FALL 24
ISSUE 20

THE PENDULUM

CLEMSON'S INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

6
WHALING
The Legacy And The Continued Practice

26
LOCALIZE TO GLOBALIZE
The Consequences of Data Localization to Combat Digital Exploitation

18
SHADES OF INFLUENCE
How Unilever Shapes Global Beauty Standards

10TH ANNIVERSARY

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. G.W.F. Hegel once referred to history as "a continuous process of change … of thesis, antithesis, synthesis." In many ways, this quote encapsulates the spirit of The Pendulum: we take the back-and-forth swing of international affairs and its approaches, and synthesize it with unconventional topics and interdisciplinary lenses to form something new.

This issue marks the ten-year anniversary of the founding of our magazine, an occasion that affords a moment for both perspective and progress. This issue pays homage to our legacy, while also looking forward to what lies ahead, both in the world around us and in the magazine itself. In this vein, we have several exciting initiatives to announce.

First and most importantly, we are thrilled to feature contributions not just from Clemson students, but also from other colleges and universities across the Southeast. Though we have had one or two guest writers per edition in the past, this edition marks the first time we have made an active effort to promote our writing process elsewhere. 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 excited to announce the return of The Pendulum's Swing, our podcast where we interview writers to learn more about their topic of interest and writing process. At the time of this magazine's release, one episode on Greenlandic independence will have been recorded and published, with several more to come.

In this magazine, you will find articles ranging from coverage of Bangladeshi student protests to analysis of Global South data centers to the effects of international corporations on body dysmorphia. 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 international affairs.

Warm regards,

Owen M. Eastman

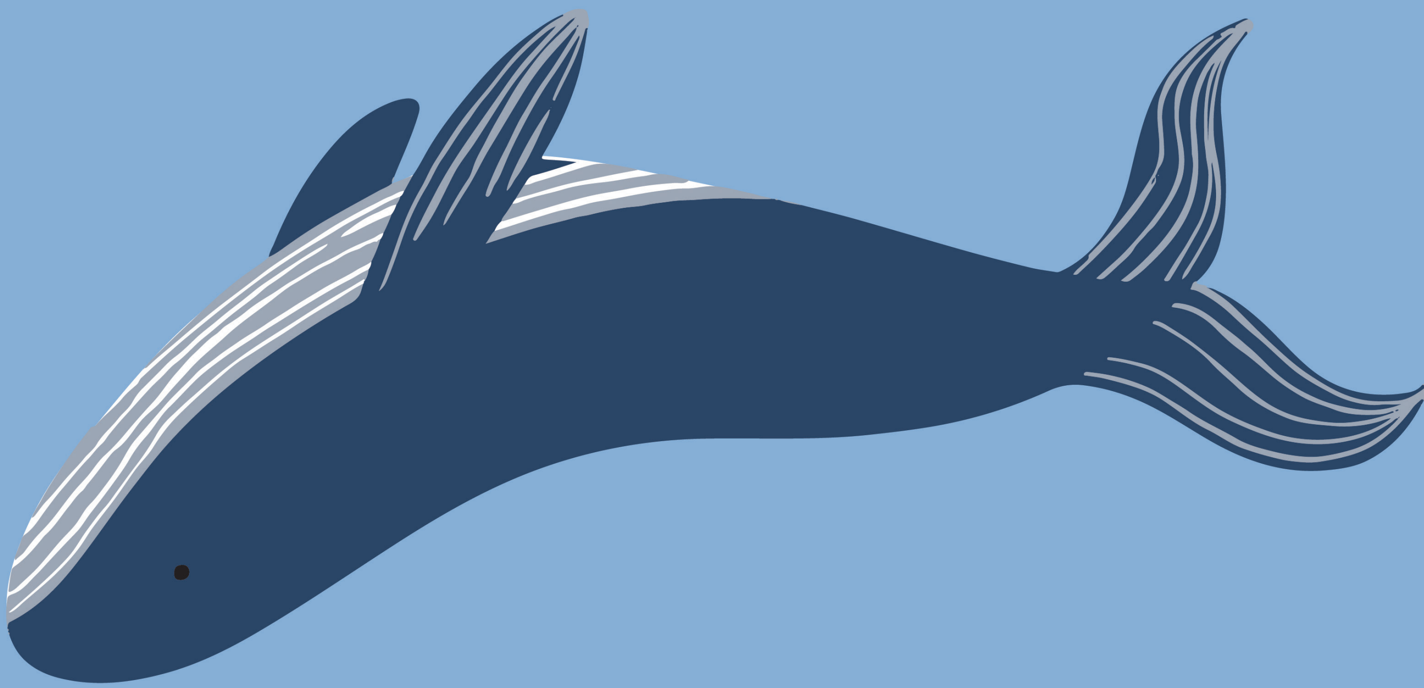
Owen Eastman
Editor-in-Chief, The Pendulum

CONTENTS

Issue 20 - Fall 2024

WHALING

The Legacy and The Continued Practice



By Ethan Thompkins: Ethan is a freshman Anthropology major at the University of South Carolina.

"Call me Ishmael," reads the iconic opening line of the well-known novel, Moby Dick, by Herman Melville, published in 1851. It chronicles an American ship captain and his relentless pursuit of a white whale roaming the open oceans. Although touted as famous fiction, the practice of whaling is still very much present today and throughout history.

Whaling, the practice of killing whales for their resources for commercialization or tradition, can be traced as far back as humans have traveled the seas. According to National Geographic, early Scandinavians practiced whale hunting for their meat and oil thousands of years ago. The Japanese were likely also practicing the gathering of whales far before this. Throughout history, the industry surrounding whaling has persisted, especially with the advent of the Industrial Revolution. Often regarded as beginning in the early nineteenth century, it witnessed a switch to new technologies such as steam and coal engines. The need for longer workdays to supply booming industry and a growing consumer base, especially in the US, resulted in a turn to whale fat as the primary supply for oil-burning lamps. Thus, the industry surrounding the harvesting of whale-related goods exploded in the West, hundreds of thousands of whales being killed between the late 1700s to mid 1800s, according to the Scientific American.

The rise of steam-powered ships increased this number dramatically. As a result, a great many species of whale were driven to near extinction, including the North Atlantic right whale, gray whale, and blue whale. These populations have only recently made a strong comeback. Today, the practice is widely shunned by many countries culturally and legally, and thus it rarely goes unnoticed when other nations continue it.

Recently, Japan released a new whaling ship that gained the moniker of "Mothership" when Hideki Tokoro, owner of the vessel, referred to its mothership-style hunting method. The vessel has significant distance and speed capabilities, with CNN stating that it possesses a sailing range of around thirteen-thousand kilometers – more than eight-thousand miles. This range equates to Japanese capabilities to hunt whales far outside the territorial waters of the East China Sea. The ship also has a freezer capacity estimating two-hundred thousand pounds of whale meat, with the most hunted whale species by the Japanese being the minke whale, and the average minke whale reaching no more than twenty thousand pounds, according to the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Japan, however, is not the only country to continue to practice whaling. Continuing the hunt against whales, Norway and Iceland have undertaken whaling operations under some circumstances, incurring recent major outcries. According to Oceanographic Magazine, Norway has harvested fifteen-thousand whales since 1986. Iceland, however, saw no taking of whales between 2019 and 2020 due to a lack of tourism and an inability to trade with Japan in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Of the three nations currently participating in commercial whaling, in only one is the practice subsidized federally: Japan. Yet, both Norway and Japan have reported many numbers of whales taken over recent years.

