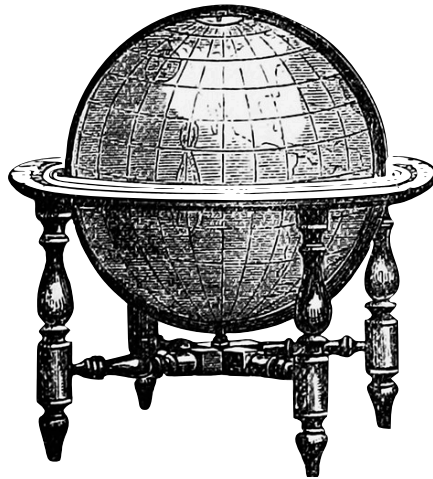




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Cogito

Issue X – Fall 2021

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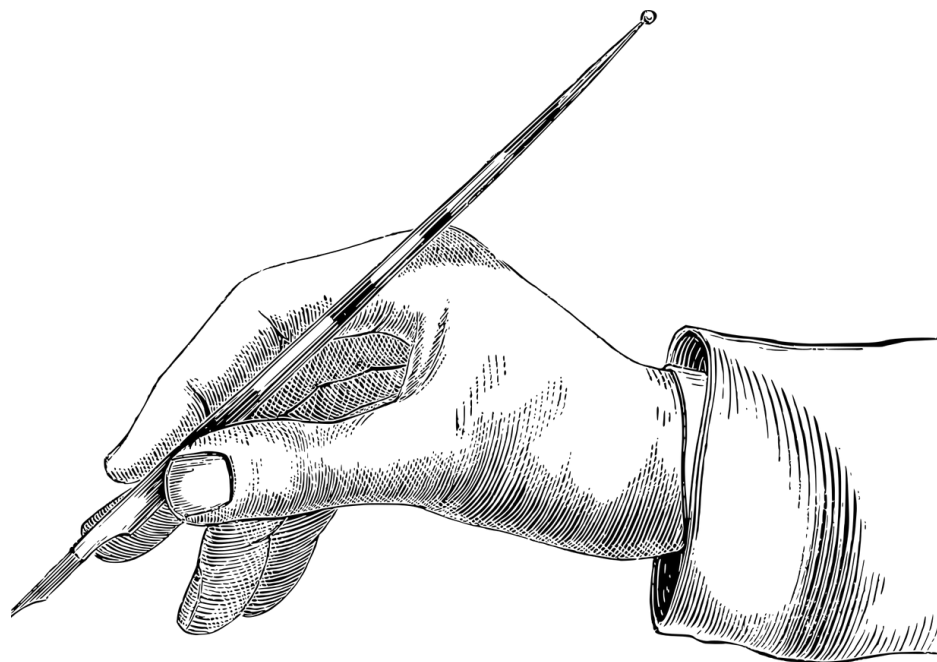
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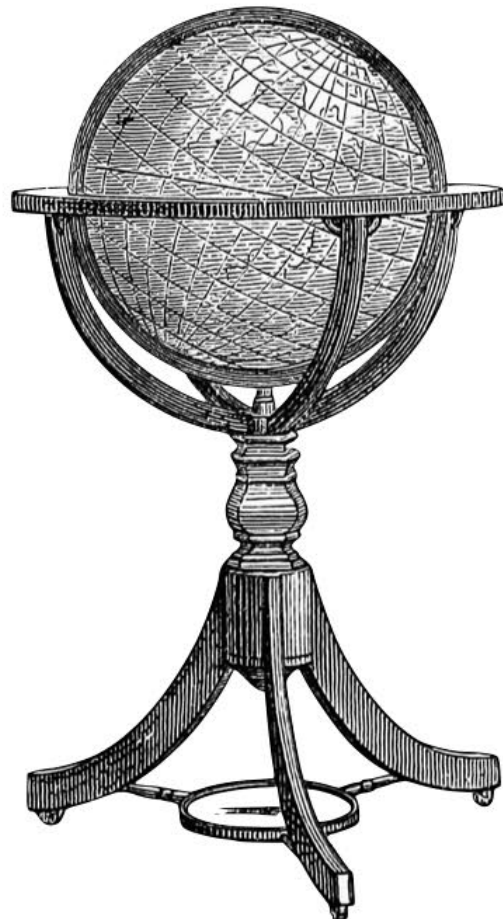
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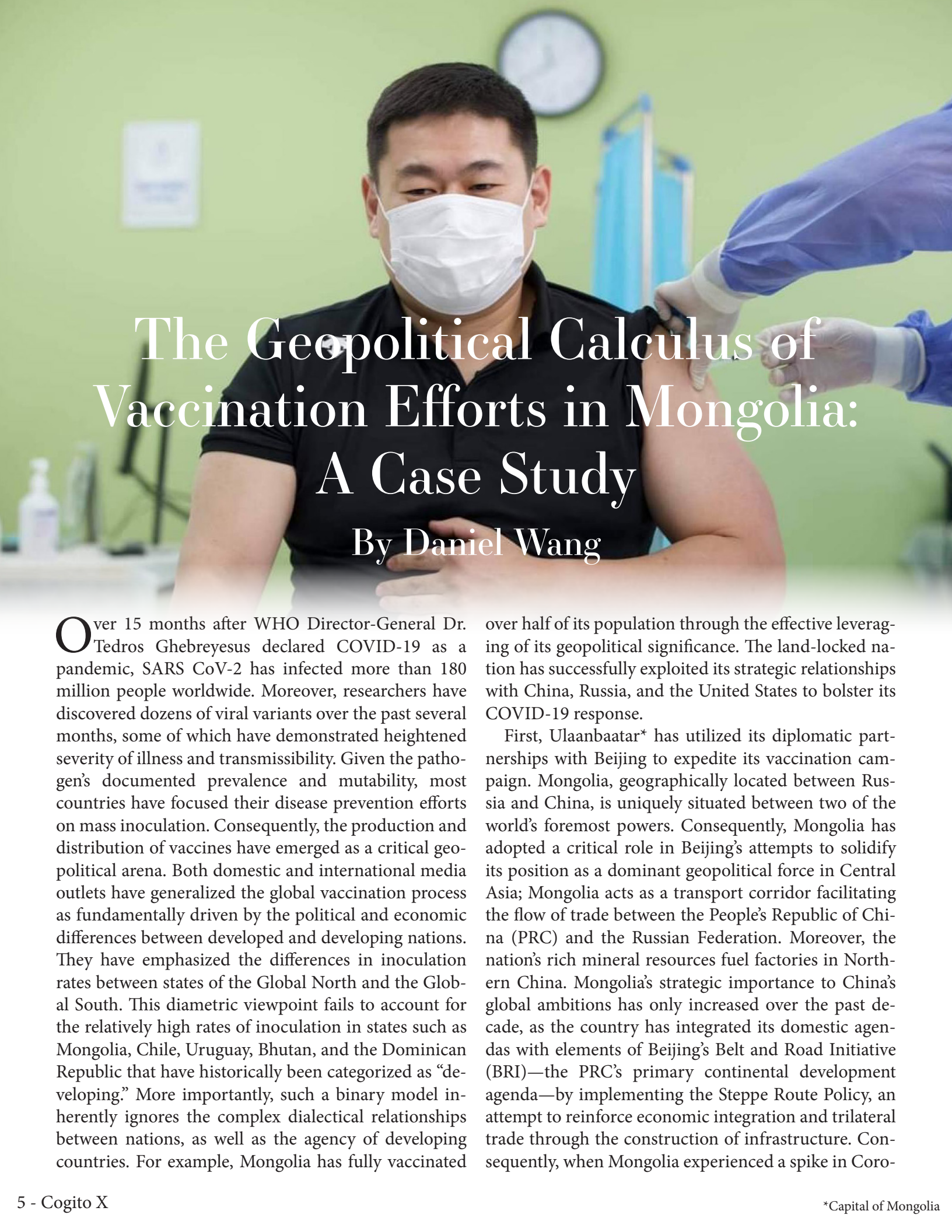




The Future of



COVID-19



The Geopolitical Calculus of Vaccination Efforts in Mongolia: A Case Study

By Daniel Wang

Over 15 months after WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus declared COVID-19 as a pandemic, SARS CoV-2 has infected more than 180 million people worldwide. Moreover, researchers have discovered dozens of viral variants over the past several months, some of which have demonstrated heightened severity of illness and transmissibility. Given the pathogen's documented prevalence and mutability, most countries have focused their disease prevention efforts on mass inoculation. Consequently, the production and distribution of vaccines have emerged as a critical geopolitical arena. Both domestic and international media outlets have generalized the global vaccination process as fundamentally driven by the political and economic differences between developed and developing nations. They have emphasized the differences in inoculation rates between states of the Global North and the Global South. This diametric viewpoint fails to account for the relatively high rates of inoculation in states such as Mongolia, Chile, Uruguay, Bhutan, and the Dominican Republic that have historically been categorized as “developing.” More importantly, such a binary model inherently ignores the complex dialectical relationships between nations, as well as the agency of developing countries. For example, Mongolia has fully vaccinated

over half of its population through the effective leveraging of its geopolitical significance. The land-locked nation has successfully exploited its strategic relationships with China, Russia, and the United States to bolster its COVID-19 response.

First, Ulaanbaatar* has utilized its diplomatic partnerships with Beijing to expedite its vaccination campaign. Mongolia, geographically located between Russia and China, is uniquely situated between two of the world's foremost powers. Consequently, Mongolia has adopted a critical role in Beijing's attempts to solidify its position as a dominant geopolitical force in Central Asia; Mongolia acts as a transport corridor facilitating the flow of trade between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Russian Federation. Moreover, the nation's rich mineral resources fuel factories in Northern China. Mongolia's strategic importance to China's global ambitions has only increased over the past decade, as the country has integrated its domestic agendas with elements of Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)—the PRC's primary continental development agenda—by implementing the Steppe Route Policy, an attempt to reinforce economic integration and trilateral trade through the construction of infrastructure. Consequently, when Mongolia experienced a spike in Coro-

navirus cases during the winter of 2020/2021, the state immediately exploited its relationship with the PRC by pressuring Beijing to deliver its order of Sinopharm vaccines before other developing nations. According to Bolar Lkhaajav of *The Diplomat*, “As early as February 23, 2021, Mongolia received 300,000 doses of the Sinopharm vaccine as a donation from China.” This delivery predated Mongolia’s first batch of AstraZeneca inoculations from the World Health Organization (WHO) and Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) COVAX initiative—the primary source of vaccines for “developing” nations worldwide—by several weeks. In fact, during a press briefing after the Sinopharm shipment’s arrival in Ulaanbaatar, WHO Representative to Mongolia Dr. Sergey Diorditsa stated “It’s encouraging that Mongolia has already vaccinated over 67,000 people, including priority groups such as health workers.”

Second, Mongolia has similarly used its strategic relationship with Russia to advance its inoculation process. Ulaanbaatar and Moscow have historically maintained a close relationship, as the land-locked nation served as a critical buffer state between the PRC and the Soviet Union throughout much of the twentieth century. Though direct Russian involvement in Mongolia concluded with the U.S.S.R.’s monumental collapse in 1991, the two states have repeatedly reinforced their diplomatic ties during the past three decades. In recent years, Russia has regarded Mongolia as an important asset for extending its diplomatic control into Central Asia and allaying growing competition with Beijing. As part of its commitments, Moscow has established a \$1.5 billion fund for overhauling Mongolia’s transportation infrastructure. Fully aware of its crucial significance to the Kremlin’s geopolitical calculus, Mongolian representatives used China’s early engagements in the country’s vaccination efforts as leverage to coax Moscow to export the Sputnik V inoculation. As of May 2021, over one million doses of the Russian vaccine have been sold to Mongolia.

Third, Ulaanbaatar has taken advantage of its blossoming ties with Washington to expand its vaccination efforts. Although Mongolia has largely played towards the foreign policy agendas of its two dominant neighbors, the country has increasingly sought to assert its sovereignty through a “Third Neighbour” policy rooted in growing relationships with other states. Notably, Ulaanbaatar has established cooperative ties with the U.S.. Over the past several years, this relationship has strengthened as Washington’s relationships with both

the PRC and the Russian Federation have soured. Consequently, the Central Asian nation forcefully requested aid from the U.S. following a surge in COVID-19 cases this spring. Washington, understanding the geopolitical positions of the land-locked nation’s continental partners, has so far complied with these demands. In April, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) launched a \$450,000 program to assist Mongolia’s disease control efforts, increasing the U.S.’s total COVID-19 aid to Mongolia to roughly \$4 million. These funds helped assist Ulaanbaatar’s vaccine bids and thus contributed to the state’s inoculation campaigns.

“According to Bolar Lkhaajav of The Diplomat, As early as February 23, 2021, Mongolia received 300,000 doses of the Sinopharm vaccine as a donation from China.”

In conclusion, Mongolia has utilized its diplomatic ties with China, Russia, and the United States to bolster its vaccination campaign and disease control efforts. The nation’s effective manipulation of its diplomatic ties with much more wealthy and influential states illustrates that the dualistic view of relationships between developing and developed countries is both misleading and, in many cases, inaccurate. Furthermore, Ulaanbaatar’s successful geopolitical maneuvers demonstrate that statecraft in fact is nuanced, discursive, and actor-oriented. Even within unidirectional dialogues, complexities abound.



Are Masks Here to Stay?

By Sofia Branco



With Covid restrictions easing, America has reached another point of uncertainty, and this time it entails the lasting impact of masks within society. It's easy to say now, that Covid has had a deep impact on the way we think, react, and feel about viruses. Seeing someone in a mask in public prior to Covid-19 would make you think twice, however, mask-wearing was normalized during the pandemic and has somewhat been adapted into American culture. Just as quickly as the mask came into practice, within a few weeks of covid restrictions being dissipated, people were quick to remove their masks. After many months of isolation and separation from society, people have revealed their faces to the world once again and now the truth for the future of mask-wearing in America will be unveiled.

Heavily packed international and public zones remain a place of great uncertainty for masks to remain a habitual practice. With all our new knowledge of the benefits of mask wearing the question for many has now become, why revert to our old, unsanitary ways in such germ-ridden places? Particularly in airports and on planes, masks are still required regardless of

one's vaccination status. This goes to show the severity of germ spread within airports and how their rules differ from other heavily packed places such as grocery stores. Similarly, to the airport situation, people have debated whether to continue wearing masks during flu season. Prior to the pandemic, the world did not stop for a cold, resulting in influenza ripping through schools, workplaces, and in more vulnerable places like nursing homes. After Covid, the normalization of continuing to live life with a cold can never fully return to our society. If someone snuffles or coughs people will not want to be around them anymore. The pandemic has been eye-opening in so many areas of life and especially regarding the way people approach unsanitary situations. For many, Covid has perpetuated the threat of germs and masks have served as a beacon of safety. After realizing the safety a mask can provide for illnesses, and especially those with pre-existing conditions, people may be reluctant to stop wearing masks in crowded public places. However, an immune system that has no germs to fight will become weakened. Wearing a mask during the cold season could prevent sickness yet it will also prevent a healthily engaged

immune system. Getting rid of all germs in society will cause just as much of an issue for future generations in regards to immune health.

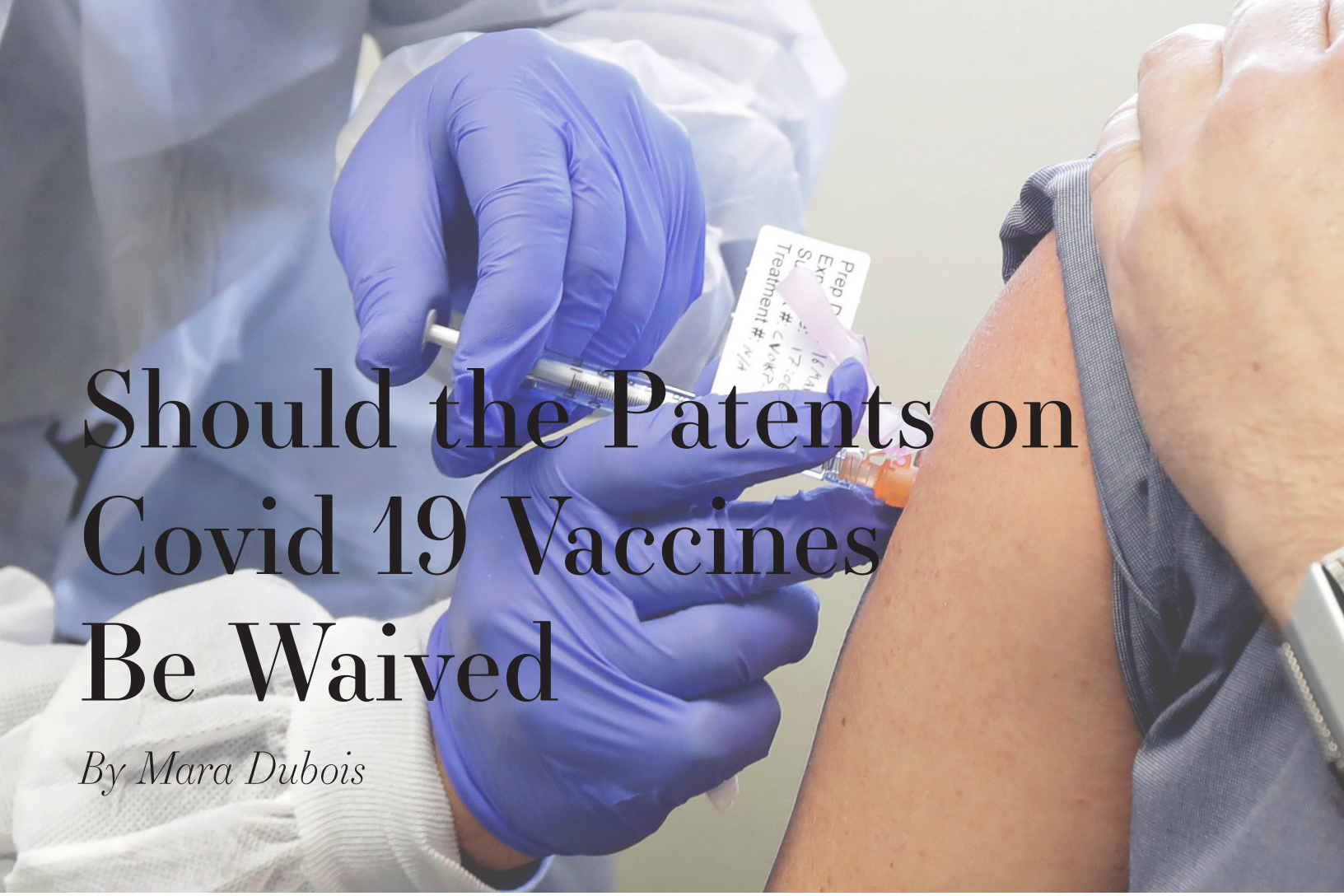
Plainly stated, mask-wearing saves lives. This is demonstrated by statistics found in a Healthline article stating, "Each year the flu causes approximately 140,000 to 810,000 hospitalizations and up to 61,000 deaths in the United States." Just like most recognize that the spread of Covid can be prevented with a mask, we must now recognize many of these deaths could have been prevented if only mask-wearing was more common in our country. For those who are immuno-compromised, wearing a mask at large would also be extremely beneficial. In an article Cutler from healthline boldly states, "Wearing a mask can be equated to wearing a seatbelt or stopping smoking. It saves lives, costs little, and is risk free." Although this statement is true it disregards the large sacrifice of wearing a mask and covering your face compared to the other examples. For many people in America, covering their face in a mask feels like it is restricting them from society. Wearing a mask is predominantly for the public good and protecting others who are weak, while on the other hand wearing a seatbelt and quitting smoking is an individual safety concern. For those who realize both the individual and public betterment of wearing a mask to prevent transmission of any type of virus, moving past the burden of covering part of your face to the world will be feasible. In addition, masks provide relief for those with social anxiety. Proven by a recent study conducted in Poland, the research found, "that mask wearing was linked to lower levels of anxiety". For

years after the pandemic, it is likely that these groups with either health or emotional issues will continue to wear masks in unhygienic or large uncomfortable social settings.

