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THE PENDULUM

CLEMSON'S INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear readers,

Welcome to this issue of The Pendulum! In a world perpetually swinging between historical trends, we aim to offer perspectives that challenge, inform, and broaden the way you see global affairs. The world of international affairs is never static—its rhythms are shaped by conflict and cooperation, ideals and pragmatism, history and the unknown. The physicist Niels Bohr once remarked that "the opposite of a profound truth may well be another profound truth." This issue embodies that spirit, engaging with traditional geopolitical issues through unconventional lenses: we ultimately hope to challenge familiar frameworks and inspire new ways of understanding.

Earlier in Fall 2024, we began our initiative of expanding our reach across the Southeast, seeking to engage with students at universities beyond Clemson. This semester's edition continues this mission, with writers from Clemson, the College of Charleston, and the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga. We hope to continue this mission in the following semesters, and eventually transform The Pendulum into a staple of the Southeast's college humanities discourse. We're also introducing a new segment of the magazine dedicated for shortform writings on international affairs, kicking off with an essay-writing competition which challenged students to connect their personal passions to the broader world. The format of these segments will vary with each edition, and will provide a new avenue for writers to engage with our magazine.

In this edition, you will find articles ranging from the anarchist settlement of Rojava, to the digitization of Pacific Ocean micronations, to the future of NATO. As you turn these pages, my hope is that you will find both answers and questions — that our stories will not only inform but inspire you to think critically about the world we share. Thank you for being part of our journey, and for your ongoing commitment to understanding the complexities of our world today.

Warm regards,

Owen M. Eastman

Owen Eastman
Editor-in-Chief, The Pendulum

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TUVALU

Beneath the Waves and into the Metaverse

By Sia Sharma: Sia is a freshman Psychology & International Studies major at the College of Charleston.

Surrounded by the Pacific Ocean's deep blue water and lined with pristine white sand beaches is Tuvalu, a small, remote island nation located between Hawaii and Australia. The nine coral islands that make up the country only stretch ten square miles, making Tuvalu one of the smallest countries in the world. Its size makes it easy to travel up and down the strip of islands in a matter of hours, even on foot. Unfortunately, such travel will be impossible in the near future as the whole country will sink beneath the waves of the Pacific Ocean.

Climate change is quickly affecting all countries across the globe, but picturesque Tuvalu will be the first to fully experience total devastation. The low-lying atolls and islands that make up Tuvalu are quickly succumbing to the rising sea levels; the highest point in the country is only fifteen feet above sea level, so as the sea rises, it chips away at the shoreline until, eventually, the unforgiving ocean will envelop the entire country. According to NASA, although Tuvalu is not expected to be fully uninhabitable until 2100, the effects of climate change could partially destroy the beautiful nation as soon as 2050. For everyone else around the world, the sinking of Tuvalu may be nothing more than a sign to increase efforts to combat climate change, but for the 9,816 people who currently call Tuvalu home, that time frame feels like a ticking clock counting down the seconds until their beloved country disappears into the sea. For them, the sinking of Tuvalu is not just a sign of danger, it is the danger.

It is not as if the Tuvaluan government has been standing idly, watching passively as the country slowly lowers into the ocean. In 2021, in a pre-recorded speech addressed to the United Nations Climate Change Conference, better known as COP26, Tuvalu's Minister of Justice, Communications, and

> **"...the sinking of Tuvalu is not just a sign of danger, it is the danger."**

Foreign Affairs, Simon Kofe, demanded that the world immediately take action against climate change for a chance at a better future. Initially, the speech started as expected of such an event–the Minister dressed in a suit and tie, standing behind a podium with the Tuvaluan and the UN flags waving in the background. After a few seconds, however, the camera begins to zoom out, slowly revealing more and more of the actual setting, until, finally, viewers see that Minister Kofe is standing knee-deep in water, just off the shoreline of Tuvalu. Eventually, the camera pans out so far that he is nothing but a minuscule figure surrounded by different shades of the blue ocean. Though his words were inspiring alone, physically seeing the immediate effect of climate change in what was expected to be a typical speech is what made Minister Kofe's statement so impactful. He not only raised awareness about the dangers the sinking country faces but also used Tuvalu's inevitable demise as a beacon of hope and change for other countries.

However, being the first country to sink is not the only first Tuvalu will achieve. Its government has partnered with the metaverse to create "The First Digital Nation" in hopes of virtually preserving the culture, heritage, land, and people of Tuvalu. There is little that can be done to completely save Tuvalu from its future as an underwater country; the effects of climate change are hard to reverse, especially for a country that is already sinking at such a quick pace. Recreating it digitally could be the only accessible proof future generations have that Tuvalu ever existed. The initiative was revealed in another speech given by Minister Kofe in 2022 at COP27. Again, the speech started out normal. Minister Kofe stood behind a podium, the same flags waving in the background. This time, it was clear from the beginning that he was standing on the beach, and the camera slowly zoomed out, revealing more of Tuvalu behind him. However, as Minister Kofe continued to speak, the environment around him began to freeze and glitch, revealing that the Tuvalu he stood in was not the real place but rather a digital recreation, a simulated Tuvalu created entirely in the virtual world.

This digital recreation begins with the tiny islet of Te Afualiku, likely the first of Tuvalu's land to become one with the ocean. Not only will the Tuvaluan government digitally preserve its physical territory, it also strives to preserve the country's cultural heritage so that those displaced by its sinking and future generations alike can stay connected to their culture. The country plans to digitize all cultural artifacts, including its history, art, stories, and practices, making Tuvaluan culture easily accessible on a digital platform. By preserving all aspects of their culture, the Tuvaluans are ensuring that they are not erased from maps and history books.

As digital worlds become more of a reality than a concept out of a science fiction movie, countries are struggling to address the problems that emerge when considering how the virtual world will intertwine with the real one. The main problem that arises from a digital copy of a country is the issue of citizenship. Are people technically still citizens of a country, even if it only exists virtually? To address this issue, Tuvalu amended its constitution in October of 2023 to clarify that the country will maintain its sovereignty and citizenship even once the land itself has sunk. Another problem stems from the fact that digital recreations are just that–digital. The virtual copy will preserve the culture, heritage, and image of Tuvalu, but it cannot preserve the community Tuvalu fosters. Living in such a small country, Tuvaluans have formed interpersonal bonds that larger countries cannot imagine or relate to. Inevitably, as the islands sink, more and more

Tuvaluans will flee to other countries in search of a new home. By doing so, they are not only leaving their physical country behind but their people as well. Unfortunately, forced migration after the country sinks will unravel the tight-knit community Tuvaluans are used to, and with that will come a loss of culture, connection, and community that no digital recreation could prevent or replicate.

As Tuvalu recreates itself in the digital world, the possibility of a future filled with digital countries becomes more plausible. Right now, digital recreations still seem like a last resort that only a couple countries are attempting to achieve. In the future, though, will the only way to visit certain countries be to log on to a computer, click on the country, look at a digital rendering of the land, and read about what it was like before climate change? Will there be entire generations of people who do not even remember a world in which these countries existed? These seem like dramatic questions, but it is hard to differentiate possibilities from fictional scenarios when the world seems to be barrelling towards a reality that was unimaginable even just a few decades ago. However, the worst part is remembering that it does not have to be like this. Climate change is a phenomenon everyone has been aware of for multiple decades. Scientists have been warning the general public and federal governments for years that if action is not immediately taken to combat it, climate change will cause irreversible damage to the planet. Many people believe that not enough is being done to combat climate change, the effects of which will be seen in Tuvalu's inevitable loss of land and culture after the country sinks beneath the dark blue waves of the Pacific. The question now is if Tuvalu's digital copy will be enough to preserve the nation or if the memory of the country will vanish with the land.

FAINT ECHOES OF FREEDOM

Quebec Separatism

By Jackson Hufman: Jackson is a Philosophy & Political Science major at Clemson University.

Standing upon the marble balcony of the Hôtel de Ville de Montréal, adorned in military regalia with epaulets and all, President Charles De Gaulle made the infamous proclamation, "Vive Montréal... Vive le Québec… Vive le Québec libre!" Long live free Quebec – those words echoed throughout the province and settled into the hearts and minds of the disgruntled Québécois.

The clamoring crowd was an omen, a portent, for a foreboding future fraught with insurrection and calamity. Soon, the waves of passion would crash, and the receding sand would be lost to the ocean of history. From this milieu, a violent terrorist organization arose, carrying with it the weight of several centuries of suffering. The Front de Libération du Québec, or FLQ, was a Marxist-Leninist Québécois sovereigntist movement that perpetrated a series of attacks across Montreal and greater Quebec. Members of the FLQ were colloquially referred to as 'felquistes' and the organization was divided into autonomous cells with each serving one grand purpose. Their transgressions culminated in the October Crisis of 1970, which resulted in the death of the Deputy Premier of Quebec. Immediately following this prominent act of terrorism, the organization was disbanded and many members were incarcerated for their crimes. But the story of the FLQ cannot be defined solely by their period of activity; rather, the story possesses a conception that stretches back to the impoverished habitants of New France, and a corpse whose rotting smell still lingers in parliament halls and voting booths. The late 1960s and early 1970s were the zenith of the separatist movement, and the modern framework is an extrapolation of the sentiments, and reactions, that pervaded that dark era.

The terror began when the Union Jack first flew above the province, and when the redcoats marched along the avenues and boulevards of that destitute region. The Seven Years' War, better known as the French and Indian War in America, ended in 1763 with the Treaty of Paris. One of the concessions provided by the defeated France, was the territory of 'New France' which rests north of New England. New France was one of the few successful French colonies in the New World, and was populated mainly by impoverished farmers and trappers, referred to as habitants, along with merchants and the Catholic Church. Under the auspices of the British, the political dynamics of the region shifted: the Catholic Church aligned itself with the governing powers, the merchants seized this lucrative opportunity with open arms, and the habitants remained toiling under the cold, Quebec sun. The existing hierarchy of the region was not merely enforced by this political transformation, but was crystallized in the various governing documents propounded by the new ruling party.

This dynamic festered below the flimsy facade of cohesion for centuries, with explosions of ire breaching through the barrier every so often. The first occasion was in 1837 with 'The Lower Canada Rebellion,' wherein a myriad of petit-bourgeois Québécois joined together in arms under the patronage of James Stuart and Louis-Joseph Papineau. These individuals established the Parti Patriote, or Patriot Party, which sought to reaffirm the rights of French-speaking Canadian citizens in lieu of the English-speaking dominance found within the halls of the House of Assembly. As it were, the House of Assembly purportedly supported the interests of its constituents, but in truth, of the two parties found within the institution, one was governed largely by aristocratic British merchants, and the other by French feudal families of old-world power operating under the seigneurial regime, or lordly system. The former was known as the English Party and often nestled itself neatly within the loving arms of the Catholic Church, and the latter being referred to as the Canadian Party found its greatest proponents amongst the French-Canadian business class. But regardless of this party divide, the House of Assembly composed one-third of the governing organizations, with the remaining two branches being owned absolutely by the English.