Iceland, however, did not permit commercial whaling of fin whales, a threatened species, from 2019 to 2021. Nevertheless, in 2022, the only current Icelandic whaling company, Hvalur, killed one hundred forty-eight fin whales. Following disturbing inspection results showing that 41% of the whales took longer than 11.5 minutes to die, Iceland's Minister of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, Svandís Svavarsdóttir, mandated regular inspections to improve animal welfare. On June 19, 2023, an Expert Advisory Board concluded that current hunting methods violate Iceland's Animal Welfare Act. Consequently, Minister Svavarsdóttir suspended fin whaling until August 31, 2023, according to the Iceland Review. Iceland's government has since permitted Hvalur to kill one hundred twenty-eight whales for the 2024 season. Public outcry over the reported duration of whale kills in Iceland has led many to believe that whaling may eventually become a non-practicing industry.

Though whale hunting is a large cultural, economic, and societal practice in many places, this activity garners significant opposition from the International Whaling Commission (IWC), The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and other interest groups. There are over three-thousand whale and other marine mammal organizations in the world, leading one to ask if nations' reasons for encouraging the hunting of whales should again be examined.

"...current hunting methods **violate** Iceland's Animal Welfare Act."

Iceland and Norway cite historical and traditional motivations, with whaling practices dating back to Viking times. Norway emphasizes cultural heritage and claims that limited hunting of the non-endangered Minke whale supports the environment and provides food, often exported to Japan and Iceland. Japan also refers to its whaling traditions and has recently claimed scientific research justifies whale hunting, arguing that gathered data would help determine sustainable hunting levels for the IWC and open whaling as a practice for more nations.

What current organizations are operating in opposition to these nations and other organized efforts to hunt whales?

On December 2, 1946, the International Whaling Commission, or IWC, was founded as a global force charged with the conservation of whales and whaling regulation, with eighty-eight member nations as of 2024. Furthermore, most nations across the globe have banned the hunting of whales entirely, with a strict reference to different protected statuses of whale species. The order of species at risk, as classified by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), includes those that are, "vulnerable," "endangered," and "critically endangered." Many species, including the Fin Whale, have been designated as "protected" or "vulnerable" by both the IWC and the IUCN ("protected" status is typically assigned to "endangered" or "critically endangered" whale species). The IWC also maintains a ban on all commercial whaling of any kind among its member states.

Renewed outcry against whaling efforts has increased due to a multitude of issues, which trace primarily to a Japanese abandonment of the IWC, which they had been a member of since 1951. Japan left the International Whaling Commission in 2019, and resumed commercial whaling on a massive scale that same year. The Japanese whaling industry is facilitated through private enterprises sanctioned through the Japanese government. The industry's defense is through claims of science and a necessity of certain nutrients that the people of Northeast Asia require. However, opponents of Japan's whaling Industry state these claims are false. According to the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), polls conducted in Japan show that, "89 percent [of respondents] say they have not bought any whale meat in the last 12 months" and "only 27 percent of respondents in Japan say they support whaling."

Recently, the IFAW released new evidence against the whaling industry in Japan. Founded in 1969, the organization works to protect animals and their habitats through advocacy, rescue operations, and community-based programs. In the IFAW's report titled, "The Economics of Japanese Whaling," it is stated that, "commercial whaling in Japan is an industry that is not profitable, that can exist only because of taxpayer subsidies, and that provides a product catering increasingly to a shrinking and aging market." The IFAW also mentions findings from the Japanese firm ESquare on the Japanese economy relative to the Whaling industry. The IFAW claims these findings suggest that the industry garners little to no profit and thus relies on taxpayer money and government support (government subsidies to support whaling average around ¥782 million – US$9.78 million – annually). The article also shows evidence of waste in whale meet collection: "Between 2011 and 2012, the whaling industry attempted to boost income and reduce stockpiles by holding a series of whale meat auctions. These auctions were total failures, and three-quarters of the meat went unsold." Yet, Japan still argues that increased whale populations make the industry extremely valuable, and that whaling will have a positive impact.

New evidence does suggest that whales are making a comeback, with the IWC showing an increase in population estimates for nearly all species, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) claiming a nearly 33% increase in gray whale populations from just 2022. Many see these developments promising opportunity. Upward trends in whale populations have led many proponents of the whaling industry to enjoy a view on relaxing or abandoning the IWC ban on international commercial whale harvesting. The 69th meeting of the IWC was held in Peru last September, the international ban on whaling being the focus of discussion. Many believed that the ban continue and that protectorate organizations continue operation. Further debates discussed whether the IWC should be dissolved. During this very meeting, former IWC head Peter Bridgewater called the organization a "zombie" that should vote for its own dissolution. Bridgewater, in interview with High North News, mentions the IWC has little to show for its tenure. Instead of prolonging the organization's life, Bridgewater suggests it would be more beneficial to dissolve it, exemplifying when such an organization has outlived its usefulness. Bridgewater and his supporters believe that millions are spent in support of the IWC, while many of its members are perfectly capable of enforcing regulations themselves.

The 69th IWC meeting eventually passed, the outcome ruling in favor of the large, water-bound mammals, and ensuring the continued existence of the IWC and its original functions. Recent calls for change seem to align with public disdain for whaling, while many still insist on a consolidation of these conservation-based organizations.

What is the argument for whaling?

The arguments supporting whaling involve aspects of ecology, tradition, and economics. From an ecological standpoint, some argue that certain whale populations are at healthy levels and can sustain limited hunting. Advocates contend that ethical whaling can be part of balanced wildlife management, maintaining population dynamics within marine ecosystems: no whale species has ever been driven to complete extinction by hunting.

Traditionally, many cultures have, and wish to continue, the practice to maintain their cultural heritage. Furthermore, considering the economic side of whaling, Don Walsh, a marine consultant, retired US naval officer, and oceanographer, stated that the global whaling industry generates $31 million USD annually as of 2018. Communities in Japan, Norway, and Iceland may be severely impacted by a lack of revenue should whale hunting be banned.

Whales provide a substantial source of protein, and some argue that, despite their intelligence, this does not diminish their value as a food source. Thus, proponents of whaling often highlight the nutritional and cultural significance of hunting these creatures. In an interview by The Guardian featuring Setsuo Izumi—a long-time whaler with over thirty-seven years of experience—he stated, "what we eat is different from country to country. It's a cultural thing. In Australia, they eat kangaroos, but I don't want to eat kangaroo." In this same article, Joji Morishita, a deputy director of the far-seas fisheries at the Japanese Fisheries Agency, stated that, "the West are trying to force their values on us. It is cultural imperialism," in reference to attempts to ban whaling in Japan.