Some wonder if mask-wearing will become a part of our culture similarly to the way they are in China. However, in comparison to China, the United States is much different in regards to population, which means the way viruses spread and are prevented is different. After all, "China is four times denser than the US as China's population density is 153 people per square km compared to 36 of the U.S." At this point in time mask-wearing will not become as critical as it is in China simply because of the population density difference which lowers the risk of diseases spreading where there are less people.

Among all the disturbances to our lives the pandemic has brought, one of the largest effects on people has been mask-wearing. At this point in time, the United States can go on in one of many unpredictable directions regarding mask-wearing. With 46.1 percent of America's population fully vaccinated as of June 27th the state of the inoculation campaign will certainly play a role in the responsibility those feel to continue masking. In closing, the future of mask wearing in America as a whole and on an individual level rides on the surplus of factors including the vaccine, health conditions, and most importantly willingness to mask for the public and personnel benefits. Through time, this will all be determined by the will of the American people and propaganda in favor of mask-wearing proposed to the people.





Should the Patents on Covid 19 Vaccines Be Waived

By Mara Dubois

In the past few weeks, the United States has begun to return to normal. For the first time in more than a year, people have been allowed to unmask in stores, restaurants, and other establishments, signaling a return to full capacity. These changes come in the wake of the development and widespread availability of COVID-19 vaccines in the US. As of June 13th, a total of 143,921,222 Americans have been fully vaccinated or 43.4% of the total population with 52% of the population having received at least one dose. The statistics in Massachusetts are even higher, with 80% of adults having received at least one dose. Unfortunately, while things in Massachusetts and the United States as a whole are certainly looking up, the same can not be said for many other countries.

While countries such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and China have access to successful vaccines, many countries who lack resources have not been able to produce enough vaccines for their populations. In October, a meeting of the World Health Organization took place in which India proposed that the patents on the existing COVID-19

vaccines, such as the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, be suspended as a way to expedite the production and distribution of vaccines among developing countries. Since October, the idea has gained traction, earning the support of over 100 countries.

On May 4th, President Biden made the controversial announcement that he was in favor of the proposal. President Biden, India, and other prominent supporters of the idea such as South Africa, argue that suspending the patents of the COVID-19 vaccines is the best way to provide vaccines for under-resourced countries, and that countries such as the United States with successful vaccines have a moral obligation to aid struggling countries to end the pandemic and achieve herd immunity. However, these arguments are not necessarily correct, as the international negotiations that would result if patents were waved could drag on for months, or even years. In addition, this proposal would allow “drugmakers across the globe access to the closely guarded trade secrets of how the viable vaccines have been made,” and could set a dangerous precedent for the biotech industry. The concept of intellectual

property is one of the foundations of the United States' industry and one of the drivers of intellectual innovation. Waiving the patents on the COVID-19 vaccines would not only result in the loss of money for the United States, but could stunt the long-term growth of the biotech industry including future adaptations and improvements of the COVID-19 vaccines.

"Supporting the waiver of COVID-19 vaccine patents means destroying tens of billions of dollars of US intellectual property, allowing that profit to be taken by companies around the globe,"

Supporting the waiver of COVID-19 vaccine patents means destroying tens of billions of dollars of US intellectual property, allowing that profit to be taken by companies around the globe, producing knock off vaccines. This proposal would result in all the details of vaccine production to be shared with global companies, subsequently surrendering America's advantage in biotech, a key industry of the future. Biotech manufacturing is likely a growing export industry for America and giving up patents would make the U.S. more reliant on China and India for pharmaceuticals. In addition, companies such as Moderna and Novavax have been unsuccessfully working on mRNA vaccines for decades, and their COVID-19 vaccines represent their first successes based off of a culmination of past research. Waiving the patents would negate this hard

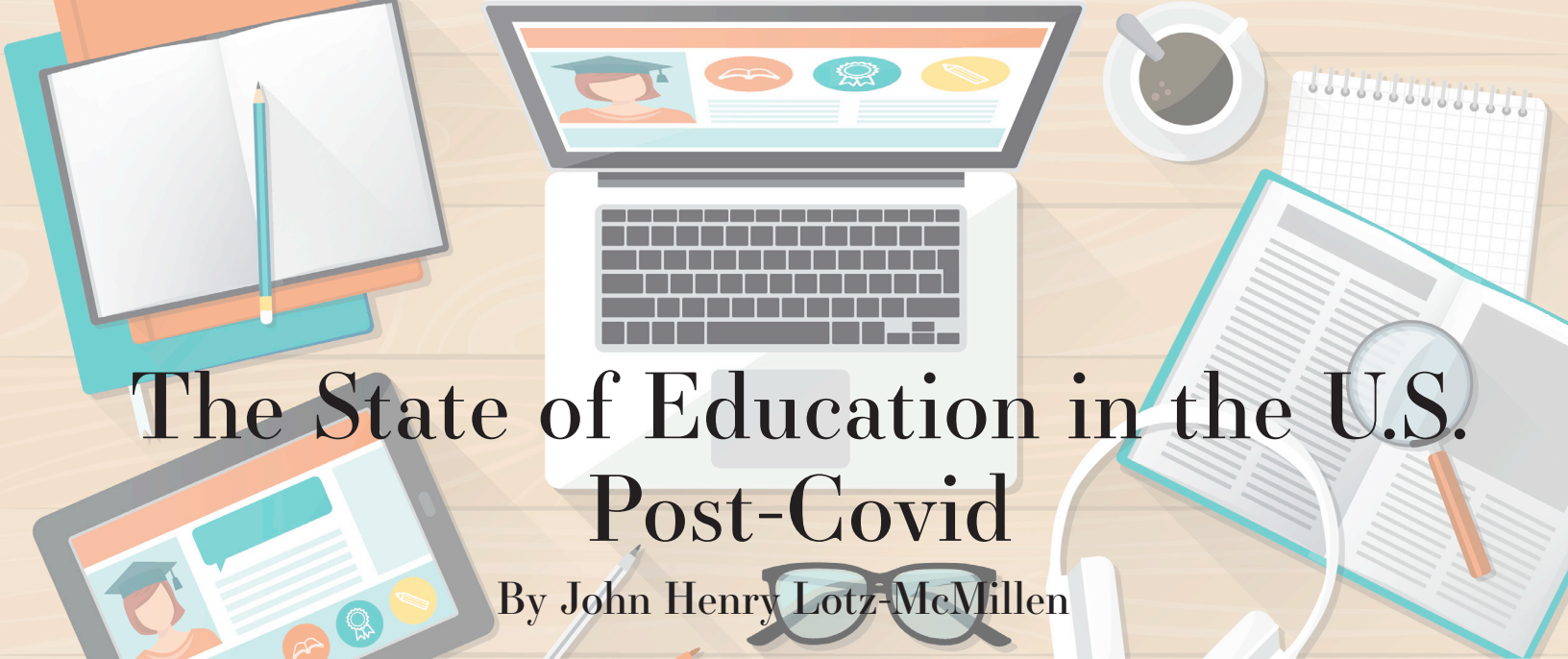
work, as the successful vaccines would be available to companies that had not dedicated the work and resources to developing them. Similarly, if patents are waved now, when another pandemic arises in the future, companies will be less willing to spend money and resources on vaccine research and production. As German Chancellor Angela Merkel said, "The protection of intellectual property is a source of innovation and it must remain so in the future," and removing protection would remove the incentive for future work by pharmaceutical companies.

While the destruction of intellectual property is reason enough not to support the proposal, there is also evidence showing that patents are not actually a major barrier against the distribution of the vaccine in developing countries, and that waving patent rights would not help speed up distribution. If patents are waived, it would still take months for countries such as India and South Africa to set up new facilities to produce the vaccines because manufacturers would need to gain approval and funding to buy new machinery and adapt their technology. In addition, new manufacturers that aren't familiar with how to make the vaccines may take awhile to get up and running. Meanwhile, Moderna, Pfizer, and AstraZeneca, have all indicated high estimates for the number of doses they could produce with, "Pfizer ... [saying] they [are] aimed to deliver three billion doses this year, up from last summer's 1.2 billion estimate." Moderna and AstraZeneca also have encouraging estimates for vaccine production.

Although some may argue that Biden has a moral obligation to help developing countries' vaccine production, waiving patents is not the right thing to do. Waiving vaccine patents does more harm than good, and in the long run will ultimately prove to be detrimental to the United States.



"The protection of intellectual property is a source of innovation and it must remain so in the future,"



The State of Education in the U.S. Post-Covid

By John Henry Lotz-McMillen

Starting when the virus began its sweep across the United States and continuing through its retreat this summer, COVID-19 has directly impacted everyone. However, it is important to note the unequal, disparate effects it has had upon different Americans. These effects are clearly present in the U.S. educational system. While the country was already struggling to prioritize the education of its future generations, Covid added many challenges to education which have negatively impacted the learning of students across the US. In addition, these challenges have been distributed unequally across the US demographics.

As the rollout of vaccinations mitigate the threat of Coronavirus infection, much of the United States has focused on reopening its doors and relaxing Covid restrictions. While this delicate process has been going on for a while, it is disappointing to see where state and federal priorities lay regarding where and when to reopen. A major goal of the Trump presidency was keeping the U.S. economy open, even when it could put people at risk. While this arguably makes sense to an extent in our capitalist-driven society, school systems were often overlooked. It is not a good look when bars, restaurants and gyms are opened despite health experts' recommendations, while schools remain closed. It is also important to recognize that the safety of children going back to school is directly affected by restrictions outside of school. Schools themselves that have been lucky enough to be in person do their absolute best to follow safety precautions, thus the threat of spreading Covid often originates from the homes of students. For many Americans, public schools provide critical resources such as meals and health services, as well as being a place where parents can be confi-

dent their children are safe while they work. Not only does school closure harm the education and future of students, it also hurts the economy, as parents have to stay home and supervise their children. By this point, it is well known that children are less at risk of severe Covid, so why has reopening schools been given this little value? As Dr. Nuzzo and Dr. Sharfstein describe, "Reopening businesses that pose a major risk of community spread should be a lower priority than reopening schools, for which continued closure carries far greater harm." Even more regrettably, it is estimated that "the sudden switch to online instruction has cost some students a full year of academic progress."

"It is not a good look when bars, restaurants and gyms are opened despite health experts' recommendations, while schools remain closed."

Indeed, COVID-19 has had a multitude of impacts on student education, coming in varying shapes and sizes for different populations of students. Even now, with restrictions receding, there are many uncertainties regarding schooling. This state of unpredictability has been the harsh reality for the past one and a third school years. After the chaotic Coronavirus spring of 2020, students were predicted to return in the fall with only 70% of learning gains in reading, and less than 50% of typical gains in mathematics.

The comparison of Covid standardized test scores

to those of a normal year were unfortunately not far off, especially for math, in grades three through eight. However during the pandemic, other factors come into play which challenge families unequally.

As described by the main author of the aforementioned study, Megan Kuhfield, “we might be facing unprecedented levels of variability come fall.” This is seen as learning loss is more pronounced in disadvantaged homes. As an example, during times of school closure, student learning relies heavily on having reliable technology and internet access at home, something that can be more difficult to find in underprivileged communities. According to a pre-Covid Pew Research Center Analysis, “17 percent of teenagers have difficulty completing homework assignments because they do not have reliable access to a computer or internet connection. For Black students, the number spikes to 25 percent.” This disparity is only exacerbated by Covid; Black and Hispanic families often have to deal with greater economic burdens, and also experience higher rates of infection.

Other factors that can be harder to measure include the psychological effects of social isolation (especially for children), grief over losing loved ones, and anxiety or feelings of insecurities over health. These challenges to student’s mental health have a disproportionate impact on students of color and those living in lower socio-economics classes. The education system has traditionally been relied on as “the de facto mental health system for many children and adolescents,” and Covid has made access to these important resources much more difficult.

Furthermore, students from lower-income fami-

lies are even less likely to have mental health services outside of their schools, and have also statistically gone through more hardship during the pandemic. Long term mental health problems often start during childhood, and increased stress experienced by all students, especially low-income, is extremely concerning. Chronic stress has also been proven to affect academic performance.

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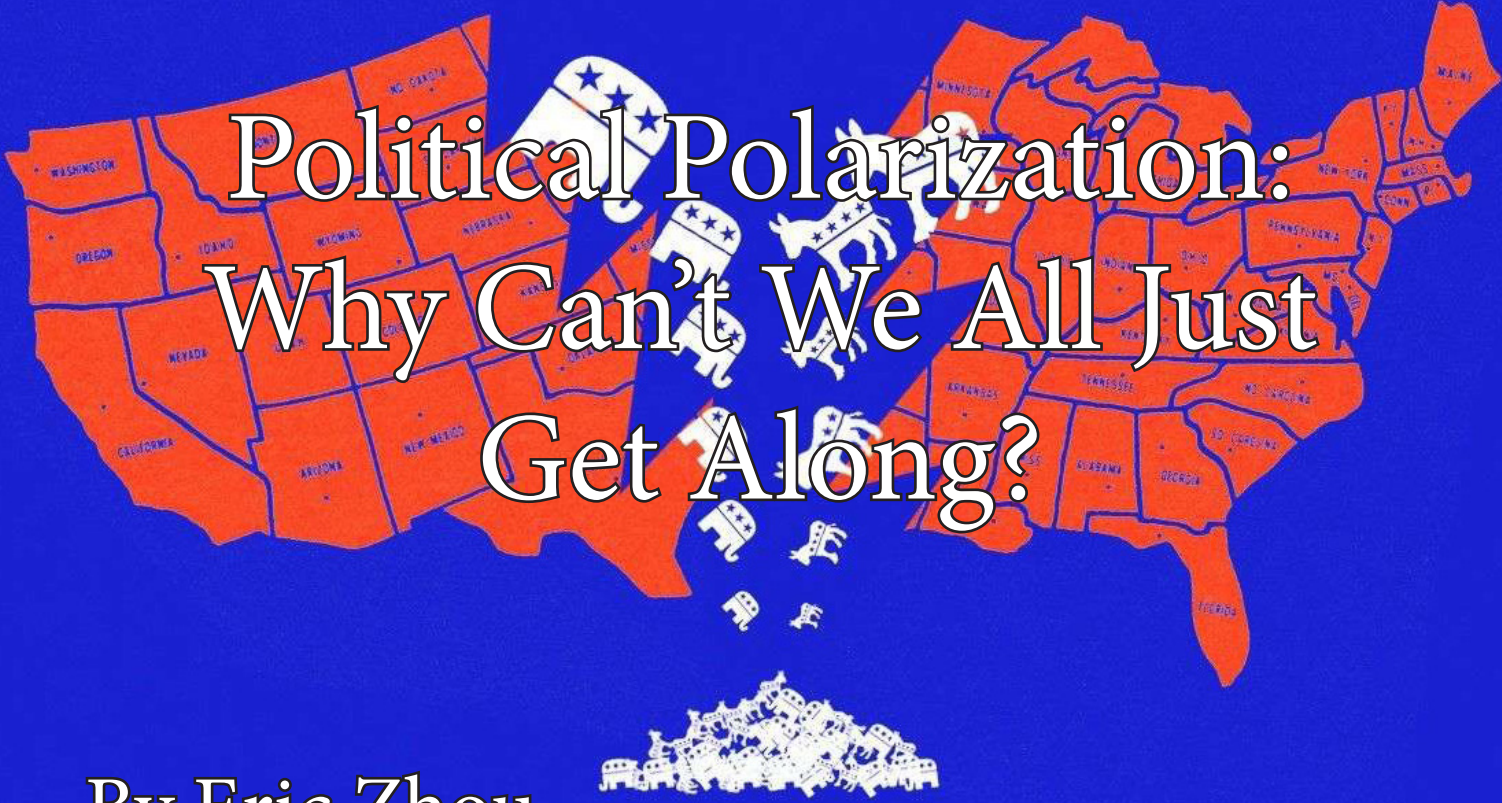
Levels of comfort and stress are not given equally, and in order for the country to heal, everyone’s experiences during the pandemic must be recognized. The Coronavirus has also demonstrated that the U.S.’s priorities need to focus more on future generations, as the destructive effects Covid has had on these past couple years of education will continue to impact students for years to come.





An aerial photograph of a landscape featuring a dirt road that curves through a hilly area. The hills are covered with dense green vegetation, including trees and shrubs. The road is light brown and appears to be unpaved. The overall scene is captured from a high angle, showing the topography and the path of the road.

Opinions



Political Polarization: Why Can't We All Just Get Along?

By Eric Zhou

There has been a noticeable increase in inflammatory rhetoric in both the social and political spheres; personal attacks are ever more frequent as we stray further from understanding and compromise towards division and resentment. On April 28, Senator Tim Scott (R-S.C) delivered a rebuttal to President Biden's address to Congress. "Hear me clearly," he stated, "America is not a racist country."¹ It was undoubtedly a different opinion than that of Biden and many Democrats, but a justifiable one. As a Black Republican who had not only been open about discrimination against him but had also pushed for police reform, Scott spoke from a place of experience and authority that should have merited respect. Instead, social media erupted in a flurry of vile, racist name-calling, with the slur "Uncle Tim" trending on Twitter and a Texas Democrat referring to Scott as an "oreo" in a since-deleted Facebook post.²

More recently, I read an article describing a speech by Florida Governor Ron Desantis (R), a candidate closely aligned with former President Donald Trump, whose popularity has surged due to Florida's successful Covid-19 response. Desantis addressed many issues, including "Big Tech censorship," the border crisis, COVID-19 lockdowns, and mob violence. However, he concluded his speech with a promise that sounded like it belonged more in a gladiatorial arena than a conference room. Referring to the political left, Desantis re-

marked, "It ain't going to be easy. You got to be strong. You got to put on the full armor of God. You got to take a stand, take a stand against the left's schemes, you got to stand your ground, you got to be firm, you will face flaming arrows, but take up the shield of faith and fight on. So I look forward to joining with you in the battles to come."³

So how exactly has the world of politics become so polarized? Why do we see two parties instead of one America? The answer is somewhat complex and involves several factors.

One factor involves the movement away from the center of the political spectrum. Historically, the two parties have settled for more moderate positions to get a mix of centrist and liberal/conservative voters; those in the center who don't align with either set of beliefs vote for a different candidate or don't vote at all. However, political theater and campaign strategies are making moderate views less popular. A soft position invites attack from the opposing party, forcing a shift towards a more narrow platform to maintain a strong image. As a result, both parties end up further apart, each trying to seem like the more decisive, capable party that will get things done rather than attempt to appease everyone.