This illusion of agency did not excite the impoverished habitants, who rallied behind Papineau and Stuart ecstatically. In the early 18th century, the economy of New France changed, with the lucrative activities in which the habitants partook being rendered useless by the altering course of supply and demand and the eventual elimination of logging. The institutions of regulation and governance provided no sympathy for the plight of the habitants, for the abilities of their representatives paled in comparison to the sheer numbers of the opposing parties. For several years, the Parti Patriote propounded a myriad of proposals to mitigate this pernicious divide held between the various parties and classes. The ruling parties abjured these proposals, and sent a spark into the pile of dry tinder after three Québécois were maimed by the English in 1832 and another two notable French propagandists were arrested in the same year. Eventually, the revolutionaries took to arms, forming a paramilitary organization known as the Société des Fils de la Liberté, or Society of the Sons of Liberty. Impatient with the stagnancy of progress, rallies were held across Quebec, with one in Montreal ending in violence in November of 1837. For the next year, a war was waged against the English leviathan.

" This dynamic festered below the flimsy facade of cohesion for centuries.. "

Eventually, the war ended with a majority of the leaders of the rebellion being arrested for seditious behavior. To the English-speaking side of Canada, the history of the rebellion was largely forgotten, or rather, it was understood as a mismeasure of governance, a salutary neglect committed by the self-interested ruling party. To academics, the study thereof provided an examination into equality amongst diverse constituents. But to the separatists, this event was the beginning of a national myth – a courageous call to arms against systematic and historical oppression. A minimal amount of reform succeeded this violent affair, with the cycle of violence and reform, echoing the trials and tribulations that occurred a hundred years later.

The cycle began once more in the late 1930s and early 1940s during a period known as La Grande Noirceur, or The Great Darkness, under Quebec Premier Maurice Le Noblet Duplessis, better known as Le Chef. Premier Duplessis was a conservative politician known for his staunch opposition to communism; his career reflected this sentiment vividly. The most prominent example of this was the 1937 Padlock Laws which sought to lock the doors of any office disseminating any potential 'seditious' or left-wing news being just one example. This behavior was situated at the rear end of a lengthy lineage of explicitly pro-Catholic leaders and institutions, with the 'Quebec Identity' being defined by its adherence to the Pontiff and to France. These amorphous attributes epitomized the Québécois –

they were to represent their history, their values, and, perhaps most presciently, their future.

By the 1960s, change was imminent. With various liberation movements sweeping the nations of the world, a tangible hope was held by the oppressed. In 1960, Jean Lesage of the Liberal Party was elected Premier of Quebec and ushered in the Quiet Revolution. The Quiet Revolution was a series of proposals and initiatives that sought to revolutionize Quebec through political reform by secularizing the state, diversifying the economy, establishing a welfare state, and securing greater autonomy. Changes such as the aforementioned ones were meant to alleviate the wealth disparity between the French-Canadians and the English-Canadians, who, by that point, held a greater disparity in wealth than the one between Black Americans and White Americans. Although these changes were substantial, they did not suffice for many of the struggling Québécois, who felt as though the enemy had transformed. To them, it was no longer the Church alone, but the English, who, with their egregious capital, dominated every aspect of societal affairs. The habitants remained as an impoverished class; a proletariat clade alienated from a governmental body whose veins flooded with unobtainable capital. Lesage was a contentious figure to the separatists as he heralded many of the necessary changes, but to them, he did not represent the average habitant. And this opinion was incidentally substantiated by Lesage himself when, in response to calls for a plebiscite constitution, he responded, "How are you going to explain that to the ignorant?"

In 1964 during the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day celebration, the English-appointed Governor General Georges Vanier was subject to derision by a mob of separatists who repeatedly shouted, "Vanier, jester to the Queen." Another four years later, during an event celebrating the same holiday, Prime Minister of Canada Pierre Trudeau was denigrated by a crowd of particularly cantankerous Québécois. The culmination of this animosity manifested in 1970 with the most notable militant separatist organization, the FLQ, committing a heinous act of treason.

The FLQ was founded sometime in the early 1960s by a myriad of ambitious revolutionaries with the intention of inciting a revolution that would establish an independent Quebec state not reliant upon anglophone economic capital. The FLQ was founded in response to the palpable wealth disparity and discrimination within the Québécois job market. One of most prominent founders was Georges Schoeters, who was a Belgian resistance courier during WWII and is noted to have once said, "When I was fourteen years old, I was made prisoner by the Germans, but they treated me better than the Montreal police."

Schoeters trained and led one of the cells, with the other cells finding refuge in various communities. These cells operated autonomously under the patronage of the movement's general ideology, with different cells performing different duties throughout their tenure of activity. During the seven years preceding the October Crisis, a preponderance of terrorist activity occurred, including the 1963 Victoria Statue bombing and the 1969 Montreal Stock Exchange bombing. Most of the attacks targeted symbolic figures of the 'anglophone regime', with the 1963 one being a slight against the abstract edifice of monarchical rule, and the other being an aspersion against the center of 'foreign' capital. Activity ebbed

and flowed throughout the 1960s, with a resurgence in activity following the 1967 World Fair, wherein the world came to witness the Québécois city of Montreal. It was during this event that President Charles de Gaulle made his infamous speech, and lit the flame that has remained burning for decades.

Three years following this event, on October 5th, two members of the Liberation Cell kidnapped British diplomat James Cross in Montreal. The felquistes disguised themselves as delivery men and persuaded the unexpecting maid to allow their entrance. Upon entering his abode, they held the diplomat by gunpoint in a dramatic display of resistance, providing but a moment for him to wish his farewells to his wife – following that, they blindfolded him and ushered him into a car. Once Cross arrived at their secret facility, he became privy to their demands, which aspired to exchange Cross for any and all imprisoned Felquistes, and if this demand was not fulfilled, Cross was to be killed. Cross, astounded by this predicament, stoically responded, "In that case I must compose myself for death."

Five days later, felquistes from the Chénier cell kidnapped another prominent local politician, the Deputy Premier of Quebec Pierre Laporte. Local police were amassed, and the federal government orchestrated the military to scour the city in search of the abducted politicians. By the 16th of October, Canada was in a state of exception and special privileges were granted to Canadian Armed Forces via the War Measures Act. The manifesto of the FLQ was published in newspapers and it appeared as though an insurrection might occur – the division of the nation intensified and the fragile structure of cohesion collapsed upon itself. During this period, 3,000 unwarranted searches occurred, and 497 individuals were arrested, most of which were deprived of the right of habeas corpus. Tanks rolled through the peaceful streets, and the sound of tracks echoed through the silent city. Soldiers flooded Quebec, the people were in panic, and when asked how far he might be willing to go to secure the hostages, the Prime Minister of Canada, Pierre Trudeau said, "Well, just watch me."

On the 17th of October, Pierre Laporte was said to have been executed by the FLQ, with them referring to him as the "minister of unemployment and assimilation." But in truth, there was no execution, rather, Laporte seized the opportunity to escape by leaping through a window and severed his arteries. Scarce of medical equipment, the felquistes decided to strangle Laporte and capitalize upon the event as a publicity stunt, to assure the government that they were serious about their demands. Twenty days later, the members of the Chénier cell were arrested. The next month was fraught with trepidation, and it wasn't until the 2nd of December that Cross was released. In exchange for Cross, the members of the Liberation Cell were granted asylum in Cuba.

After such a violent ordeal, the militant organizations scattered, leaving behind a movement tainted with blood and ash. The sovereigntist movement remained but the political instruments for independence changed. At first, the animosity that invited violence did not wither, rather, it transformed, and assumed a position of legitimacy, with support for independence and the sovereigntist party being 44%. But even so, such animosity eventually faded, with a mere 29% of Québécois now supporting the cause in 2025. Some academics postulate that the new found Canadian nationalism has been a result of President Donald Trump's recent comments regarding the annexation of Canada. However, as of now, the Parti Québécois, a sovereigntist political party, remains a popular choice for the French-speaking citizens of Canada, with Francois Legault, the Premier of Quebec, also supporting the proposition of a referendum to take place in 2030. Change occurred slowly throughout the latter half of the 20th century, French language reform was implemented, the economic disparity shrunk, and the cause became a political game, whose essence appears to be that of nationalism alone. This sort of sentiment echoed the political promises of the Quiet Revolution, but this division of ideology permeated the 70s as well. Charles Gagnon, the Québécois separatist, expressed his doubts for this bureaucratic system of political change and placation by saying, "There are still poor people, even if they can buy their rags in French." The future of Quebec is uncertain, what remains is two distinct societies tethered to a capricious world order; the success, and sanctity, of the nation is dependent upon economic prosperity. As cultural identifiers adapt and change, semiotic associations fade, and the wealthy class diversifies, the movement splinters. Regardless, a division is palpable, and the flimsy string that sewed together the quilt of Canada is still subject to the tears of domestic discomfort.

SENEGAL

A Democracy of the Future Reconstructed

By Kraven King: Kraven is a Freshman Political Science major at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

A long, brightly dyed red road sits before one of the most beautiful buildings in Senegal. A grand white palace, built in 1902 for Ernest Roume, the governor general of French West Africa. At the turn of the century, France had new plans for their colonies in West Africa: they would develop them for long term exploitation. It took 58 years until a Senegalese man was able to claim the palace as his own when independence was gained in 1960. Léopold Sédar Senghor, one of Senegal's finest poets and a leading intellectual in the African nationalist Pan-African movement, became the first president of Senegal. Senghor's focus was on diversifying the economy and developing the agricultural sector of Senegal through state run programs. His efforts brought temporary stability to Senegal but his unwillingness to distance himself from the French regime of the past hurt his image among the public and other African intellectuals of the time like Nelson Mandela. Though not perfect, development was no longer to strip Senegal of its resources, rather it was to embolden the people of the land. Today Senegal finds itself still searching for long term developmental success. The nation's newly elected leader Bassirou Diomaye Faye strives to be the stability and prosperity the youth of Senegal has been searching for with plans of large economic and structural reforms.