According to The Guardian, Japan and Norway have agreed to a joint mission providing all whaling ships with a DNA and conservation specialist. These specialists would keep record of DNA so any whale meat on the market could be tracked to determine the legality of the kill. The conservationist would make sure the correct number, size, and age of a whale is taken by the vessel. All of this seems to work towards providing more credibility and ethics to their operations.

Responses to such arguments included a slew of anti-whaling groups and protests over the years, including the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, Greenpeace, and Whalewatch. An important individual is Paul Watson, a founder of both Sea Shepherds and Greenpeace, and a prominent figure in environmental and animal rights movements, most notably for his activism against whaling. He co-founded the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society in 1977, an organization dedicated to global marine wildlife protection. Watson became a controversial figure due to his aggressive protests, including direct action against whaling ships at sea.

On July 21st of 2024, Watson was arrested in Nuuk, capital of the Danish territory of Greenland, while docking to refill his vessel on its way to confront a Japanese whaling ship in the Northern Atlantic Ocean. Watson was arrested on account of a "red notice" many countries have placed on him in recent years. He is being detained in Greenland due to a 2012 Japanese-issued arrest warrant accusing him of harming a Japanese whaling ship in the Antarctic region in 2010 and injuring an onboard crew member.

Japan is currently seeking extradition of Watson, while The Greenlandic Court in Nuuk issued information to the press indicating that Watson will be held in Greenland until at least November 13th. Hundreds gathered in Paris and Nuuk to protest his arrest, and many French citizens have become vocal over Watson's imprisonment due to his living in France up until his recent arrest. Watson is currently seeking French nationality, and requested political asylum from French President Emmanuel Macron. France has denounced Watson's proposed extradition but stated that one must be in France to file an asylum claim.

Thus, the practice of whaling continues to provoke complex and often contentious debate globally. While historical and cultural factors underpin the traditions of countries like Japan, Norway, and Iceland, growing awareness around animal welfare and ecological sustainability is shifting perceptions. As public sentiment evolves and regulatory bodies such as the IWC and others advocate for more stringent protections, there are hopes that whaling will diminish as an industry. The recent shifts from whaling in Iceland exemplify the potential for change driven by public and legal advocacy, suggesting that whale conservation may take the place of whaling. Continued dialogue and international cooperation are crucial in balancing cultural heritage with the urgent need to protect these magnificent creatures and their habitats for generations to come. Countless other marine mammals, including dolphins, porpoises, and seals, are also the focus of ongoing struggles, both culturally and legally. It is thus essential to consider both sides of the argument and understand the history that shapes the world we live in today. We must consider whether we should, or should not, heed the final words of Captain Ahab from Moby Dick: "Thus I give up the spear."

BANGLADESH'S JULY REVOLUTION

Meaning-Making, Framing, and the Repression Paradox

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

With the constant stream of social movements through Instagram story feeds, tracking the sequence of events and understanding how social movements come to fruition has become increasingly challenging. The Bangladeshi Student Protests, in particular, were a brief but powerful flash across social media platforms, and, likely, the plight of these students this past July has already faded from public memory. However, these students' achievement- the removal of an arguably autocratic ruler- stands as no small feat.

Multiple forces contributed to the ousting of Prime Minister (PM) Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh and the instating of the Yunus ministry, many of which can be analyzed under social movement theory. Social movement theory provides valuable insight into how social movements synthesize and how their consequences impact social, cultural, and economic spheres. While other social movement tactics contributed, meaning-making, framing, and the repression paradox were crucial to Bangladeshi students' success in bringing about significant political change.

In the last couple of years, Bangladesh has seen a remarkable transformation, with a surge of garment exports and infrastructural investments, halving poverty in the country. However, while the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been increasing, it has been coupled with rising inequality, unemployment, and skyrocketing prices for essential foods, which set the stage for crisis in Bangladesh. GDP growth is not the only determinant of prosperity; pre-existing issues have called for a fair distribution of wealth, income, and jobs for young people with fair wages and good working conditions. A 2019 World Bank study found that although over half a million higher-education graduates in Bangladesh are ready to enter the job market, "less than half secure employment within one or two years of graduation." According to Time Doctor, the average monthly income of any given Bangladeshi is less than 300 United States Dollars (USD), with the minimum wage being less than 40 cents USD an hour. Coupled with the dissatisfaction of unsatisfactory disposal income, the World Happiness Report in 2024 designated Bangladesh as the 15th least happiest country in the world.

To add insult to injury, on June 5th, 2024, the High Court of Bangladesh reinstated a quota that reserved 30% of government jobs for descendants of freedom fighters from the Bangladesh War for Independence from Pakistan. Also known as the Bangladesh Liberation War, this war transformed East Pakistan into Bangladesh's currently recognized geopolitical state. Those who were not on the side of Bangladesh's liberation in 1971 but instead had allegiance to Pakistan were stamped with the label *রাজাকার*,, or Razakar, equivalent to calling someone a traitor in Bangladesh.

This reinstatement of the government job quota in Bangladesh not only further strained new graduates' employment concerns but ignited widespread frustration among students and young citizens, who saw the policy as a setback in the fight for merit-based opportunity. At first, students peacefully demonstrated against these quotas, arguing that the system was discriminatory, unfair, and needed to be overridden. At the capital city's most prestigious institution, Dhaka University, students instigated the first non-violent protests in the region.

Violence first emerged across Bangladeshi universities when ex-PM Hasina ordered police forces to defend themselves with weapons as necessary. However, with hundreds of civilian deaths, including many children, it is difficult to categorize this violent suppression of protesting as "self-defense" when, in comparison, police casualties were limited. As the death toll from the protests rose, the Bangladeshi government imposed additional repressive measures, overtly censoring media through a multi-day internet blackout and the deployment of their army to enforce a nationwide curfew.

> **"These student's achievement- the removal of an arguably autocratic ruler- stands as no small feat."**

Instead of quelling dissent, this crackdown exemplified the repression paradox: both the violent and "soft" repressive response by the Bangladeshi government fueled widespread public outrage both within Bangladesh and abroad. As physical integrity violations tend to draw public attention and sympathy for social movements, members of the Bangladeshi diaspora reposted infographics and scenes from the protests on various social media platforms, further spotlighting the movement globally.

The Awami League, led by Hasina and representing Bangladesh's majority, staunchly defended the quota system. Supporters of the Awami League (and members themselves) are descendants of freedom fighters, such as Hasina's father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who was the second Prime Minister of Bangladesh. Instead of sympathy for the protestors, she publicly stated, "If the grandchildren of the freedom fighters don't get quota benefits, should the grandchildren of Razakars get the benefit?".