The polarization of the parties themselves makes it harder for people to compromise. University of Delaware professor Meryl Gardner, who contributed to

research on polarization in the Journal of Public Policy and Marketing, notes,

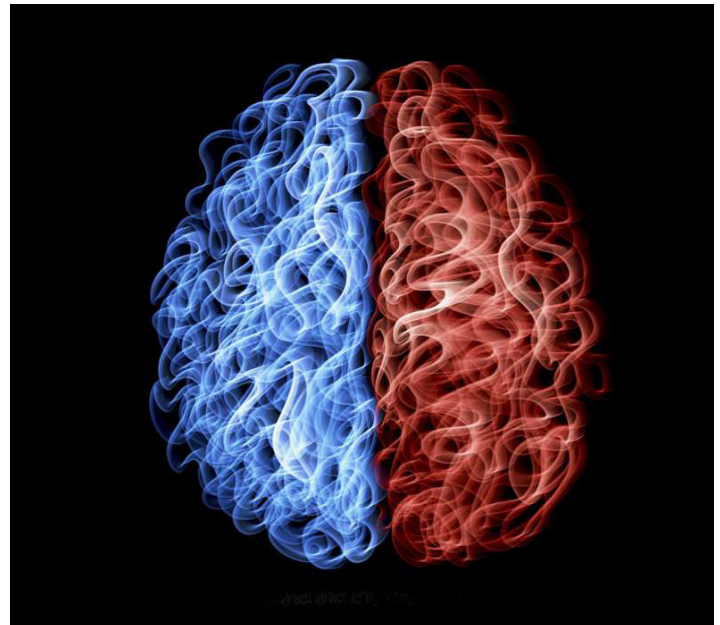
“We’ve always had different opinions. But we used to have opinions issue by issue. You might agree with me about climate change, but not about vaccinations. Now, what we’re seeing are people who are agreeing with each other straight down the line. Part of what happens then is people tend to interact with those who see the world very similarly. It becomes a question of us and them and this other person is going to cause problems, which could be life and death. We are having people say, ‘whose life matters more?’”⁴

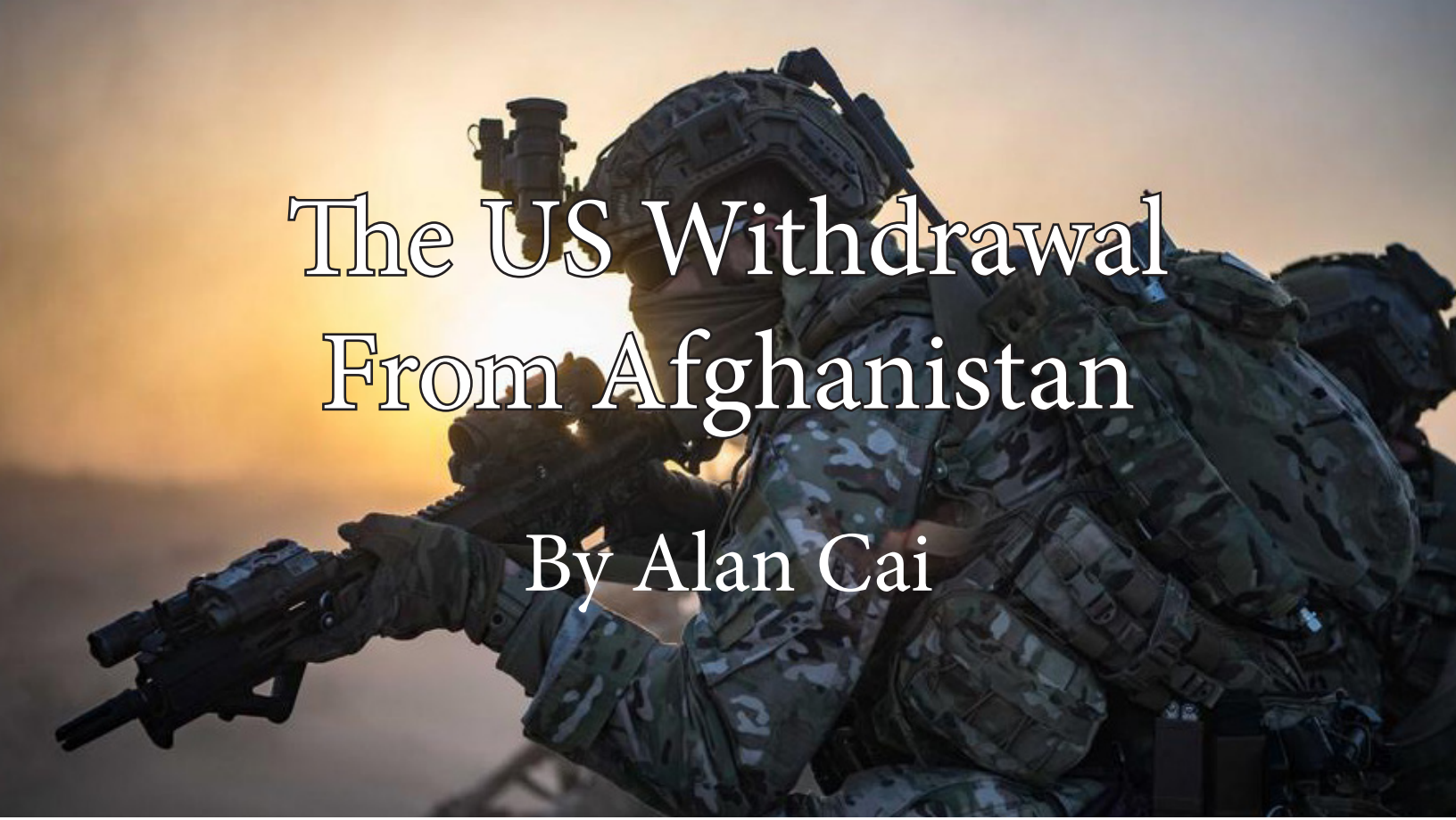
When political entities take more radical positions, people throw their support behind them and agree “straight down the line;” they fear that if they don’t, the issues that are most important to them will be neglected by the opposition. As centrist voters are forced to choose between opposite platforms, none of which they may think are qualified, they settle for what is good enough; this is known as “satisficing.”⁵ Through satisficing, individual, issue-by-issue opinions are cast aside, causing Democrat and Republican voters to increasingly see each other as obstacles to the change they want. As Gardner astutely observes, “Trust is a basic starting point. That’s what we’ve lost. We’ve lost the belief that we all have a basic idea of how to make things good.”⁶

Perhaps the most influential factor, social media strongly augments our distrust in those who disagree with us. Social media is often accused of only showing us the content that we like and agree with, creating ideological echo chambers that reinforce our beliefs. This should make sense, as these algorithms no doubt keep us more engaged and generate more revenue for the companies. However, social media is just as divisive when it attempts to show us things we disagree with. David Sabin-Miller and Daniel Abrams, researchers at Northwestern University, recently created a mathematical model simulating the effect social media has on polarization, a study that is too difficult to perform on a large, real-world scale. Unlike previous models, this project included the possibility of people reinforcing their own beliefs further after being exposed to different viewpoints. The model concluded that this exposure is actually worse than an echo chamber. When media outlets show differing viewpoints, they often show extreme cases designed to spark outrage and go viral. A pattern the researchers fittingly dubbed “repulsion,” perspectives are distorted using extreme

cases and provide a push away from the viewpoint; this repulsion is more powerful psychologically than attraction to our own beliefs.⁷ Even more concerning is the lack of solutions or willingness to find solutions: social media companies thrive off of letting polarization run amok, and we are understandably content seeing things we like.

Polarization may very well continue to get worse due to its multifaceted and complex nature. We are seeing it manifest regularly in the form of censorship attempts, cancel culture, personal attacks, and confrontational rhetoric. Recognition of this dangerous trend is difficult but absolutely necessary; I for one am concerned that if we continue to let it fester, we may find ourselves abandoning the compromise and freedom of expression that this country was built on. As with any seemingly irreconcilable difference, the first step is to look for similarities. We should try to remember that we are all Americans, that the “us” and the “them” are one and the same.





The US Withdrawal From Afghanistan

By Alan Cai

Tuesday, November 17th, 2020: only 11 days after the heavily contested 2020 election, a military spokesman serving under the Trump Administration announced that the US military would be withdrawing their troops from Afghanistan by the end of the year. It was widely expected that the winner of the 2020 election, Joe Biden, would reverse the Trump Administration's hurried decision to withdraw troops. However, after taking office, President Biden decided to continue with the withdrawal, albeit with a later deadline. The evacuation from Afghanistan comes at a time when Taliban forces have been ramping up their presence across Afghanistan, and the Afghan army is stretched dangerously thin. Under President Trump's administration, the US Armed Forces hoped to finish the complete evacuation of all American service members by January 15th, 2021. However, after taking office, President Biden changed the deadline for a complete withdrawal to September 11th, 2021, the 20th anniversary of the September 11 Attacks. The Afghan Army is reliant on American support and an American withdrawal will cripple their capabilities.

In 1979, the Soviet Union, hoping to spread Communism to neighboring countries, invaded the small nation directly on its southern border: Afghanistan. At the time, Afghanistan was run by a Communist dictatorship, which the Soviets had close relations with. The Soviets had already sent troops to help assist

their Communist allies in Afghanistan to combat western-backed rebels, but after infighting among their Afghan allies, the Soviets decided to topple the regime, and install a more loyal and stable puppet government. This led to dissent among Afghans and Muslims across the world as many viewed the Soviet Union's intervention in Afghanistan as a Christian power trying to subjugate an Islamic country. Many Afghans rebelled against the Soviets and soon rebel groups formed across the inhospitable terrain of Afghanistan. These groups were largely supported by the Islamic World and NATO, as NATO still viewed the Soviet Union as an enemy, even with hostilities flaring down in the Cold War. These groups supported the rebels with guns, ammunition, and funding. In 1988, with the Soviet Union collapsing, the Soviets decided to pull out of Afghanistan, the last Soviet soldiers withdrawing in early 1989. After the Soviet evacuation, the various rebel factions that had been fighting the Soviets no longer had any common enemy to fight, and after finishing off the remnants of the old Communist government in 1992, they quickly began fighting each other over differing ideologies, tribes, and ethnic backgrounds. In 1996, the Taliban came out on top, defeating several other factions and seizing control of Afghanistan, except for a sliver of land in the far north held by various groups united against the Taliban. However, Taliban control would not last. In

2001, Al-Qaeda launched the 9/11 Attacks on America, Al-Qaeda-sponsored terrorists boarded several planes, and crashed them into key civilian and military infrastructure across the east coast. This attack led to thousands of deaths, most notably in the Twin Towers in New York City. After the 9/11 attacks, the US asked the Taliban where Osama Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda were hiding in order to extradite Bin Laden to America. The Taliban refused to give up their ally, and the Bush administration decided to work with the anti-Taliban resistance to overthrow the terrorists. With American support, the Taliban were swiftly overthrown and a new western-backed government was later installed in Afghanistan. However, the retreating Taliban soon formed into resistance cells and began to reorganize, launching a guerilla campaign against the Afghan government. 20 years after America's original intervention in Afghanistan, the United States has decided to withdraw from the country. With over 2,000 Americans dead and 800 billion dollars spent in Afghanistan, the sudden withdrawal, taking place during peace talks with the Taliban, has caught many observers by shock. Muska Dastageer, a lecturer in peace and security studies at the American University of Afghanistan in Kabul said to NPR in an interview that, "the timing surprised [him]." He further stated that he wondered if the sudden withdrawal was "thought through in relation to the peace process, if it was considered that [the withdrawal] might seriously disincentivize the Taliban and effectively obstruct the peace process." So far, the Biden Administration hasn't been clear about why they have decided to continue the Trump Administration's withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. However, in a speech by President Biden on April 14th, President Biden made the point that "American troops shouldn't be used as a bargaining chip between warring parties in other countries." Stating, his philosophy around the use of American troops in foreign conflicts, and giving a possible explanation for his continuation of the withdrawal from Afghanistan.

The Afghan Army has taken the news of an American withdrawal with distress. Afghan forces are unable to effectively protect their forces without American support. Many Afghan units are completely reliant on American airpower to protect their positions. A soldier in Ghazni, a southeastern Afghanistan city, reported that the Afghan National Army, "strongly need[s] [American] air support because it always gives [the Afghan National Army] the upper hand". Even more, a policeman, Shamul Haq reported that "If air support

from the Americans is stopped, it will be a disaster." Recently, an Afghan garrison in the city of Ghazni was overrun by Taliban fighters, who only retreated after the US Airforce arrived to conduct airstrikes. In the Afghan National Airforce, there is a surplus of pilots as there aren't enough planes to fly because of, "over-use, battlefield attrition and maintenance cycles... What aircraft are available... usually only go to help the special operations forces." Afghan air support is so unreliable that a police commander in Afghanistan's Herat Province reported having only received air support once in his eight-month tour of duty. With an American withdrawal, the Afghan National Army will be left without effective air support as the Afghan government lacks the capabilities to support its air force, leaving the air force also completely reliant on

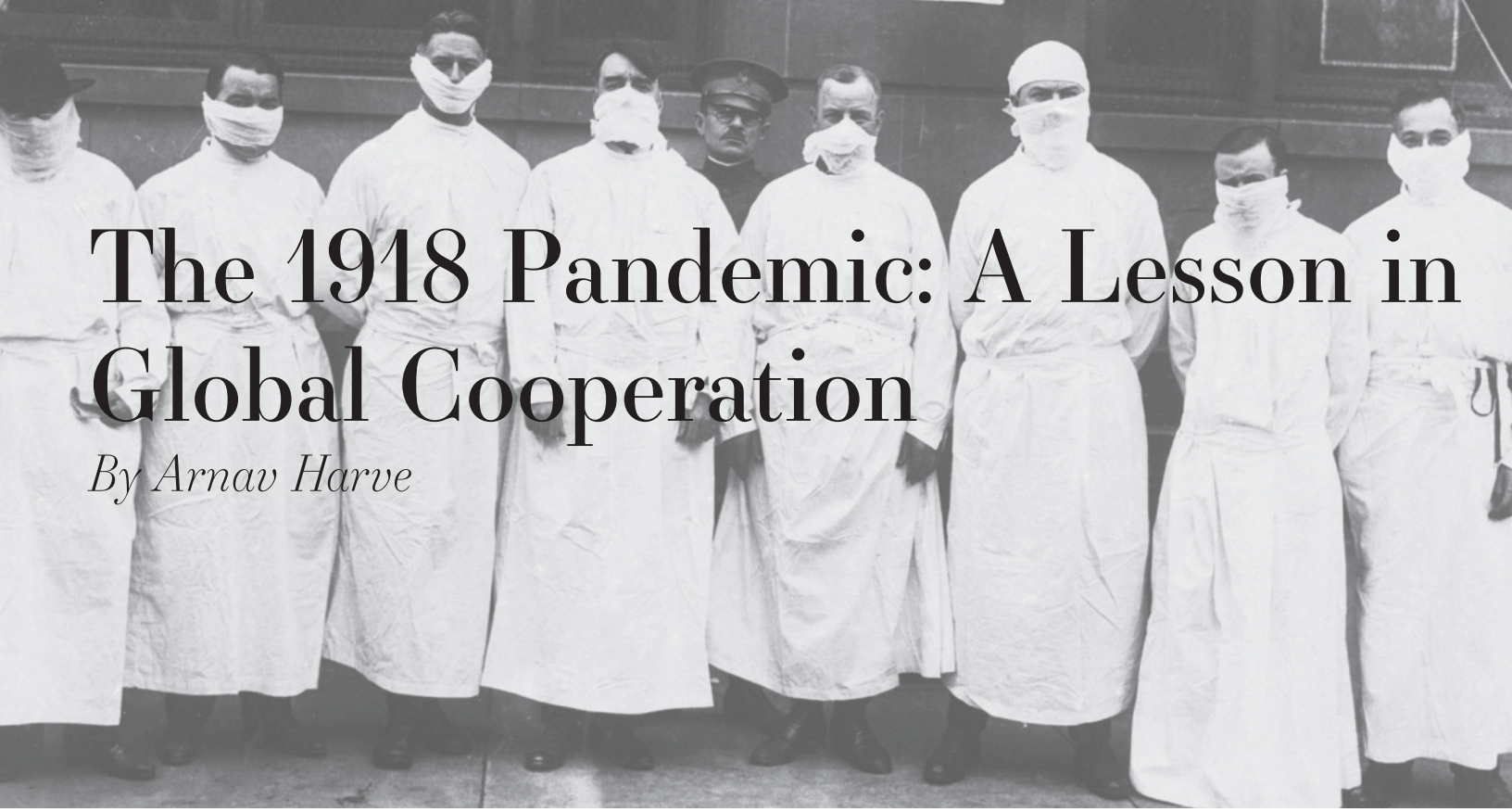


foreign assistance. The Afghan National Army and Police also lack the supplies and support from America to fight effectively. In an NYT interview with Captain Mohammed Saleh of the Afghan National Army, he reported that the Afghan National Army had run so short of ammunition that machine gun teams were allocated only a single magazine, around 200 rounds, not even enough to fire for longer than a minute. Many of the supply issues are a product of the corruption deeply embedded into the Afghan bureaucracy. Many soldiers and police sometimes excessively fire bullets so they can sell the discarded brass casings for scrap. Corruption even permeates the highest levels of governance. On paper, the Afghan security forces have more than 300,000 soldiers, but many units have many more soldiers on paper, as commanders can pocket these extra soldier's salaries. Media recently reported that "one important army corps meant to have 16,000 men and women has around half that" with "the salary of the rest of the soldiers is going to the pocket of corps commanders and people in the ministry of defense". The pay in the Afghan Army is so inadequate that the rifles given to Afghan Soldiers were "worth several months' pay", with many soldiers selling their rifles to local civilians or even the Taliban. With the US government pouring in billions of dollars into the Afghan security forces, Afghan forces still suffer from inferior equipment to the Taliban, largely because of the Afghan government's failure to command and finance their soldiers, "Afghan outposts are often battered nightly, frequently by fighters with night-vision gear. Regular Afghan soldiers and police, lacking the same capability, have resorted to buying their own or sometimes even lighting debris or brush on fire to interfere

with the Taliban's devices. The Pentagon tried to equip certain units with night vision, but stopped after so much of the gear was lost, stolen or sold". The situation is so dire that several commanders report being forced to buy their own sniper rifles on the black market because of supply issues. Afghan soldiers are also treated as second-class compared to American soldiers. A NYT article reported that while "westerners received world-class trauma care, Afghans were taken to entirely different medical facilities where their treatment was substandard". The lack of supplies, support, low pay, and inferior treatment stemming from corruption has had a major effect on morale and fighting potential. In an NYT interview with a police commander in Afghanistan, it was reported that the commander had lost control of several outposts, with one selling out to the Taliban, another being overrun and "at least 30 of his officers have abandoned their posts". With the US withdrawing from Afghanistan, the US government has pledged to reinforce the Afghan National Army from "over the horizon". However, according to the Voice of America, "U.S. officials admit that bringing in such resources from 'over the horizon' will take longer and will generally be "extremely difficult." The future seems bleak for the Afghan government, but it is yet to be seen how they will react when they no longer have the upper hand.

The war in Afghanistan has drained the resources of countless nations, caused unspeakable suffering and death, and has permanently scarred the landscape of Afghanistan. However, will the American withdrawal improve the current situation in Afghanistan?





The 1918 Pandemic: A Lesson in Global Cooperation

By Arnab Harve

As the summer begins, the U.S. stands on the cusp of a long-awaited end to the COVID-19 pandemic. Restrictions have been relaxed or even lifted in states as cases continue to drop. Meanwhile, however, thousands of people are still becoming infected all around the world, with cases rising in countries like India and Nigeria. To make matters worse, there is a distressing scarcity of personal protective equipment, oxygen, and most importantly, vaccines. As this crisis continues throughout the world, it's important to acknowledge how our pandemic resembles a remarkably more destructive viral onslaught: the 1918 Pandemic. Marked by a lack of global cooperation, it killed tens of millions, especially in poorer countries. Learning from the horrors of this pandemic can teach us now about the importance of cooperation and unity between countries.

