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THE PENDULUM

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ORPHANED STONES: THE FATE OF JEWISH CEMETERIES IN EASTERN EUROPE

PG 4

REIGNITING TENSIONS?: BREXIT AND THE FUTURE OF NORTHERN IRELAND

PG 11

A VOICELESS OPPOSITION

PG 17

SOUTH AFRICA'S "SECOND PANDEMIC"

PG 33

A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR...

To the reader,

I have often been told that a Clemson student is one of a different breed, so to speak, that there is something in these hills that calls to a specific soul as we each come together from our array of beginnings to seek the future. In my time at Clemson, and with The Pendulum especially, I have come to believe that this is true. There are no students more committed and eager to shape the community and world around them, none more formidable amongst uncertainty. When I first joined The Pendulum, I was a young sophomore looking to be inspired by the world and people around me. The mission of contextualizing our curricula within the broader global community soon became my own as I read each and every article. Working with each writer has strengthened my passion to push forth this mission and I am honored to help grant a voice to those with illuminating stories to share.

Each of these writers, while remaining unbiased, advocates for knowledge - the knowledge of global issues that demand recognition and international engagement. Their voices challenge us each to think outside of our biases and normal media consumption to expand our breadth of knowledge. This magazine, this staff, and these writers have reinvigorated my desire to learn and I hope that their works instill the same in you. I encourage you to read each article with an open mind and eagerness to discover. What you read will spark new passions and quench the thirst for knowledge that I know you have, for you are a Clemson student. I encourage you to explore the worlds that each of these writers shares with you and delve into the issues. As we all move forward and shape the communities close to our hearts, it is important to remember the larger international community that we are a part of.

An enormous thank-you to The Pendulum for shaping me in ways unbeknownst to my sophomore self and to those that have come before me for paving the way. To the writers: thank you as this would not be possible without your insight and commitment to being a global citizen. To the staff: thank you for your devotion to your articles and for working so diligently for your writers. This campus and this world have been bettered because of you and your courage to write.

Ever loyal,



Jade Killion

CONTENTS

- 4 | ORPHANED STONES: THE FATE OF JEWISH CEMETERIS IN EASTERN EUROPE
- 8 | DRUGS & DISSOCIATION: RUSSIAN ATHLETE'S PATH TO OLYMPIC COMPETITION
- 11 | REIGNITING TENSIONS? BREXIT AND THE FUTURE OF NORTHERN IRELAND
- 14 | EXPANDING HORIZONS: INNOVATION AND COOPERATION ON THE FINAL FRONTIER
- 17 | A VOICELESS OPPOSITION
- 20 | VTUBERS: JAPAN'S INTERNATIONAL FAN CULTURE
- 23 | CHINA'S BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE: GATEWAY TO ECONOMIC SUPERPOWER
- 26 | COP26: WHO TO WATCH AND WHAT TO EXPECT
- 29 | ABORTION RIGHTS IN LATIN AMERICA: CONTEXT AND IMPLICATIONS
- 33 | SOUTH AFRICA'S "SECOND PANEMIC"



JESSICA FOSTER

When Jewish tombstones in Western Europe or the United States are overturned or defaced with Nazi graffiti, international media outlets are quick to condemn it as an act of anti-Semitism. However, the mainstream media have remained noticeably silent while an Orthodox Jewish group, Agudas Ohalei Tzadikim, has removed tombstones from the original burial places in numerous Jewish cemeteries across Eastern Europe. As part of an effort to “rescue” these neglected cemeteries, Rabbi Israel Meir Gabay’s group resets the tombstones in concrete bases, which sometimes obscure the epitaphs, and arranges them in straight rows bearing no relation to the actual graves. The latest cemetery to be “rescued” by Gabay is the old Jewish cemetery in Sataniv, Western Ukraine. Although Jewish heritage experts and religious leaders have decried Gabay’s work in Sataniv as desecration and vandalism, there seems to be little anyone can do to stop the permanent alteration of the cemetery. The fact that Gabay’s intervention in Sataniv will proceed over any objections from the

Jewish community, and under the radar of the international media, reveals the vulnerability of Jewish historical sites in a post-Holocaust Europe.

Like many Jewish cemeteries throughout Eastern Europe, the one in Sataniv has fallen into disrepair. The cemetery, the oldest part of which dates to the sixteenth century, sits atop a steep hill between Kurortna Street and the Zbruch River. Recent photographs show the heavy, intricately carved tombstones leaning at precarious angles in the thick grass of the hillside. A post on Rabbi Gabay’s website emphasizes the urgency of the situation: “The edge of the cemetery is collapsing. The slope itself is dotted with earthquakes, broken tombstones and exposed bones, thrown in terrible disgrace...other tombs are in constant danger of collapse, at the mercy of the weather.” Even after some restoration efforts, “most of the cemetery is still in real danger, the back of the cemetery is deteriorating into the river and requires immediate rescue!” Few Jewish heritage experts would disagree with Gabay’s assessment. Indeed, there is a consensus that the Jewish

cemetery in Sataniv is in need of attention. Some take issue, however, with Gabay’s methods.

Critics object to Gabay’s intervention in Sataniv on both religious and historical grounds. According to Jewish tradition, a cemetery is a sacred place, holier even than a synagogue. It is also considered a place of impurity and must be clearly marked and separated from nearby houses. Observant Jews commonly refer to a cemetery as *bet hayyim* (“house of life” in Hebrew) due to the belief that a person’s soul is bound to their grave. Out of respect for the dead, the graves and the ground above them are not to be disturbed after burial. It is the responsibility of the local Jewish community to protect, repair, and maintain the cemetery. Memorial stones called *matzevot* (“monuments” in Hebrew), often decorated with elaborate carvings and inscriptions, mark the places where the deceased are buried.

Many Jewish heritage experts believe that by uprooting and moving the *matzevot*, Gabay’s team has committed religious desecration. Michael Schudrich, the Chief Rabbi of Poland and head of Poland’s Rabbinic Commission for Cemeteries, considers Gabay’s actions to be “abominations.” In a statement sent to Jewish Heritage Europe, he declared: “The fact that [Gabay] is a Jew does not give him permission to desecrate Jewish cemeteries, the fact that he is religious does not give him sanction to break Jewish law.” Similarly, Dr. Boris Khaimovich, Chief Curator of the Museum of Jewish History in Russia, called Gabay’s actions “blasphemous and barbaric.” In an opinion piece on the Jewish Heritage Europe website, Khaimovich wrote: “They ripped old gravestones out of the ground like pulling teeth, leveled the surface of the earth, created ugly concrete foundations, and inserted tombstones into them in even rows with equal intervals between them, without any connection

with their real location and real grave. If the relatives of the people buried here were alive, they would not know where to come to pray.”

Khaimovich’s statement points to the reality facing thousands of Jewish cemeteries in Eastern Europe: there are few Jews left to care for the graves. Many Jewish communities no longer exist because the Nazis destroyed them during the Holocaust. The story of Sataniv is a variation on a tragic theme. For over four hundred years, the Jews of Sataniv had to endure persecution, massacres, and Soviet repression to build a vibrant religious and economic life. This life ended on July 6, 1941, when the Nazis occupied the town. With the help of their Ukrainian auxiliaries, the Nazis murdered approximately 600 Jews in Sataniv and displaced the rest, likely deporting them to camps and killing sites. Although a few survivors returned after the war, the Jewish community of Sataniv never revived. The most recent grave in the cemetery is dated 1958.

While some cemeteries reverted to private or state ownership after the extermination of the local Jewish population, others, like Sataniv, remained essentially ownerless. Since the Communist governments in Eastern Europe had little interest in honoring the Jews as a special group of victims during World War II, they allowed the cemeteries to fall into neglect or simply built new structures over them. After the fall of Communism, the new governments likewise did not prioritize the preservation of Jewish cemeteries. As a result, many cemeteries are now overgrown with vegetation and strewn with trash. The lack of fencing allows vandals to enter the grounds and spray-paint anti-Semitic symbols and slogans on the tombstones, knock them down, or even break them. Unless the cemeteries receive media coverage due to one of these attacks, they may sit forgotten for decades.

The unprotected state of Jewish cemeteries leaves them vulnerable to outside intervention. In the case of Sataniv, it is not clear who gave permission to Gabay's team to begin their work. According to ethnographer Dmitry Polyukhovich, if the cemetery had the status of "a historical monument of national importance," any restoration work would require "the permission of the [Ukrainian] Ministry of Culture" and be carried out "according to an agreed project". Unfortunately, says Polyukhovich, "the cemetery has only the status of a 'cultural heritage site,' which does not bear any legal prohibitions on carrying out work here. Moreover, the cemetery has no legal owner – that is, it is officially ownerless. Accordingly, local authorities have no legal leverage to prevent vandalism." This means that Gabay's work is not technically illegal. Even if the Ukrainian authorities wanted to intervene, they may be hesitant to do so since the case involves a Jewish group working on a Jewish cemetery. "Officials are simply afraid to speak out," says Polyukhovich, "lest they be publicly accused of anti-Semitism."