Arguably, this was a turning point in the protests, as during protests, students started screaming, "We are Razakars!". Through the act of meaning-making, a slur that once meant traitor was welcomed by protestors, thanks to the students utilizing counter-framing against Prime Minister Hasina's claims, furthering their cause and imbuing newfound meaning to the word. Amid their outrage and frustration, the discourse surrounding the word Razakar underwent a metamorphosis. After Hasina's so-called 'victories' in four consecutive elections, many viewed Hasina's attempt to label them as traitors as yet another move in her increasingly autocratic rule. Instead of deterring the protestors, her words only strengthened their resolve.

Soon after these newly emboldened protests turned violent, Dhaka became a war zone. As reported by Al Jazeera, police authorities wound up using various crowd control weapons such as "tear-gas shells, sound grenades, shotgun pellets, [and] rubber bullets." Besides a handful of police and ruling party supporters, the casualties concentrated among ordinary people and students. Not only police but supporters of the Awami League served to suppress the protests as well, adorning themselves with helmets and firing bullets. By this point, protestors were now protesting with new convictions; they would not stop until Sheikh Hasina herself took accountability for her role in the death toll of the protests.

Utilizing the term Razakar, students started framing their protest goals clearly: they rejected any alignment with the Awami League and were determined to persist until they removed Hasina from power. This reframing arguably paved the way for more intense forms of protest, including burning government buildings and vehicles and raiding the Prime Minister's residence just hours after she fled the country at her family's urging. These actions by the protestors represent various repertoires of contention or the methods by which constituents of a social movement use to express their grievances.

When social movements undergo repression, the outcome of the movement is not always the intended one. The repression paradox is a term in social movement theory that explains how repression can have unexpected consequences. That is, rather than bringing social movements to a halt, repression can add to the grievances of the constituents of a movement and draw not only further resistance but even support from the masses. These forms of repression can range from physical violence, like tear gas employed during the 2020 Black Lives Matter Protests in the U.S. in the wake of George Floyd's death, to softer methods, such as internet blackouts or media bans.

In order to endure repression, a movement must have a strong foundation, with constituents agreeing on a shared meaning. Meaning-making refers to how humanity makes sense of the signifiers around us. Meanings can vary based on one's epistemic group, which shares a perception and knowledge base. For example, take the "Loudly Crying" emoji as a signifier. When someone from the "Baby Boomer" generation views this emoji, they may understand it to mean deep sadness. In contrast, someone from Gen-Z may understand this emoji to signify embarrassment or extreme laughter to the point of tears. The meaning assigned to this emoji varies by epistemic group, and is shaped by individual experiences, beliefs, and cultural influences.

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Signifiers do not have to merely be visual objects; signifiers can be words, too. The way that words insinuate certain ideologies is referred to as "framing" and encapsulates intended connotations and impressions that words can give off when used strategically. In the context of speech and slogans formed during social movements, if meaning-making is the first step to making sense of the world by giving words meaning and deciding how we respond to them, framing is the intentional/strategic utilization of these words to portray a particular image or to express a specific ideology. A simple way to exemplify framing would be to pull from the Civil Rights Movement. Take Martin Luther King (MLK), for example- he framed the liberation of Black Americans as a righteous quest, using Christianity as a master frame. He mobilized and appealed to the masses with his call for non-

THIS FIGHT FOR JUSTICE IS NOT CONFINED TO NATIONAL BORDERS

violence, often utilizing his religious affiliations in his speeches.

On the other hand, the framing of Black liberation pursued by Malcolm X was vastly different. His famous line "By any means necessary" is intentionally ambiguous and leaves the constituents of the movement to determine whether or not Malcolm X was insinuating violence with this framing. While neither movement was entirely passive (MLK's approach was still organized and active) nor entirely violent (the Black Panthers did not engage in mass violence), each activist approached the same end goal with distinct methodologies shaped by their unique framing.

Even with all this technical talk of social movement theory implementation and Prime Minister Hasina having been successfully ousted, stability in Bangladesh remains elusive. Bangladesh today is not by any means thriving. The former Prime Minister is facing over 100 cases of murder charges, over 1000 people have passed, and some 400 students have lost their eyesight, according to a statement from the Interim Health Ministry. Mob rule, especially in rural areas, has taken over due to the lack of stability within the country's law and order.

According to NPR, Dr. Yunus, the Nobel laureate turned interim Prime Minister of Bangladesh, has mentioned a need for comprehensive economic reforms that invest in human infrastructure at the very minimum. He has enormous work ahead of him, but Bangladesh is hopeful. Rebuilding a nation after the fall of a longstanding semi-autocratic leader such as Sheikh Hasina understandably requires significant time and effort to address the country's deeply rooted political, economic, and social challenges. Before jumping for joy, Bangladesh must work to untie its roots of corruption and weed out pre-existing problems before looking to the immediate future.

However, if the Bangladeshi student protests have taught us anything, it is that 2024 was the year college students showed the world that defiance outside of the classroom is incredibly effective at challenging the status quo. Amidst the transnational affinity for Bangladesh's students that spread across social media this past July, a new message became apparent. This fight for justice is not confined to national borders but is a global movement of its own, as young people work together to shatter the status quo.

AFRICA'S ILLEGAL GOLD TRADE:

Fueling Violence, Geopolitical Instability, and Global Markets

By Ellis Parsons: Ellis is a junior History and International Affairs major at Wofford College.

With the number of significant gold deposits being discovered decreasing and gold itself being finite, reliance on established gold mines has become prevalent in the 21st century. Africa's historical predominance in gold extraction continues today in Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and other countries in Africa's Great Lakes Region (GLR). Despite tumultuous geopolitics and localized armed conflicts that have gripped much of the continent, African countries remain among the top global producers of gold. However, Africa's contribution to the worldwide gold market is plausibly far more outstanding due to illegal gold trade and smuggling operations in Africa's GLR. M23 and the Armed Democratic Forces (ADF) in the DRC, Mohamed Hamdan "Hemedti" Dagalo's Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan, and hundreds of violent non-state actors across the GLR and localized conflict zones capitalize on political and socio-economic instability to establish and extract lucrative profits from these mining operations to fund their engagement in armed conflicts. The gold from these illegal mining operations is then smuggled out of their country of origin to countries such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where the gold is then sold in bulk as artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) to Dubai-based foundries. From there, the gold is sold on the global market as legitimately and ethically mined gold. This article will articulate and analyze the effects of illegal gold trade in Africa in proliferating war in the Great Lakes Region, identify the key actors involved, and discuss possible solutions to curtail the sale of ASM gold on the global market. Additionally, this article will apply theoretical explanations of the success of illegal gold mines to establish a lens for the institutional factors and historical context of Africa's illegal gold trade.