The 1918 Pandemic, also known as the Spanish Flu, is frequently cited as the most devastating pandemic in history. Estimates show that over 50 million people died from the influenza virus and that *one third* of the human population (over 500 million people) were infected. The public saw a fundamental shift in life, with the enforcement of public health measures like mask mandates and social distancing that bear an eerie resemblance to those of today. Never had a disease since the Black Death, almost six hundred years before, inflicted death and destruction upon such a wide swath of the world. Nevertheless, at what should have been a time for a united front against the virus, its

initial stages were very politicized and used to divide instead of unite. To start, the "Spanish Flu" itself did not even originate from Spain — it simply attracted that name because only newspapers from Spain, neutral during World War I, reported on it; many warring countries, intending to preserve morale, censored news of the virus. Other newspapers, however, weaponized the virus against enemies by giving it different names: in Brazil, the "German flu," in Senegal, the "Brazilian flu," and in Poland, the "bolshivist plague." These labels fueled xenophobia and stigmatization toward target countries, further promoting division over unity.

Global public health cooperation was almost nonexistent during the pandemic. Adopting an 'every man for themselves' mentality, organizations such as The League of Red Cross Societies in England and the Office International d' Hygiène Publique in France struggled to work together and help other countries around them. For example, Neville Chamberlain, the future prime minister of UK and then member of parliament who held great influence in the League, refused to offer £50,000 to Poland (suffering from a typhus epidemic in the midst of the flu pandemic) unless other countries like the US and France did as well (which they refused). The result of this inaction was devastating: by the end of the pandemic, 200,000 to 300,000 Polish people would be dead. Moreover, the global political landscape itself was rife with division: World War I had fomented disunion, especially in



Europe, while the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the aftermath of the Russian Revolution furthered the chaos. The result was a fractured world, with countries whose inability to help each other during the direst of times would have catastrophic consequences.

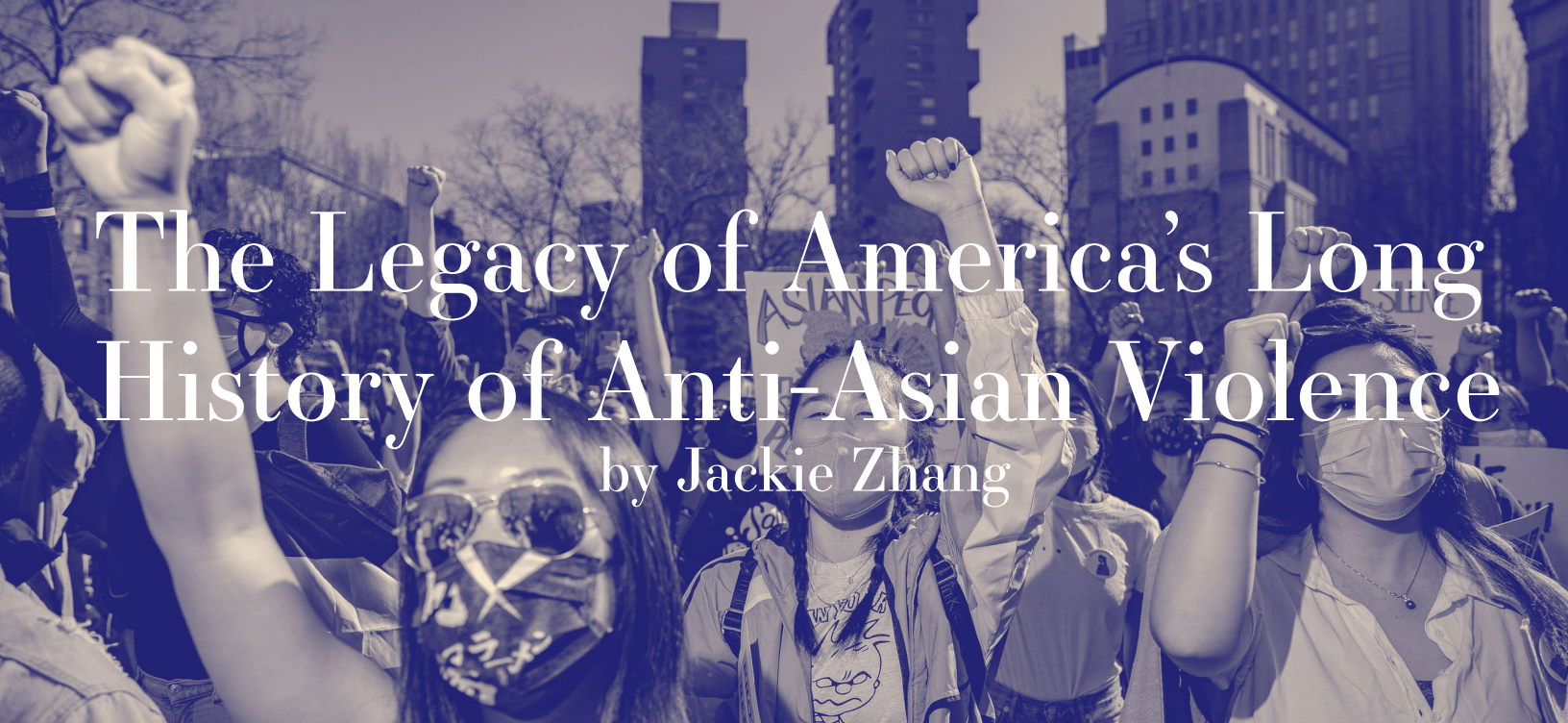
The 1918 Pandemic teaches us here that to ignore the plight of less powerful countries is to cause devastating tragedy.

The COVID-19 pandemic has mirrored the 1918 Pandemic in many ways, especially in the areas of global cooperation and unity. For example, the promotion of xenophobia and misinformation in the 1918 Pandemic is similar to that of our times as well, manifested through the usage of names like “China Virus” and “Wuhan virus” that emphasize the stigmatization of a particular group. Moreover, despite the fact that access to vaccines was limited during the influenza pandemic, its lessons in global cooperation still resonate during the current vaccine rollout. For example, during the flu pandemic, millions of Indians under colonial British rule died because of British indifference to assisting their subjects. According to some estimates, colonial India was considered the hardest hit during the flu pandemic, with 12 to 13 million people dead because of the virus. The blatant power dynamic between Britain and colonial India parallels the cur-

rent relationship between wealthier and poorer countries, with wealthier countries having far greater access to COVID-19 vaccines. The 1918 Pandemic teaches us here that to ignore the plight of less powerful countries is to cause devastating tragedy. To fix this, wealthier countries with COVID-19 vaccine surpluses could involve themselves in operations like COVAX, an initiative of the World Health Organization that works for global vaccine equity. In addition, the 1918 pandemic teaches us about the importance of need-based resource distribution. Poland, suffering from both a typhus epidemic and the influenza pandemic, needed resources like money more than others, yet Britain’s refusal to give that money resulted in thousands of deaths. To learn from this, COVAX could replace its current population-based system with a need-based distribution of vaccines.

The headline of the COVAX website makes clear why global vaccine equity is crucial: “With a fast-moving pandemic, no one is safe until everyone is safe.” The 1918 Pandemic illustrates these words clearly by showing the devastating impact that comes with a lack of global cooperation between countries. It offers a solemn lesson for us as we enter what should hopefully be the final stages of the pandemic—global cooperation is key to overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic once and for all.





The Legacy of America's Long History of Anti-Asian Violence

by Jackie Zhang

It was the blistering summer night of July 19, 1982. 27-year-old Vincent Chin, a Chinese American, was celebrating his engagement with friends in Detroit. As they laughed and drank, two White men began to notice their celebrations and picked a fight with Vincent and his friends. They blamed Chin for “the Japanese” taking their jobs in the auto industry. The men beat Chin with a bat, giving him severe injuries that he died from several days later. His assaulters pled guilty to manslaughter which would normally result in a sentence of 15 years. Instead, the judge gave the men probation and a \$3000 fine. This incredibly lenient sentence infuriated and shocked the Asian community, uniting many of them into a fight for civil rights.

There has been a continual lack of awareness of the Asian American struggle in America, despite the prevalence of violence littered throughout its history. Recently in March of 2021, a 21-year-old gunman, Robert Long, murdered eight people at three spas in Atlanta, Georgia, six of which were Asian American women. The police said that the shooter legally purchased a 9mm handgun the same day of the incident. Long admitted to being a sex addict, and saw the Asian spas as a temptation that he desired to eliminate. The event sparked a new wave of fears of violence against Asian Americans among advocacy groups in the country. The analysis released by the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University examined hate crimes in 16 of America's largest cities. It revealed that while such crimes in 2020 decreased overall by seven percent, Asians rose as a target to

violence by nearly 150 percent during the pandemic. It appears that only recently, Americans have become aware of the scapegoating, blaming, and racism that Asian Americans have faced for centuries. This issue can be attributed how Asian American discrimination, despite being prevalent throughout American history, is a subject that is rarely taught in schools and classrooms.

“There has been a continual lack of awareness of the Asian American struggle in America, despite the prevalence of violence littered throughout its history.”

Immigrants from China came in the 1850s to western states in order to work in aiding railroad construction and mining. The low-paying and dangerous jobs were highly popular among the newly immigrated Chinese-Americans inducing the “Asians coming to steal White jobs” trope that has lasted centuries. Poor White workers saw them as dangerous threats to their livelihood. White lawmakers and prospectors regularly abused the immigrants, driving Chinese miners from their claims and taxing them. California's courts refused to allow the Asian immigrants along with Black Americans, and Native Americans from testifying against White people. Attacks against Chinese immigrants, as a result, went unpunished. Anti-coolie clubs were the name of campaigns against the Chinese,

the Central Pacific Anti-Coolie Association and others advocated for an end to the immigration of Chinese Americans and defended White vigilantes. In 1867, a mob of white workers drove Chinese laborers from their worksite in San Francisco, injuring 12 and killing one. The Anti-Coolie Association rallied to the mob's defense and won the release of all 10 assaulters. There was a continual trend of death and pain for the Chinese immigrants and exoneration of White assailants.

In 1882, the famous Chinese Exclusion Act was passed which barred Chinese immigrants from entering the country for 10 years and made it impossible for them to be naturalized. It came as a result of the continual animosity against Chinese workers on the West Coast and the placed blame on them for the declining wages and economic disparity. Chinese-Americans attempted to challenge the act passed by President Chester A. Arthur but their efforts were futile. This act led to other calls to action against the immigration of other "undesirable" groups, many of which were Asian: Hindu, East Indians, Middle Easterners, and Middle Easterners. The Geary Act of 1892 was proposed by California congressman Thomas J. Geary which extended the ban on Chinese immigration for ten more years. It also required immigrants to carry documentation from the Internal Revenue Service and immigrants found without theirs were subject to labor and deportation. Bail was only allowed if it was posted by a "credible White witness". Chinese immigrants and their families born in America were unable to get citizenship until 1943 when the Magnuson Act was passed.

In 1900 the San Francisco area became infested with an outbreak of bubonic plague. Since the first victim was a Chinese-American, the whole community of Chinese immigrants were blamed despite the high likelihood that the outbreak started with a ship from Australia. The Chinese immigrants made up a large part of San Francisco's population. In fact by 1880, some 16% of the population of San Francisco were Chinese. However, they faced extreme discrimination and segregation, partially due to the Chinese Exclusion Act. Chinatown became San Francisco's most impoverished district, with dilapidated wooden buildings stuck together in tiny spaces. San Francisco's Chinatown was surrounded by law enforcement allowing only White residents to leave or enter. Home searches and destruction of property were also what the Chinese residents were subjected to. Interestingly, the conditions for the San Francisco epidemic mirror the recent attacks against Asian Americans during COVID-19 greatly.



Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japanese aircrafts, the United States entered World War II. It was the 1940s and thousands of Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans had created lives for themselves in the country. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 that forcibly removed Japanese Americans from their homes. The government relocated them to internment camps according to their reasoning that it was the necessary steps the military and the government had to take in order to keep the country safe during wartime. They also argued that both were not discriminating against Japanese Americans on the basis of their race because the government had to take certain precautions due to some Japanese American individuals who still retained loyalty to Japan over America. Conditions in the camps were extreme, intensely hot



in the summertime and freezing cold in the winter. Violence occurred frequently in the camps, prisoners were delivered by trains and were marched two miles to the camp. Toshio Kobata and Hirota Isomura, two Japanese Americans were shot and killed by sentries who claimed that they were attempting to escape. However, Japanese Americans later testified that the two disabled and elderly men were having trouble marching but the sentry was not found guilty. In 1943, the Army deployed tanks and soldiers to Tule Lake Center in northern California to crack down on protests. Japanese prisoners at Tule Lake had been striking over food shortages and unsafe conditions that had led to accidental death. Many other similar incidents happened in the camps and the prisoners were put under inhumane conditions. In 1988, Congress finally issued an apology and passed the Civil Liberties Act giving \$20,000 each to over 80,000 Japanese Americans as reparations for their treatment after releasing them. Many Japanese Americans found their homes or businesses vandalized or taken away and found it very difficult to readjust to their former lives.

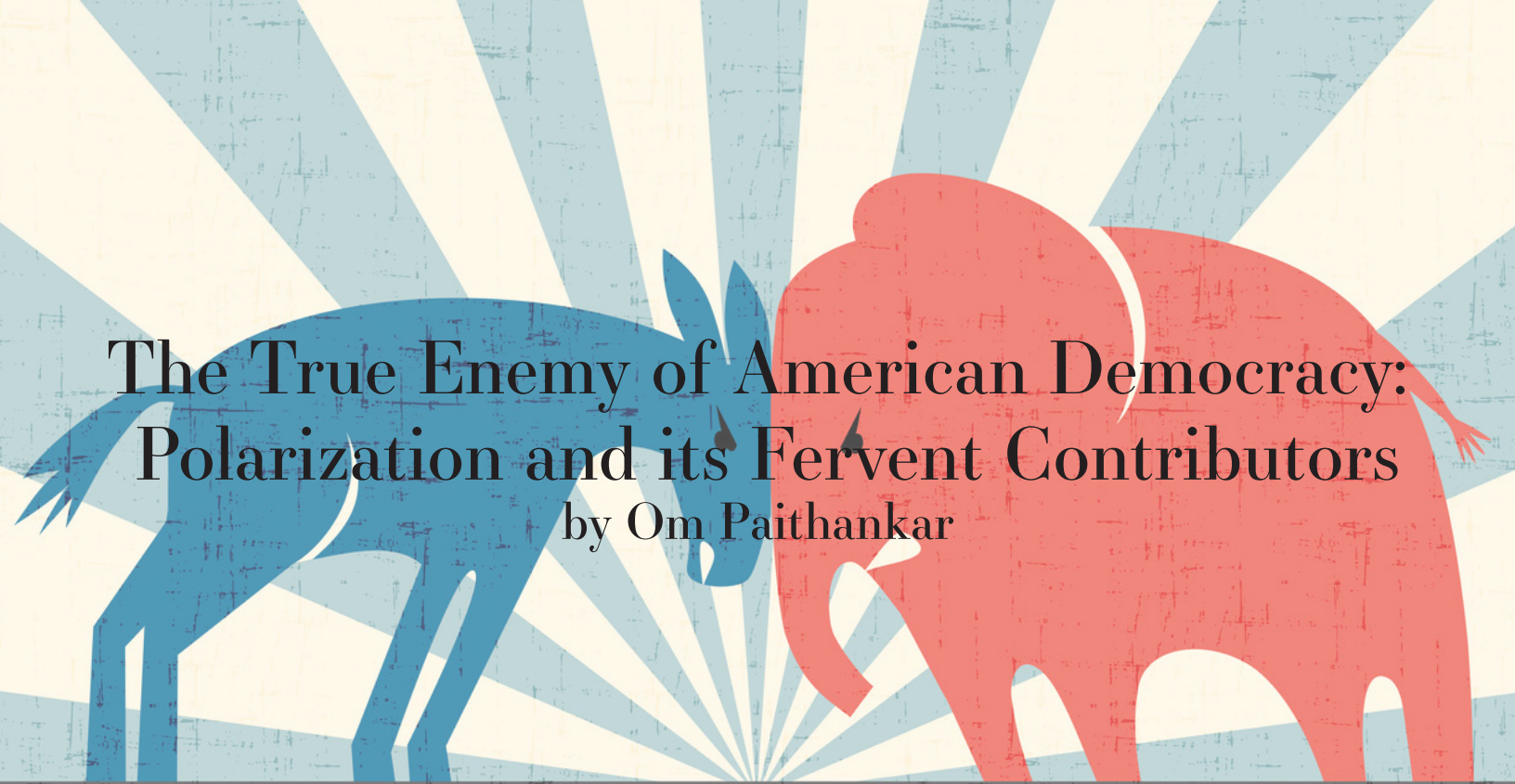
Following the attacks of the terrorist group ISIS on 9/11, there was an enormous spike in hate crimes against people who were perceived to be Muslims, including Muslim Americans and people of South Asian descent. According to figures compiled by the FBI, the number of anti-Muslim hate crime incidents jumped from 28 to 481 incidents in 2001. Four days after 9/11, mechanic Frank Silva Roque murdered Balbir Singh under the impression that he was Muslim, when in truth, Singh was an Indian immigrant who owned a Sikh American gas station. South Asian, Sikh, Muslim,

and Arab Americans were targets of numerous hate crimes, as well as employment discrimination, bullying, harassment, and racial profiling. Places of worship were assaulted and vandalized, famously, the Sikh gurdwara in Oak Creek. Especially in airplanes and airports, Middle Easterners and people of South Asian descent were, and still are, unfairly treated and viewed as terrorists. From being forced to go through security multiple times to being denied flights, there are repeated accounts of these communities being treated with racism and xenophobia at the hands of law enforcement.

As the number of Asian immigrants has grown in number throughout American history, waves of xenophobia and economic-induced anxiety have also grown to match these rates. The demonization of Asian Americans has long pervaded history and alighted centuries of hate speech and violent attacks. The genealogy of anti-Asian violence stretches as far back as the 19th century and in reviewing current events, Americans are forced to reconcile with the fact that this is not an issue of the past. This history not only gives more context to the struggles that the current Asian community combats, but also induces larger conversations about the systemic racism that oppresses all ethnic groups including Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other vulnerable communities today. Anti-racism should not just be the burden of people oppressed by those in power, but a mission for people in power as well. Being conscious of the history of hatred directed towards Asian Americans can bring critical awareness to the trends of violence, and how Americans can begin to combat them better than they have in the past.

END THE
VIOLENCE
AGAINST
ASIANS





The True Enemy of American Democracy: Polarization and its Fervent Contributors

by Om Paithankar

On January 6th, we saw the most threatening attack on American democracy since the founding of the nation. Although several causes are attributed to the attack on the Capitol, the main cause is the vast extent to which polarization has infected the United States government. When people mistakenly place the blame solely on Donald Trump, they're implying that since he is out of office these attacks are unlikely to repeat themselves. However, any individual can come to power and attempt to spread their extreme views or skewed perception of reality. This discussion, however, isn't about how Trump came to power. Individuals similar to Trump can find a way to take political office as we've seen in lawmakers such as Marjorie Taylor Green (R-GA). This discussion is about how Trump somehow managed to commandeer the entire Republican Party and in doing so, wreak havoc through the nation's most powerful political office.