Sixty-five years after independence, Senegal chose within its most vital moments to stand behind the youngest head of state within all of Africa. In March of 2024 Faye's party, African Patriots of Senegal for Work, Ethics and Fraternity (PASTEF), garnered 54% of the nation's vote, handily beating the incumbent Alliance for the Republic (APR) who had underperformed with just 35% of the vote. Senegal fought to show that their faith lies with the 44-year-old reformist and his plans to forever change the nation.

The party that dominated the 2024 elections was created in 2014 in response to the highly controversial first two years of Mackey Sall's presidency, which was rife with corruption and greed. Its founder Ousmane Sonko would lead the party up until his 2021 arrest stemming from a message therapist's sexual assault allegations. These allegations brought with them rape charges and a lengthy trial which would be highly contested by both Sonko and the public. The charges brought upon him in the case were eventually dropped to a much lesser crime, immoral behavior towards individuals younger than twenty-one, a charge that brings a two-year prison sentence. PASTEF called his arrest highly political with riots from the people following the case as it went through court. These riots would be so widespread that President Sall seized the opportunity to dissolve PASTEF citing repeated incitement of riots. The party was unable to participate within the government with all acting members of the government becoming independents and the party being barred from participating within the next election. This dissolution did not stop the movement PASTEF found itself at the core of with the party's members acting as a coalition of independents. While this would not be his only arrest, with another in 2023 for "disturbing the peace" [7] following deadly protests surrounding his case, the conviction within his rape trial would be the one to throw his presidential hopes away. In Senegal, convicted criminals are unable to run for president, but Sonko's conviction being that of a misdemeanor as well as his conviction being appealed brought uncertainty over his eligibility.

While Sonko faced political persecution, the dissolved but still acting[8] PASTEF searched for who would lead them into the 2024 national presidential election. At first Sonko was chosen[10] as the party's presidential candidate due to his conviction resulting only in a misdemeanor. This battle over eligibility found itself bogged down within the courts, and with only four months before the presidential election, PASTEF had to search elsewhere. Sonko's various legal issues directed most of Senegal's international attention, but in the streets of Dakar, a coalition had been building up behind the charismatic Diomaye Faye. There was one problem: Faye was in prison awaiting a conviction for the spreading of misinformation, which he was charged with in early 2023.

Faye announced a presidential bid for the 2024 presidential election despite his detainment. With riots in the streets and uncertainty behind the candidates of the election, President Sall postponed the February election. Senegal had long held the prestigious title of a top democracy in Africa but Sall's postponement

> **"...Senegal would not only be one of the most important nations in Africa, but a nation that must be respected on the wider global stage."**

following political arrests, internet restrictions, and party dissolvement placed the nations democracy in disarray. This decision was quickly picked up by the Constitutional Council who decided that Sall acted outside the bounds of the constitution and that the election must be held on March 24th. As a sign of good faith before the election, Sall released both Faye and Sonko from detainment days before Senegal was to choose its president. Running as an independent with the backing of the dissolved PASTEF, Faye overwhelmingly won the election, ushering in an era of hopeful reforms.

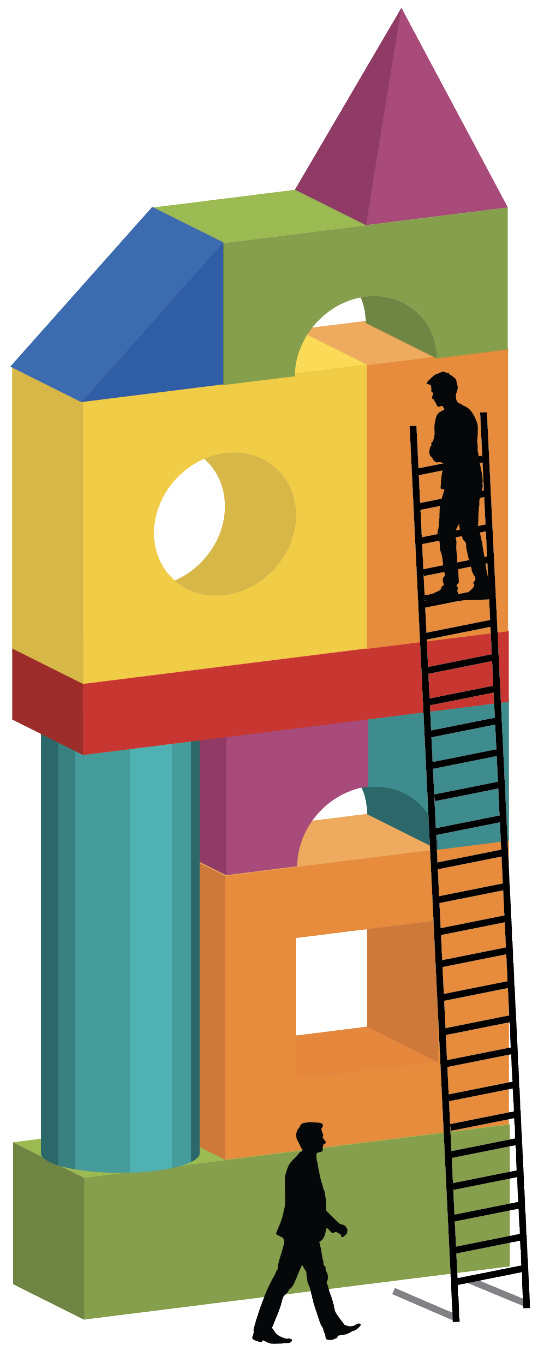
In his first months in office, Faye unveiled the ambitious Senegal2050 strategic plan, one which would propel Senegal into 21st century prosperity. President Faye's vision is one shrouded in the tumultuous past of failed African development projects. African development has consistently failed due to inadequate planning, corruption, and economic struggles, all things Faye plans to get ahead of. The young president aims to bring drastic changes to the nation's energy production, infrastructure, and economic opportunity through a flurry of programs and policies. If Faye's goals were to be accomplished, Senegal would not only be one of the most important nations in Africa, but a nation that must be respected on the wider global stage.

Senegal2050 is a plan that strives to deliver economic, developmental, and social success. The plan has been built to address both the issues that Senegal has had since its independence as well as the issues that appeared under Macky Sall's twelve years in office. In October of last year, Ousmane Sonko described Senegal's current political and economic state as "ravages of the bad choices and bad practices of our governing elites since independence." The now-Prime Minister is correct in his assessment. While the nation is the most stable democracy in Africa and its economy has seen consistent growth, the poorest people in Dakar and those living in the near 400 rural communities of Senegal see little of it.

These rural areas are where Faye's economic plan differs from others within Senegal's political landscape. Venturing out of Dakar for development is the key to Senegal2050. Only 67% of people in Senegal had access to electricity in 2022; Senegal2050 calls for raising that metric to 100%. Not only are there plans to bring all Senegalese people onto the power grid, but Faye's government also wants to do it in a sustainable way. Only 14.3% of Senegal's electricity is produced through renewable means, much under the 23.5% average that Africa holds according to the International Energy Agency. The plan would make Senegal a renewable energy leader within West Africa[14] , as the nation strives to expand its solar, hydro, and wind programs. This expansion should increase Senegal's renewable energy share to 40% by 2030. In January of 2025, the World Bank Group reported that Senegal had reached an 84% electricity access rate, already showing great development within the nation.

Senegal is one of the largest economies in West Africa, firmly holding the fourth highest regional GDP. While the country has not seen direct economic decline since 2015, growth has slowed beneath 2024 targets. There are two driving forces behind future economic development under Senegal2050: investment in human capital and the promotion of economic opportunity. Faye adopts the principle that focused healthcare and education reforms lead to a more productive workforce. A healthier and well-educated society is one that can take on the task of leading Africa into a more globalized age. The youth of Senegal have fought for economic opportunity both within and outside of Dakar. With educational reforms boosting the workforce of infrastructure, healthcare, and energy programs, the opportunity to find a worthwhile career will be substantial. A nation full of opportunities is what Senegal wants to build, one that the young people that back PASTEF will thrive in.

Senegal is looking towards the future as the young nation aims to build itself up to be an example of African development. Behind the youngest democratically elected leader in Africa Senegal is looking to quickly work on infrastructure throughout rural areas, clean energy development, and human capital investment. Bassirou Diomaye Faye's Senegal2050 plan strives to create a Senegal prime for a new age in Africa, one in which it will be a leader.



ORBAN'S HUNGARY

Its Danger to NATO Through a Historical Lens

By Cole Kinley: Cole is a junior History & Political Science major at Clemson University.

On November 11th, 1918, an armistice was signed which ended the First World War, effectively dissolving the dual monarchy of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Post-war treaties, guided by pre-war promises, carved up the Imperial domain, gifting some portions to the victors (i.e., Italy and Romania) and others to newly independent nations (i.e., Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia). One such agreement, the Treaty of Trianon, stripped the Kingdom of Hungary (a sovereign state within the dual monarchy) of around two-thirds of its pre-war territory. As a result, nearly three-fifths of its pre-war population, which was mostly Hungarian, became subjects of non-Hungarian governments, effectively making them ethnic minorities. Trianon, a national embarrassment, came to define Hungarian politics during the interwar period, and eventually in the modern day.

After the war, Hungary was thrown into chaos by various revolutions and subsequent foreign interventions. Eventually, order was restored, and an authoritarian nationalist regime established under former Admiral and elected Regent Miklos Horthy. (Although, Horthy's 'election,' was neither free nor fair, since it was achieved through intimidation tactics carried out by the pro-Horthy military, and the exclusion of major left-wing parties in parliament). The Horthy Government's foreign policy was characterized by aggressive irredentism and an affinity for Europe's fascist powers. These policies served the ultimate goal of restoring 'Greater Hungary,' or the Kingdom's pre-war condition. Although, it would be mistaken to attribute Hungary's pro-fascist leanings to some sort of ideological kinship. Horthy himself was more an anti-radical conservative who oversaw the oppression of Hungarian fascist movements, and had aligned with Italy and Germany because they too were dissatisfied with post-war borders and sought to redress their grievances. Hungary's alignment also strengthened economic ties to Europe's fascist powers, since, in 1934, it jointly established the Rome Protocols (which fostered cooperation with Italy and Austria), and entered into a trade treaty with Germany. Generally speaking, Hungary's foreign policy was fairly pragmatic and attempted to balance between achieving its irredentist goals and avoiding a war with the Western powers - particularly Britain, as Horthy was a devout Anglophile. Horthy's staunchly pro-British stance was largely a result of British support for Hungary on the international stage. As Hungarian historians Iván Bernard and György Ránki explain, "Britain did extend a certain amount of foreign political support to Horthy," which resulted, "in Hungary winning membership in the League of Nations and also a loan from the League." As seen in the quote, this positive relationship contributed to post-war economic growth, as it provided financial support through international loans. Due to this, and the strengthening of the Horthy regime, the internal situation stabilized. As a result, foreign direct investment naturally flowed into Hungary, which contributed to further development.