While conflicts in Africa and subsequent illegal gold mining operations are not wholly unique to the continent, with similar situations playing out in Panama, Bolivia, and Indonesia, according to a report conducted by The Johns Hopkins University

Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, one political theory stands to explain the success of these operations in Africa: post-colonialism. According to Tayyar Ali, a professor at Bursa Uludağ University, post-colonialism is a theoretical framework for examining colonialism's lasting effect on society and the effects that the imposition of colonial values has on the subjugated communities. In regards to this article, post-colonialism frames how colonization occurred to maximize economic exploitation from the colonized and did so by suppressing the identities and cultures of the native populations. Thus, colonial powers were only interested in extracting natural resources from subsequent colonies and failed, or were not concerned, with adequately investing in the infrastructure of their colonial holds. Subsequently, following World War II and into the 1970s, as many colonized regions gained independence, former colonies lacked a foundation for a stable economy. According to Professor Alonis Mlambo, a professor at the University of Pretoria, African governments turned towards financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank for loans to reinvigorate their economies. Professor Mlambo argues that the structural adjustment programs accompanying these loans devastated African economies. Many of these former colonies were forced to continue the only stable form of employment: natural resource extraction. This lens of post-colonialism establishes context to the conflicts and explains the long-term structural problems. More so, however, the post-colonial context establishes a framework for interpreting the current power struggles on the continent among political elites and other external actors and how these actors are profiting from the illegal gold trade.

"The **post-colonial** context establishes a framework for interpreting the current **power struggles** on the continent."

Over the past decade, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has dominated Africa's illegal gold trade. According to a report published by the non-governmental organization (NGO) Swissaid, the UAE accounts for 93% of Africa's undeclared exports and 57% of the country's gold imports originating in Africa; most of these smuggled goods are sold in the country's largest city, Dubai. A report conducted by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace found that because of Dubai's subpar adherence to international resource-sourcing regulations, the city accounts for 80% of the UAE's gold imports and exports. Dubai's mineral imports regulatory agency, the Dubai Multi Commodities Centre (DMCC), officially adheres to responsible and ethical sourcing standards set by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Standards set by the OECD are complied with by 38 countries, including the United States and European Union member states. However, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace report also found that, despite the UAE officially agreeing to these regulations, the DMCC has little to no enforcement of OECD policies. This report also shows evidence of significant discrepancies between reported gold exported by African nations and reported gold imported by the UAE, demonstrating a high probability of illegal trade. Gold smuggled into the UAE through laissez-faire import authorities is then illegally processed through Dubai's gold market and prepared for the global market. Once smugglers have offloaded their gold to buyers in one of Dubai's three gold souks, or bazaars, the gold is either directly smelted at the souk and turned into jewelry or sold in bulk to a gold refinery. Despite the existence of industrial devices capable of detecting trace minerals that occur in illegal ASM gold, Dubai refineries do not use them, even though their use is commonplace in the industry.

The illicit gold trade in Dubai undermines global resource regulations and enables the integration of illegally sourced gold into the international market. Shawn Blore, a researcher on natural resources for the Artisanal Gold Council, found that Souk dealers sell the gold as scrap gold to refineries, which allows ASM gold to be mixed in with legitimately sourced gold. Once the gold has been refined and turned into jeweler bars, it is sold globally as legitimately sourced gold to countries such as Switzerland, Hong Kong, and Turkey. In fact, despite the U.S. Office of Global Sanctions and Threat Finance regulating resource sourcing, the 2020 Carnegie Endowment for International Peace study found that over 500 million dollars worth of illegally sourced gold jewelry entered the United States. The illicit profits gained from the refineries processing ASM gold are either kept as cash in Dubai banks or moved around the globe. Conversely, the profits are possibly converted back into trade goods to sell to countries in the Great Lakes Region, thus extracting even more profits from the area. With such lucrative profits, domestic actors and individuals face an ever-growing problem of curtailing the illegal gold trade in the GLR.

With 43% of people living below the poverty line in Africa, according to data from the World Bank Group, the potential for massive profits from ASM operations is apparent. By participating in the smuggling, couriers can transport around 10-12 grams of gold, which holds a market value of between $850-$1000. With countries in the GLR averaging a GDP per capita of $796, according to the World Bank, a courier transporting 10-12 grams of gold can earn far more than the average GDP per capita, highlighting the financial incentive to engage in illegal gold trade.

Despite such large profit margins from ASM operations, African nations have been lackadaisical in implementing a coordinated effort to regulate the GLR gold export market. However, previous efforts by African governments to extract royalty payments have resulted in cross-border smuggling between countries with lower royalties. Statistical data accumulated by the NGO coalition Partnership Africa Canada (PAC) shows that regional gold exports are directly related to increases and decreases in gold royalties. A case example of this dynamic occurred in Uganda between 2006 and 2007. When the United Nations Security Council issued sanctions against several Ugandan-based companies for exporting gold sourced in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda's exports dropped by over half from 6,900 kilograms to 3,100 kilograms. Cross-border smuggling operations became more apparent when Uganda's eastern neighbor, Kenya, reported a gold export increase from 432 kilograms to 3,023 kilograms from 2006 to 2007, according to research conducted by the PAC.

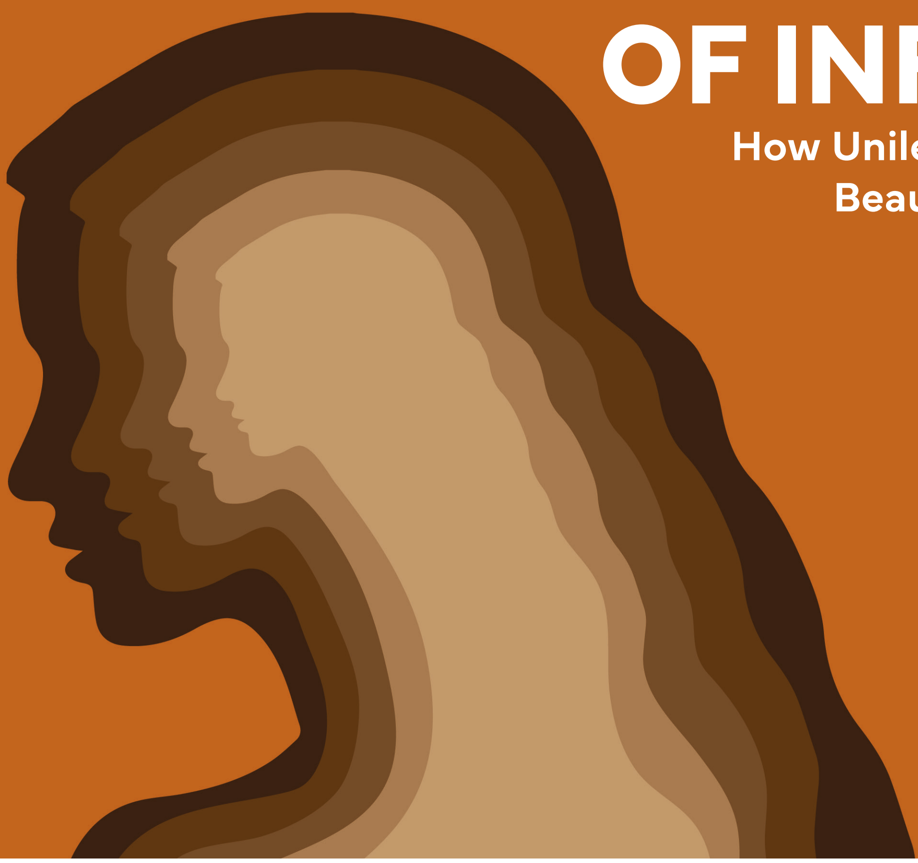
However, smugglers could not comfortably operate under Kenya's higher royalties of 2.5% compared to Uganda's 0.5% royalty for a sustained period. Thus, as regional gold exports decreased for Uganda and Kenya during 2008, the UAE's gold imports rose, turning international efforts to regulate cross-bordering smuggling operations into a far more profitable out-region smuggling operation. Indeed, research by PAC found that African countries in the GLR lose 15 million dollars in royalties annually to out-region smuggling. Some efforts by governments in the GLR have successfully mitigated illegal gold smuggling. However, these agencies are still limited in their capabilities and size, meaning they can not monitor all international airports and have limited authority to check luggage. Having examined the GLR's challenges with gold smuggling, attention now turns to possible solutions to create meaningful change.

