stakes over Taiwan, the US and its allies may antagonize China to pursue reunification sooner than it would under a policy of strategic ambiguity consisting of unofficial engagement with Taiwan with an official commitment to the One-China Policy. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has made explicit statements that it will not allow Taiwanese independence. The reintegration of Taiwan is a cornerstone of the CCP's legitimacy. It is also essential to the story of China's re-emergence after the “century of humiliation.” In essence, the narrative of

of Chinese national rejuvenation requires Taiwanese reintegration to be complete. Furthermore, the geostrategic implications of Taiwan to China can not be overstated. Its geographic placement as the linchpin of the first island chain makes it a key priority of Chinese security interests.

RAISING THE RISKS OF WAR

In this way, China has far more to lose from an independent Taiwan than the US has to lose from reunification. This simple calculation should not be underestimated. China may very well be willing to risk a full-scale war over Taiwan, which it has vowed to do, but one would be hard-pressed to argue that the US and its electorate would be equally willing to sacrifice lives and resources in the defence of the island.

The US cannot afford to repeat an Afghanistan-style failure in Taiwan.

In addition to these factors, the next decade represents a unique window of opportunity for China to retake Taiwan. The US is in the early stages of upgrading its military capacity and adopting next-generation warfighting technologies. China could see this as an opportunity to act before this process is complete and the closing technological and capabilities gap between the two states either widens or the strategic landscape shifts.

When — not if — China makes a move to reintegrate the island, the US will be forced to decide whether to sacrifice American blood and treasure in what may amount to a protracted war with the risk of nuclear escalation. If the US is ultimately unwilling or unable to commit to the defence of Taiwan after giving the impression that it will, then the reputational damage will be immense. The US cannot afford to repeat an Afghanistan-style failure in Taiwan, and the fact that it keeps losing war games with respect to the island's defense should serve as a cautionary warning.

While there are valid reasons to support greater engagement in the Indo-Pacific to act as a counterweight to Chinese assertiveness, the move to

upend the status quo of ambiguity surrounding Taiwan specifically makes little strategic sense. The logic of such policies seems to be predicated on the hope that China will acquiesce. However, this is misguided because the political and strategic stakes are too high for China to accept anything short of total reintegration. Such policies ultimately serve to raise the costs of war and encourage China to take advantage of the aforementioned opportunity to retake the island by force sooner rather than later. If these policies escalate, China may have good reason to reassess the strategic costs of restraint and decide that it has less to lose by making a move.

CHINA'S GLOBAL AMBITIONS

The question of Taiwan's defence also plays into a larger debate over China's global ambitions. The belief that the containment of China is necessary for protecting the "rules-based order" and preventing China from constructing an authoritarian world order in its own image is built on a hysteric misconception of Chinese interests and intentions.

China, no doubt, has grievances with elements of the existing international order, specifically a perceived Western dominance and a commitment to the ideology of liberal democracy and human rights. However, it does not reject wholesale the institutions and systems of global governance and cooperation that have allowed its hitherto peaceful rise. China has a vested interest in maintaining and contributing to the global architecture it has benefited from.

Notions of expansionist tendencies within China are similarly unfounded. Although it is true that China has been more aggressive in asserting its territorial claims in recent years, and there is a need to meet such assertiveness with a balanced response, the fundamental content of these claims has remained consistent over the decades. Furthermore, pointing to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as evidence for such intentions is misleading. BRI projects are not centrally dictated by Beijing and are subject to heavy influence by the interests and goals of national governments. Notions of "debt-trap diplomacy" similarly fail to stack up to empirical review. Moreover, it would be difficult to claim that attempts to expand influ-

-uence via economic means is unique to China. Therefore, there is little evidence to suggest that the BRI serves to advance expansionist imperial intentions.

MOVING FORWARD

Blowing Chinese intentions out of proportion and painting China as an expansionist power with hegemonic ambitions is unproductive. It may even be dangerous insofar as it informs aggressive policies of containment that risk war and escalation while degrading diplomatic channels.

As relations between the world's two largest powers continue to decline, it is important to remember that, for all the talk of international structures and Thucydides Traps, state actions are ultimately decided by real people with agency. War with China over Taiwan or any other dispute is not inevitable. However, if policies continue to be fueled by ideology and based on the belief that a neo-containment strategy can stop China's growth and influence, then collapse into conflict may be the outcome. At this point, very little, if anything, will stop the transition to multipolarity. However, how this transition occurs—and the extent of suffering and turmoil it creates along the way—is still very much within the power of policymakers to decide.



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Arthur is a first-year Master of Global Affairs student at the University of Toronto and is participating in the Collaborative Master's Specialization in Contemporary East and Southeast Asian Studies. He received an honours Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Queen's University, where his research focused primarily on international relations and security issues in the Indo-Pacific. Arthur has taken part in academic exchanges in both China and Japan and is proficient in Japanese. In addition to his focus on Asia, he is also interested in the NATO alliance. In 2019 he participated in a Field School and simulation program on NATO in Europe, where he took part in official crisis response simulations at the NATO Defense College in Rome and was one of two participants selected to supervise and assist in a crisis response simulation at the University of Business and Technology in Pristina, Kosovo. Arthur's interests include cybersecurity and space-policy with a regional focus on East and Southeast Asia.



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