The preservation of cemeteries like the one in Sataniv is increasingly important because they represent some of the only physical remnants of Jewish life before the Holocaust. The Nazi annihilation of Jewish people coincided with the obliteration of Jewish synagogues, schools, homes, and cemeteries. Indeed, the fact that the tombstones in Sataniv were not deliberately moved or damaged during the Nazi occupation is remarkable. In many places, the Nazis forced their Jewish victims to break up and reuse matzevot as building materials to repair or construct roads, pavements, and other structures. They also used Jewish cemeteries as killing and mass burial sites. Civilians and post-war Communist governments often repurposed the tombstones

as well. As Polish photographer Łukasz Baksik shows in his project Matzevot for Everyday Use, one can find recycled Jewish tombstones all over Eastern Europe. However, the cemetery in Sataniv escaped this "cultural genocide." Therefore, when viewing the Sataniv cemetery as a historical text—a primary source, as it were—it becomes imperative to take all possible precautions not to disturb or damage the site in any way. For these, as well as religious reasons, Jewish heritage experts like Khaimovich believe that Gabay's intervention constitutes "a crime".

While there is no way to undo the damage to Sataniv, Jewish heritage experts are using this opportunity to advocate for greater accountability in future preservation projects. "[N]o matter how late it is," says Khaimovich, "one should try to stop the progress of this madness. An expert council should be established immediately to oversee our historical heritage, especially in countries where local government oversight is weak." Currently, Jewish cemetery preservation largely depends on volunteers such as New York orthodontist Dr. Michael Lozman and his teams of college students, who work with local authorities in Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine to restore neglected Jewish cemeteries. There are also organizations such as the German-based European Jewish Cemeteries Initiative (ESJF) and Ukraine-based Jewish heritage preservation NGO Rohatyn Jewish Heritage. Rohatyn founders Jay and Marla Raucher Osborn, who have developed a guide to best practices in preserving Jewish cemeteries in Western Ukraine, said they were "aghast" at the situation in Sataniv. "Uprighting the stones to make them easier to read in no way compensates for this disrespect to the dead buried underneath," they told Jewish Heritage Europe. "What happened in Satantiv [sic] (and risks happening elsewhere) is desecration, pure

and simple, and must stop."

Unfortunately, despite the outcry from Jewish heritage experts and religious leaders, there are few signs that such interventions will cease. As the case of Sataniv shows, Jewish cemeteries throughout Eastern Europe remain extremely vulnerable to self-appointed saviors such as Rabbi Gabay, who may have good intentions but do not adhere to the best practices that experienced preservationists

have developed. The story of Sataniv should serve as a warning to anyone who cares about the preservation of Jewish heritage in a post-Holocaust Europe. Without more legal oversight and accountability, these fragile monuments will continue to suffer from heavy-handed restoration efforts.



"UNLESS THE CEMETERIES RECEIVE MEDIA COVERAGE DUE TO ONE OF THESE ATTACKS, THEY MAY SIT FORGOTTEN FOR DECADES."



Drugs and Dissociation: Russian Athletes' Path to Olympic Competition

KELSEY VROOMAN

While everyone rooted for their country's favorite athletes to compete head-to-head in the Olympics this summer, among them could be seen a vibrant pink uniform. People may have been confused by the unfamiliar colors of the uniform or the strange abbreviation plastered across the athletes' chests. The "ROC" written on the pink uniforms and swim caps stood not for a country but for the "Russian Olympic Committee." After the occurrence of a doping scandal that took place in 2016 and was ultimately confirmed in 2019, Russia had been barred from competing in major athletic competitions—such as the Olympics—for the four years following the verdict. Since the punishment was put in place, however, Russia's sentence has been lessened

to two years, allowing them to compete in the Beijing Winter Olympics. 'The Russian Olympic Committee' is Russia's enduring ability to give their athletes the chance to perform on what many consider the most competitive platform in the world. Though Russian athletes are not allowed to compete representing Russia, the Russian Olympic Committee gives Russian athletes an acceptable way to participate because they are, in fact, representing the Olympics and not their country.

When Russia's scandal was uncovered in 2016, the hotbed of pressure was rooted, mainly, in their track team. Athletes such as Dmitry Shlyakhtin and Danil Lysenko received aid from several Russian Athletic Administrators

where they faked drug tests and even faked car accidents to justify their drug use. According to NBC, the administrators used fake clinics, created out of abandoned and demolished buildings, to make the crime look as legitimate as possible. One of the key pieces of evidence against them came from Lysenko faking appendicitis and getting a procedure done in the "SD Clinic" which, when investigated, was the site of a demolished building. Another giveaway stemmed from when Russian Athletic Federation worker, Elena Orlova, created documents to fake a car crash for Lysenko so that he could avoid drug testing. Eventually, Executive Athletic Director Alexander Parkin admitted that he knew and covered up the doping for years. While the athletes were held individually responsible, the committee effectively punished the entire country for the actions of the Athletic Federation officials and for their criminal effort required to cover up the scandal.

This ban was intended to punish the Russian officials and Russian sports fans by giving them as little national gain as possible. Russia is prohibited from entering the drawing to host the 2032 Olympics, and under the ban, they are barred from hosting any major sporting events. This is a huge loss for Russia because they are known for being incredibly dominant in sports, especially in the Olympics. With their success in the Olympics, however, they also had over four times as many medals stripped from them due to doping as the next leading country. Whether there is a relationship between their Olympic success and them leading the world in sports doping cases cannot be determined, but it does rationalize even further the implications behind their punishment.

As for the individuals, the disciplinary

action that will hold until right before the Beijing Winter Olympics allows for athletes to compete through the Russian Olympic Committee if they successfully pass all of the tests given by the Olympic Committee. Many might be asking how that is different from competing for Russia from the athletes' perspective, and the answer lies in the neutrality the Olympic Committee forces. One glaring example of this strict neutrality is the banning of the Russian flag, both on uniforms and on the podium. Instead, the athletes wear Olympic flags and listen to Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 on the podium. Despite these changes, there is still controversy about the athletes' right to compete. After receiving some harsh backlash from athletes of other nations, the official ROC tweeted saying, "Yes we are here, at the Olympics. Absolutely rightfully so. Whether some people like it or not. But you've got to know how to lose...From the mouths of athletes who are miffed by defeat. We will not console." The ROC's tweet responds to the fact that many are concerned the punishment is not strict enough and that Russia should be completely banned from the Olympics.

The Russian Olympic Committee is not the only association of people at the Olympics that were not representing their country; alongside them is the 'Equipe Olympique des Réfugiés, 'Olympic Team of Refugees' in French. This summer, the team was made up of twenty-nine athletes from eleven different countries. In order to compete, they received scholarships to train to try out for the Olympic team. In total, the team was comprised of people from twenty-one different host countries. Nearly every athlete that competed on the team came from a different nation. Like the ROC, when an athlete from the Refugee Olympic Team (EOR) won an event, an

Olympic flag was flown and instead of Concierto No. 1, the Olympic anthem was played. Instead of the complete neutrality of the Russian Olympic Committee, however, the EOR represents refugees across the world. The International Olympic Committee believes that the team sends "...a message of hope and solidarity to the over 80 million forcibly displaced people in the world." The EOR differs fundamentally from the ROC because the ROC is completely prohibited from representing Russia as a nation whereas the EOR is a team created to represent and compete for the over 80 million refugees there are internationally. Athletes and fans alike became further outraged about the decision to allow the ROC to compete when Russian President Vladimir Putin tweeted all of the ROC athletes congratulations after winning medals. When the tweet was uncovered, the Russian Olympic Committee had already won 14 gold medals and was third overall. This communication raised suspicion about just how disaffiliated the athletes were from their country and how neutral the Olympic Committee was forcing them to be. In total, the ROC athletes won fifty-two medals, leaving them in an impressive third place overall. Due to both the team's success and the tweeting scandal, questions arose about the extent of conversation between the Russian government and the ROC. According to CNBC, news of the Olympics in Russia came with magazines telling of the incredible accomplishments of the "Russian athletes" and not the ROC athletes. Though the athletes may have followed the regulations to technically dissociate, the implications of this suggestion disaffiliation comes into play. Only after they had won a gold did Putin congratulate them, and up until that point they were completely disaffiliated, so many could argue that the ROC

followed the rules. Alternatively, however, Putin's ability to contact the athletes and congratulate them does tarnish the validity of the ROC and the concept of complete neutrality. This lack of neutrality also applies to the everyday viewer. Viewers confused by the pink flag asking, "Who just won that event?," would likely receive, "Russia" as their answer. From an audience and lay-person viewpoint, the punishment only extends legally rather than culturally. Viewers, after learning about the ROC, still identify the country despite the legal restrictions. Though the implications of neutrality were strongly enforced in the Olympic Village, elsewhere the sole difference stems from the lack of Russian flags and music. In every other sense of the matter, Russia had representation.

While there is controversy surrounding whether or not Russian athletes should be allowed to participate in the Olympics at all, at the heart of the matter lies the fact that the athletes themselves are the central focus of the Olympics with their national affiliation a far second to their personal achievements. The creation of the ROC can be seen as permissible because it allows for athletes to compete while also taking away the national-representation aspect of the Olympics. The neutrality that is achieved from the ROC outside of the Olympic Village is both controversial and is in many ways absent, but at the Beijing Olympics the world may witness the flying of the Russian flag again, and viewers will be left to wonder if the punishment truly fit the crime.