However, the Horthy Government was uncompromising in its opposition to the Soviet Union, as to many, it represented the past communist revolutions that threw Hungary into disarray. Anti-communist sentiment contributed to Hungary's partnership with Germany and Italy, as they were seen as capable of defending them against Soviet aggression. Nevertheless, in the years prior to the Second World War, Hungary's alignment with the Axis powers (which became official after its signing of the Anti-Comintern Pact in 1939, and Tripartite Pact in 1940) proved to be beneficial, as it managed to reclaim some lost territories: through German arbitration, Hungary gained parts of Slovakia and Transylvania, regions it had historically controlled. But, Hungary's balancing act between territorial expansion and Western appeasement came toppling down upon its invasion of Yugoslavia in 1941, which prompted Britain to break diplomatic ties and eventually declare war. This challenging feature of nationalism is apparent in modern day Hungary.

After the Axis defeat, the conservative Horthy regime was replaced by a communist one, effectively making Hungary a Soviet puppet. Despite subjugation, nationalist sentiments remained strong and would violently flare up in an unsuccessful 1956 uprising. This revolution, while short-lived, greatly demonstrates the presence of anti-foreign attitudes. This has proved to be a dominating factor in contemporary Hungarian politics. Following 1956, after decades of oppression, the Soviet Union collapsed, leaving Hungary to establish a liberal democracy. Furthermore, Hungary became a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1999. This move guaranteed protection in a post-Cold War world and aligned the newly freed nation with the West, since the alliance maintains a mutual defense pact among member states. Yet, it did not take long for authoritarianism to take hold, as in recent years, Hungarian democracy has been undermined by the current Prime Minister: Viktor Orban.

Mr. Orban, a self-proclaimed nationalist and defender of Christian values, has steadfastly criticized international organizations such as NATO and the European Union despite continued Hungarian membership in them. This comes as a surprise since, during his first term, Orban strongly supported Hungarian entry into NATO. Yet, today, in an effort to offset 'globalist influence,' he has espoused pro-Russian sentiments, especially after Putin's invasion of Ukraine. Furthermore, his strategic use of irredentist symbols (i.e., Greater Hungary, Trianon), has also served to rally public support in his crusade against globalism. While there are key differences, Orban's nationalistic governing style mirrors that of his interwar predecessor, Miklos Horthy, which is especially apparent in the realm of foreign policy. As history indicates, a recurring theme in nationalist regimes is a willingness to exercise a fairly flexible foreign policy (although this notion solely applies to purely nationalist regimes and not those attached to a radical ideology - i.e., Fascism, Communism, etc. - which would make them more inclined towards idealism). The core goal of nationalism is to ensure the general welfare of the native population by securing their interests abroad. Nationalists throughout history have achieved this goal through various ways, but have almost always remained committed to navigating the rough waters of international politics pragmatically. For a nationalist regime, this means maintaining strong connections with most, if not all, major international players, which usually vie for power between one another. In doing so, it attempts to play all sides, enjoying the benefits of associating with both. While this strategy is effective in peacetime, during a large-scale

"...in an effort to offset 'globalist influence' he has espoused pro-Russian sentiments."

conflict, a nationalist government may be pressured into taking a clear, definite stance. The aforementioned example of the Horthy regime during the 1940s best demonstrates the difficulty of the nationalist balancing act. Ultimately, Horthy's desire to maintain positive relations with Great Britain, while aggressively expanding through Axis cooperation, came into direct conflict, forcing him to make a polarizing decision.

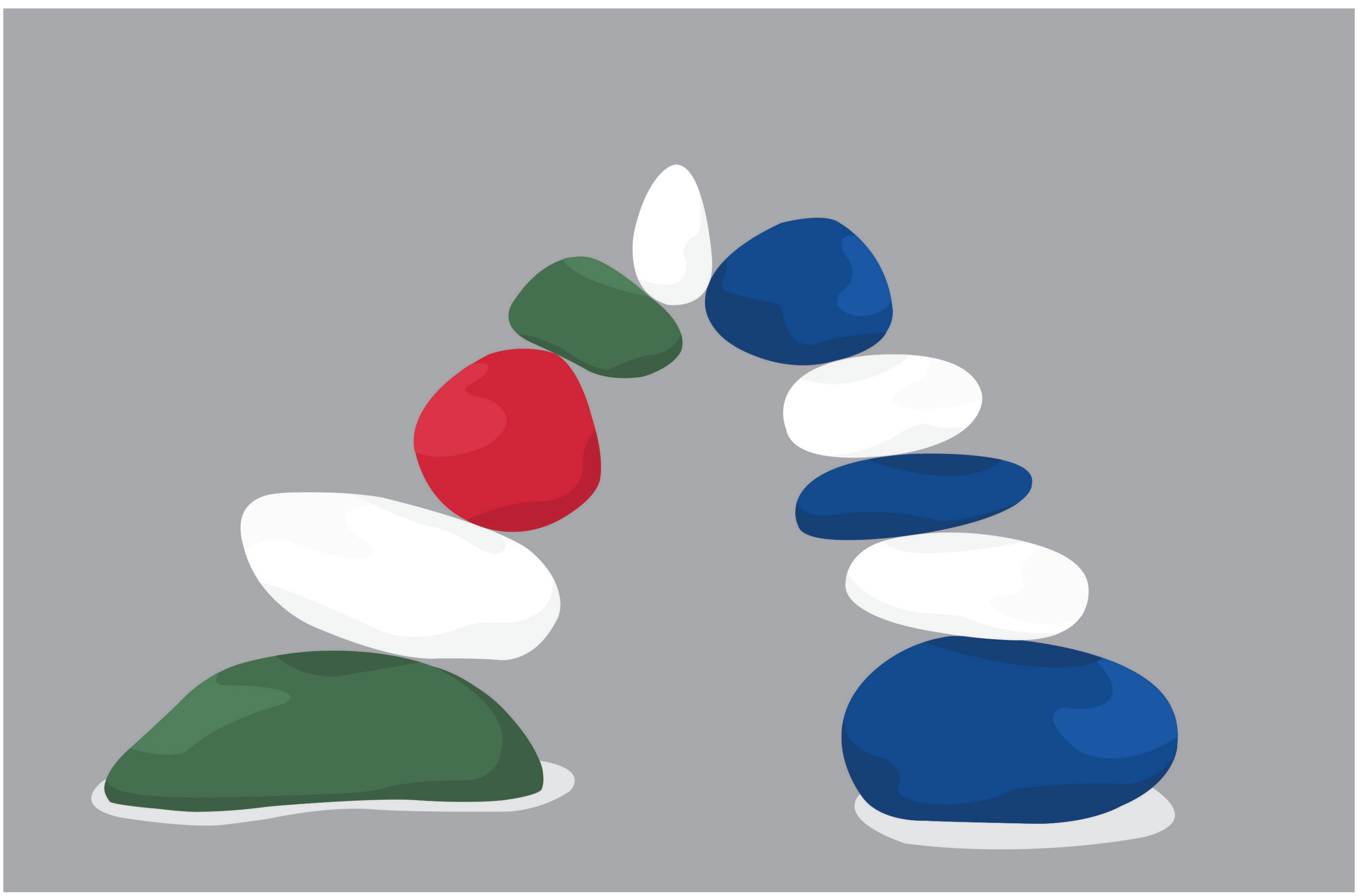
Along with this, it is typical of nationalists to rapidly adjust to any perceived changes in the global balance of power. To cite a previously used example, during the inter-war period, Hungary attempted to secure national interests by maintaining positive relations with all major powers, barring the Soviet Union. Yet, after the Munich Agreement in 1938, which showcased Western weakness to German aggression, Hungary shifted more towards the Axis. This trend continued with the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia the following year, which Hungary directly benefited from, as it acquired some of its pre-war territories (however, it had gained some of its historical holdings, like southern Slovakia, prior to 1939). By November 1940, its signing of the Tripartite Pact, making it an official Axis member, was likely prompted by the German conquest of mainland Europe, a clear display of dominance. While Hungary attempted to maintain its relationship with Britain, a Western power, up until the invasion of Yugoslavia, it progressively became more aligned with Germany as war drew closer and eventually broke out.

While these examples indicate the often-pragmatic nature of nationalist states, such regimes have also tended to designate clearly defined enemies, which they uncompromisingly attack. For Miklos Horthy, it was the Red Menace to the East. The European Union (EU), or the 'Bureaucrats in Brussels,' are the primary enemy of contemporary Hungary, according to Viktor Orban. Mr. Obran has repeatedly railed against the organization, claiming it represents the excesses of globalism. In theory, his criticism is consistent with nationalism since the ideology argues that international organizations encroach on the sovereignty of independent nations. In reality, Orban's criticism is a clear display of political grandstanding meant to rile up core supporters. Furthermore, it pushes an image that depicts Orban as a defender of traditional values who protects against the transgressions of foreign influence and Western globalist culture. Despite his fiery rhetoric, Orban has maintained Hungarian membership in the EU, as leaving would exclude the small, landlocked nation from a host of economic benefits.

Though Orban has been unwilling to take a hard-line stance against his self-designated globalist enemy, his foreign policy has shown similarities to previously outlined characteristics of nationalism. These similarities have become especially apparent following the outbreak of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, as Hungary attempts to secure its interests by reaping the benefits of supporting Russia while maintaining membership in the EU and NATO. For example, after the invasion, much of the EU embargoed Russian oil imports. Hungary, an outlier, continues to import oil, which has helped finance the Russian war effort. While Orban's refusal to embargo Russian oil may seem as a display of Hungary's defiant will, the underlying motivations behind this move are purely economic. Like many European nations, Hungary was heavily reliant on Russian energy, and any embargo would have disastrous effects on its economy. Yet, as Hungary continued purchasing oil, it also advocated for additional funding for renewable energy from the EU. In doing so, it sought to promote national interests by maintaining relative economic independence without risking an economic disaster. As Csaba Marosvari, a high-ranking Hungarian energy official, explains, "You don't put all your eggs in one basket, this is true of natural gas supply as well," and although, "they [the Russians] are reliable... this does not mean we have to stick to one single source, so we have been conducting a diversification strategy for supply." As indicated in the quote, a core goal of nationalism is to establish a strong, self-sufficient national economy. Ultimately, this is achieved by balancing the interests of two global powers, Russia and the West.