As stated in the previous section, disparities in mineral royalties between Great Lakes Region countries increase cross-border smuggling, eliciting out-region smuggling onto the global market. A possible solution to this issue could be a collaborative effort by GLR countries to establish a harmonized ASM mineral royalty. These royalties would have to remain relatively low at around 2-2.5% of the export value. This low royalty would limit the profits that cross-border smugglers gain and keep the barrier low enough for them to consider legitimizing their ASGM operations.

Furthermore, the success of the Tanzania Mineral Audit Agency (TMAA) and Mineral Inspection Units in Tanzania could be a model for other African countries. TMAA agents operate within several of Tanzania's international airports and have the authority to search passengers' luggage to ensure that all appropriate mineral royalties are applied. From the agency's founding in 2012 to 2014, over $900,000 worth of gold was seized, according to PAC. Institutionalizing a governmental entity with the authority to verify the origins and sourcing of gold restricts out-region smuggling by counteracting weak security in the UAE. Similarly, Dubai refineries could be required to use detection scanners that detect trace elements of tin, silver, and copper that would not be present in jeweler bars. Intergovernmental agencies such as the United Nations or OECD could even implement this requirement, bypassing the DMCC in Dubai.

In conclusion, Africa's illegal gold trade is a profoundly complex issue with roots extending back to colonial times. The involvement of domestic actors and international actors, such as the UAE, has enabled and proliferated the illegal extraction, smuggling, and sale of ASM gold. While governmental efforts such as Tanzania's TMAA have provided hope for possible solutions, more robust and collaborative efforts are needed to address the problem. Without comprehensive reform and international cooperation, Africa's illegal gold trade will continue in the Great Lakes Region, and international actors, particularly the UAE, will continue to extract illicit profits from the region.

THE ILLICIT GOLD TRADE IN DUBAI UNDERMINES GLOBAL RESOURCE REGULATIONS.



SHADES OF INFLUENCE

How Unilever Shapes Global Beauty Standards

By Brea Stone: Brea is a freshman English major at the University of South Carolina.

In the United States, it's common to hear about friends and family going tanning. Whether that means laying out on a sunny day, visiting a tanning bed, or even using tanning lotion, tanning is a popular beauty trend in the US. In other parts of the world, however, this isn't the case. In many African and Asian countries, in fact, the trend for nearly a century has been to use skin-lightening products. India, in particular, has a long and toxic history of skin-whitening, exacerbated by modern-day advertising. Advertising has the power to deceive consumers, not only into buying products, but also into reinforcing societal stereotypes including racial biases, gender roles, and body expectations, especially in minoritized or disempowered group.

To understand why countries such as India are hooked on products like skin-whitening creams, these countries' history of colonization must be considered. Zooming in on the historical relationship between India and Britain can provide explicit evidence of the ongoing effects of colonialism that persist today. Britain officially began its dealings with India in 1600 when Queen Elizabeth I allowed for the charter of the British East India Company. By 1757, the East India Company took control of India's government, including its education system. This shift in power dynamics from a trade organization to a governing body marked the beginning of a period of English influence in Indian culture. One consequence of this was the emergence of colorism, or prejudice against darker-skinned individuals, which manifested itself in India as early as the 18th century. Some of the first evidence of Indian colorism was the transition within Indian art from the depiction of darker-skinned deities to lighter-skinned deities in the 1800s. As British control in India continued to grow, the idea that lighter skin was favorable grew as well.

By the time India gained its independence from Britain in 1947, colorism had already set in on the country. Today, India is one of many postcolonial countries that were once a part of the British Empire, all of which are still at a great risk of exploitation. This exploitation is no longer coming directly from a colonial presence but rather from a corporate presence. Globalized body dysmorphia, therefore, can be defined as the collective perception of physical flaws, often as the result of international companies taking advantage of historically marginalized populations.

The multinational corporation Unilever, founded in Britain, is one such company with markets that depend on the existence of body dysmorphia in consumers. Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) was originally established under a different name in India in 1931 as a subsidiary of Unilever. By this time, there was already a market for skin-whitening products in India, due to the colorism that had been building within the country for the better part of two centuries. Thus, when Unilever's infamous Fair & Lovely skin-lightening cream was released in India in the 1970s, it was a highly successful product. In 2010, in India alone, the market for skin-lightening cream was estimated to have reached $432 million.

Advertisements for Fair & Lovely depicted women with darker skin unable to find jobs or husbands, and after using the product, it showed the same women with lighter skin leading happier lives. This social concept was utilized by pragmatic businesses like Unilever without ethical considerations of the impacts these advertisements and products would have. These advertisements perpetuate the colorism that developed in India as a result of British colonization by feeding into the notion that people with darker skin are at an inherent disadvantage.

One of the biggest challenges to HUL's success in India came in 2013, when, for the first time, an Indian American won the Miss America pageant. Nina Davuluri was crowned Miss America on September 15, 2013, and by the next week, headlines like "Is Miss America Too Dark-Skinned To Ever

"...one such company with markets that **depend** on the **existence of body dysmorphia** in consumers."

Be Crowned Miss India?" were circulating all across the Internet. Articles claiming that Davuluri wouldn't have won pageants in India, where women were expected to have lighter skin, caused public outcry. In reaction to these events, the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) finally, on August 14th 2014, published Guidelines for Advertising Skin Lightening or Fairness Improvement Products (35), consisting of roughly two pages of assessment criteria. These guidelines were certainly the result of decades of backlash companies like Unilever had received for its advertisements, as well as the latest surge in scrutiny that Davuluri's publicity brought. However, these guidelines were not enough to stop HUL's pervasive advertisements. The ASCI, a self-regulating body, has no governing power in India and, being composed mainly of advertisers, its guidelines are most effective for less influential companies.