Trump was able to do this because that political office isn't supposed to be and wasn't always as commanding and influential as it has become. Despite being president of the United States, Trump shouldn't have been able to have the power that he did. He was only able to because of the extent to which our country has become polarized. When the founding fathers drafted the Constitution, they laid out the three

branches of government, each with balanced power, along with checks and balances to maintain that balanced power. This system was constructed under the idea that political factions with varying ideologies would constantly be fighting for power within these branches of government, and ultimately, each branch of government would cooperate within itself and find compromise within these factions. However, we have adopted a two-party system in which voting against the majority of one's party is heavily frowned upon, and not tolerated. This means that the system of the three branches of government is rendered ineffective, as effective collaboration only takes place within parties and not within branches of government. The party with control over the most branches and within the legislative branch, houses of Congress, works only to achieve the goals of their party, and as intolerance for voting against party majorities grows, this situation only worsens. This was shown countless times during Trump's presidency. One particular time, when Senator Mitt Romney (R-UT), one of the few Republicans in the Senate who was resistant to Trump's demands of the party, voted to impeach, voting for what he believed to be right rather than for what Trump coerced his party to vote, Trump ridiculed him, calling him a "sore loser". Out of fear of being criticized by the pres-

ident, almost all other Republican lawmakers followed by slamming Romney and following the demands of their president in previous and subsequent scenarios. This is just one example of the fear of upsetting Trump that Republican lawmakers had. As time passed, following Trump's election, Republicans in Congress began to endorse and defend the unprecedentedly false and hateful statements the president made. Despite there being significant evidence of collusion between the Trump Administration and Ukraine in the administration's attempts to uncover damaging information on the Biden family, the Republican-majority Senate voted to acquit the president. As this continued to occur, the values of the GOP diminished.

Moderate voices of reason in the cabinet and in Congress, such as Speaker Paul Ryan, gave up trying to offer their help in staying true to the party's values and resigned. Later in his term, Trump nominated two Supreme Court Justices who both took office. While they weren't as prone to his coercive tactics as conservative lawmakers, this still gave Trump the upper-hand. With this, Trump had created a political atmosphere in which the Republicans had control over the executive branch, judicial branch, and the Senate, and the fear of disobedience he had instilled within his own party members in Congress made it a political atmosphere so polarized that he had nearly full control of the Senate and the House for the first half of his term.

With this, polarization worsened as both sides refused to compromise and instead embraced growing political divides. Neither party had members who were willing to take the high road and stand for what they supported rather than what the extreme of their party wanted them to support, instead finding it more politically valuable to get into a battle of egos in the form of increasingly more radical policies to make TV headlines. For two sides to grow further apart from each other, both sides must be unwilling to compromise. Instead of finding ways to compromise, the Democratic Party has turned to the other side, led by progressives who attempt to cover up their desire for political attention with their "affection" for the poor of their country. This is usually done through making statements of extreme political belief, such as claiming to be in support of canceling all student debts or offering free healthcare to all — radical ideas that let them steal the spotlight from that fanatical thing Trump tweeted a few days ago, but in reality, are completely unattainable and unsustainable. This contributes to polarization by making it seem as if a member of the party is not in

support or does not give the impression of being in support of one of these extreme views, they're not in support of the party. This forces politicians, particularly lawmakers to lean further towards the extreme of their party, and the extremes of each party are unwilling to compromise. A prime example of this is the Green New Deal, led by Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) and Senator Ed Markey (D-MA). While it shouldn't be a difficult task to find common ground between parties to fight climate change on its own, the Green New Deal demands action against not only climate change but also promotes radically liberal economic change, and lawmakers like AOC are unwilling to compromise. Evidently, Republicans and even several Democrats wouldn't want to pass such an economically liberal policy; therefore, AOC is not only failing to deliver on her empty promises to the suffering people of the United States, but she's also putting an end to any possibility of Republicans taking legislative action against climate change.

This cycle, started by the fear instilled in the GOP by Trump, continued with opposing parties trying to best each other with more extreme policy and unwillingness to compromise. Now, with a more level-headed president, tensions will hopefully subside, but this still doesn't mean we're safe from the drama of a divided polity. Above all, this has shown us that we must do what we can to prevent greater polarization: politics is a battle of policies, not a reality TV show or screaming match.

We must realize that we are at a turning point in our democracy, one at which we can choose to build barriers and enlarge the gap between these two parties or start working back to where we started to achieve a political climate in which political figures can speak out and vote for what they truly support. But the past four years that led up to the January 6th attack on the Capitol have shown that as of now, the three-branch system and distribution of powers created to protect our democracy have been crippled by polarization. Today, we have a reliable president, but if action is not taken to counteract the damage, all it takes is another Trump to be elected for our nation's democracy to find itself in danger again. We must use our voices and our vote to restore political tolerance and moderacy in the United States Government once again.



Disassembling the Blind Postulate of Moral Equivalence between Israel and Hamas

By Colin Levine

This past May, the world watched as the constant violence between Israel and Palestine spawned another costly war. The conflict followed the usual plot, with Hamas belligerently breaking the peace, aggressing several times as much as Israel, targeting and hiding behind civilians, and yet somehow receiving a fraction of the condemnation as Israel. In this instance, the condemnation went so far as to contest Western alliances and support of Israel, creating a dangerous situation in geopolitics. Nonetheless, to question the morality of aiding a longstanding ally against its terrorist neighbor requires absolute ignorance and disregard of the actual situation and maintains a terrorist dictatorship in Gaza that threatens both the Palestinian and the Israeli people.

Hamas declared two immediate reasons for launching the 150 rockets that inaugurated the conflict. Palestinian protests first began in anticipation of an impending Israeli Supreme Court decision to evict six Palestinian families from the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, in East Jerusalem. According to Israeli law, Jewish people with the deeds to property in Jerusalem from which Jordan expelled them in 1948 maintain the rights to their land and may demand that the current deedless residents pay rent. The families of Sheikh Jarrah were not paying rent to the Jews who historically lived in and possessed the deeds to their property.

Therefore, they could be lawfully evicted the same as any American tenant who refused to pay rent would be evicted. The evictions were ultimately delayed by Israel's Attorney General to ease tensions; no families were displaced by the Supreme Court, but 70,000 families would be displaced by the ensuing conflict catalyzed by Hamas.

Hamas' second grievance arose on May 7, again by their own creation. Indeed, Hamas members brought several buckets of stones into the Al-Aqsa Mosque during the final days of Ramadan. When they proceeded to hurl stones at Israeli police outside of the great holy site, IDF forces had no choice but to enter and evacuate the Mosque. As they continued to be assaulted by the Palestinians inside, they were forced to employ stun grenades to stop the violence. In bringing weapons into a place of holiness during Ramadan, Hamas endangered its citizens and committed sacrilege upon its own culture.

On May 10, Hamas demanded that Israel remove its forces from Sheikh Jarrah and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. After Israel refused to take any such action, Hamas fired over 150 rockets at Israel. Over the following 10 days, Hamas and Israel exchanged daily barrages of rocket fire. In all, Hamas deployed 4,360 missiles, with almost 1,500 heading towards highly populated Israeli cities. Some point out that the Israeli Iron Dome

Defense System intercepted all but 60 of those 1500 city-bound rockets, costing only 12 Israeli lives. However, as the New York Times concluded, “ Hamas has fired more than 3,000 rockets toward Israeli cities and towns, a clear war crime.”

In response, Israel fired 1,500 rockets at confirmed Hamas military targets, reporting 225 enemy combatants neutralized. Israel’s retaliation received international condemnation, with critics highlighting the 128 Palestinian civilians that died during the operation. The crucial question remains: who is to be blamed for the loss of life? It has been well documented that Hamas hides its rockets among schools, hospitals, and other civilian areas as shown above. The Washington Post reports Hamas moving rockets into mosques, using Shifa Hospital as its headquarters, and even storing “troves of rockets” in UN-run schools. When Hamas uses its citizens as human shields, Israel is left with no choice but to neutralize the weaponry that threatens its populace. As the IDF tweeted, “Under international law, a civilian structure used for military purposes is a legitimate military target.” Israel has still worked to minimize civilian loss of life, with Channel 4 reporting that “Prior to the attacks, residents have been warned to leave, either via phone calls by the Israel military or by the firing of warning missiles.” Adding to the casu-

alties, 680 of Hamas’ own rockets landed in the Gaza Strip, causing irreparable damage.

Across the board, the Palestinian people were placed in peril by their own government when it started a conflict it was bound to lose disastrously. One Hamas leader, Hamas Interior Minister Fathi Hamad recently told the Palestinian people, “You should attack every Jew possible in all the world and kill them.” Hamas takes no care with the safety of its own populace, rather aiming to satisfy its genocidal hatred of the Israeli people and reaffirm its autocratic grip over the Gaza Strip. Any attempt to conflate an invaded Israel’s self-defense with its invader, Hamas’ belligerency is to ignore the nature of war. When a nation is attacked with thousands of rockets, it fires back and works to neutralize the assailant. However, the American media and liberal faction continues a long history of blaming Israel for the unwavering aggression of its terrorist neighbors where no other nation would be blamed. War between Israel and Hamas will perpetually repeat itself until Israel’s allies finally commit to eliminating the constant belligerent, the war criminal in Gaza, and installing a peaceful, democratic partner into Palestinian leadership.





A Necessity, Not a Luxury, Internet Access and Biden's Universal Broadband Plan

By Simon Juknelis

In late March 2021, President Biden's office issued the fact sheet for his American Jobs Plan, a \$2 trillion infrastructure package. Part of this package is a federally-backed program of universal broadband, or guaranteed affordable internet access for every U.S. resident.¹ 44 million American households currently do not have internet access they can afford.² While many may have long considered internet access to be a luxury, it is now the case that for the U.S. to truly succeed, every citizen needs affordable access to broadband.

One of the biggest ways in which the internet has recently played a role in American society has been through the introduction of virtual learning. Before the pandemic, it was estimated that 10 to 16 million children did not have access to the internet in their homes, and over the course of the pandemic, the U.S. government only managed to get internet connection to three to four million children.³ That still leaves up to 13 million children who, throughout the entire course of this pandemic, have had no at-home access to school. This failure to provide basic and safe access to education to millions of students has put even worse strain on the school districts that have already been suffering from a diminished budget and limited access to qualified teachers. And while many may think the problem of internet access in education is confined to

the pandemic, it is actually much broader. According to the Federal Communications Commission, 70% of U.S. teachers assign homework for which internet access is needed.⁴ This creates an undue hardship commonly known as the "homework gap" for students without internet access at home. As Hanley, a policy analyst at the American Prospect, describes, "in some cases, students trying to do their homework have camped outside their school or at Taco Bell parking lots seeking adequate Wi-Fi."⁵ Furthermore, state educational authorities are requiring that schools loan computers or tablets to students, classifying them as necessary school supplies.⁶ While this is an important start, no such requirement exists for internet access, even though much of what the computer or tablet is needed for can only be done with an internet connection. Universal broadband would therefore make these loan programs vastly more effective at technologically empowering students.

Moreover, a lack of internet access can often be a barrier to career advancement and opportunity. In the U.S. today, most job opportunities are posted exclusively online, and applications can only be filled out online.⁶ This puts people without internet access at a disadvantage in getting even jobs that would seem

to have nothing to do with technology. In addition, work-from-home jobs are disproportionately held by high-income earners.⁷ This obstacle blocks people in regions with a lack of internet access from being able to climb the social ladder by applying for higher-income jobs. This effect may not have been as noticeable before the pandemic, when most jobs at all income levels were in-person, but now, with many companies having realized the benefits of teleworking, this will almost certainly have a significant impact. Furthermore, areas lacking access to the internet are often heavily rural regions, reliant on declining industries such as coal or steel.⁸ Young people in particular are leaving these communities at an alarming rate due to this lack of opportunity, further contributing to the potential economic failure of these areas.⁹ The lack of a very prosperous future in these areas is exactly something that could be rectified by the implementation of universal broadband, as it allows people to access lucrative job opportunities regardless of where they live.

Relatively speaking, universal broadband is not a new idea. Switzerland implemented it in 2008, Finland and Spain followed suit in 2010 and 2011 respectively, and Canada committed \$750 million to achieving universal broadband in 2016.¹⁰ Canada's plan in particular guarantees internet speeds that would be considered above-average in the U.S., and Finland guarantees speeds twice the U.S. average.¹¹ By contrast, the only significant action taken thus far by the U.S. government with regards to universal broadband was in late December 2020, brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the initiative, known as the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) Program, the FCC offered a

\$50 monthly subsidy to most households considered in or near poverty.¹² In a country where internet can cost up to \$350 a month, this is simply not enough, and the fact that this subsidy gives practically no consideration to the actual cost of internet, which varies wildly by location, makes it seem entirely like an afterthought.¹³ John Bailey, an advisor to the Walton Family Foundation, described the effort as “a collective failure of Congress and the [Trump] administration.”¹⁴ In contrast to the measly \$3 billion budgeted for the EBB, the White House has stated that Biden's plan will call for the investment of more than \$100 billion.¹⁵ This money will be used to build internet infrastructure to reach areas getting access for the first time as well as to reinforce access to poorly-connected areas. Afterwards, the companies operating the newly-built infrastructure will be required to offer customers affordable broadband packages.¹⁶ As a result, this will be a much more comprehensive and effective solution than the EBB program, which simply gave a flat subsidy instead of attacking the root of the issue, and will put America's broadband access programs on par with those implemented internationally.

In conclusion, access to the internet is vital in many ways to participating in today's society. Biden's new infrastructure plan is a chance to achieve true digital opportunity for every American. The plan's policy of universal broadband will empower the economic success of residents of areas that have thus far been largely isolated from the internet, therefore investing in America's future through enabling education to take full advantage of technology with every student being able to benefit.





Where Democracy Fails: India, the U.S., and Public Health

By Helen Cui

VACCINE
OUT OF
STOCK

In late January 2021, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared that India had “saved humanity from a big disaster by containing coronavirus effectively.”¹ Those of us in the U.S. at the time might scoff at such an assertion, considering the rather recent third wave the country had seen, but many could argue P.M. Modi had made an accurate conclusion. By that point, India’s daily count of coronavirus infections had fallen to around 12,000 in a country of 1.4 billion people.²

With that, the country began resuming normal activities. For example the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Modi’s political party, held campaign rallies before elections in late March and allowed a large scale Hindu festival in Northern India that drew millions of devotees.³ Thoughts of a second wave were thrown out the window as Indians found their way into their new normal. At the very least, that was what the BJP hoped for, as a successful response to COVID-19 and a return to normal life would be a political holy grail in the four states and territories where the BJP needed to remain in power.⁴

Sadly, a second wave began just as election season started and it devastated the country. From a purely numbers point of view, what India has seen is unparalleled. For example, cases peaked at 414,000 per day and at one point, 1 in 2 people in Kolkata tested positive for COVID-19.⁵ As of June 2021, it is well known that this rapid transmission is a result of a particularly dangerous variant. But, figures like those are not possible without some shortfall in the system: how is it possible for new daily infections to reach almost half a million people? How is it possible to have reached such a place when in February 2021 there was a point where a mere 9,000 cases were reported?⁶

When restrictions were lifted it was inevitable that

transmission would begin again and become further exacerbated by this new variant. Some may point to the obvious: India only has 4% of their population vaccinated. Moreover, vaccine rollout has been dismal. Despite India being one of the world’s biggest manufacturers of doses, specifically AstraZeneca, this strikingly low percent of vaccinated people persists. A host of factors have created this situation. For example, states fought over vaccines, doses were then unequally priced across the country, and of course vaccines were hoarded by the U.S. and other Western countries.⁷ Although Modi’s government has stepped in to have the federal government take charge in procuring vaccines, making vaccines free, and continuing social programs that aid in COVID-19 relief, these changes come too late.⁸

Had the threat of the second wave been taken more seriously, it is unlikely that India would have seen the same devastation. In fact, Dr. Subhash Salunke argues that what occurred was not only negligence but purposeful ignorance despite warnings as early as the beginning of March. The former World Health Organization (WHO) official said that he had alerted V.K. Paul, Modi’s main coronavirus advisor, and Sujeet Kumar Singh, the head of the National Centre for Disease Control and they “did not take heed.”⁹ While the credibility of Salunke’s warning is hard to confirm, a forum of scientific advisors had warned the government at around the same time. The Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genetics Consortium (INSACOG), set up by the government to report on genetic variants of coronavirus, voiced that the continued lack of restriction at campaign rallies, festival celebrations, and other large gatherings would result in an increase in spread, as this variant was of “high concern.”¹⁰ Considering

the ample precautions experts were urging for by early March 2021, the Indian government should have made the appropriate steps to stop the variant before it had taken human lives.

Policy in India failed the people, but not too long ago the U.S. experienced the same. Only condemning what seems to be a clear cut government shortfall in India ignores disturbing parallels to the mistakes in the U.S. during 2020.

Firstly, it was an election year. The US and India may have vastly different political systems, but at the core of both is a democracy that relies on politicians campaigning for votes on a cycle of a couple years. Combatting public health crises are a matter of planning beforehand; it is work where seeds are planted in hopes of one day blossoming without one's oversight. These steps require funding political entities do not want to give and if done well it does not yield any accolades: prevention means that the peace is preserved. When the Trump administration worked under the frenzied eyes of a nation struck with Coronavirus, it turned to a larder of medical supplies called the Strategic National Stockpile, only to find a deficit of 100 million respirators and masks that had never been replaced from the 2009 flu epidemic.¹¹ Additionally, many may recall the harrowing stories frontline workers shared about the lack of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) in American hospitals as exports from China and India fell through. Kay Kennel, a doctor in Texas, shared stories of emergency rooms with waiting lists of up to 50 kids as Coronavirus relief was prioritized, "We have kids living with grapefruit-sized abscesses for over three months who can't eat or drink and there's nothing we can do for them because we can't get P.P.E."¹² The U.S. simply did not spend money on building infrastructure that could prepare the nation for a sudden need for self sufficiency.

Similarly, India's oxygen supply absolutely collapsed during its second wave. This compounds on shortages of hospital beds, antiviral drugs, Coronavirus test kits, and more as India invests a mere bit more than 1% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on public health. This is a dismal amount compared to other nations; for instance, Brazil invested more than 9% of its GDP.¹³ The world looked on as India's hospitals pleaded for liquid oxygen.¹⁴ Fragile systems crack under intense pressure, but how does this occur? At its core, it is an incompatibility of democracy with long term planning. In order to get reelected, legislation that is increasingly difficult to pass through bodies like Congress, needs

to yield tangible results in the timeframe before representatives have to fight to stay in power again. From a cursory view, such an issue could be resolved with shorter terms that are necessary so that those in power can be held accountable by the people.

"The world looked on as India's hospitals pleaded for liquid oxygen."