KAYLA COOK

On April 18, 2019, Lyra McKee, a 29-year-old journalist and Troubles specialist, was shot and killed while covering a riot in the Creggan District of Derry, Northern Ireland. In the days that followed her death, McKee, already the voice of Northern Ireland's "cease-fire babies," the generation of children born during and shortly after the negotiations which ended the Troubles, became something of a martyr for peace. McKee's status as a martyr was further reinforced when the New IRA, a small, localized Nationalist paramilitary group, openly took credit for her death. Hundreds of people attended her funeral, including the Prime Ministers of both Britain and Ireland. Her death also inspired the Northern Irish government to reinstitute its power-sharing policy, which had previously collapsed in 2017 following the resignation of the late former Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness.

In mid-September of this year, two men,

Peter Cavanagh and Jordan Devine, were charged in connection with McKee's murder, nearly two and a half years after her death. According to their testimony, they were with the gunman at the time of the shooting; the suspected gunman, Paul McIntyre, has denied his charges. In their September 17 article on the hearing, The New York Times called the riot where Lyra McKee was killed "some of the worst rioting to rock Northern Ireland in years", but it was certainly not an isolated event. Since the announcement of Brexit, Northern Ireland has seen an increasing number of sporadic but extreme acts of violence. In addition to this increase in violence is the rise of the "New IRA," a terrorist organization which has branded itself after the Irish Republican Army (IRA). The IRA was a paramilitary group which had previously terrorized Northern Ireland during the Troubles, a turbulent period in Northern Irish history which occurred roughly from the 1960s to

the 1990s.

The United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union (EU), colloquially known as "Brexit," has not only affected England, where the majority of pro-Brexiteers reside, but the other nations of the United Kingdom (UK) as well. Northern Ireland in particular was thrust into a difficult situation with many questions left unanswered and many old wounds threatening to reopen. After the announcement of Brexit, many people in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland voiced a concern that the UK's separation from the EU would lead to a hard border being placed between the two countries. This would have likely occurred between any two bordering nations on the European continent if one of them had elected to depart from the EU. Instead, governmental cooperation between the UK and the EU, as well as the Good Friday Agreement, a 1998 treaty that ended the Troubles in Northern Ireland, led to an alternative solution. In order to avoid a hard border, the UK agreed to place the border in the Irish Sea between Ireland and Great Britain, leaving the border between the Republic and Northern Ireland as it has been for over twenty years. This decision, however, has not stopped tensions from rising, as many Unionists—those loyal to the British Crown, and who identify as British rather than Irish—are unhappy with the institution of the Irish Sea Trade Border and feel that it has the potential to cut them off from the rest of the UK and force them to rejoin with their Republican neighbors. On the other side, many Nationalists, or Republicans—those who would like to see Northern Ireland reunified with the Republic of Ireland—are angry about Brexit because they would have rather stayed under the protection and single market of the EU, and see reunification with the Republic as a way to maintain their EU status and affirm their identity as Irish people.

The situation is not helped by the practice of segregation prevalent in many parts of Northern Ireland. Catholics, the vast majority of whom are also Nationalists who wish to be reunited with the Republic of Ireland, and Protestants, who are mostly Unionists, live in their own neighborhoods which are separated by "peace walls." This segregation initially began as a means of limiting the tension between Protestants and Catholics and helping them achieve peace, but instead over time created an environment where tension was allowed to ferment.

In the months since Brexit was finalized, tensions between Protestant Unionists and Catholic Nationalists have risen to an unignorable peak. This summer in the capital city of Belfast, Unionist riots ran rampant. People attacked police officers, torched vehicles, threw rocks, bricks, and explosives across the peace walls separating Catholic and Protestant neighborhoods, and even left gasoline bombs in buses. Police Assistant Chief Jonathan Roberts reported that after Unionists began throwing things over the peace walls into Catholic neighborhoods, violence erupted on both sides, with hundreds of Catholics and Protestants responsible for significant amounts of violence as well as damage to public and private property. Roberts believes paramilitary groups were likely responsible for starting the fights.

The annual Twelfth of July marches also saw an uptick in tension this past summer. Protestant Unionists in Northern Ireland celebrate the Twelfth as the anniversary of the victory of William of Orange during the Glorious Revolution in the mid-17th century and his succession to the British throne. On the surface, it is a time-honored tradition among Unionists which exists to celebrate and affirm their British identity. It is celebrated with parades on the Twelfth, and massive bonfires the night before on the Eleventh.

This summer, however, as many Unionists felt deeply uncertain about their future within the UK, many bonfires were adorned with anti-Irish and anti-Catholic phrases, the flag of the Republic of Ireland, and caskets bearing the names of various martyrs, sending a clear message that they will not have themselves associated with their Republican neighbors regardless of where the border between Ireland and Great Britain lies. JJ Magee of New Lodge, a Catholic community in Belfast, discussed in an interview with VICE News, an incident involving a young Protestant man who had climbed to the top of a stack of pallets intended for later bonfire use with a golf club and golf balls, which he hit across the peace wall, breaking a window and endangering the people on the other side of the wall .

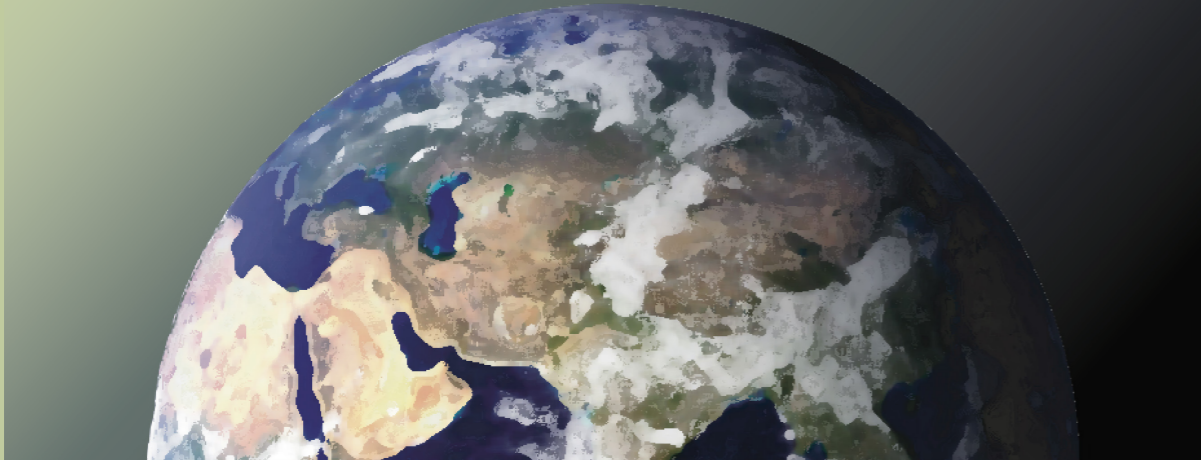
In late July of this year, the EU proposed some changes which could have helped to alleviate some of the burden presented by the Irish Sea Border, namely the import of medical necessities from EU member nations to Northern Ireland. These included medications and disability service dogs, which had become too expensive to purchase from British companies. Nevertheless, the UK rejected this proposal as they argued it did not align with the policies of the Northern Ireland Protocol, which governs customs in Northern Ireland and keeps it outside of the EU's single market economy .

Across the pond, the government of the United States (U.S.) is aware of and troubled by the threat of further turbulence in Northern Ireland. In meetings with UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson in Washington, DC, U.S. President Joe Biden voiced his concerns about peace in Northern Ireland, warning Johnson that Brexit and the problems presented by the Irish Sea Border could prove problematic for Northern Ireland and

may even reignite some of the old tensions, thus damaging the progress made by the Good Friday Agreement. The Good Friday Agreement is part of America's legacy in Northern Ireland, as the U.S. worked as a mediator between the governments of the UK and Ireland to achieve peace. As such, it is easy to see why President Biden is concerned about the maintenance of peace in Northern Ireland; any threat to the Good Friday Agreement would mean not only the possibility of tensions within Northern Ireland, but also potential unease between the UK and the U.S.. Whatever the future holds for Northern Ireland, the impact will be a transnational one, with possible effects on both sides of the Atlantic.



Innovation and Cooperation in the Final Frontier



MATTHEW PLOYHART

When many think of the Cold War, they imagine the impressive arms race between the United States of America (U.S.) and the Soviet Union (USSR) and the contemporary Space Race between the two world powers. The race to the cosmos would ultimately culminate in the United States landing on the Moon in 1969, which is what many think of on the topic of space travel. However, while the Moon landing was certainly impressive, it was the side-effects of these daring endeavors that were truly rewarding.

The Apollo Program, for instance, utilized new technology to achieve the moon landing. "While some of that tech has stayed within the space industry," says NPR, "a lot of it has trickled down to the public." These technological innovations include everything from freeze-dried food and fireproof materials to spring tires and

integrated circuits. In fact, so many products were created as a result of space travel that the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has an entire department devoted to recording such technology spin-offs.

"Space travel has given us a wealth of knowledge which has helped us create inventions and technologies that have made human life easier," says the Jet Propulsion Laboratory at the California Institute of Technology. Even inventions such as camera phones, memory foam, and athletic shoes have space travel to thank for their existence. More contemporarily, according to the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA), space technology has been utilized for telemedicine purposes and for tracking the spread of infectious diseases, specifically the Coronavirus. UNOOSA states that "[s]pace

applications provide innovative tools to improve lives and accelerate sustainable development in many areas, and health is one of them."