A contributing factor to Orban's pro-Russian sympathies, which starkly contrasts the consensus of other NATO members, is his view on Europe's balance of power. Orban asserts that the ongoing war in Ukraine was a result of Western interference, rather than Russian irredentism. In his world view, Orban's ideal Ukraine is perpetually non-aligned, therefore acting as a buffer zone between Russia and the West. By maintaining Ukrainian neutrality, the balance of power in Europe would remain undisturbed, therefore ensuring regional peace. Yet, according to Orban, this balance was disrupted by Western attempts to integrate Ukraine into the globalist sphere of influence, represented through organizations like the EU and NATO. In a speech, Orban expressed his views regarding the Russian invasion, stating, "The war is not really about Ukraine, it is about the fact that the territory called Ukraine - which has been a buffer zone, a buffer state, between NATO and Russia - should be brought under the auspices of NATO." The threat of Western expansionism into Ukraine prompted Putin to invade, therefore empowering Russia's position internationally. In accordance with this self-perceived shift, Orban has taken an increasingly pro-Russian stance, so that he can potentially act as a mediator between the two conflicting sides. To Orban, the ideal outcome for this diplomatic maneuver is to raise Hungary's standing on the international totem pole, a core goal of any nationalist regime.

So, what threat does nationalist Hungary pose to NATO, to which it is a member of? Well, NATO is an organization founded on clearly-defined ideals, to which Orban sorely lacks. One such ideal is mutual defense, meaning that if one member state is under attack, the entire alliance will come to its defense. This concept blatantly clashes with the nationalist agenda, which usually seeks to avoid large-scale conflicts, as they isolate potential economic partners. In regard to Hungary, there are concerns over whether it would protect its allies in a hypothetical war against Russian aggression. Now that we have identified this issue, we must ask the question - How will NATO be able to resolve this issue? In my conversation with Dr. Alex Honeker, a Lecturer in Political Science at Clemson University, he clearly outlined potential solutions. As he explains, while there are no official mechanisms to punish Hungary, there are various ways to do so outside the bounds of the organization. These measures include breaking off diplomatic ties, and imposing economic sanctions. If all NATO countries carried out punitive action against Hungary, and presented a clear enough danger to its economic interests, this may be enough to make Orban realize his balancing act has come to an end. While the government's undemocratic nature is certainly concerning, NATO's primary concern is to guarantee it has reliable military allies. Furthermore, it is unbecoming of the organization to pressure democratic change, as an anti-foreign Hungarian public may view its efforts with skepticism. This would then do more harm than good, and only strengthen Orban's regime. If democracy is to come to Hungary, it would have to come from the streets of Budapest, not from the offices of foreign leaders.



Spring 2025 Writing Contest

WINNERS

Prompt: What is something you are passionate about, and why does it matter to people around the world?

1ST Elizabeth Caldwell

A few misplaced nucleotides. A glitch in my genome. That was all it took to redefine me—to diagnose the limits of my existence. An identity handed to me not with pride but with pity. A mark that set me apart and made me less than, something others were taught to be grateful not to be. For years, I choked on the word meant for me and swallowed it like a curse. How could I be good when the name for what I am was spoken in hushed tones, wrapped in stigma, tangled in misunderstanding, softened to make others comfortable? I am disabled.

But the more I lived, the more I realized that disabled is not a bad word. It is not brokenness, not a tragedy, not something to be erased. It is identity. It is community. It is resilience, forged in a world never meant for us—an us that includes one in six people worldwide. The world was not built in a day, but how much time, how much suffering, must we endure before we decide to rebuild what was broken from the start?

Accessibility is the bridge between what is and what should be. It is the ramp beside the stairs, the captions on a screen, the braille on an elevator button—present yet unseen by those who do not depend on it to navigate the world. It is belonging, not as an afterthought, but as a foundation woven into workplaces, classrooms, and friendships. It is freedom, dignity, and the radical truth that no one should have to fight for the right to exist in a world that was always theirs.

The barriers disabled people face are not inevitable; they are choices. A child who cannot access their school because there is no ramp is not disabled by their wheelchair, but by a world that refuses to make space. Maybe disability is bad—but only because of what society makes it. But imagine a different world.

Imagine schools that see disabled students not as burdens, but as brilliant minds with unique ways of learning. Imagine opportunities where doors never slam shut. Imagine a world where no one must fight to prove they belong—where every person, regardless of birthplace or ability, is welcomed without question.

To create a world without barriers is to believe in something bigger than ourselves. To understand that accessibility is not a favor, but a fundamental right. To accept that disability is not an "other," but an intrinsic part of the human experience—one that any of us may join at any time.

Disabled is not a bad word. It is history and culture, activism and art. It is millions of people, fighting every day—not to be fixed, but to be seen, heard, and valued. Looking back, I am proud to say: I am disabled. Because when we fight for accessibility, we do not fight for some. We fight for all. A world without barriers is not just better for disabled people. It is better for everyone.

2ND Eliza Haines

The Ultimate Sport:

Anjona Majhi grew up as the eldest daughter of a single parent home in the Balijan Tea Estate, in Assam, India. She never had time for herself as a child because she was always looking after her younger sister and her father. One day, she was introduced to a sport. At the same time, 8000 miles away, in Clemson, SC, I was a burnt-out former high school athlete being introduced to the same sport. That sport taught both of us how to advocate for ourselves and is helping women around the world take on leadership positions in their communities. That sport is ultimate.

Ultimate, sometimes called ultimate frisbee, is a noncontact sport consisting of players passing a disc from one teammate to another with the goal of scoring in one end zone. The sport has a special twist that makes it the perfect sport to build self-confidence and leadership skills among its players: it is self-refereed.

The foundation of ultimate is "Spirit of the Game." This is the idea that players are responsible for upholding the rules and it emphasizes fairness and mutual respect. Let's say Anjona catches the disc in the end zone, but I, her competitor, believe that she actually landed out of bounds. We would discuss our viewpoints and come to an agreement before gameplay could resume. Learning how to play ultimate in accordance with the Spirit of the Game teaches a player how to stand up for herself, to explain her perspective, and to peacefully resolve conflict.

Anjona and I were both wary on our respective first days at ultimate frisbee practice. My previous experience with sports had been a powder keg of pressure and the constant need for perfection. Anjona had never played a sport before in her life. We both left the field at the end of that first day with huge smiles on our faces. Anjona had learned what it feels like to run and jump. I had learned what it feels like to run and jump on my own terms, without the expectations of coaches and the American system of high school sports to weigh me down. The unique spirit of ultimate allowed both of us to develop leadership skills like problem-solving and conflict-resolution. Now, I am the club president of Clemson's women's ultimate frisbee team. Anjona became the first coach of Playquity, an ultimate frisbee coaching program that empowersgirls to develop their athletic skills, confidence, empathy, and communication.

Anjona said, "before learning frisbee, I did not speak much. Now, I know that if I make a mistake that I am learning and can take responsibility and move forward." The women of the global ultimate community, including Anjona and I, know what it means to make our voices heard. We have the confidence to make a call on the playing field, and we have the communication skills to navigate disputes. We have the ability to become leaders in our communities. We owe it all to ultimate.

HONORABLE MENTION

Seabrook Easterling

The world would not be the same without classic books - they provide the reader with a respite from everyday life, a reunion with beloved characters, and a rally to grasp new ideals. Classic books are the railroad that connect the modern reader with the timeless chronicles and wisdom of the past.

My mother instilled the value of reading in me from an early age by taking me on weekly field trips with my sisters to the main library. In the children's section, the flip of thick gloss paper, the watercolor illustrations, and the poignant words were magical to me. My library card would be maxed out at the end of most library visits. As I have gotten older, I have become passionate about reading the classics, especially historical fiction books. The quality of writing is simply unmatched. Reading classic novels has exposed me to rich language, which has expanded and polished my vernacular vocabulary and has translated to a sharper writing skill.

One of my favorite books is Anne of Green Gables; I remember reading the story for the first time and instantaneously resonating with Anne's famous line that although she makes mistakes often, she "never makes the same mistake twice." Her cheery, tenacious character mirrored my optimistic outlook on life, particularly on my speech. I have wrestled with a stammer throughout middle and high school, and I was inspired by Anne's resilient demeanor to display courage in difficult situations and view each day as a fresh opportunity to practice fluency. Another favorite book of mine is Understood Betsy, which follows a young girl's metamorphosis to discovering her own abilities in school and daily tasks as she begins to consider the world for herself and be curious. Both of the heroines in these books share my love for learning and have encouraged me in my efforts to overcome my speech-impediment.

Additionally, classic novels contain moving stories with enduring influence; historical fiction stories supply context for the countless other books, movies, and other media that reference classic books.

Classic books are meaningful and rewarding to everyone around the world, as their powerful stories become personal when they put to words what we sometimes can't; classic books challenge readers with a thoughtful perspective and gift readers with kindred spirits.

PAVED WITH PROMISES OR POTHOLES

China's Infrastructure Gambit in East Africa

By Molly Schweickhardt: Molly is a sophomore Historic Preservation and Community Planning & Urban Studies major at the College of Charleston.

"要想富，先修路:" If you want to be wealthy, build roads first. This Chinese proverb defines China's growing influence in East Africa, where new infrastructure development promises economic transformation of the region. But underneath this progress lies a question: is this a road to African prosperity, or a path towards Chinese neocolonialism within the African continent? In 2013, President Xi Jinping developed the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to secure more trade routes that are not controlled by Western powers. China understood that its rapid infrastructure development would be extremely beneficial for developing countries in dire need of more roads, railways, ports, and airports. East Africa faces a huge transportation infrastructure deficit, which makes the cost of doing business within this region relatively high compared to other regional blocs in Africa. To boost global competitiveness and integrate regional economies, East Africa turned towards China to invest in the transport sector. As East Africa becomes a focal point within Africa for Chinese investments, the BRI presents both opportunities and risk throughout the region. While China aims to bridge the infrastructure gap and foster intra-regional trade, it also raises concerns of debt trap diplomacy and asset seizure of infrastructure projects by the Chinese government, creating an opportunity for China to exert itself as a neocolonial force within the continent.