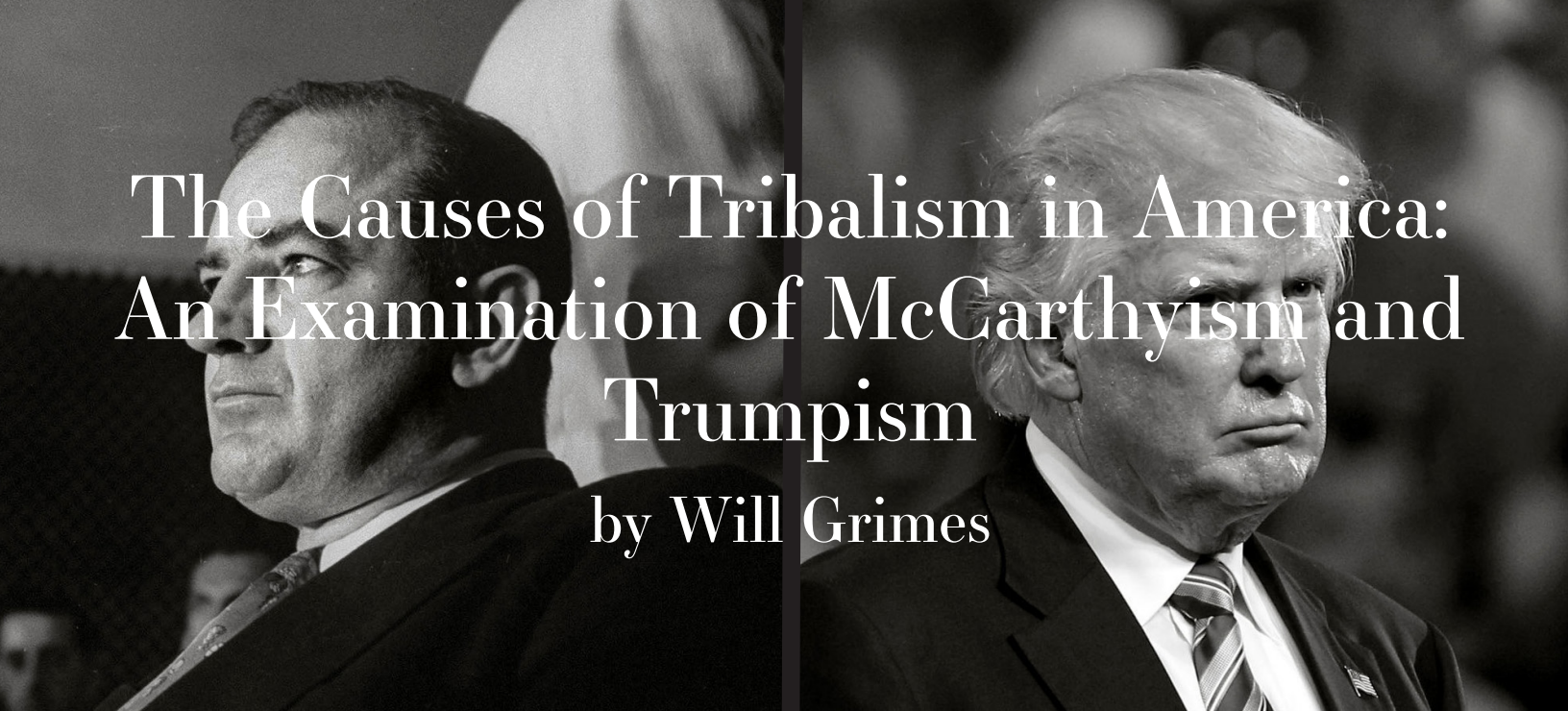
Political campaigning also took priority in both the U.S. and India over the health crisis the countries faced. Most recognizably, outdoor rallies garnered the majority of public attention for their blatant disregard for social distancing protocol and warnings against large gatherings. In the U.S., a Stanford researcher cited Trump campaign rallies as the spreader event for more than 30,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19.¹⁵ In India, the Madras High Court slammed the country's Election Commission for not suspending political rallies. Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee called the commission "singularly responsible" for the surge in cases.¹⁶ Despite it being somewhat hyperbolic to make such a conclusion, the outward display of disregard for safe Covid protocol by the political parties is telling. Clearly, getting reelected remained the priority. Dr. Salunke commented on this seeming disinterest from politicians, "What happened in Maharashtra [where the variant first emerged] is a natural phenomenon. And it should have been addressed on a war footing, as an absolute emergency," he said. "It was ignored and the entire focus was on the elections."

These issues are inherent to the way a modern democracy functions. The merits and demerits of democracy have been debated for time immemorial; public health is merely another on the list of grievances people have against democracy. Here is where many may point to the words of Winston Churchill, "Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others."¹⁷ But viewing it as a necessary evil of an intrinsically positive way of governance overlooks the human cost of a public health crisis. Surges in India had reached such a point that Delhi parks and parking lots served as funeral pyres while cremation facilities were overloaded. Ultimately, the citizens suffer the consequences of faulty government. Nowhere is this more true than in public health.¹⁸

A blue corrugated metal house with a red gable roof is positioned in the foreground. The house has three windows with white frames. Behind it, a modern glass skyscraper with many windows is visible. The word "Essays" is written in white serif font across the red gable of the house.

Essays





The Causes of Tribalism in America: An Examination of McCarthyism and Trumpism

by Will Grimes

Despite the long tradition of proclaiming national unity, tribalism is a persistent theme in American history. Several times in the past when Americans have felt threatened by global influences, their fear has turned into the demonization of internal enemies and suspicion of shadowy forces that some groups believe are undermining the country. This paper will explore two examples in which tribalism disrupted American politics: McCarthyism and Trumpism. These episodes are not aberrations in American history. As McCarthy himself said, “McCarthyism is Americanism with its sleeves rolled up.”¹ In the cases of both McCarthyism and Trumpism, the resentment that is created by a deep sense of threat or precariousness is directed at “others,” leading to tribalism and villainization of opponents in the United States.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines tribalism as “loyalty to a particular tribe or group of which one is a member.”² It is characterized by a narrow definition of an in-group, and a hatred and fear of an out-group. McCarthyism fits this description because it defined the in-group as the people who truly loved America, and it vilified the alleged Communists that McCarthy claimed were infiltrating the government and society. Trumpism also fits this description because the in-group are the people who support him, while the out-groups are described as “enemies” and people who don’t love America.

With the emergence of the Cold War in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the social and political environment in America allowed Joseph McCarthy to gain power and influence by raising fears of secret Com-

munist cells and making shocking accusations against individuals. The fears of a Communist threat reflected international realities. After the end of World War Two in 1945, Communism was starting to spread around the globe. By 1948, every single Eastern European country had a fully Communist government. A 1946 memorandum published by Secretary of State Dean Acheson and the Joint Chiefs of Staff claimed that,

“If the Soviet Union succeeds in its objective of obtaining control over Turkey, it will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to prevent the Soviet Union from obtaining control over Greece and over the whole Near and Middle East ... [including] the territory lying between the Mediterranean and India. When the Soviet Union has once obtained full mastery of this territory it will be in a much stronger position to obtain its objectives in India and China.”³

America’s position as the greatest global power felt deeply precarious, and that instability was only heightened by the victory of the Chinese Communist Party in Mainland China in 1949, the division of the Korean Peninsula, and Communist involvement in decolonization movements around the world.⁴ The objective threat posed by global Communism to the US and its allies was rapidly growing. America needed something to rally around, and something to rally against.

The anxieties created by global events were compounded in America and other non-Communist countries by credible threats of Communist cells. Russian

spy networks had advanced the Soviet nuclear program through the espionage of Klaus Fuchs, and the widely publicized trial of Alger Hiss in 1949 made it clear that even privileged elites could be involved in supplying information to the Soviets.⁵ Spies and Communists appeared to be everywhere in America, hidden among unsuspecting citizens. As Ronald Reagan (then president of the Screen Actors Guild) testified to the House Un-American Affairs Committee in 1947 about Communists in his union, “Sir, I detest, I abhor their philosophy, but I detest more than that their tactics, which are those of the fifth column, and are dishonest.”⁶ Already in 1947, President Truman had issued Executive Order 9835, which mandated “loyalty oaths” for federal employees, and bodies like the FBI and the House Un-American Affairs Committee were actively investigating suspected Communists in government, entertainment, and universities.⁷ Fear and suspicion were growing rapidly; moreover, they were amplified by media coverage, including through the new medium of television.

Senator Joseph McCarthy took advantage of the fear and feelings of precariousness in the United States to gain power for himself, stepping into the debate over “who lost China” that was raging in America around the beginning of 1950. China had declared itself as a Communist nation just a few months previously, and many people were desperately searching for someone to blame. In his famous speech from February, 1950, Senator McCarthy blamed Secretary Acheson and the State Department for allowing the Communists to take China, claiming, “I have here in my hand a list of 205 [State Department employees] that were known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist Party and who nevertheless are still working and shaping the policy of the State Department.”⁸ While throughout his four-year-long anti-Communist witch-hunt, he never produced credible evidence of even a single Communist in the State Department. His accusations gave him enormous popular and political sway in America, as most people were unwilling to take the risk of being labeled a Communist or a subversive. He did not lose the support of the public until the televised Army-McCarthy Hearings, because Americans finally recognized the bullying tactics that McCarthy used.⁹ Equally importantly, the Army-McCarthy hearings showed the country that McCarthy’s accusations lacked any evidence—he had only been able to build his power through intimidation and the threat that opponents would be labeled as Communists. While

McCarthy died in disgrace in 1957, his example has come to be seen as a cautionary tale for America.

Joseph McCarthy was able to rise to power because of his ability to identify a group of “villains” and make it impossible to defend themselves. Growing fear over China and the USSR made it easy to scapegoat the alleged Communists in America’s midst, especially those in the State Department, whom many in America believed to have mishandled or even aided the global spread of Communism. Anyone who tried to defend an accused Communist was immediately labeled a Communist, and any attempt to defend oneself could be further proof of one’s Communist affiliation. McCarthy and the House Un-American Affairs Committee, or the HUAC, also pressured accused Communists to name other Communists publicly.¹⁰ By identifying an enemy (the “Communists” working in government and the arts), McCarthy was able to take advantage of the sense of precariousness that many Americans felt due to the external threats of the Cold War. This allowed his political ambitions to fuel hatred and tribalism throughout America.

Like McCarthy-era anti-Communism, Trumpism was also caused by feelings of precarity about America’s standing in global politics, economic dislocation, and cultural and demographic shifts. Since the end of the 1970s, members of the working class in America had been economically left behind. Reagan-era policies weakened unions that had protected the interests of blue collar workers, social safety net programs were eroded under Presidents Reagan and Clinton, and massive tax cuts under Reagan and George W. Bush contributed to a growing divide in income and wealth. According to John Komlos, a former professor at the University of Munich:

“the sources of the [economic] dislocation were the development of a dual economy characterized at one end by low and stagnating wages, increasing debt, downward social mobility, declining relative incomes, and the hopelessness accompanying them while at the other end of the income distribution the economy was simply booming.”¹¹

Blue-collar workers became disillusioned with career politicians, whom they believed had repeatedly let them down in the past. As Komlos puts it, the economic policy of the previous administrations “culminated in the revolt of the masses in favor of an incompetent

strongman by overthrowing the establishment.”¹² Trump also encouraged fear of American decline by making false or exaggerated claims about trade. For example, Trump claimed that because of the 1993 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), America had lost a third of its manufacturing jobs.¹³ Similarly, politicians including Trump blamed China and Japan as unfair traders that were stealing American jobs, and complained that “globalist” politicians were not protecting America.¹⁴ Claims like these encouraged fear that other countries were taking advantage of America, aided by elites who did not care about American workers.

Polarization and tribalism were also caused by other social and demographic trends, including ones that fit Trump’s overarching theme of the threat of “globalism.” Trump and other populists blamed immigrants for the perilous economic situation in which many Americans, especially rural whites, found themselves.¹⁵ Culture wars over gender, sexuality, and marriage also contributed to a sense among these groups that their country was being “taken away from them.”¹⁶ These forces were becoming evident even well before Trump’s candidacy—for example in the Tea Party movement and in political talk radio, both of which attacked moderates and politicians who were willing to compromise. According to the Pew Research Center, the overall share of people in America who consistently expressed liberal or conservative views more than doubled from 1994 to 2014. The ideologies of both political parties have less overlap than ever before, as “92% of Republicans are to the right of the median Democrat, and 94% of Democrats are to the left of the median Republican.”¹⁷ The Pew report goes on to say that 36% of Republicans in 2014 saw the Democratic Party as a “threat to the nation’s well-being.”¹⁸ With partisan animosity doubling between 1994 and 2014, the political center had dissolved, leaving the country fractured by partisanship. Trump took advantage of this highly socially, economically, and politically unstable situation and leveraged it into election as president, leadership of a political movement, and a cult of personality.

With mutual suspicion high, the situation was ripe for a demagogue who could vilify particular groups as “un-American” or “enemies of the state.” What made Trumpism different from many previous political leaders, but similar to McCarthy, was his use of tactics like labeling opponents as enemies, his willingness to support wild conspiracy theories when he thought they might be useful, his disregard for facts, and his open

embrace of tribalism. The culmination of these tactics was the January 6, 2021 insurrection at the US Capitol.

Trump’s repeated claims of voter fraud that reached back to 2016 contributed to his followers’ distrust in democracy, and ultimately the 2021 Capitol Insurrection. In 2016, he tweeted that there was “large-scale voter fraud happening on and before election day.”¹⁹ According to NBC News, in a speech in Pennsylvania, Trump claimed that “the ‘only way’ he could lose the state is ‘if cheating goes on.’”²⁰ Since early in his political career, Trump laid out claims of fraud that were entirely unsupported by facts, so by the time that the 2020 election was starting to get contentious, he was already making similar claims. With the coronavirus pandemic sweeping the nation, the number of mail-in ballots increased greatly. Trump used this fact, along with claiming an early victory before all the votes were counted, to further stir up the narrative of a fraudulent election rigged against him.²¹ Trump’s legal team filed more than 63 lawsuits regarding the legitimacy of the election, yet every single one was shot down.²² Trump’s support of conspiracy theories and paramilitary organizations like the Proud Boys, paired with the claims of a stolen election, made his followers believe they had go to Washington to try to stop certification of the electoral vote. On January 6, Trump repeated those claims at a rally, saying among other things, “All of us here today do not want to see our election victory stolen by emboldened radical-left Democrats... And stolen by the fake news media.”²³ The result was the Capitol Insurrection, one of the greatest assaults on the institutions of American democracy ever. After that, Trump experienced a fall from grace similar to that of McCarthy. At least for now, much of his party has abandoned him, and he has lost the support of many of his followers. Trump’s story serves as yet another parable for the American people, about trusting the wrong leader for the wrong reasons.

Political tribalism has appeared repeatedly during periods of great strife and instability in America, and each time it has threatened the integrity of American democracy. Demagogues like McCarthy and Trump have shown the ability to take people’s sense of uncertainty and fear of global forces and turn them inwards to identify and attack their political enemies. While these tactics have benefited the demagogues at least temporarily, they destabilize the country and weaken democracy. That is why it is essential to learn from these episodes and reject the politics of tribalism.

Low-Income Housing in the U.S: A Publicly Private Affair

By Max Rudikoff



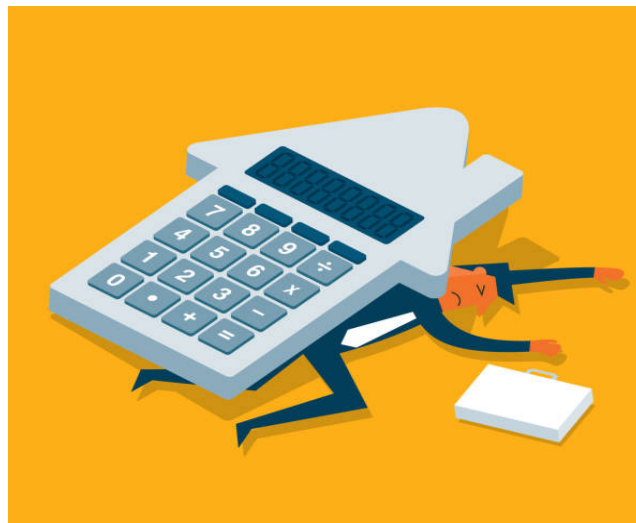
Introduction

Making a home is a universal human activity, whether “we dwell in caves or in condominiums.”ⁱ Despite news headlines about the current housing crisis, for the poor, working class people and minorities, the crisis of insufficient housing has rather been the norm throughout history. Moreover, “housing is always more than just housing”ⁱⁱ. Without it, “participation in most of social, political, and economic life is impossible.”ⁱⁱⁱ Housing therefore becomes a question of societal power, citizenship, and democracy. Friedrich Engels highlighted the political-economic character of housing in *The Housing Question*, 1871, describing housing struggles as stemming from class struggles, which explains why housing problems cannot be addressed only through isolated housing solutions.^{iv}

Housing within societies directly links to political and economic ideology and views on the roles of the welfare state and capital markets, and to which degree governments let markets treat housing as commodities, as opposed to provision of homes. Housing is widely viewed as one of the four main pillars of the welfare state, along with education, health care, and social security.^v Therefore, housing was established as a social right in more socialist countries.^{vi} Several European countries serve as good examples. The abstract ideal of housing for all is common; it has long been promoted by the United Nations and other key international organizations, and 69 countries include state-responsibility in providing adequate housing for

their citizens in their constitutions. The right to housing was included in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and several other major treaties.^{vii}

In the US, the government with bipartisan support, set a national housing goal through the Housing Act of 1949, and called for “a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family”^{viii}. This basic principle has been reaffirmed by Congress on many occasions since.^{ix} However, the promise stands in direct conflict with America’s long history of both racial discrimination and deep-rooted, conservative beliefs in capitalism. The governmental approaches and policies to date have failed to provide an adequate system of affordable housing for all citizens due to the American belief in the limited role of the public sector.



Background

At the turn of the twentieth century, despite scattered moves toward public housing by philanthropists, the government had yet to express the need for subsidized housing.^x Industrialization brought with it rapid urbanization, creating mass-demand for, and a shortage of, housing in metropolitan areas. New urban structures developed nationwide, with socioeconomic segregation and housing hierarchies still visible today. Expensive neighborhoods developed by the wealthy to be separated from the poor, while immigrants and workers settled in slum tenements. High housing demands and limited regulations benefitted landlords and developers who could charge high rents while ignoring housing quality, overcrowding and safety.

Tenements grew common as speculative builders, controlling the market, made profits by replacing houses with apartment buildings with as many rentable units as possible. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, tenements were the “most common type of residence in New York City.”^{xi} Conservative laissez-faire ideology dominated, and the belief amongst the elite was that the housing question should be solved privately and by philanthropists.^{xii} Conservatism drowned the warnings from critics and reformers declaring that the speculative profit-motive generated slums.^{xiii} Despite some quality housing developments for the working and middle-class through for-profits philanthropists, nonprofits and unions, there was still unaddressed soaring housing shortages and urban slum areas nationwide.

The Great Depression provided the momentum and political window for subsidized housing. The reasons were two-fold; firstly, a stagnant economy and mass-unemployment called for action. The “normal opposition to ‘socialized’ housing made its appearance in the debate.”^{xiv} Public housing was characterized as ‘the cutting edge of the Communist front.’^{xv} However, the business support from both manufacturers and workers was stronger.^{xvi} The second reason was “not so much as a matter of radical ideology, but out of a demand for positive programs to eliminate the ‘undeserved’ privations of the unaccustomed poor.”^{xvii} The newly poor to emerge were former middle-class people who had been well off in the 20s. Keeping their articulateness, perspective, and habits of voting, the millions of newly poor therefore constituted new candidates for public housing. Rather than belonging to the ‘problem poor’ class, they were members of

the ‘submerged middle class.’^{xviii} Nationally, Roosevelt articulated in his second inaugural address; “I see one-third of the nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished”.^{xix} However, actual “government-sponsored housing construction only began when public housing overlapped with other goals of the state.”^{xx} The government was pressured to provide jobs and affordable housing.^{xxi} Unrest among unemployed workers also needed to be stemmed.^{xxii} Thus, subsidized housing was not a benevolent response to acute needs of the lowest income classes.