Without the space race, "you probably still would have had integrated circuits," claims John Tylko, who taught a course called "Engineering Apollo" at MIT in 2019. "[But] you might have had it a decade later." Thus, space travel – which requires significant technological advancement to fulfill – has resulted in much more than Moon landings and satellite launches: it has brought dozens of new technologies to the general public much faster than they would have otherwise been introduced.

Indeed, the benefits of space exploration and travel are not limited to the occasional triumphs of humankind making its way across the cosmos, such as landing on the Moon or capturing the first close-up photographs of Pluto. There are many additional benefits of space travel, outside of inventions, that can (and have) practically benefit the general public. In fact, according to the European Space Agency (ESA), there is even the potential for business in space. "To further stimulate demand, growth and long-term development in a new low Earth orbit and lunar economy, [the] ESA is setting up a Business in Space Growth Network (BSGN)." David Parker, the ESA Director of Human and Robotic Exploration, added: "Commercial partnership plays a growing role in the exciting ESA vision for space exploration."

Some of the first emerging businesses to interact with space have been from the tourism industry. According to Science Direct, "[i]n the European context...space tourism could contribute to the evolution of the EU Space Policy" – a remarkable assertion of the power that space tourism can have on space popularization

and regulation. Over the last year, Jeff Bezos and Richard Branson, both billionaire owners of their own spaceflight companies, have flown to space, opening the door to space tourism for the ultra-rich. However, much like in the past when novel forms of transportation and new inventions had yet to be introduced on a wide scale, space tourism will not initially impact the general public in a direct way. However, history has shown that, over time, such advancements will allow for new forms of tourism to become more available to a wider range of people. Though it still is the case today that space tourism remains only within the reach of the ultra-wealthy, in some instances, its effects can be felt by the greater public. For example, according to The New York Times, on October 5, 2021, Russian actress, Yulia Peresild, and director, Klim Shipenko, journeyed to the International Space Station (ISS) to film the first-ever feature-length production to be shot in space. The practice of films being recorded in space would result in such films being available for public enjoyment.

While space tourism to low-Earth orbit is now within reach, heavy industry may soon find itself among the stars as well. In 2018, Jeff Bezos, founder and former CEO of Amazon, seemed to express his support of space travel. "The reason we need to go to space is to save the Earth," he stated. "...We need to move heavy industry off Earth." Granted, while he did acknowledge that this is something that "our grandchildren" (and their grandchildren) will continue to work on, it does nonetheless present another gleaming possibility of space travel as it relates to humanity: the environmental benefits to the planet. In fact, in 2018, the MIT Technology Review found that asteroid mining (which is sometimes associated with environmental degradation) "might actually

be better for the environment” than mining for resources on Earth. Mining platinum on Earth results in releasing almost two hundred seventy times more kilograms of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere as would mining platinum from nearby asteroids in space. The environmental benefits of investing in space travel have enormous potential in the long term, indeed. The development of new technology and the preservation of Earth’s resources are not the only uses of space exploration. Humans have always been curious, searching to explore the world around them and quench their thirst for knowledge. The American historian Frederick Jackson Turner stated that, “the existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement, explain American development.” Of course, he was referring to the American settlement of the West and the Midwest, but one possible aspect of his argument stands clear: as long as people are focused on a common goal – a new land to settle – they will continue to advance. Unfortunately, that advancement was at the cost of thousands of Native American lives, a toll which could very well have been avoided in the case of American Expansionism to the West Coast. However, according to Space.com, when thinking of outer space exploration, one should not think of “colonization,” but “settlement.” “Using a colonialist framework in space reproduces past harm from humanity’s history on Earth,” affirmed astronomer Lucianne Walkowicz. “There’s nothing else in the solar system with lots of life on it,” claimed Mary Voytek, senior scientist for astrobiology at NASA Headquarters in 2020. “Otherwise, we would have likely detected it.” Thus, humans are not “colonizing” other life forms or peoples through their investments in space exploration, as was the

case of European exploration in the Americas and American settlement in the Midwest.

Granted, while there is the potential for conflict through space rivalries (prompting the United Nations to maintain five outer space treaties), there are enormous benefits for international and social advancement stemming from space exploration, as well. According to Britannica, “By the early 2020s more than 500 people, coming from more than 40 different countries and more than 10 percent of whom were women, had flown in space.” According to NASA, the International Space Station – the most expensive human-made object in recorded history – has hosted “244 individuals from 19 countries.” Space travel is fairly non-partisan, as well: “Strong public support that the U.S. should continue to be at the vanguard of space exploration is widely shared across gender, educational and political groups,” stated the Pew Research Center in 2018. Meanwhile, in 2019, the ESA reported that “Europeans are undeniably interested in space activities, and the idea of pooling resources between European countries is considered important unanimously by European citizens.” Indeed, space travel possesses the potential to bring allies closer together, foster cooperation between nations, and focus humanity’s gaze on a more-progressive frontier.



NICHOLAS VERITY

A fundamental tenet of democracy is being threatened in Eastern Europe. In recent months, members of the Polish government have sought to strike a blow to press freedoms within the country. On August 11th, the Sejm (the lower chamber of parliament), voted in favor of an amendment to the country’s 1992 Broadcasting Act. This amendment, if signed into law, would place restrictions on foreign ownership of Polish media broadcasters. The law forbids companies of non-European Union (EU) member nations from owning, directly or indirectly, a controlling stake in domestic broadcasters.

Sitting in the crosshairs of this law is TVN24, a Polish news channel that is consistently critical of the ruling conservative Law and Justice Party’s policies. The news channel is the most popular in the country, frequently topping the

ratings for its segment of the market. As such a popular channel, it is a major part of broadcaster TVN’s entertainment offerings in the Eastern European country. TVN itself is a subsidiary of U.S.-based Discovery which provides access to popular brands like the Discovery Channel, Food Network, and Animal Planet in America. The fact that TVN is owned by a U.S. company means that Discovery would be forced to sell at least 51% of their stake based on the existing framework of the proposed amendment. This would create an opportunity for a buyer more favorable to the government to purchase the broadcaster. The 1992 Broadcasting Act in its current form possesses stipulations that limit foreign ownership as well; however, Discovery skirts these existing stipulations by registering TVN as a standalone business in the European Union. The proposed amendment

would close this loophole by banning companies with indirect foreign ownership even if they are registered in the EU.

The proposed amendment has provoked widespread condemnation from within Poland and beyond. Polish political parties such as The Civic Coalition and The Left have denounced the law as an attempt to remove opposition voices from the media. These parties, which are ideologically left of center, see the law's amendments as a purely political move by the Law and Justice Party. Polish citizens have been motivated to take to the streets to protest. Donning signs that read "Free Media, Free People, Free Poland", men and women in Warsaw and elsewhere in Poland have voiced their opposition to the legislation. In the United States, Discovery stated that the law is "an attack on core democratic principles of freedom of speech" and "is directly discriminatory against TVN and Discovery." U.S. Secretary of State Antoni Blinken followed a similar tone by stating that "this draft legislation threatens media freedom and could undermine Poland's strong investment climate."

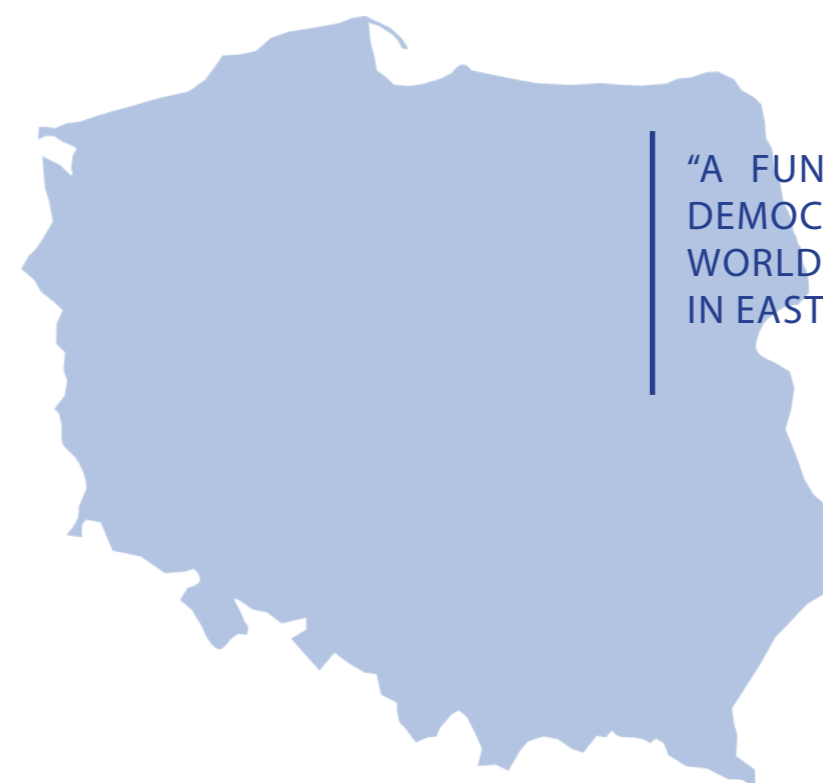
As a NATO member, Poland is closely tied to the United States when it comes to military policy. In 2020, Poland agreed to the establishment of a permanent base for U.S. troops in the country. Although a small contingent of U.S. troops already regularly rotates through Poland, their presence has never been permanent, and a base has never been constructed. The creation of this new base would mark the beginning of a much closer relationship between the two countries. With Russian military excursions in the region, such as the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the civil war presently occurring in the Donbas region of Ukraine, the Baltic States and Eastern European countries like Poland have become a significant part of NATO's

strategy to deter Russian aggression. The law's passage would threaten to undo these recently strengthened ties between the U.S. and Poland as the U.S. faces domestic pressure to hold its allies accountable for unsavory policies. Deeper relations with a country that doesn't share the same democratic values of the U.S. would be a hard sell to the American people.