The new guidelines were not enough to put an end to Unilever's advertisements, but the public persisted. Notably, Davuluri sent a letter to the CEO of Unilever denouncing their promotion of skin-whitening products in 2020. Two days after her letter was sent, on June 25th, 2020, HUL issued a press release stating its intention to rebrand Fair & Lovely under a new name. Unilever officially changed the name of Fair & Lovely to Glow & Lovely. Many people, including Davuluri, thought that this name change was a step in the right direction. Unilever's name change must be remembered for what it is: a tactful method of rebranding in order to become more palatable and more purchasable. According to Unilever, the removal of the word "fair" was meant to symbolize the company's realignment of values. Despite its new name, the skin cream still serves its previous function of whitening darker skin, and its advertising still depicts the same messages. However, the limitations on advertisement regulations combined with the public's general satisfaction with Fair & Lovely's name change, many believing the company truly was taking strides in racial awareness, has resulted in a decline of public objection directed at Unilever. This period of stasis has opened the doors for Unilever to continue producing advertisements aiming to exploit consumers.

Beyond racial implications, advertising can also encourage gender stereotypes. Unilever's subsidiary Persil, a laundry detergent company, will regularly release ads depicting women doing their laundry with clean homes and smiles, while releasing very few ads depicting males doing laundry. These differences in gender depiction suggest Unilever's awareness of the common gender expectation for women to be the home's caretaker, and their desire to use this societal force as a method of selling products.

When Persil started advertising their cleaning products in the early 1900s, it was to an audience of largely housewives, during a time when very few women held paid positions. Women were at this time, and still are today, a marginalized group. In most countries, the early 20th century was a time when women were not given many of the same rights as men, including suffrage. This disenfranchisement meant that women were at a significantly higher risk of being successfully targeted by large corporations, being unable to speak for themselves against the stereotypes advertisements enforced. Printed ads appeared globally in columns such as The Australian Women's Weekly, featuring nuclear families and women doing common household chores. Towards the mid-1900s, even as more women globally began earning their suffrage and moving into the workforce, Persil continued to market their products almost exclusively to women. Additionally, they maintained their original marketing, showing women completing laundry-related chores.

The turn of the century was, in a way, transformational for Persil. In modern day society, their ads were becoming more and more obsolete as women spent less and less time in the home. Finally, in July of 2000, Persil introduced a dramatic shift in its advertising style with an advertisement featuring Naomi Campbell next to the question "What does it take to get me into rubber?" Naomi Campbell, a famous model, was depicted wearing cleaning gloves and lingerie. Doubtlessly, Campbell's involvement in this campaign signifies the company's recognition of women's employment, and of previously domestic advertisements becoming patronizing and outdated. Persil's response, in hiring Campbell, was intended to rebrand their company as more progressive. Despite this, in its efforts to subvert women's past gender expectations, Persil ironically instead turned to the objectification of women, as well as the expectation that women maintain a body type like that of an international supermodel. Though Persil's advertisement with Campbell was meant to be a satiric take on housewife ads, it nevertheless presented a direct recognition of the stereotypes these ads portray, without claiming responsibility or calling these advertisements negative. Instead, Campbell's ad seems to pay homage to the ads of the 20th century, with a nostalgic appreciation. Unilever knew that women were in the workplace, and Unilever knew women could vote, but Unilever also knew women were still an at-risk group. Thus in the transition from the 20th to 21st century, Persil began advertising oversexualization rather than dated gender stereotypes alone.

While most of Persil's advertisements have been historically directed at women, in their 21st century rebranding, Persil did begin releasing some ads meant to target men. Today, in the 2000s, men are doing more household chores than ever before. However, the tactics at play in the ads meant for men are severely different than that of ads meant to target women. One of the only recent Persil ads that depicted a man was published in 2024, featuring Usain Bolt. The advertisement with Bolt, a world-class athlete, features him in a sprinting position. Calling back to his days as an Olympic gold medalist, this advertisement contributes to the general expectation for men to be masculine or strong. On the one hand, Persil's advertisements pander to the stereotype that women should act as nurturers and, on the other hand, that men should be hyper-masculine. Unilever's goal presumably isn't to maintain conservative or harmful values; nevertheless, advertisements do have an effect on consumers that leads to these values' persistence in society.

Similarly to Campbell's Persil ad which pushed the "perfect" body type, companies often play on the societal expectation for individuals to maintain an "ideal" body weight. Unilever, through its advertising, regularly plays on body weight expectations. A prominent example of this is its sale of its former subsidiary SlimFast. Up until 2014, Unilever had majority stakes in both the companies SlimFast and Ben & Jerry's (Stynes), advertising a weight-loss product alongside a brand of ice cream. When, predictably, the public noticed this shocking truth, Unilever quickly sold most (but not all) of its shares of SlimFast to a separate company. Their maintenance of stakes in SlimFast implies a direct knowledge of the profit they could make by keeping shares in these two contrasting companies. Despite Unilever's constant attempts at rebranding its image to seem more positive, it profits on consumers' insecurities and thus encourages body dysmorphia through its advertising.

Whether conscious of it or not, people are exposed to advertisements every day, and without maintaining constant media awareness, the average consumer is at risk of incurring effects from these advertisements. While many argue that advertisements represent societies' current desires, companies use advertisements to influence societal desires by intentionally lowering consumers' self-esteem. Companies, like Unilever, practice careful societal subterfuge each time they rebrand to fit in with modern ethical consumerism. One of the most important things to consider while living in a media-saturated world is that everyone is not equally targeted by advertisements. Many of these ads are carefully directed toward groups of people who are already at risk of historically imposed body insecurities. In the past, marginalized groups were at risk from tyrannical governments or cultural impositions. Today, while this is in many ways still true, at-risk groups also face obstacles from large corporations who have immoderately taken up the role of imperialist through advertising globalized body dysmorphia.

PROFITS ON CONSUMERS' INSECURITIES ENCOURAGES BODY DYSMORPHIA

ONE IN ONE MILLION

How the Paralympic Refugee Team Uplifts Refugees

By Katelynn Landry: Katelynn is a sophomore Political Science major at Clemson University.

Discussions of refugees and their crises permeate nearly all aspects of modern international conversation. Ongoing refugee crises in Syria, Europe, and Central America and their varying causes (war, climate change, governmental persecution) have resulted in extensive discussions of immigration policies, governmental regulations concerning citizenship, and the general ethics regarding the habitation of non-citizens living in countries different from that of their origin around the world.

One broad concept that plagues the refugee community and solutions surrounding refugee crises is the idea that a one-size-fits-all solution can be applied to such crises. This is the direct result of another plague - one of a sameness that is perceived to surround the refugee community. A common attitude surrounding refugees is that the displacement and persecution faced is uniform among all refugees. While it is true that all refugees face displacement and persecution, the uniqueness of individual circumstances is rarely acknowledged: a refugee from Ukraine, who was pushed out of their country due to military conflict, will have different needs from a refugee from South Sudan, who fled due to humanitarian crises. This is most evident in the paradoxical manner in which policies surrounding refugees are created. In places such as the United States, United Kingdom, and European Union, the United Nations' standard of accepting refugees and not returning them to countries of danger is acknowledged; however, this level of danger is often only interpreted as that in which their lives are immediately threatened. Their experiences must be codified, their refugee status "earned" according to certain conditions. In addition, the intersectionality of refugee status and other factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and disabilities rarely broaches discussions of refugees and the general refugee crisis, neglecting core issues that vary between all displaced peoples. This results in the omission of a critically important perspective, and the restriction of refugees to a box that they are rarely able to escape from.