Another mission was to actively eradicate the unsanitary and dangerous slums. The Wagner-Steagall Housing Act of 1937 established the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to channel federal funds through new-created housing authorities at the local level, such as the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA). Policies were designed to “prevent large numbers of affordable housing units flooding the market.”^{xxiii} To not compete with privately developed housing, the law required that for each public housing unit built, one slum unit would be demolished.^{xxiv} This requirement remained in place through the 1980s.^{xxv} “The result was a public housing program carefully crafted to support, rather than compete with, private housing.”^{xxvi} Thus, the governmental policies displaced large numbers of people while also failing to address the housing needs for the most vulnerable segment of the population.



Analysis

U.S. governmental approaches and policies have neither been long-term in creating an adequate and sufficient system of decent homes in suitable living environments, nor has the focus been on all citizens.

In the decades following the Depression, the nation-wide residential segregation was institutionalized in state-assisted urban housing systems with ghettos surrounded by white suburbs. Indeed, the WWII magnified the housing shortage as the government focused on wartime defense-industry workers housing, while also becoming a major actor in furthering racial segregation. During the inpouring of workers to war-industry towns such as Richmond, CA, “housing could not be put up quickly enough.”^{xxxvii} The federal government began producing public housing. “It was officially and explicitly segregated.”^{xxxviii} Workers-housing for African Americans, who had fewer private options, were temporary, poorly constructed and built along railroad tracks, while housing for whites was built closer to white residential areas. The “federal government’s decision to segregate public housing established living patterns that persist to this day.”^{xxxix} In fact, the government often created segregation where it was not before.

xxx

A system of direct and indirect government-sponsored practices hindered whites and African Americans from living amongst each other.^{xxxi} A suburban housing boom for the white middle-class began, financed by public money such as FHA-guaranteed mortgages, tax breaks, and aid to private enterprise. Construction would be kept high. Importantly, “it was never ‘charity.’”^{xxxii} Large movements of white middle-class to outer suburbia began. At the same time, public housing was purposefully used by governments “to herd African Americans into urban ghettos.”^{xxxiii} “Public housing was now boxed in, in the core of the cities. Outlying sites, on the fringes of metropolitan areas, where land was raw and cheap, were no longer available.”^{xxxiv} Similar to other towns, as many whites from Richmond left for the suburbs, African Americans moved into the public housing vacancies, which became mainly African American.^{xxxv}

Real estate steering by agents was another widespread practice, where whites were only shown white neighborhoods, and African Americans shown ‘theirs’. White neighborhoods established racial covenants, bylaws that barred homeowners from selling to African Americans. Moreover, “banks discriminated with ‘redlining’, refusing to give mortgages to African Americans or extracting unusually severe terms from them with subprime loans.”^{xxxvi} Even landlords wanting to upgrade housing in African American dominated areas were refused bank loans. Despite several of

these actors and policies being private, they fell under government regulations and supervision; hence, the state supported race segregation by their non-action to change these practices.^{xxxvii}

Several financial implications of the post-war federal and local policies still affect African Americans’ residential and upward mobility to this day.^{xxxviii} Not only were African American veterans excluded from government-guaranteed mortgages for suburban purchases by the FHA and the VA, thereby also preventing them from home equity appreciation wealth gain, nor would they insure bank loans to African Americans for housing. Whites wanting to move into a neighborhood where African Americans were present were also denied insured bank loans.^{xxxix} In addition, minimum wages established through the New Deal excluded African American dominated industries.^{xl} Even as late as the early twenty-first century have banks been allowed to practice ‘reverse redlining’ with excessive marketing of subprime mortgages to African Americans neighborhoods.^{xli} In sum, African Americans were financially fenced-in in areas of less opportunity.

Federal slum clearance and urban redevelopment took off nationally through the Housing Act of 1949, which in the process “destroyed more housing than it produced.”^{xlii} Public funds were used for the benefit of the middle and upper classes through displacing the poor. Real estate and business communities also benefitted from the valuable and well-located land.^{xliii} In 1954, federal revisions introduced ‘urban renewal’ to include displacement approaches.^{xliv} However, federal funds for urban were used to clear slums by routing highways through African American and Puerto Rican neighborhoods nationwide to facilitate commutes between jobs and white suburbs.^{xlvi} Rather than good-willed intentions for the poor, it can be argued that the major reason for slum clearing “were the elites’ twin fear of disease and uprising among the city’s working class.”^{xlvii} Political leaders feared the threat of economic and social instability. Stuyvesant Town was a mega-complex of rental apartments developed in Manhattan, NY, that served almost as a middle-class island in the middle of Manhattan. The city purchased parts of the land and sold it at cost to the developer rather than keeping it in the public domain. Again, displacement of thousands of people followed.

Slum clearance dispersed thousands of families with limited relocation assistance. “In their haste to see old housing replaced with new, important questions about

the value of material betterment were ignored.”^{xlvi} Despite the terrible conditions, rents were lower and the large proportion of the lower classes could actually afford housing in areas where opportunities were. Such under consumption of housing facilitated upward mobility through savings or college education.^{xlvi} The rapid construction in NYC of sprawling complexes became a slum-clearing machine that reshaped the city’s urban landscape.”^{xlvi} “But NYCHA developments were not poorhouses: unlike other cities, New York effectively barred lower-income residents from public housing.”^{li} In-depth screenings of residents excluded those on welfare, single mothers, those who lacked furniture, or negative moral factors such as irregular job history and alcoholism.^{li} In sum, governmental policies served the ‘deserving poor’ at the expense of the lower classes or ‘problem poor’ - policies driven by the most influential voters.

In Chicago, as African Americans left the South, their population grew exponentially between 1910-1950. Most would live in the ‘Black Belt’ on the South Side. Other groups “made great efforts to live far from the area’s polluted worksites and ramshackle homes. Thus, African Americans were able to move in.”^{lii} While European immigrants could freely test the private market, African Americans were “forced to contend with a wholly separate real estate system.”^{liii} At one point, 85% of Chicago was covered under racial restrictions. Despite the US Supreme Court outlawing racial covenants in 1948, enforcement was weak, and “neighborhoods found less subtle means, such as assaults and firebombing, at least as effective.”^{liv}

The CHA public housing developments proved to be the only hope for many families desperate to move out of tenement basements. Two enormous CHA tower-block developments were the 3,600-unit

Cabrini-Green complex and the Robert Taylor Homes. As in most Chicago public housing, a majority of the tenants were poor African Americans. Well-intended attempts or not to create better housing for the lower income classes in the slum clearing, the result was often that of second ghettos due to poor urban planning and insufficient consideration to class and race integration. Disrepair and poor planning added to these developments standing out as prime examples of the next generation of slum clearing that took place.

State and local subsidy programs were introduced, as well as “long-term, below-market interest-loans for privately developed housing intended for working- and middle-class households.”^{lv} Between the 1930s and 1960s, housing leaders “sought federal subsidies, and pioneered municipal housing programs.”^{lvi} The state of New York introduced the Mitchell-Lama program in 1955 to help developers compete with the growing suburbs.^{lvii} Subsidy-packages of low-interest mortgages were incorporated along with long-term real estate tax abatements covering project values of between 40 and 100 percent. To ease the skepticism of developers, cooperatives and landlords were allowed to exit the system after thirty-five years. In 1959, the exit date was reduced to fifteen years by the Rockefeller administration. “These more generous terms removed the final impediment to wide-spread use.”^{lviii} As such, Mitchell-Lama “was the most ambitious program of its kind in U.S. history.”^{lix} New York City developed the largest system of subsidized private below-market housing for the middle-income segment outside Europe in the 1950s.^{lx} As a result, the FHA developed its own similar programs in the 60s.^{lxi} These state-subsidized projects were short-term solutions placed in the hands of private actors, thereby giving up public sector control and without securing future housing affordability.



In Queens, NY, the LeFrak City mega-complex of 4,561 rental apartments was privately built without state or city tax abatements.^{lxiii} Completed in 1971, it was the country's largest privately financed rental complex. Initially, it housed veterans and provided good and relatively low rents accommodation for thousands of middle-class families.^{lxiii} The Fair Housing Act of 1968 called for the prohibition of housing discrimination and a lawsuit by the Nixon Administration claimed that LeFrak discriminated against African Americans. The mid-1970s settlement included the Justice Department dropping the case if LeFrak "promised to prohibit discrimination in apartment rentals and to give a month's free rent to 50 black families to assist them in moving into predominantly white buildings."^{lxiv} A typical phenomenon occurred; as soon as a few African-Americans moved in, white flight followed. Rapidly, LeFrak City became 95% African-American. Consistent with trends around the country, the complex changed drastically, crime and safety issues intensified, and drugs flooded the complex by the late 1970s.^{lxv}

By the mid-1960s, large towers-in-the-park public housing projects, had grown in popularity without appropriate consideration given to class and race integration. Segregated projects included Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis and Rosen Homes in Philadelphia.^{lxvi} "Every state and major city had some public housing units in planning or operation, and more than 2,100,000 people lived in low-rent public housing."^{lxvii} By now 500,000 lived in subsidized units in New York, which had the most public housing in the country. The majority of these developments stemmed from the federal program, but also state and city money.^{lxviii} Consequently, by the 1970s, government-created housing consisted of racially and economically segregated

metropolitan structures with uncountable creations of poverty concentrations in areas of limited opportunity with few possibilities to exit.

Traditionally, housing-structures power relations in society by either maintaining or challenging social order.^{lxix} The social unrest that plagued public housing communities over the next decades should not have been unexpected. The result was yet another nationwide wave of slum clearing via deconstructing the large-scale high-rise public housing complexes. One of the more prominent cases was the CHA's 1999 'Plan for Transformation' that included razing both Cabrini-Green and the Robert Taylor Homes to make way for new mixed-income communities with only a small portion of the to be created units to be for public housing tenants.^{lxx} The displacement of thousands of residents was handled by the government via the voucher system that let the displaced residents either move to alternative public housing or try their luck in the private market through vouchers. Unfortunately, neither method enabled tenants to significantly move upward to better situations, but rather sideways to similar situations of poverty.^{lxxi}

Once again, after federal and local government-withdrawal from the direct creation of public housing, trust has been placed in public-private partnerships to solve the country's housing crisis. Vouchers are the absolutely largest federal rental assistance program, and used in the private rental market as a way for the government to assist lower income citizens. The Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8) is the largest federal housing subsidy for low income





households.^{lxxii} However, circa 67 percent of poor renting families in the U.S. do not receive vouchers or any form of housing assistance.^{lxxiii} Public housing agencies have a legal obligation to tackle segregation and discrimination in housing. According to the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing ruling by HUD, voucher programs are to be administered in a non-discriminatory way, and are “to take the type of actions that undo historic patterns of segregation and other types of discrimination and afford access to opportunity that has long been denied.”^{lxxiv} In theory, vouchers could provide low-income citizens residential choices and possibilities to move to neighborhoods of higher opportunities and lower poverty. However, “voucher-affordable rental units are relatively scarce in low-poverty neighborhoods or disproportionately concentrated in high-poverty neighborhoods.”^{lxxv} Research shows that, relative to voucher-affordable units, families with children using vouchers are disproportionately concentrated in neighborhoods in high-poverty, low-opportunity neighborhoods that have larger percentages of people of color.^{lxxvi} For the voucher programs to be able to succeed, a significantly larger portion of the qualifying population would need rent assistance, along with a significantly larger stock of affordable units in relevant neighborhoods.

As an attempt for governments to provide affordable housing to more low- and middle income citizens, developers are encouraged, and sometimes required, to include affordable housing in their plans. Meanwhile, both states and cities attempt to control the real estate market through tax credits, beneficial loans, and zoning, as well as maintaining existing stocks of public housing. This led to another major public-private initiative in the 1980s via the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC). LIHTC are tax credits allocated by the government to developers, who then sell to investors to finance their projects. After 15 years, rents are able to increase to market-levels.^{lxxvii} Using tax credits as a way to fund low-income housing is more preferable for governments than via direct construction or creation as the costs do not appear in government budgets. However, it gives control over a critical social welfare function to the private sector.^{lxxviii}

In addition to federal programs, many states and cities have versions of tax abatement and low interest financing programs. In New York, the 421-a program allows a developer to save real estate taxes, while the 80/20 program provides them with extremely inexpen-

sive bank financing.^{lxxix} In the past, many developers who benefitted from affordable housing tax incentives created the affordable housing units in different, less valuable locations. However, a 2008 revision “made it almost impossible for developers to sequester the affordable units away from luxury digs.”^{lxxx} If zoning allows, developers can allocate 20 percent of the units as low and moderate-income households, and the remaining 80 percent are market rate. Under this scheme, developers receive low interest bond financing.^{lxxxi} The units are allocated through a one percent chance lottery system.^{lxxxii} Tenant screening is more invasive than for typical tenancies.^{lxxxiii} Preference is mostly given to people in the same community board, thus limiting the elimination of previously existing segregation patterns.^{lxxxiv}

Zoning laws are other ways to incentivize private actors to produce low-income housing. New York’s ‘inclusionary zoning’ where “in exchange for the right to build more market-rate housing than would be allowed under existing zoning law, private developers agree to construct some number of nominally ‘affordable’ units as well.” These units can be reverted into market rates after a specified number of years. However, the data from several states shows that there has only been a minimal impact on the affordable housing stock produced via the various tax credit and inclusionary zoning programs.^{lxxxv}

NYCHA stands out as the best-surviving local housing authority. However, due to the bad rep of public housing “NYCHA became a victim of disinvestment as all levels of government steered billions of dollars away from the agency.”^{lxxxvi} With the financial crisis and storm Sandy, NYCHA entered a crisis in housing management; “Everything is getting old at once, because everything was kind of built at once. So, it’s like a 30-year window where almost all of public housing was built, and now we’re in that 30-year window where it’s going to be totally revamped or redeveloped.”^{lxxxvii} The Federal Government has been suing NYCHA to make repairs. However, as a Bronx councilman expressed: “Given the decades of federal disinvestment from NYCHA, the city should be suing the federal government, rather than the other way around.”^{lxxxviii} At the same time, economic disparity has reached levels from a century ago.^{lxxxix} The 2008 financial crisis intensified financial situations. Low- and middle-income people’s salaries have stagnated at the same time as governments have made budget-cuts in federal housing.^{xc} The

result is an ever-increasing need for low- and medium income housing.

To understand alternative policies for providing housing for all, several European examples stand out. Vienna boasts a successful system of ‘social housing’, serving both the middle class and the poor, “and has thus avoided the stigma of being either vertical ghettos or housing of last resort.”^{xcii} Circa 60 percent of the city’s 1.8 million people live in social housing. The strong rental culture correlates to favorable tenant-rights; tenants do not have to leave due to income increases, and conversely, they can remain in their apartment if they lose their job or get sick due to housing allowances. Over the past hundred years, series of governments have adopted deliberate, long-term policies to reach welfare goals, including urban planning, land-purchases as protection from the speculative markets, and building, expanding and renovating government owned housing at regular intervals. Additionally, the transit system was expanded and made inexpensive for users.^{xciii}

Similarly, Sweden has made substantive state-investments into its social housing stock to ensure that its population can afford housing; mainly through building 1 million new homes in a country of 8 million people between 1965-1974 targeting a range of needs and affordability. Sweden’s housing market has been “structured with to limit speculation and volatility, with a large rental sector and co-operatives as a tenure instead of condominiums.”^{xciii} A large rental sector and speculation-limitations are some key factors in protecting the housing market from large financial market crises.^{xciv} As opposed to the U.S. where home-ownership is the goal of most for saving and investment, large proportions of the populations are renters in many European countries, including Germany. Thus,



renters constitute a powerful political force in keeping housing costs down.^{xcv}

As a contrast, too much U.S. housing is “in the market sector and too little is in a social sector permanently protected from rising rents. The result is that supply and demand relentlessly bid up market prices.”^{xcvi} Consequently, there is a case to be made for local governments to increase the national social housing stock with millions of units to meet the ever-existing and increasing need throughout the U.S.^{xcvii} Publicly built and owned apartments have several benefits over private market-alternatives. Housing can be built more efficiently due to economy of scale, smaller unit square-footage, less unnecessary luxuries, and without a profit or risk mark up. In addition, government financing have lower interest rates, and “many cities already own around a fifth of their city’s land.”^{xcviii} Thus, the public sector could offer lower rents, particularly as profit margins are not the end goal. Management could be handled publicly or by hired property management companies.^{xcix} Long-term public ownership of land and housing stocks better protects social housing from both market crises and private market decisions, while also providing more flexibility for local authorities to integration goals.

Some argue that the state has tried to solve the housing question for decades, and that the intentions have been those of a benevolent state, acting with the primary goal of the welfare of all its citizens in trying to solve the housing problem. Moreover, some argue that failed governmental efforts either have been due to incompetence or lack of knowledge, or a result of the choices and character of public housing recipients. However, the actions and non-actions of our governments have not taken sufficient ownership of intentional, long-term policies or practices to meet the promise of ‘a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family’ or that have addressed the actual need of the American population as a whole. In fact, if the state “were truly concerned with the best course of action to meet society’s dwelling needs and end residential oppression, housing history would look very different than it does.”^c With knowledge about poverty concentrations and class struggles under capitalism being centuries old, incompetence is not a valid excuse. Contrarily, this study has highlighted a series of intentional government policies aiming to maintain private market control while keeping the American class system intact, rather than being based

on benevolent goals of ensuring adequate housing for all.

Conclusion

American approaches to housing the population have been heavily reliant on the private market sector; and when the public sector has more actively engaged, governmental efforts have often been driven by limited political motives rather than long-term goals to create decent homes in suitable living environments for all citizens. The governmental approaches and policies to date have failed to provide an adequate system of affordable housing for all citizens due to the American belief in the limited role of the public sector. As evidenced in this paper, our governments’ efforts have primarily reached the middle section, the ‘deserving poor’, and have not adequately served the lower income classes, i.e. ‘problem poor’. Furthermore, the state has both directly and indirectly contributed to and even created race segregation both via active policy and by ignoring racist policies and institutions. However, across the board, there is an acute shortage of affordable housing in the U.S. Additionally, such large portions of affordable housing stock should not be in the hands of the private real estate sector in the way it currently is, as real estate markets repeatedly, by nature, fail. European examples show how keeping a large amount of affordable housing stock under public sector control creates stability for populations, a key task for any democratic government. As such, further research on how the U.S. can significantly increase its affordable housing stock is crucial, and information needs to reach the American public on what possible political housing solutions could exist.



U.S. Refugee Aid in Response to the Holocaust

by Lily Hamilton



Smuggled into the Warsaw ghetto and disguised as a Latvian policeman, Polish underground courier Jan Karski confirmed the genocide of Polish Jews to American leaders in 1943. Karski witnessed people freezing and starving to death, and being sent to death camps via the Izbica Transit Camp. Karski visited the United States (U.S.) to report the inhumane treatment occurring in ghettos and concentration camps. He pleaded for action on July 28; six months before any decisive action was taken, two years after the creation of the first Nazi extermination camp, and four after the establishment of the first ghetto. One spectator to Karski's eyewitness account, Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, announced to Karski, "I am unable to believe you," clarifying, "I did not say this young man is lying. I said I am unable to believe him. There is a difference." This statement from an esteemed government official portraying himself unable to comprehend the horrors of the Holocaust mirrors the mindset of the American public upon receiving such news. Isolationism and anti-Semitism, not genuine disbelief, curtailed U.S. refugee aid to Holocaust victims; few Americans doubted the authenticity of statements such as Frankfurter's due to their predispositions.