Following the recent rise in criticism of the news media by conservative figures around the world, the law also follows a worrying trend in Eastern Europe. To Poland's south, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban's government has implemented a systematic takeover of the country's news outlets which has resulted in a largely pro-government narrative being broadcast. The few remaining independent news operations in the country are frequently labeled as political agitators by the government and have minimal influence in the news market. Similarly, to the east in Belarus, President Alexander Lukashenko's state-run media holds a monopoly on broadcasting in the country while independent journalists face routine harassment by the government. However, Polish supporters of the proposed amendment do not see it as a step in this direction. They argue that instead of limiting political opposition, the law is meant to prevent authoritarian powers like China and Russia from influencing the country's domestic politics. Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki echoed this view by stating that "It is through the media that other countries influence our social life." At a time when Russia has been shown to have made attempts at influencing elections, this fear of foreign influence is not unfounded. After all, other European countries and U.S. allies like France and Germany have existing laws that similarly limit foreign ownership of media broadcasters, although not as strict as this one.

The proposed law failed in a 53-37 vote in the country's Senate on September 9th, 2021. However, the bill still has a chance to find its way to passage through another vote in the Sejm. If passed again by a simple majority, the bill would make its way to Polish President Andrzej Duda's desk to be signed or vetoed. For his part, the president has expressed reluctance to sign the bill, but he may face pressure from within the Law and Justice Party, of which he is a former member. On September 22nd, 2021, after being postponed for over a year, Discovery's license to operate in Poland was renewed by Poland's broadcasting authority, known as the National Broadcasting Council. Simultaneously, however, the council adopted a resolution that stated that their interpretation of the 1992 Broadcasting Act as it stood, forbade companies like TVN from operating in Poland. The resolution also directed the Chairman of the National Broadcasting Council to call on companies to rectify their

violations of the law and requested that the Prime Minister draft legislation to close the existing loopholes. Essentially, the council has threaded a political needle as it seeks to avoid creating an international crisis while simultaneously aligning itself with the Law and Justice Party. The council's allegiance to the Law and Justice Party should come as no surprise, as appointments to the broadcasting authority are awarded through the Sejm, which the Law and Justice Party has controlled since 2015. Seeing the renewal as a largely temporary victory due to the resolution, Discovery stated that "This license does not in any way solve the situation we have with the new law." It remains to be seen whether the amendment will be passed or if the resolution will be enforced, but this push to limit press freedom follows a worrying trend in Eastern Europe that shows no signs of slowing.



"A FUNDAMENTAL TENET OF DEMOCRACIES AROUND THE WORLD IS BEING THREATENED IN EASTERN EUROPE"

VTubers: Japan's International Fan Culture



CHRISTOPHER SHUMARD

Japanese culture has long influenced people around the world. Many might recall playing Pokémon games on DS or Wii sports with family and friends. There also exists anime and manga, often unfairly minimized to Japanese cartoons and comics. In recent years, especially due to the pandemic, interest has risen in anime and manga. In addition, another Japanese phenomenon has begun to storm the internet. This new phenomenon is known as the VTuber. A VTuber (short for Virtual Youtuber) is a person who uses a 2-D or 3-D animated model to represent themselves rather than making a real-life, on-camera appearance. Using motion-capture technology, a person's facial movements can be mimicked by their virtual avatar. VTubers create content through videos or live streams acting through their chosen avatar. Like other YouTubers, they appeal to various audiences and use different forms of entertainment such as

dancing, singing, and playing games to attract viewers. Despite the language barrier, VTubers have grown in popularity around the world by fostering an energetic fan culture around themselves. They are an important part of Japan's influential popular culture with an interactive fan culture that encourages distant viewership.

Before discussing the rise of VTubers, it is important to understand their origins. VTubers are primarily inspired by Japan's Idol Culture. Idol Culture is unique to East Asia, namely South Korea and Japan. In Japan, it usually involves small to large groups of young women who perform together. They sing and dance, but more importantly, they create an appealing image for fans. Japan is known for its "cute culture," Hello Kitty for example, and this is exactly the sort of imagery idol groups aim for. Performers usually dress in fashionable skirts with a uniform-like appearance and sing in high-pitched voices. This

attracts fans, mostly men, who not only attend their concerts and buy their music and merchandise, but also actively participate in affecting their performances; some idol groups allow their fans to participate in a vote to determine who should be the leader in each performance. A sort of hierarchy is established by fans, who vote for the most popular candidate to take that position. This is just one way in which fans interact with their idols. There are also fan-made music disks, art, and clubs dedicated to individual members of each idol group. Idols encourage this fan culture by attending fan meetups and by following the results of the votes. In this way, fans are motivated to create and participate in a highly interactive culture.

Idol Culture inspired the creation of Vocaloid which, in turn, also served as an inspiration for VTubers. Vocaloid is a program allowing for the creation and usage of synthetic voices. The first greatly popularized voice and character was Hatsune Miku, a fully-fledged character with an outfit resembling idols and a high-pitched synthetic voice. Users were able to take this voice and apply it to any song that they wished. In a sense, fans could create their own digital idol. The voice and character became so popular that live concerts were eventually held, using a holographic image of the character. Vocaloid and Idol Culture remain popular in Japan, but neither has achieved much popularity internationally. In contrast, VTubers, after debuting in 2016, began to gain international popularity by 2018.

The original VTuber introduced in 2016, known as Kizuna Ai, was a new idea that combined aspects of Idol Culture and Vocaloid. Kizuna's character model reflected her Idol and Vocaloid inspirations. Just as real-life Idols

did, she wore a flashy outfit loosely inspired by Japanese schoolgirls' famous sailor uniforms. Vocaloid's influence is also seen in the digital designs of VTubers. After all, Vocaloid utilizes digital characters, such as Hatsune Miku, but there is not a real person behind the character. Kizuna, despite her digital appearance, has an actress behind the character and does not utilize a synthetic voice. Therefore, VTubers were a combination of Idol Culture and Vocaloid, both of which are heavily intertwined with each other. After her initial debut, Kizuna gained much fanfare in Japan. However, she was little more than a tech curiosity to the international community. Her novelty also wore out in Japan in the years following her debut. After all, she performed the same actions that a real life Idol would. She sang and danced in YouTube videos or live streams, yet there was little fan interaction between Kizuna and viewers. Her character was seen as little more than a digital idol that lacked the interactivity that a real person offered. And, of course, she could not be modified in the same way that Vocaloid allows. Kizuna Ai shrank in popularity, and it initially seemed as if VTubers were another new tech trend that would quickly pass. Then, in 2018, a new group of VTubers appeared, radically changing the trajectory of this faltering idea.

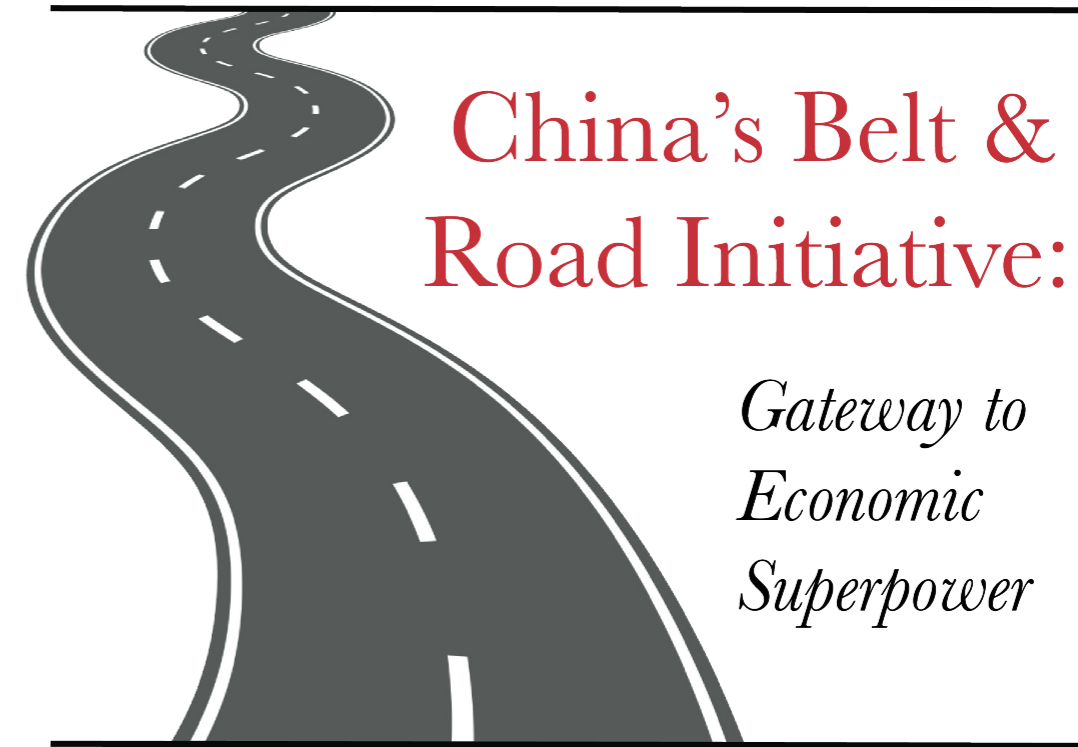
In 2018, Hololive was a new group of VTubers established as a sort of digital idol group. Just like Kizuna Ai, their first members focused on singing and dancing, and they resembled their real life counterparts or Vocaloid's digital characters. However, this changed when some members started playing video games, especially internationally popular games. Upon viewing these streams or videos, the few overseas fans who understood Japanese began to translate them and created their own highlight videos