Before European imperialism in Africa, 19th century precolonial East Africa maintained a complex network of vernacular infrastructure through footpaths that allowed for trade locally and regionally. However, the European "Scramble for Africa" in the late 1800s destroyed these communities' self-determination, as demonstrated by the Berlin Conference of 1885, which divided up the continent between European colonizing nations. Since the primary goal of European colonization was to extract as much raw material as possible at the lowest price, they developed extractive railway networks by redirecting all trade to the international export market through connecting resource rich areas and coastal ports. The investment into the railways was massive: they were often the largest expenditure in colonial budgets, amounting to around one third of total expenditures. To put this in perspective, about 90% of African railroad lines were built before independence. While most of these railroad lines are now inactive, cities built around them remain economically dependent on western markets, even 65 years after independence, as roads built to replace the railways are still oriented towards international trade. Therefore, China is seeking to gain global and political power by remedying the broken system left by European imperialism in East Africa. China is not investing in East African infrastructure out of pure kindness, but rather as a beneficial investment in trade relationships to extract natural resources out of the region to support China's consumer population. Sound familiar? If China reflects past colonial entities within the region, why would East African nations agree to implement BRI initiatives within their country?

One of the key differences in Chinese infrastructure development and past-colonial development, is that China reflects a Pan-African approach to railway and road networks. Instead of domineering the country's economy and building roads that aim to satisfy the needs of international exports, China collaborates with a country's government to build regional trade routes that connect cities and countries together. As early as the 1970s, China was building the Tazara railway to connect the Zambian town of Kapiri Mposhi and Dar es Salaam, a port in Tanzania.1 This network allowed Zambia to ship copper to Tanzania, bypassing then white-ruled Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa. This railway emphasizes two key points in Chinese infrastructure development in East Africa; prioritizing building connections between African countries, and developing trade routes no longer dependent on western powers, allowing them to become less dependent on their colonial past. This Pan-African vision of "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa" is supported by the East African Community (EAC), which encourages East African nations to build infrastructure that prioritizes intra-regional expansion which will boost East Africa's trading position in the global market by strengthening their voice in global trade negotiations.

Another reason why these countries are looking towards China is simply how fast Chinese companies can develop railways and roads. The Nairobi Expressway in Kenya was built in just three years by the China Road and Bridge Corporation. The Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway within Kenya was built in just three years by the same company. The Mbamba Bay Port in Tanzania is anticipated to be completed in just 2 years. While the average infrastructure project funded by China takes around 3 years to complete,

> **"...a beneficial investment in trade relationships to extract natural resources out of the region to support China's consumer population."**

similar projects funded by the World Bank and other western development organizations, take around 5 to 10 years to complete. Therefore, China's rapid development of intra-regional infrastructure seems like an ideal alternative to western countries' infrastructure investments, which usually take longer to develop due to complex regulations and risk aversions.

While there are many positives of the Belt and Road Initiative, it is important to recognize the potential risks of this Sino-African partnership. As China continues to invest in Africa, western leaders have grown anxious about Chinese debt-trap diplomacy. The excessive borrowing from China to fund infrastructure projects could lead to unsustainable debt, giving China leverage over the borrowing country. Chinese infrastructure projects also often lay critical due diligence by the wayside as there are issues with transparency on the Chinese end. Financial sustainability, environmental sustainability, and checks on working conditions are never done, poorly managed, not transparent, or not visible to the public. Due to this lack of transparency, many countries take on projects that they thought would be affordable but leave them saddled by debt. Kenya's estimated \$3.6 billion Chinese-sponsored railway network connecting Mombasa to Nairobi, cost 4.6 billion dollars and took longer to complete than expected. In just three years of operation, the railroad lost \$200 million and compelled Kenya into sustaining substantial debts to China.

Concerns over asset seizure have also arisen due to rising debt, as is for example by Sri Lanka's recent forfeiture of port rights. The Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka could not repay BRI debts, leading to Chinese seizure of the port for 99 years. However, Chinese investment greatly varies. To better understand this, let us observe the Nairobi Expressway, a 27-kilometer toll road in Kenya that connects the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport to Nairobi's city center. This highway showcases the common terms and conditions of Chinese investments through public-private partnership (PPP). The project was largely financed by the China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC), which received loans for the project by state-run Chinese banks. These investments in infrastructure projects are structured to generate revenue to ensure that loans are repaid over time, which in this case is ensured by tolls along the highway. So, while the Kenyan government is not directly responsible for paying back the loan, they oversee guaranteeing toll revenues, which is used by the CRBC to repay debt from Chinese banks. However, if the highways under perform, the Kenyan government does take some responsibility in helping pay back the Chinese banks. If the loans are repaid after the agreed time of 27 years, the highway will be transferred from the CRBC to the Kenyan government. While the Nairobi Expressway is not representative of every BRI deal throughout Africa, it gives great insight on how China invests into infrastructure development through PPP.

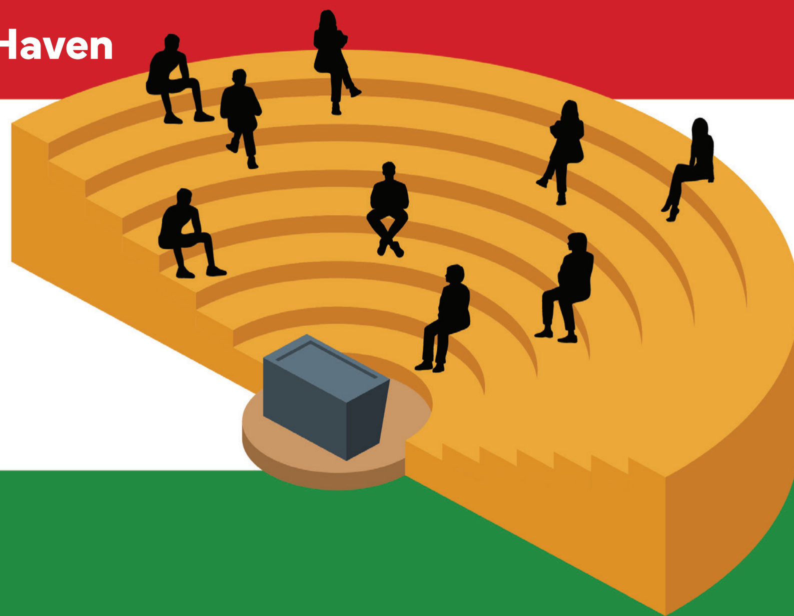
So, what happens if loans are not repaid at the agreed time? Will the Chinese government take control of the infrastructure like what happened in Sri Lanka? Probably not. While every investment is different, and while it would be foolhardy to say it could never happen, it's important to recognize China's broader diplomatic strategy within East Africa where they aim to become long-term trading partners through increased influence rather than direct control. Therefore, China uses other strategies such as extending the repayment period and forgiving non-interest loans to extend their influence. From 2000-2019 China forgave $3.4 billion and restructured $15 billion of loans within Africa, emphasizing Beijing's dispensation towards African countries.

While China expresses more leniency through easing financial burdens, extending the payment period means that Chinese owned companies have control over a major piece of infrastructure within a given country for a longer period. While it is not the Chinese government that directly owns the highway, railway, or port, it's important to remember that these private companies within China develop strong relationships with the state, altering Chinese influence in foreign policy objectives within East Africa.

Chinese influence is not restricted to just East Africa: at the time of writing this article, 53 African countries now have a partnership with China's Belt and Road Initiative. Globally, 150 countries are now in partnership with the BRI, and China aims to expand into Central and South America. As western countries are shifting more to political conservatism hostile to foreign investment, China is in the prime position to fill the potential power vacuum left by the United States and its European allies. As China pledges to complete 30 cross-border infrastructure projects in Africa by 2027, now is the key time to understand how Chinese investment can shift the world order. Only time will tell if China successfully dethrones old colonizing nations to form a new neo-colonial power within the continent, using economic and political pressure to influence African nations, all paved through infrastructure investment.

ROJAVA

An Anarchist's Hidden Haven



By Kirti Reddy: Kirti is a sophomore Political Science major at the College of Charleston.

When people think of the Middle East, a wide array of images come to mind: the scent of saffron and sumac drifting through bustling bazaars, ancient ruins standing resilient against time, and the golden domes of mosques glinting in the sun. Some picture the sweeping dunes of the Arabian Desert, the towering peaks of the Zagros Mountains, or the turquoise waters of the Mediterranean lapping against the shores of Lebanon. Others, however, conjure a darker narrative: petro-dictatorships, repressive regimes, endless cycles of war, and theocracies wielding unchecked power. The Middle East is a place of contradiction, a region where modernity and tradition coexist, where cultures interweave, and where resistance movements emerge against all odds.

In the plains, hills, and mountains where Turkey, Iraq, and Syria meet, there exists a movement capable of shattering these preconceived notions. When you first hear about it, you may wonder- how have I never heard of this before? The movement is Rojava, Kurdish for "the West," formally known as the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES). A society built on principles of direct democracy, feminism, and cooperative economics, Rojava is one of the most radical political experiments in modern history. For anarchists, it represents something even more astonishing: proof that anarchy is not just a utopian dream - but a tangible reality.

Though the Western world may see Rojava as an anarchist, purists might hesitate at the label. Rojava's political structure is heavily rooted in democratic confederalism, a system developed by Abdullah Öcalan, the founder of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). While imprisoned in Turkey since 1999, Öcalan transitioned from a traditional Marxist-Leninist approach to an ideology rejecting the state altogether. Influenced by Murray Bookchin's theory of social ecology, Öcalan envisioned a stateless, decentralized society where power flowed from the bottom up rather than the top down. His writings transformed the Kurdish liberation movement, shifting it from nationalist separatism to a broader fight for direct democracy, gender equality, and ecological sustainability.

While democratic confederalism shares much with anarchism - both reject the state, oppose hierarchies, and advocate for grassroots governance

- Öcalan's model is distinct in that it still allows for formal organizational structures. Unlike anarchist movements that often struggle with maintaining cohesion, Rojava functions through a confederation of local councils, communes, and assemblies, ensuring that decisions are made collectively while avoiding complete fragmentation.

One of the greatest criticisms anarchists face is the question of functionality: without a centralized authority, how does anything actually get done? Rojava provides a compelling answer. Governance starts at the communal level, where assemblies of 30 to 400 households make local decisions. These communes then feed into district councils, which handle issues that affect multiple neighborhoods. At the highest level is the People's Council of West Kurdistan (MGRK), responsible for coordinating efforts across the region.