The refugee aid measures taken by the U.S. government ineffectively responded to information regarding the Holocaust due to the prioritization of the government's public appearance over progress in aiding Holocaust victims. Through a tactic of blocking information from reaching the country and publicly doubting incoming news beginning in 1942, the U.S. evaded the obligation to assist Holocaust victims and appeased an anti-semitic public. As knowledge inevitably spread and U.S. citizens began sympathizing

with victims, President Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) faced mounting pressure to take action. Consequently, in 1944, he established the U.S. Government's primary refugee aid contribution effort, the War Refugee Board (WRB). While countless well-intentioned officials supported the WRB, the massive amount of government employees who adhered to earlier determinations of inactivity impeded its ability to reach its life-saving potential during 1944 and 1945. The assistance that the U.S. government administered during the Holocaust insufficiently supported victims because each effort fell into one of two categories: facades to subdue action or plans not wholly backed by the government.

"The refugee aid measures taken by the U.S. government ineffectively responded to information regarding the Holocaust due to the prioritization of the government's public appearance over progress in aiding Holocaust victims."

The cause of inadequacy of the U.S.'s refugee aid efforts—discouragement from innumerable American government officials and citizens—parallels that of the Holocaust: anti-Semitism. This prejudice led to unnecessarily strict immigration policy during the 1930s, and a "Paper Wall" was raised between America and prospective immigrants. Rather than changing its policy while Nazi oppression escalated and dismissiveness of refugee aid became unjust-

tifiable, the U.S. government prevented information about the genocide from reaching the public. Not until 1943 did the media cover the atrocities of the Holocaust, exposing the U.S. government to criticism. This disparagement led to various aid gestures which appeased those urging action yet accomplished little, quelling anti-Semitic critics. Due to insistence from both sides of Holocaust refugee aid argument, the U.S. government compromised for a limited response, therefore saving their reputation, but not the millions of people imprisoned in Nazi death camps.

Rise of Naziism in Central Europe

Adolf Hitler's rise to power as Chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933 set into motion a period of diabolical anti-Semitism in Europe known as The Holocaust. After Germany's defeat during World War 1, the Treaty of Versailles, and the Great Crash of 1929, with the guidance of the the Nazi party, vulnerable and gullible German citizens blamed their economic misfortunes on the Jewish population. The Nazi party enforced the idea of Jewish people generating evil, and advocated for the "renewal" of German life for its white Christian citizens, also known as Aryans. To combat economic depression, Hitler promoted his plan to unify Aryans and likewise justify increasing oppression of Jews through social Darwinism. A Nazi newspaper, *Der Sturmer* or *The Attacker*, contained dehumanizing cartoons and stated that "The Jews are our misfortune" on the front of each issue, proliferating anti-Semitic beliefs by selling half a million copies each week by 1938. The Nazi Party's orchestration of a mob mentality surrounding the abuse of Germany's Jewish population overpowered the voices of its opposers, therefore enabling a rapid increase in cruelty of the movement.

Hitler's position as a dictator enabled him to transition from solely promoting anti-Semitism to systematically imprisoning and murdering the European Jewish population without obstruction. In 1933, Hitler forbade Jews from occupying various professions and participating civically. In 1935 the Nuremberg Laws were passed, prohibiting Jews from marrying Aryans, confiscating property, and overall promoting Jewish exclusion from society. Among the many ways that Nazis normalized anti-Semitism, one 1934 cartoon from a Nazi satirical magazine *Die Brennessel* propagated the conviction that Jewish people took more than they contributed to society and deserved to have their rights taken away through these laws (see fig. 1). Despite the increasing egregiousness of regulations for Jewish people in Germany, the U.S. government, preoccupied with the peak of its own Great Depression, failed to step in. Religious persecution escalated during November 9-10, 1938 through

the the Nazi Party's execution of *Kristallnacht*, a national government-sponsored riot against Jews which destroyed 200 synagogues and Jewish-owned businesses. *Kristallnacht* led to the implementation of ghettos, holding camps which confined prisoners until they died of starvation, disease, or relocated to concentration camps. Because Hitler built up years of goodwill with the German population, citizens accepted these increasingly heinous actions based upon his racial theories, enabling him to continue religious persecution.

"Hitler's position as a dictator enabled him to transition from solely promoting anti-Semitism to systematically imprisoning and murdering the European Jewish population without obstruction."

Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, the first step of Hitler's plan to wipe out the European Jewish population, facilitated the largest genocide of all time. Linking unease towards Russian Bolshevism with anti-Semitism, Nazis feared a "Jewish-communist subversion", therefore Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union (SU) led to the decimation of the Soviet Jewish population. Along with the implementation of ghettos, the mass murder of Soviet Jews served among Germany's first active steps in its Final Solution to exterminate Europe's Jews. At the Wannsee Conference of 1942, the Nazis resolved to broaden their elimination plan by opening concentration camps to exploit and murder their victims. Sharing the widespread anti-Semitic mindset which led to this deadly decision 9 years prior, Nazi official Achim Gercke commented on proposals to solve the "Jewish question," noting that "they do not eliminate the Jews from Germany...And that is what we want to do." Sharing this view in the National Socialist Monthly Magazine, Gercke aided the Nazi Party in normalizing oppression of Jewish people, priming a bigoted public to become silent witnesses to the Holocaust. Thus, the Nazis convinced thousands of citizens of the justifiability of executing 11 million people by spreading and increasing the severity of their anti-Semitic propositions over a period of 10 years.

The SS *St. Louis* exemplifies the selfishness in the U.S.'s immigration policy during the Holocaust, proving government officials' willingness to see Jewish refugees in mortal danger rather than accept them as their responsibility. On

May 13, 1939, 937 people boarded the SS *St Louis* in Hamburg, Germany to escape Nazi persecution. Many viewed their destination, Cuba, as a temporary asylum until they obtained U.S. visas, having already sent in paperwork. Cuba had previously agreed to accept these 937 refugees, however by the time the ship docked, Cuba's policy had changed, and only 20 passengers were admitted on land. Upon realizing they may be sent back to Germany, three passengers attempted to commit suicide, notable considering that this event took place before the Nazi invasion of Poland and subsequent apogee of crimes committed against Jewish Europeans. The U.S. attempted negotiation with Cuba to accept the immigrants, but responding to Cuba's eventual refusal, the SS *St. Louis* departed for Florida where passengers hoped for acceptance.

FDR's negotiations with Cuba soon appeared a hypocritical illusion, as the U.S. showed unwillingness to accept these refugees itself. The passengers sailed back to Germany, and although the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, a non-government sponsored company, organized for passengers to take refuge in England, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, many others disembarked in Germany, and were immediately sent to concentration camps. The U.S.'s reluctance to welcome refugees in contrast with the allowances of smaller and less equipped countries highlights America's neglectful immigration policy as a result of egocentrism, which prevented the saving of not just 937, but millions of lives.

U.S. Immigration Police

The "Paper Wall" raised between the haven of America and the nightmare of Europe for Jews during the Holocaust resulted from a fear of popular isolationist opposition to Jewish refugee acceptance. During World War Two (WWII), the American population broke down into distinct subsections as represented by a 1938 poll asking, "what is your attitude towards allowing German, Austrian, and other political refugees to come to the United States?" The 67.4 % who reported an inclination to actively prevent entry represented Americans with isolationist mentalities due to prejudice toward Jewish people or fear of a worsening economic depression. Although many surveyed citizens responded on the basis of anti-Semitism, some adopted nationalistic and xenophobic attitudes as self-protection mechanisms after the the Great Depression which resulted in limited jobs and resources.

FDR's moral inclination to aid refugees and legislate against popular feeling led to charges that he prioritized saving foreign Jews over working to advance his suffering country and, in 1941, over fighting to win WWII. Accused

of fighting a "Jewish War", FDR downplayed his Holocaust aid efforts to gain more votes before his 1940 and 1944 presidential elections. For this reason, between 1933 and 1943, immigrants filled under 40% of quota availability as the White House promoted what they referred to as the "rescue through victory" campaign, allocating resources to militaristic matters rather than rescue operations. Although America engaged in battle with Nazis in North Africa during 1942, an earlier and more direct approach in closer proximity to these atrocities may have liberated more victims. During WWII, even ethically minded U.S. government officials had ulterior motives to oppose Holocaust refugee aid, therefore minimizing assistance to and acceptance of European Jews.

"Accused of fighting a 'Jewish War', FDR downplayed his Holocaust aid efforts to gain more votes before his 1940 and 1944 presidential elections."

Furthermore, the U.S. State Department (SD) proved its incompetency by manipulating visa protocol to reduce the ability of refugees to immigrate to America. During July of 1941, visa policy evolved such that interdepartmental committees reviewed all immigration applications and arbitrarily chose whether to reject requests or send "advisory approvals" to visa-issuing consuls, who then subjectively decided whether or not to issue the visa. Although the SD devised various justifications for its sluggishness in issuance of visas such as protection from spies, a message from the Assistant Secretary of State Breckinridge Long to the SD revealed the true anti-Semitic and isolationist intention of the department. One year prior to the visa protocol alteration, Long had proposed drastically minimizing the number of immigrants accepted to the U.S., "by simply advising our consuls to put every obstacle in the way and to require additional evidence and to resort to various administrative devices that would postpone...the granting of visas." With little justification other than blatant anti-Semitism, the SD's obstruction of refugees fleeing the Holocaust represents that an immigration system with seemingly benevolent intentions such as that of the U.S. can be corrupted by a few people with immoral motivation.

Obstruction of Information by U.S. State Department

The U.S.'s journey in receiving and responding to a

telegram regarding Hitler's extermination plan, the August 8, 1942 Riegner telegram, represents the SD's deliberate inefficiency in the spreading of crucial information. Upon acquiring an early report describing Hitler's Final Solution, Gerhart Riegner, a representative of the World Jewish Congress in Switzerland, relayed this news to the U.S. SD and British Foreign Office. His telegram confirmed the plan that "all Jews in countries occupied or controlled by Germany numbering 3½ to 4 million should, after deportation and concentration in the East, be at one blow exterminated." Upon reaching the SD in July 1942, officials rejected the validity of this information, the proven anti-Semitic official, Breckinridge Long, referring to it as a "war rumor," therefore ignoring and failing to relay the telegram to its designated recipient, Stephen Wise of the U.S. World Jewish Congress office.

Emblematic of the SD's interference of information, the Riegner telegram reached its intended recipient unconventionally. Parliament member Sydney Silverman forwarded the Riegner telegram to Wise three weeks after he should have received it, surprised that the U.S. had not yet responded to the news. Wise shared this information with Secretary of State Sumner Welles, who unhurriedly confirmed its credibility on November 24, 1942. Wise alerted the press, facing backlash from SD officials who complained that this publicity exposed the U.S. government "to increased pressure from all sides to do something more specific in order to aid these people." The SD hesitantly released this information five months after the telegram's creation, promising to punish war criminals, but not to rescue victims of these crimes. The U.S.'s lack of urgency in response to the Riegner telegram symbolizes the SD's ongoing role in minimizing resources for this crisis.

Undeterred by the U.S.'s inadequate response to his first message, Riegner sent another telegram in 1943 specifically proposing action, to which he received a response more disappointing than the first. Updating that, "The remaining Jews in Poland are now confined to fifty-five ghettos" and various concentration camps, 6,000 people being killed daily in just one, Riegner begged for financial support and a license to rescue those in danger of deportation in France and Rumania. Responding to incessant begging, the SD falsely told the Treasury Department (TD) that a license had been sent, utilizing the time before the Treasury officials recognized this lie to further delay action. Through deception and resistance to admitting the truth of verified information, the SD's response to the 1943 Riegner Proposal inhibited the ability of TD officials to aid the thousands of people in hiding from the Nazi government.

Not only did the SD fail to constructively react to Reign-

er's proposal until the time to act had passed, its officials also attempted to prevent future action-provoking information from reaching the U.S.. In response to the 1943 Riegner Telegram, Secretary of State Sumner Welles banned the Switzerland legation from accepting and sending similar information to the U.S. unless absolutely necessary. Writing that "Such private messages circumvent neutral countries' censorship", Welles attempted to justify a corrupt interest to keep the American public and government from intervening in matters of refugee aid. If given further information regarding Nazi barbarity, the SD worried that those not indoctrinated with anti-Semitic interests would pressure the department to accept more Jewish immigrants. Largely due to this manipulation by the SD, during the year 1943, a Gallup poll reported that 29% of responding Americans believed the rumor that 2 million Jews had been killed during the war to be false. By preventing the reception and spreading of information about the Holocaust, the SD evaded its responsibility of aiding victims of this atrocity and prevented awareness of this issue.

U.S. Government Faces Pressure to Take Action

Public discontentment with the U.S.'s lack of Holocaust counteraction increased throughout 1943, obligating the government to assume an interest in providing aid. Protests, letters, and media backlash compelled the government to establish a conference during April for British and American delegates to discuss their next steps on the European front. However, the choice of location, Bermuda, a British territory with the promise of little press coverage, indicated the conference's true goal, to feign consideration of action. Likely present for show, SD conference delegates lacked familiarity with refugee aid, and could not meaningfully contribute to deliberations. The conference produced only one output, a statement explaining the maintained coyness of all discussions and stagnation of quota levels. This conference, a "woeful failure" according to Stephen Wise, enabled the U.S. government to drain valuable time, cast the impression of an attempt to alleviate suffering in Europe, and temporarily lessen public disapproval all by sending representatives on a vacation to Bermuda.

"Public discontentment with the U.S.'s lack of Holocaust counteraction increased throughout 1943, obligating the government to assume an interest in providing aid."



One of many indignant Americans who provoked the Bermuda Conference, Peter Bergson impacted the American understanding of the Holocaust by publicly donouncing the government for its passivity. On November 25, 1942, this young Palestinian Jew visiting America read a Washington Post article declaring “Two Million Jews Slain.” Unlike others who missed this report buried on page 6, Bergson responded by increasing public awareness of these atrocities through marches, rallies, and compelling newspaper articles. Alarming phrases such as “‘HOW WELL ARE YOU SLEEPING?’, ‘ONE VICTORY FOR HITLER?’ and ‘TIME RACES DEATH’” appeared in popular newspapers in 1943 and 1944, forcing ignorant citizens to understand the contrast between the plight of European Jews and the U.S. government’s apparent urgency to help. In 1944, the U.S. government battled Axis powers in Italy, North Africa, and Normandy, France, however Bergson identified the meagerness of this response given its distance from the crisis’s epicenter, Poland, where the first death camp had been in action for 3 years. The government’s lack of effective aid to Holocaust victims enabled U.S. citizens to deny their responsibility in contributing to this cause. However, Bergson’s criticism of the government spreading information about the holocaust, decreased this scheme’s credibility.

Spreading doubt about the government’s intentions among his growing 125,000 followers provided Bergson with the leverage needed to approach the government and place strain on FDR to prepare a significant response to his essential question. “When will the United Nations establish an agency to deal with the problem of Hitler’s extermination of a whole people?”, Bergson implored in a 1943 New York Times article. On November 9, 1943, senator Guy Gillette and representatives Will Rogers Jr. and Joseph B. Baldwin, backing Bergson’s ideas, introduced a resolution to congress: a new governmental committee focused on saving European refugees under persecution by Hitler’s Naziism. This proposal would have been voted on by the House of

Representatives and Senate on January 24, 1944. However, unbeknownst to the Bergson Boys, FDR had already faced pressure to create such a committee and on January 22, 1944, two days prior to the nullified vote had established a seemingly perfect solution: the War Refugee Board (WRB). Although not the direct cause of the creation of this new committee, Bergson’s relentless pestering of the government and public to accept his conclusions created a social climate which forced FDR to accept the WRB proposal.

War Refugee Board

The creation of the WRB served as one of the first intrinsically motivated efforts by the U.S. government to save the victims of the Holocaust. This commission was conceived through Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau’s January 13, 1944 *Report to the Secretary on the Acquiescence of this Government in the Murder of the Jews*. This report formally accused the State Department of purposely delaying various refugee aid measures and targeted the broader government for its oversight of this negligence. Morgenthau wrote that months had passed since the “President gave assurances that the United States would make every effort... to save those who could be saved”, yet no constructive plan had emerged. Responding to this proposal which was a culmination of widespread efforts to spark action, FDR established the War Refugee Board (WRB). In his words, this committee was tasked with taking “all measures within its power to rescue victims of enemy oppression.” Although seemingly another scheme to cover up governmental idleness, the Treasury Department proved the WRB to be the first legitimate refugee aid attempt of WWII.

Various governmental factions such as the SD used their responsibility within the WRB as leverage to restrain it from reaching its full potential, remaining consistent with their long-held theme of hindering refugee aid. Forbidden from stretching immigration quotas and allocated a less than one sixteenth of the private funds ultimately used, the WRB had little backing from the larger government in their endeavors to send supplies to concentration camps, remove victims from Axis territory, negotiate refugee acceptance with foreign governments, and admit evacuees to the U.S.. In February 1944, the WRB sent American representatives to countries neighboring Nazi territory to contact their governments and advise refugee acceptance, hypocritical given the U.S. government’s incompetence in doing the same. American representatives transmitted and gained information to and from the U.S. via coded telegrams, however, SD officials hastily dominated these correspondences, staggering clearance of urgent messages. In this way, the SD utilized its influence in the WRB to curb the effectiveness of

U.S. refugee aid, and therefore, as Morgenthau articulated in his report, “will have to share for an all time responsibility for this extermination.”

Although the approximately 200,000 Holocaust victims saved by the WRB appears insignificant compared to the 11 million killed, without the efforts of Henry Morgenthau and members of the TD, the number of lives saved would have been far closer to zero. Due to the abounding efforts to negate Holocaust aid, the WRB served as a comparatively positive institution despite its ability to highlight unscrupulousness in the SD.

Conclusion

Blinded by disbelief and aspirations to appease American citizens during the Holocaust, U.S. government officials failed to recognize their potentially crucial role in this crisis. Anti-semitic mob mentality in Germany also expanded throughout America during the ‘30s and ‘40s, leading to retrospectively ludicrous hesitation from the government to aid Holocaust victims. The U.S.’s subsequent campaign to liberate victims through winning WWII rather than providing direct aid or immigration reform enabled the government to appease the anti-Semitic population while temporarily evading criticism for inaction. These objections increased as information met the public eye, although slowed by the SD. Facing demand to compensate for lost time, FDR’s WRB attracted vastly more discouragers than supporters, again attributed to anti-Semitism in most analyses. The WRB’s challenges in providing refugee aid symbolize many controversial humanitarian issues in which the opinions of a majority of unscrupulous politicians overshadow those who prioritized morality.

“Blinded by disbelief and aspirations to appease American citizens during the Holocaust, U.S. government officials failed to recognize their potentially crucial role in this crisis.”

Overall, the U.S.’s unyielding immigration policy proved not a price worth paying to uphold American unity. Although there is no doubt that inexcusable bigotry drove much of the lack of refugee assistance, much research is built off of this confirmation bias, therefore little light is shed on peripheral factors which may have altered the U.S.’s resources to do so. While today’s standards deem obvious that the U.S. should have saved more immigrants during

the Holocaust, critics must ask themselves what comparable humanitarian issues are occurring which may seem ambiguous today, but be viewed as gross oversights 75 years from now. The protracted Syrian refugee crisis, for example, has left 12 million Syrians seeking asylum, merely 62 of which were accepted to the U.S. in 2018. Due to its failure to draw a definitive line between moral and legal obligation, the U.S.’s actions in response to the Holocaust cost millions of lives, and set a precedent for indifference to ethics in legislation.







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