“THE ADVENT AND RISE OF THE VTUBER IS EVIDENCE OF JAPAN’S SOFT-CULTURAL POWER”

showcasing funny clips of the VTubers. This slowly encouraged international interest into what was originally a Japanese niche. Fan translators in North America, South America, and Europe became an important part of Hololive’s success. They chose the funniest clips to translate and in turn fostered the growth of an international fan community. This community grew to a size that eventually caused the Hololive VTubers to begin interacting with and acknowledging their foreign fans. Many began to learn English to interact with the many new English-speaking fans that were watching their live streams and videos. This transition was key to garnering the international fame that Idol Culture, Vocaloid, and Kizunai Ai could not. Hololive’s VTubers embraced fan interactivity through their more casual video game streams. Not only that, but they allowed fans to partially dictate their personalities. Fan translators only translated small amounts of content, so foreign fans gained only a particular view of what a VTuber’s personality was like. If a VTuber was known for their loud voice and aggressive personality due to funny clips of them, then foreign fans would come to a livestream expecting a loud voice. Moreover, foreign fans might create art or memes reflecting this view of the VTuber. This VTuber might then respond to the fan’s donations, art, or memes during

a livestream and most likely would reinforce the iconic perception of their personality. In this way, Hololive members interacted with their foreign audiences and helped to create energetic international fan cultures surrounding themselves.

The advent and rise of the VTuber is evidence of Japan’s soft-cultural power—that is, the prevalence of their popular culture on an international scale. More specifically, it demonstrates the strong influence that Japanese culture has on internet culture worldwide. VTubers were among the top earners in 2020, in terms of the money donated during their live streams. Due to the pandemic, more people were staying at home and viewing live streams, leading to a spike in viewership. Although, as previously noted, it is the VTuber’s fan culture that attracts and keeps such a large audience because of the high level of interactivity. The VTuber phenomenon is an example of rapid globalization facilitated by the internet. The fans and VTubers are participating in a linguistic and cultural exchange and are crossing previous barriers in the entertainment industry. While the actresses are playing an exaggerated virtual character, there exists a notable exchange of culture and ideas in a world that is becoming increasingly more connected.



China’s Belt & Road Initiative:

*Gateway to
Economic
Superpower*

ETHAN KITTS

In a world shaken by the COVID-19 pandemic, economies have been met with a harsh realization. Health-based lockdowns and limits on social contact halted economies to a grinding standstill. This was no less true for China’s economy that endured a 6.8% shrink in the first quarter of 2020. While China was fortunate enough to undergo an economic resurgence in the second and third quarters of 2020, many other countries were not as lucky. This brought about a massive obstacle to China’s implementation of their Belt and Road Initiative, the plan to connect China to the world economy through a network of railways, energy pipelines, and highways. The goal of this project is to create new special economic zones around the world similar to their own Shenzhen Economic Zone while expanding the usage of Chinese currency. The Shenzhen

Economic Zone began as a small fishing village that was designated as a special economic zone by the Chinese Communist Party in 1979. Within this zone, the Chinese government provides less regulation and more free-market style policies in order to encourage economic growth. Shenzhen has since become one of the largest and fastest-growing technology centers in Mainland China, following \$300 billion in foreign investment during a time when China was struggling from political and economic turmoil. Now in 2021, China is one of the strongest economies in the world, already on pace to become the world’s premier economic superpower in the near future. China is now looking to use its economic power and investment capability to incorporate fifty regions along the “New Silk Road” to create special economic zones modeled after Shenzhen,

potentially placing itself as the world's newest economic center.

The most recent developments in the Belt and Road Initiative are the new markets that shifting geopolitical landscapes have laid in China's sights. The first of these changes is the newly formed government of the Taliban in Afghanistan. China's first memorandum of understanding, a written agreement loosely outlining international commitments within the Belt and Road Initiative, came in 2016. This never came to fruition, however, due to the ongoing terrorist threat in Afghanistan, which has been the site of war for the better part of the last 20 years. Following the return of the Taliban as the leaders of the Afghani government, both China and the Taliban have the ability to benefit from this newly formed government. China's main obstacle to progress in Afghanistan has been security. However, should the Taliban provide a stable and secure economic climate by China's standards, they could find themselves as a hub within the New Silk Road. This would provide the Taliban with an economic partner, recognition on the world stage, and a chance to bring infrastructure to a war-ravaged and struggling nation. China would also stand to benefit greatly, not only by creating large regions of Chinese economic influence from the Belt and Road Initiative, but by potentially securing mineral rights in a country with plentiful reserves of lithium, raw iron, and precious stones, as well as smaller reserves of gold. This could provide Afghanistan, which is currently struggling financially, with a source of income. China would gain access to some of the largest reserves of precious materials in the world which have remained untapped due to Afghanistan's lack of infrastructure and security concerns. An abundance of lithium, the main

element in electric car development, and large raw iron reserves would provide China with a pipeline for steelmaking minerals. As the world is still recovering from the economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has contributed to the volatility of paper currency and increased the demand for precious metals, such reserves also provide a valuable source of income.

There are other areas of Asia that also stand to gain from new development in the region. Should Afghanistan become a large part of the Belt and Road Initiative, other like-minded countries, such as Palestine, Pakistan, Turkey, and Iran, could unify to create a very large economic zone strengthened by the influence of the Chinese global approach. Of primary interest is Palestine, a country seeking many of the same things that Afghanistan is seeking, such as infrastructure and legitimacy on the world stage, as it is not largely recognized internationally. As China expands its economic influence, the United States may be forced to solidify its alliances, similar to previous actions taken when the former Soviet Union began to expand its economic influence. Given that the main U.S. ally in the region is Israel, China could seek to expand its partnership with Palestine, which already attributes 8.54% of its imports to China, second to only Jordan. Investment in Palestine, a country already ideologically aligned with Afghanistan's new ruling party, would solidify China's influence in the region.

Also of great interest is Pakistan. As the biggest beneficiary to date of previous Belt and Road Initiative projects, Pakistan could provide China with a bridge to Afghanistan. As China has already invested billions of dollars into Pakistani infrastructure and development, an economic move solidifying Chinese economic interests

would make great sense in order to bridge China with the economic potential in Afghanistan. Like China's reasons for doing business with Palestine, including economic influence and legitimacy within the international community, a similar reasoning would be used for further economic expansion into Pakistan. If the United States sought to solidify its regional alliances, it would turn to India. China's increased economic expansion into Pakistan would consequently further undercut U.S. economic influence, as China remains the U.S.'s only true economic adversary in the world. Similar to Palestine, as of 2019, 27.9% of Pakistan's imports originated from China; China is Pakistan's primary source of imports and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is their second-largest source, providing 11.2% of Pakistan's imports. The UAE is another ally within the United States' Middle Eastern economic sphere of influence, further complicating the economic alliances in the region.

The two additional countries of interest, Turkey and Iran, could also be connected to the economic zone formed by Palestine and Pakistan. Many of their ideologies align with the newly formed government of Afghanistan, as well as that of Palestine. Moreover, these two countries have already begun to align themselves economically with China. Iran imports 27.5% of its goods from China while sending 48.3% of its exports there. As Turkey seeks stronger economic relationships, China has been a willing partner. As recent as 2019, China's central bank transferred \$1 billion to aid the stability of the Turkish government. Both Turkey and Iran have also begun to look to other sources of economic growth in response to tense relationships with the United States; China has put itself into position to be the new primary economic partner for both of these

countries. These countries, along with Palestine and Pakistan, could undoubtedly form one of the largest economic zones in the world, should they begin to grow as the Shenzhen economic zone has over the last 42 years. Access to one of the most mineral-rich regions in the world, combined with the success of one of the most ambitious global infrastructure projects in the world, could provide China with a gateway to becoming the world's top economic power. In this case, China's economy would arguably become the first noteworthy adversary of the western economic alliance on the world stage.

As The Belt and Road Initiative expands the economic influence of China, the spheres of worldly influence are fast approaching a critical crossroads. Since the fall of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the United States has not faced significant economic challenges on a global scale, but China now aims to change this fact and challenge the United States' economic foothold. The expansion of Chinese economic influence into the Middle East and neighboring regions signifies that the era of one global economic superpower is quickly coming to an end and that the United States will be challenged by a force more stable and more determined than any economic adversary it has ever faced.