Unlike traditional states, power is not concentrated in a single governing body. Instead, Rojava functions through key administrative areas that include governance, defense, economics, politics, civil society, justice, and ideology. Women's voices are non-negotiable: councils must be at least 40% women, and autonomous women's committees have veto power over decisions that affect them. Rojava's militias, the People's Protection Units (YPG) and the Women's Protection Units (YPJ), function as decentralized militias rather than a standing army, providing defense against ISIS and Turkish-backed forces. The economy operates through cooperative models that reject both capitalism and state socialism, instead emphasizing worker-owned businesses, bartering systems, and communal resource management. Justice is rooted in reconciliation rather than incarceration, focusing on mediation to resolve disputes. Political education is woven into daily governance, ensuring that the movement's principles remain deeply embedded in its structures.

Despite rejecting the state, Rojava cannot escape the realities of geopolitics. In theory, anarchism advocates for complete autonomy from state structures, yet Rojava has had to engage with both the United States and Russia to ensure its survival. The U.S. partnered with Rojava not because of ideological alignment, but out of military necessity. When ISIS began its brutal expansion across Syria and Iraq, few forces were as effective in resisting them as Rojava's militias. The battle of Kobanî (2014–2015) was a defining moment- Rojava's fighters, particularly the YPJ, led a successful

"Despite rejecting the state, Rojava **cannot escape** the realities of geopolitics."

defense against ISIS, drawing international attention. Seeing their effectiveness, the U.S. provided weapons and air support, and Rojava's forces were rebranded as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to broaden their appeal to Western allies. However, this relationship was purely tactical- when the Trump administration withdrew U.S. troops from northern Syria in 2019, Turkey immediately launched an invasion, displacing over 100,000 Kurds and threatening to dismantle Rojava's autonomy.

Turkey's hostility toward Rojava is deeply rooted in its fear of an empowered Kurdish movement. The Turkish government has long viewed any form of Kurdish autonomy as a threat, fearing that it could inspire similar aspirations among its own Kurdish population. By framing Rojava's administration as an extension of the PKK, which Turkey classifies as a terrorist organization, the Turkish state has justified multiple incursions into northern Syria under the pretext of securing its borders.

Russia, on the other hand, has acted as a mediator between Rojava and the Assad regime. While Moscow has not officially recognized Rojava, it has used its influence to negotiate ceasefires and territorial agreements. This leaves Rojava in a precarious position: it must balance engagement with state actors while remaining ideologically committed to statelessness. This paradox is the central challenge of Rojava's existence- a movement built on rejecting state power must still navigate a world governed by states' power.

For many anarchists, Rojava is the closest thing to a living anarchist society the modern world has seen. Anthropologist David Graeber compared it to the Spanish Civil War's anarchist communes, calling it "one of the most extraordinary revolutions in history." Debbie Bookchin, daughter of Murray Bookchin, described it as "a breathtaking experiment in grassroots democracy." Even Noam Chomsky, typically reserved in endorsing revolutionary projects, acknowledged that Rojava is "of historic significance."

Yet, there are lingering questions. Can Rojava survive external pressures from Turkey, Syria, and international powers? Can it maintain its revolutionary ideals in the face of militarization and compromise? Critics argue that Rojava's reliance on military structures contradicts anarchist principles, while others worry that foreign alliances may dilute its vision. But one fact remains clear: Rojava has already proven that another world is possible. It has shattered the notion that stateless societies cannot function in the modern age, and regardless of its future, its impact on an anarchist's imagination or a stateless future is undeniable.

Rojava is not a perfect anarchist utopia, but it is something just as powerful- a real-world challenge to the idea that anarchy can never work. And that, in itself, is revolutionary.

UNIONS LOBBYISTS AND MORE

Collective Action and International Prosperity

By Owen Eastman: Owen is a junior History & Economics major at Clemson University.

Most political and economic theories assume that stability is an invaluable good—that nations thrive when their institutions are predictable, their policies consistent, and their governance uninterrupted by upheaval. This belief underpins much of modern political discourse, where long-established governments are presumed to have a natural advantage over younger, less stable organizations. American economist Mancur Olson's 1982 book, The Rise and Fall of Nations, operates under a simple thesis contrary to this notion, with striking ramifications. Over forty years after its publication, Olson's framework remains compelling for analyzing fluctuations in international politics, but his claims are worth reevaluating in the wake of both new historical and social evidence. Modern economic and technological transformations complicate his claims, though, raising new questions about the relationship between stability, interest groups, and national prosperity.

Olson's analysis mainly centers around bargaining collectives, and how easy or difficult it is for them to arise in a particular scenario. Olson defines a "bargaining collective" as any sort of organization which seeks to gain some sort of common good- a broad definition which Olson applies to everything from labor unions to industry lobbies to community interest groups. Not all potential collectives actually form, though, as costs in organization or information may be prohibitive. If a group only contains a few members who can easily identify each other and create enforcement mechanisms for cooperation, it is relatively easy to form a bargaining unit and mutually benefit at the expense of others. Groups like these, Olson contends, do not create wealth but instead attempt to redistribute existing wealth to their benefit. If the costs of a particular policy are diffuse against a population of, for instance, one million voters, but all of its benefits are concentrated in a coalition of five oligarchs, then there is little incentive for the one million to fight against a marginally small loss, and great incentive for the oligarchs to pursue the policy. Many of these small costs can add up and make an economy greatly inefficient, as time that could be spent creating wealth is instead spent trying to redistribute existing wealth.

With this framework in mind, Olson attempts to explain why countries succeed or fail on both a national and international level. Counterintuitively, Olson's argument suggests that, rather than fostering efficiency, long-term stability enables the gradual accumulation of "distributional coalitions"—lobbyists, industries, and bureaucracies—that prioritize profit-seeking over economic dynamism. In contrast, societies emerging from upheaval, like Germany or Japan after World War II, can experience rapid growth precisely because they lack these entrenched coalitions, so long as their overarching legal institutions are strong. Olson cites figures from this era, noting that a survey in 1971 found that only 19% of community associations in Japan and 24% in West Germany were formed prior to 1939, compared to the relatively economically stagnant Britain (51%) and France (37%).

Olson's focus on how entrenched interest groups hinder progress resonates especially with those concerned about growing inequality in Western society. Since the publication of Olson's book, a particularly strong example of this would be the influence of the financial industry in shaping economic policies and gridlock in relatively older political systems. As part of the New Economy push in the 1990s – so-called because of its shift in emphasis from manufacturing to the "idea economy"-- international financial institutions were able to exert pressure on the Clinton administration to manage the economy less vigorously. Many of the advisory forces on Clinton's Council of Economic Advisors held significant private interests: Secretary of the Treasury Robert Rubin, for instance, had been the co-chair of financial services group Goldman Sachs, in the years immediately before his nomination. Many of the monetary and financial policies implemented by the Clinton Administration were thus friendly to private firms and were pitched to Clinton as a way to stimulate economic prosperity. While national growth rates initially increased as anticipated, overall labor productivity did not, leading to the emergence of a series of asset bubbles over the next decade from the Asian financial crisis in 1997 to the dot-com bubble burst in 2000 to the 2007-2008 international stock market crash.

It is not always the case that coalitions or interest groups can impede a country's efficiency, though. For example, one might believe that Olson would be anti-union due to the latter's frequent resistance to technological change, but Olson notes that there are particular unions that consider the total societal cost of their actions because of how large they are. Germany, for instance, has a series of federated labor unions all under the umbrella of the Confederation of Trade Unions (the "Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund," or DGB for short), and

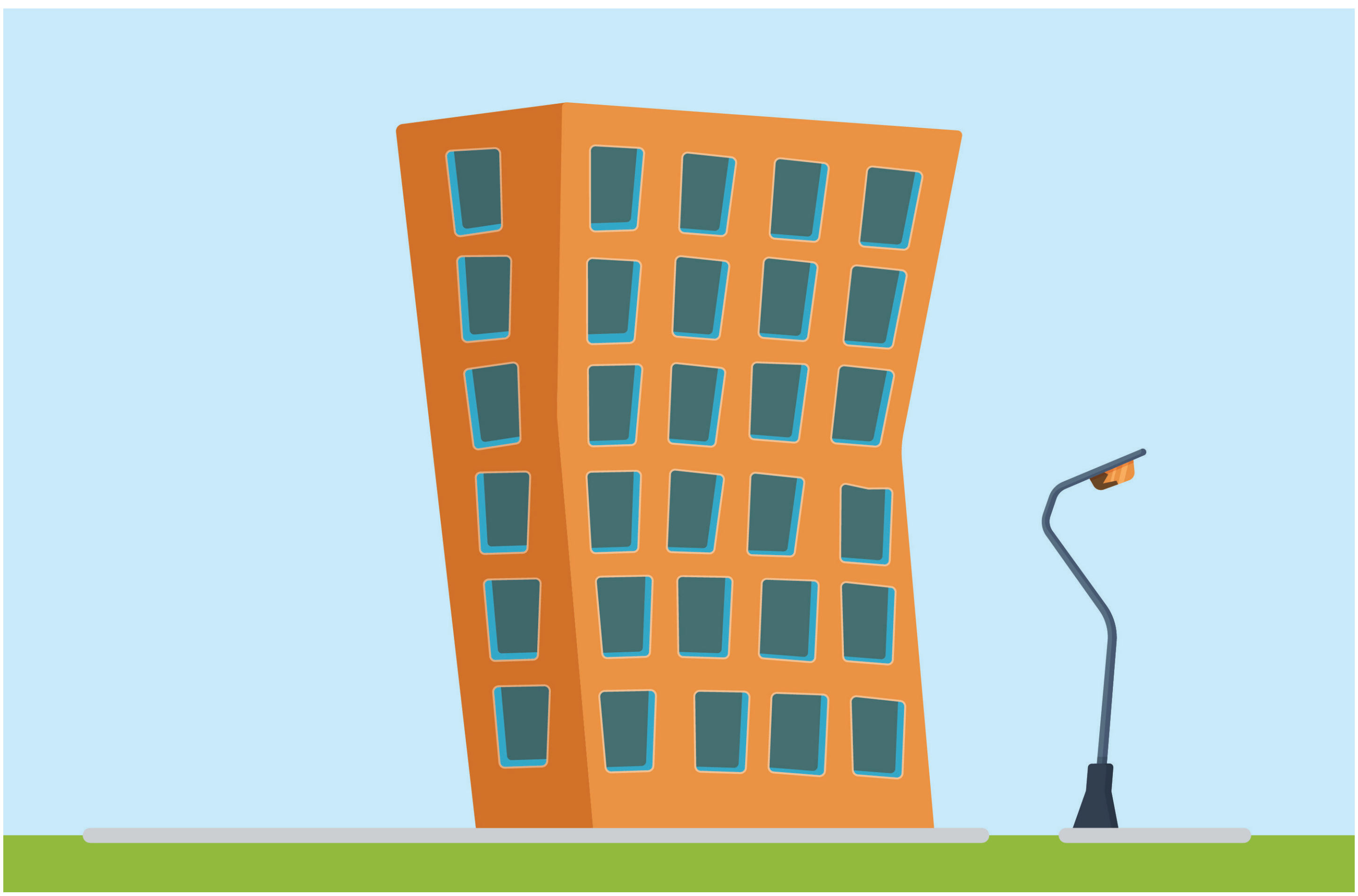
> **"He, importantly, does not consider the economic function of autocracies within this framework..."**

many of the Nordic nations have similar systems wherein unions are determined by class solidarity rather than by individual companies or professions. When these unions are sufficiently large and encompassing, their priorities shift towards pro-growth policies rather than policies that simply redistribute the existing pie: while American labor unions are often pro-tariff and seek subsidies for their particular industry, German labor unions are anti-tariff and support government policies that promote job-training and "reskilling" for all professions.