COP/26:

Who to Watch and What to Expect

PEYTON MITCHELL

Across the planet, the effects of climate change are becoming increasingly disastrous. In Madrid, Spain, Storm Filomena brought the heaviest snowfall in the last 50 years and created conditions so cold that the elderly were told to stay inside. Meanwhile, people in the Northwestern United States (U.S.) endured a “heat dome,” leading to evacuations and rampant wildfires. Thousands in New South Wales, United Kingdom (UK) had to evacuate their homes as extreme rainfall destroyed property and trapped residents in floodwaters. Record-breaking weather events are becoming more and more frequent as the climate continues to be affected by humans, and the scientific community has formed several groups, conferences, and committees dedicated to finding climate solutions. Member-states of the United Nations have formed one such group,

called the Conference of the Parties (COP).

The COP is the decision-making body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This international convention, composed of 197 member-nations, is the parent organization that created the 2015 Paris Agreement at the 21st COP, COP21. According to the UNFCCC’s website, its primary objective—and the objective of the Paris Agreement and each year’s COP—is to stabilize atmospheric greenhouse gas levels in time to prevent “dangerous human interference with the climate system.” More specifically, the objective of the 26th COP, COP26, is to prevent global temperatures from rising more than 1.5°C (34.7°F) above pre-industrial levels. COP26 is preparing to convene in Glasgow between November 1st and November 12th, 2021. Co-hosted by

the governments of the United Kingdom and Italy, this event will be watched by followers of international initiatives to address climate change across the globe. To understand the COP, one must pay attention to the major parties’ past records and carefully evaluate their successes and failures to predict whether this conference will ultimately achieve the UN’s climate goals, or whether the policies will fail to change the state of global climate as they often have in the past.

The most recent COP, known as the COP25, was held from December 2 to 13, 2019 in Madrid, Spain. At this Conference, the parties discussed the goals of the Paris Agreement and the “rules” for participating countries. Arek Sinanian, an author and climate scientist, summarized the outcomes of the COP25 as “decisions, not achievements”—a view held by many. For example, at COP25 new rules were created to prevent “double counting” units of emissions when countries reported their emissions reductions and trading values. The 2019 meeting also dealt with setting “common time frames” for countries to set for achieving their aims: some countries wanted common 5-year time frames, others 10-year, others 12. Ultimately, even this seemingly superficial matter was not settled, and the discussion of time frames was left unresolved for the next meeting to, hopefully, tie up. These are the types of loose-ended ideas that critics like Sinanian point to when criticizing the effectiveness of past COPs.

For the first twelve days of November 2021, this year’s COP26 will convene with the hope of picking up where the COP25 left off and building off of its decisions. One major element of the COP26 will be completing the three-year agriculture project known as the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture. This project seeks to support

sustainable agricultural development and to “recognize the unique potential of agriculture in tackling climate change.” At COP25, the government of Kenya, as well as the larger African Group bloc, requested funds to help African nations bolster their agriculture sectors. At COP26, this matter will be revisited. Alok Sharma, a UK politician and member of Parliament, has been appointed by the government of the UK to serve as the President of the COP26. Though the President’s role is largely administrative, encompassing agenda-setting and leading formal negotiations, his experience as a member of Parliament and Secretary of State for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy will lend him the background knowledge and political savvy to lead the international conference. Sharma addressed the Parties to the UNFCCC in a Pre-COP letter, calling for this meeting to “translate political will and positive intentions into concrete commitments and practical action, commensurate with keeping 1.5°C alive.”

To prepare for the Conference, a Pre-COP meeting was held in Milan from September 30 to October 2. Here, two youth delegates from each of the 197 countries held work-groups and discussions, and heads of states and environmental officials from dozens of member countries met up to discuss the issues that will be more fully handled at the November COP. The items on Milan’s agenda mirrored that of the larger Conference: they centered around the overarching goal of keeping the 1.5°C climate goal set by the Paris Agreement in reach. To do this, countries discussed how to best help developing countries balance environmental goals as they gain economic and industrial power. Resilience efforts are also a focal point:

those representatives who met in Milan had to consider ways to address the damage already caused by climate change and how to increase resilience in infrastructure. Finally, the Milan Pre-COP saw discussions of market strategies, such as setting taxes and emissions ceilings, and non-market methods, such as intergovernmental cooperation, of reducing emissions from their industrial sectors. The discussions held in Milan were intended to prepare participants for COP26 in Glasgow. It provided a chance for youth and country representatives to discuss the COP goals in an informal setting. Here, countries shared their goals and ideas for how to accomplish them, all in the hopes of maximizing the productiveness of the COP26.

The goals for the COP26 have been broken into four broad categories: first, the commitment to reduce emissions to net-zero by 2050 will be reaffirmed and revised, if necessary. Secondly, member nations will consider ways to increase resilience against the effects of climate change, such as natural disasters and economic declines. These plans are to be backed up by actions such as reducing reliance on fossil fuels such as coal, increasing investment in electric cars, and preserving forests which act as greenhouse gas "sinks." Third, funding will be discussed, most significantly in regards to the Adaptation Fund, which is an organization set up under the Kyoto Protocol to assist developing countries in their efforts to reduce emissions and mitigate the effects of climate change. Additionally, the COP16 in 2010 pledged \$100 billion per year to help implement climate initiatives in developing countries. This \$100 billion pledge is to be revisited at the COP26. Finally, member states will commit to a collaborative approach to climate

change, meaning that they will agree to continue working together within the UN framework to achieve the climate change goals. This final goal is particularly important in the eyes of COP President Sharma, who warned the parties in an October 12, 2021 speech:

"Responsibility rests with each and every country. And we must all play our part. Because on climate, the world will succeed, or fail as one."

As the 2021 Conference of the Parties unfolds, spectators ranging from politicians to industry leaders to common people will be tuning in to see what, if any, action steps the member countries will take to face the formidable challenges ahead.

Abortion Rights in Latin America:



Context and Implications

MADELINE MAYLATH

Mexico made international news in September when its Supreme Court voted unanimously to decriminalize abortion, a ruling that would take effect throughout the country. The ruling came about in the same week that the United States Supreme Court declined to strike down an expansive Texas law that effectively outlawed abortions throughout the entire state and could pave the way for the overturning of abortion legalization throughout the nation. This juxtaposition came as a shock to many people who did not expect a country such as Mexico, a relatively young democracy with a large Catholic population, to allow legal abortions.

Reproductive rights have long been heavily restricted throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2019, before Argentina and Mexico legalized abortion, the Guttmacher Institute estimated that 97% of women in Latin America and the Caribbean live in countries

with restrictive abortion laws. In the region, six countries - the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Suriname, and El Salvador - have total abortion bans with no exceptions even for rape, incest, or to save the mother's life. Due to the difficulty of receiving abortions, 95% of abortions performed in Latin America and the Caribbean are unsafe, which has severe consequences for the health of the women that seek them clandestinely. Unsafe abortions in the region cause an estimated 12% of all maternal deaths. Seven hundred sixty thousand women are treated for complications of unsafe abortions each year. Abortion bans have a disproportionate impact on poor women in the region because these women lack the financial resources to travel to a country where abortions are legal and safe. On top of this, the women who undergo these procedures are frequently imprisoned for doing so. In cases where poor women have

complications with their pregnancy or abortion, they have to go to public facilities where they risk being reported to law enforcement.

Traditional stances on reproductive rights in Latin America and the influence of the Catholic Church predisposed Mexico to criminalize abortion. However, shifting demographic and economic factors began to make a path to legalization possible. One condition that has occurred in Mexico that is conducive to the legalization of abortion is a higher female labor-force participation rate or FLFPR. Studies show that higher FLFPRs create more favorable policy outcomes for women in OECD countries. Uruguay passed its abortion legalization law in 2012 when their FLFPR was 55.79 percent, which is comparable to the United State (U.S.)'s rate of 56.79 percent. Mexico's FLFPR is still below that of Uruguay and the U.S.; however, its FLFPR has risen consistently since 2001 and reached 45.58 percent in 2019, its highest rate in history.

More equitable income distribution is another condition that increases the likelihood of abortion legalization because it elevates feminists in their position against the Church, making the government more susceptible to changing laws. Inequality has been declining in Latin America over the last 20 years, largely due to favorable economic conditions and proactive policies to redistribute wealth. According to a study by Brookings, part of why inequality declined from the 1990s to the 2000s was a decrease in the earnings gap between skilled and unskilled workers. This was due to an increase in basic education in Latin American countries, as well as a decrease in the skill-biased technical change that occurred in the 1990s as Latin America opened up to global trade. Brookings also found that inequality declined because of an increase

in government transfers to the poor. Large-scale conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs were implemented in several Latin American countries. Mexico had its own CCT program, originally called Oportunidades and now called PROGRESA. PROGRESA has had proven and substantial effects on education, health, and nutrition over time.

Abortion legalization in other Latin American countries also helped the movement gain momentum in Mexico. Uruguay legalized all abortions before 12 weeks into gestation in 2012. This relatively relaxed restriction on abortion was made possible in Uruguay because of three important factors: the relative weakness of the Catholic Church, the election of a president who is not opposed to abortion legalization, and the presence of a highly institutionalized party system with a strong leftist party. Argentina recently legalized abortion in December of 2020, bumping the percentage of women in Latin America who could legally access abortion from 3 to 10 percent. This legislation was proposed by the Argentinian president and passed by the Senate. The success of the reproductive rights movement there is largely credited to the long-term mobilization of activists, the progressive executive government, and the presence of more women in parliament. During the passage of the bill, there was also a shift in the debate over abortion in Argentina from a moral question to a public health one, which grew support for abortion legalization.

Abortion has been legal up to twelve weeks in Mexico City since 2007, though there were still multiple barriers to accessing one. Everywhere else in Mexico, abortion was permitted in a limited set of circumstances which included rape, fetal malformation, or when the survival or health of the mother was in danger. The illegality

of abortion has had a clear detrimental effect on the population. One study found that, from 1990 to 2008, 7.2% of all maternal deaths in Mexico were abortion-related. Over the past couple of decades, medical abortions have become more common within Mexico and have allowed a publicly funded reproductive care program through the Mexico City Ministry of Health (MOH-DF) to increase client volume and safety. An important step forward for access to safe abortions was made in 2011 when mifepristone, a drug used to end a pregnancy, was commercially registered in Mexico. MOH-DF incorporated a mifepristone-misoprostol regimen for medical abortions into public sector services. This regimen for a medical abortion is more effective and causes fewer side effects, meaning women in Mexico City then had access to a safer way to end unwanted pregnancy. This program has helped shift the discussion of abortion in Mexico from a moral to a public health issue, which has aided the abortion rights movement. However, before the Supreme Court's ruling made abortion legal throughout the country, only four Mexican states also allowed legal abortions.

The Argentinian movement for reproductive rights spilled over into Mexico and gained strength. On top of this, Mexico's current president Andrés Manuel López Obrador is a leftist. Though he never espoused support for the legalization of abortion, he said that the citizens should decide the issue and never took measures against legalization. The last significant roadblock would appear to be the Catholic Church. However, the Mexican government is adamantly secular, and the authority of the Catholic Church has waned in recent years due to high-profile clerical sexual abuse scandals. Combined together, these factors helped pave the way for abortion

legalization to take place.

On September 7, 2021, when the Mexican Supreme Court ruled to legalize abortion, it directly concerned the northern state of Coahuila but will apply to all of Mexico. Women throughout the country will be able to receive a judge's order allowing them to undergo abortion procedures legally. This legalization in Mexico has implications for further development. First, abortion legalization corresponds with leftist, more democratic governments coming to power, which signals a tangible and continued shift away from authoritarianism. Additionally, income distribution will change and advancements will be made by women in economic activities as women will have more control over their reproductive care. Liberalizing abortion laws also correspond to positive spillover effects on women's educational attainment and labor supply, as well as contributing to improvement in children's human capital. Legalizing abortion has been linked to a sharp drop in unintended births, which in turn causes increased schooling and higher earnings for children born after abortion legalization. Abortion legalization will do much to prevent maternal deaths and health problems resulting from abortions, as it has been shown to reduce maternal mortality as well as the cost of safe abortions. Mexico could even see similar results to Uruguay, where following the passage of abortion legalization in 2012 there has been a significant reduction in poverty and a very high rate of female participation in the labor force.

Despite the major progress made for reproductive rights in Mexico, the reproductive rights outlook for Latin America as a whole is mixed. Gender-based and domestic violence have increased in Latin America during the Covid-19 pandemic, which in turn will lead to unwanted

“...INCOME DISTRIBUTION WILL CHANGE AND ADVANCEMENTS WILL BE MADE BY WOMEN IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES AS WOMEN WILL HAVE MORE CONTROL OVER THEIR REPRODUCTIVE CARE.”

pregnancies. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) estimated that the pandemic would result in 2.2 million unwanted pregnancies, 1 million abortions, 3900 maternal deaths, and 51,400 child deaths by the end of 2020. There will also continue to be a disparity in access to high-quality reproductive health services, as most upper-class women, who already have access, more easily access contraceptives and private abortions while poor women will still have to rely on public health facilities. Additionally, there is a lack of access to information on safe and publicly provided abortions among citizens in Mexico and Latin America. Even in Mexico and countries where abortion is legal nationwide, judges or medical providers can still refuse to provide abortions. Nevertheless, the decriminalization of abortion in Mexico opens the door for vastly expanded reproductive rights for millions of women as well as potential economic and social opportunities for the entire country.



AVA BARROS

The term femicide refers to the killing of girls and women because of their gender, often due to stereotypes and unequal power structures ingrained in cultural norms. According to statistics released by the South African government, a woman is murdered every three hours in South Africa, and to its President Cyril Ramaphose, “South Africa is one of the most unsafe places in the world to be a woman.” As brutal attacks on women become more prevalent and as public awareness increases, activists are demanding change. Although the South African government has made recent statements addressing violence against women, activist Ngaa Murombedzi states

that the government needs to “put action with those words.”

Following the first reported coronavirus cases in the country, the South African government implemented one the longest, strictest lockdowns, leading to a rise of violence against women. In an attempt to prevent social gatherings, the South African government enacted a curfew as well as a ban on alcohol sales. Within the first three weeks of this lockdown, the Femicide Command Centre recorded more than 120,000 victims of gender-based violence (GBV). The South African Police Service (SAPS) specified that 55% of these victims were killed by former

or current intimate partners. As citizens were forced to stay home, women were inadvertently left vulnerable to domestic abuse. Tshogofatso Pule, for example, was found dead hanging from a tree in June of 2020 when she was eight months pregnant. The deaths of Pule and many other women like her have sparked a national outcry. With one of the world's highest rates of rape and femicide, violence against women in South Africa is nothing new. It is especially prevalent in rural areas where many women and girls fall victim to practices like child marriage, "ukuthwala" or bride abduction, and "corrective rape" with the intention of "curing" homosexual or transgender women. Many men in South Africa have patriarchal views about women, leading to abuse and discrimination. Women are seen as subordinate, less deserving of power, and hold primarily domestic roles. Constructions of masculinity centered around control over others and sexual entitlement fuel the use of violence against women and girls. What happens between a man and woman is often seen as a private matter; therefore, many reports of sexual offenses and domestic violence are dismissed by police. Victims of GBV are often hesitant to turn to authorities due to pressure to tolerate abuse, lack of trust in the criminal justice system, and financial dependence on the offender. Additionally, marital rape only became a criminal offense in South Africa in the 1990s.

In 2019, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reported that South Africa has one of the top five highest rates of female homicide, alongside El Salvador, Venezuela, Honduras, and Jamaica. South Africa's femicide rate is approximately five times higher than the global average. Although the issues surrounding GBV are widespread, media reports are scarce.

Because the SAPS releases minimal information about these crimes, the media is often the only public source available. To many South African men and women, domestic violence has become normalized. Lack of police reaction and media coverage adds to the mindset that committing violent crimes against women can have little to no consequences.

In an attempt to provide protection from domestic violence, South African legislators passed the Domestic Violence Act (DVA) in 1998. The DVA urged the SAPS to assist victims of domestic violence and GBV by, for example, finding access to shelter and medical treatment and giving survivors the right to apply for protection orders against abusive partners. However, the Interagency Gender Working Group finds that the criminal justice system continues to be unsupportive of victims and noncompliant with new legislation. Several accusations have been made that the SAPS has refused serving protection orders to focus on more "pressing" police matters. Victims often face secondary trauma at the hands of authorities; a 2013 report details the alleged rape by a police officer of a woman who came to the police station to report an incident of domestic violence. Due to the challenges that survivors of GBV face with authorities, many access shelters for safety, some bypassing the criminal justice system altogether. Although shelters play a significant role in responding to and preventing violence, they operate under strict capacity and resource restrictions.

Following the recent rise of violence against women, President Ramaphose has made steps towards reform after calling femicide a "second pandemic." His plan of action consists of setting up a \$68 million fund to support

"AS THE WORLD CONTINUES TO FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19, SOUTH AFRICA CONTINUES TO BATTLE AN ADDITIONAL THREAT TO ITS CITIZENS' LIVES."

law enforcement and improve legislation and policies involving femicide and GBV. The South African government has initiated the Gender-Based Violence National Command Centre to provide survivors with resources like counseling and an emergency line phone number. In hopes to increase funding for shelters and provide more court services for victims, the government also launched the Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Declaration as well as the Booyens Magistrates' Court. Legislative amendments have also been made regarding minimum sentencing for offenders, bail conditions, as well as increased protection for victims of intimate partner violence.

Critics of the South African government recognize that domestic and sexual violence is a complex issue and that criminal justice reform is only a short-term solution. New legislation will only be effective if there are authority figures to enforce it. Experts believe that programs are

needed to teach growing boys to view women as equals to prevent violence in adulthood. In general, South African culture is one in which men enable the behavior of perpetrators, even if they are not perpetrators themselves. Even in the midst of the recent public outcry, the South African government said, in a now-deleted Twitter post, that women "should not allow themselves to become victims." Drastic steps must be taken in order to break the cycle of victim-blaming and the oppression of South African women due to a historically misogynistic, patriarchal culture. As the world continues to fight against COVID-19, South Africa continues to battle an additional threat to its citizens' lives.

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