While Olson emphasizes the stagnation of democracies due to coalition-building, he, importantly, does not consider the economic function of autocracies within this framework. From what Olson says circumstantially, one might believe that autocratic abilities to sustain growth would be limited, yet some authoritarian states (e.g., China) have achieved significant growth despite having entrenched interest groups. This raises questions about whether autocracies are immune to or merely delay the effects of Olsonian dynamics. China, for instance, has subsumed many of its potentially hindering interest groups into the government apparatus, with the only union being the state-controlled All-China Federation of Trade Unions. Under Chinese law, interest groups still remain within the corporate sphere, but guardrails have been put into place to hinder the extent to which they are able to influence public funds for their own benefit. The ruling Communist Party maintains strong central control, vigorously purging interest group influences in anti-corruption campaigns: since 2012, over 2.3 million government employees have been prosecuted for accepting external bribes. Examples like these demonstrate that an authoritarian state can manage coalition-building differently than a democracy.

Another limitation to Olson's analysis is that of technology: he likely could not have anticipated the mass proliferation of the Internet, an institution which may well serve as something that helps large, diffuse coalitions form with less organization costs. The sending of real-time messages, video meetings, and internet forums-- while they do not alleviate the difficulty of getting a large group to agree on something-- lowers the cost of transporting ideas and organizing potential courses of action in the first place. For instance, the Arab Spring, a series of anti-government protests in the Middle East and Africa in the early 2010s, demonstrated that digital platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are an effective medium for mobilizing thousands rapidly without the need for hierarchical leadership. The internet, furthermore, has the power to create new economic sectors entirely outside of the control of entrenched interest groups, leading to positive disruption and overall growth in the economy. The success of the internet, however, has also created new coalitions of like-minded tech executives on all sides of the political spectrum, from liberal figures like Bill Gates and Jack Dorsey to right-wing figures like Peter Thiel and Elon Musk. The influence of these coalitions might once again raise barriers against organization, with selective content moderation policy and lobbying for more expansive control of speech.

Overall, Olson's thesis holds up quite well, but has some limitations as to its effectiveness. Even Olson had some general awareness of the limitations of any single frame of analysis: in the introduction of his book, he takes great pains to note that his theory of collective action is not a panacea for historical analysis, but a simple and effective lens for understanding a particular trend in development. By refining and qualifying his methods, we can continue to take steps forward in understanding the mechanisms of economic growth.



THE STATE OF EXCEPTION

El Salvador's Short Term Solution to a Long Term Problem

By Audrey Palmadessa: Audrey is a freshman Political Science & International Studies major at the College of Charleston.

El Salvador has been under a state of exception since March 2022. Nayib Bukele, the "world's coolest dictator" imposed the state of exception,which is an emergency action that allows the government to suspend certain civil liberties during a crisis. This is a result of high levels of gang violence in the country. Since the state of exception commenced, there have been over 80,000 arrests, and it has been extended over 30 times since it was first implemented in 2022. Although this action has significantly decreased violent crime in El Salvador, it is just a short-term remedy. The consequences of the state of exception go much further than just the gang members that have been imprisoned. Women and children are more vulnerable to different kinds of violence, families of the incarcerated are forced to sit back and let their loved ones live in deplorable conditions, and the prison system has become irreversibly corrupted.

El Salvador has a history of high levels of violence and gang activity. In the late 1970s to early 1990s, there was a brutal civil war involving the Salvadoran military and left-wing guerrilla groups. This war resulted in multiple massacres and a total of 75,000 deaths. During this time, the United States military was very involved with the El Salvadoran military, offering training and aid. The elite training and support led the military to greatly overpower the guerrillas and innocent civilians, leading to the mass violence seen in the civil war. The Salvadoran military has a history of violence against civilians. This theme remains present to this day, especially in this age of intense anti-crime measures.

During the civil war, many Salvadoran gang members were imprisoned in the United States. After the war ended, they were returned back to El Salvador through deportations (Nickelsberg, et al., 2024). As a result, gang violence increased tremendously in El Salvador. In 2015, the homicide rate was 103 per 100,000 inhabitants, making El Salvador one of the deadliest countries in the world (Statista, 2024). The numbers related to violence in El Salvador were a cause for concern, so much so that Bukele felt it necessary to suspend civil liberties such as the right to a fair trial, counsel, and free expression (Méndez and Zulver, 2023). It can be concluded that the state of exception could fix the violent crime rate, however, suspending civil liberties and mass arrests has a lot of repercussions that are cause for concern.

Despite the rational decision to round-up gang members to decrease the ever-present danger, there are underlying consequences that are going to have an effect long-term. Gangs have been very interwoven into communities throughout El Salvador, with gangs providing economic opportunities and protection, in some cases.. On one hand, the presence of gangs does bring about more violent crime, however, their presence is so strong within communities that they become a source for economic gain where other avenues are less accessible. Mothers who are now the sole providers in their households are having to leave their children at home in an attempt to find a liveable income (Méndez and Zulver, 2023). This also leaves these children vulnerable to acts of both physical and sexual violence by family members and other people in the community. Another potential worry is that these children will be forced to work in gangs to help make ends meet due to the lack of economic opportunity (Méndez and Zulver, 2023). The state of exception has taken a toll on communities that were heavily intertwined with gang activity.

Women are essential workers in gangs; they do a lot of behind-the-scenes work without opportunity for leadership or real recognition. They are expected to gather information and deliver communication for gang members. El Salvador is heavily patriarchal, and women who are affiliated with gangs feel this intensely. The power dynamics in gangs, such as the dehumanizing relationships between members and women, keep them further suppressed, forcing them to continue their support of gangs even while the men are largely imprisoned (Hornsby and Keuleers, 2022). Under the state of exception, they are tasked with supporting the incarcerated by transporting necessities (food, uniforms, hygiene supplies) to the overrun prisons (Méndez and Zulver, 2023). Women who are tasked with supporting gangs are heavily affected by this shift because they went from being economically supported by the gangs to being expected to fully support them while they are imprisoned. Women are also faced with higher potential for violence with the lack of protection from these gangs; military violence is much more likely and

> **"Despite the rational decision to round-up gang members... there are underlying consequences."**

can be equally or more damaging, since the government is ideally supposed to protect its citizens. With the lack of gang presence, there has been an increase of military forces. This is dangerous for civilians because the Salvadoran military is known for using brute force and unjust violence, which deepens fears regarding the new influx of military presence throughout the country. Gang-controlled neighborhoods are being flooded by the military, which gives the community a false sense of security due to distrust in the military. Women, especially women living in previously gang-controlled areas are vulnerable to economic instability and violence at the hands of the government under the state of exception.

Women are not the only group of people that are now living a potentially higher risk life. The children in these households are possibly more vulnerable to violence and sexual assault. Due to many women having to support incarcerated gang members by traveling and transporting goods, they are absent from the home more often, meaning their children are being left alone. This can be risky, and some are worried that their children are in a vulnerable state to being potentially assaulted by both family members and military personnel. Another risk that is heightened by the state of exception is the possibility for the children of gang members and the women who aid gangs to then join them for economic reasons. With many women having to leave and attempt to find work, it is often not enough to sustain a family, leaving them desperate for money, which then leads many kids to joining gangs to support their family as a last result. The state of exception is taking the current gang members from the public, yet it does nothing to prevent new members joining and potentially repeating the cycle, reviving the high levels of violence in El Salvador. If the state of exception truly was intended to decrease El Salvador's crime rates in the long run, there would be policies in place, perhaps more economic support, to discourage young people from joining gangs. Some potential supports could be reforms in prisons to provide incarcerated individuals with basic necessities, organizations dedicated to providing those in impoverished neighborhoods economic support through a better job market, or a system to distribute food to those who cannot afford to feed their entire households.

The pervasive issues that were created by the state of exception are not just felt on the outside of the prison system. The Salvadoran prisons were previously overcrowded, but not anywhere close to the extent to which it is now. At the beginning of the state of exception, there were little restrictions on what exactly got people arrested. Some were arrested simply for having tattoos, which led to the first wave of overcrowding in prisons (Barerra, 2024). El Salvador now has the highest prison population rate, with a 130% rate of overcrowding (Labrador, 2025). This overcrowding problem has many consequences regarding the living conditions within prisons. Like previously mentioned, incarcerated peoples are receiving basic necessities from outside the prison. Nothing is provided for them, and there is no outside governmental support because there is purposefully less supervision of the prisons (Labrador, 2025). The lack of supervision has led to torture, murder, and major negligence. For example, a man was severely beaten within the Izalco prison and when he passed it was determined he died because of pneumonia, even with the clear physical proof of a beating (Labrador, 2025). The lack of supervision and overcrowding problems in prisons make them truly unlivable. Not only are people's civil liberties being suspended, but their inalienable rights, their right to live, is being infringed upon by these horrific conditions. The prison system has been so wholly overcrowded and riddled with corruption to a point where reform in the future seems unlikely.

Nayib Bukele's state of exception was aimed at decreasing El Salvador's high violent crime rates by suspending certain civil liberties in order to round thousands of people up and throw them into overcrowded prisons. This has led to incarcerated people surviving in deplorable conditions, all while some people are being left with more violence and uncertainty than before, with the lack of government support and large military presence. On the surface, the state of exception seems to be doing what it initially intended: lowering crime rates. However, upon looking closer, it is clear that the Salvadoran government is not concerned with the higher risks many communities are facing or the long-term consequences of this approach to handling violent crime. Much of what is occurring in El Salvador at present are deemed human rights violations, therefore this event deserves to be recognized on the global stage, more so than it is. El Salvadoran citizens are essentially being transferred from one threat of violence to another, and nothing is being done about it.

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