The acknowledgment of the diversity of refugees in experience, in addition to uplifting the voices of refugees as individuals, is critical to facilitating change and altering harmful precedents so rooted within conversations surrounding refugees. There is no better place for this to occur than in the Olympics.

Historically, the Olympics have been critical to celebrating and shedding light on the unique issues that exist within a country. On the world stage of athleticism and international competition, every action and move made by an athlete reveals something not only about themselves but also about the country they represent. From the boycotting of the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin by democratic governments and Jewish athletes, to the protests performed by Tommie Smith and John Carlos during the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico City, the Olympics have been a way of bringing attention to international issues. In these times, it was necessary for these groups that were enduring oppression to gain recognition - in Summer 1936 it was Jewish athletes protesting Nazism, and in 1968 it was black athletes protesting racial injustice - and the Olympics was the most successful mode in terms of gaining international attention and support.

In 2016, the Refugee Olympic Team was founded with this in mind - to shed light on the troubles of refugees as a whole, and the specific struggles of their athletes. There were only ten players, with the grand goal of serving to "... be a symbol of hope for all refugees in the world, and… making the world better aware of the magnitude of this crisis," as stated by Thomas Bach, president of the International Olympics Committee (IOC), and its slogan has been "one in one million," a show of the choice made by one person to represent millions internationally. By the 2024 Summer Olympics, the team consisted of a total of thirty-seven athletes, all with unique skills and stories. Among them, Cindy Ngamba became the first to take home bronze for the Refugee Olympic Team in the 75kg boxing event.

Born in Cameroon, Ngamba and her brother moved to the United Kingdom (UK) with their uncle. At some point during their move, he lost her immigration papers, and as a result they were denied UK citizenship, which also denied her the passport required for Ngamba to represent the UK. She cannot represent her country of origin, Cameroon, either: Ngamba came out as a lesbian at the age of eighteen, and homosexuality in Cameroon has been outlawed for decades. Thus, her Olympic win is not only incredibly moving, catapulting her into fame and history, but also sheds light on the unique issues that queer individuals face internationally and in Cameroon.

It is a break from the typical mold: Ngamba is not a person for whom displacement or persecution is her only reason for being a refugee; instead, her struggle showcases the rejection that often occurs from both a refugee's country of origin and the country they come to reside in. It also highlights the particular issues that are faced by queer individuals in Cameroon, as well as by immigrants and refugees

> "To be a **symbol** of hope for all refugees in the world... making the **world better aware** of the magnitude of this crisis."

in the UK, further showcasing the need for an intersectional lens. Above all, though, Ngamba is a show of hope. Refugees are more than their status, and they as a collective people and as individuals can be successful despite their immense hardships. Ngamba's message to refugees was one of hope, that "...you have to keep on working hard, keep on believing in yourself …[and] you can achieve whatever you put your mind to."

Despite the Refugee Olympic team's broad success and inclusion, there is still an important oversight: that of the struggles of refugees with disabilities. Its Paralympic alternative, which was founded at the same time as the Refugee team, began with a meager two athletes, rising only to eight by the 2024 Summer Paralympics. As of 2020, 2.4 out of 82.4 million refugees had a disability, and as the number of displaced people today has increased to around 120 million, it is likely that the number of disabled refugees has increased, as well. The Paralympic Refugee team seeks to shed light on the specific intersection of individuals who are both disabled and refugees, yet its athletes still struggle to get into the public eye.

Among these athletes is Zakia Khudadadi. Khudadadi was born in Afghanistan with only one functional arm. In 2001, Taliban rule ended after the United States captured key cities, such as the capital of Kabul. With the overthrow of the Taliban, women became empowered to begin practicing sports that had been banned, freedoms they had exercised before Taliban rule later returned. Khudadadi began to practice Taekwondo, inspired by Afghan bronze medalist Rohulla Nikpai. Her coach, who was also disabled, taught her to see her own disability in a more positive light. She went from experiencing suicidal thoughts and fearing death threats, to "[imagining] having an iron hand instead that made [her] impossible to stop." However, despite the government of Afghanistan being free of its rule, Taliban presence in Khudadadi's district of Herat still remained. Thus, she often trained in her backyard and competed professionally only in areas outside of her district. Despite this, she won the 2016 African International Para Taekwondo Championship, held in Egypt, and went on to qualify for the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics, then representing her country of origin.

In 2021, the Taliban again overtook Afghanistan's capital of Kabul after two decades of American occupation. Khudadadi was forced into hiding to avoid imprisonment or execution by the Taliban for her practice of Taekwondo while being a woman, and to avoid harassment by Taliban forces for her disability. Despite this, she continued to practice the sport, and made a plea to the world for aid to evacuate her from Afghanistan to Tokyo so she could compete in the Paralympics. Her plea was moving, coming not just from herself, but spoken on behalf of all of the women of Afghanistan under Taliban rule. She asked the world to "help [her] not to be deprived of [her] rights as a woman in Afghanistan and as a player in the Paralympics." She was airlifted to Spain from Kabul by the Royal Australian Air Force, her only mode of escape, as the Taliban had closed all airports in major cities in order to prevent evacuees from leaving. These efforts successfully allowed her to compete in the 2020 Summer Paralympics as a representative of Afghanistan, where she competed and lost her round against Ziyodakhon Isakova of Uzbekistan. She qualified for the repechage round, but again lost, this time to Ukraine's Viktoriia Marchuk.

Eventually, Khudadadi qualified for, and moved to, Paris for the Summer 2024 Paralympics. She chose to represent the Paralympic Refugee Team over Afghanistan in order to advocate for refugees and showcase the unrest that was occurring in her country of origin. Upon her arrival in Paris, she stated that she was "...representing millions of refugees who have disabilities in these Games, and [she] will participate with immense pride." In the 2024 Summer Paralympics, she did more than just participate with pride - she won bronze in the women's Para Taekwondo K44-47 kg category, earning the Paralympic Refugee team its first bronze medal in its history. "I want to give this medal to the whole world," said Khudadadi. "I hope that one day there will be freedom in my country, for all the world, for all the girls, for all the women, for all the refugees in the world. And that all of us work towards that, for liberty and equality."

IMPORTANCE DIVERSITY INDIVIDUALITY POWER

Khudadadi is not the only member of the Paralympic Refugee team to win a medal, however. Guillaume Junior Atangana and his guide, Donard Nyamjua, won bronze in the men's Para T11 100m sprint. Guillaume, a refugee from Cameroon, moved to the UK, where, like Cindy Ngamba, his citizenship is left in limbo due to a lack of immigration papers. Bouts of perisotis have left him with a disability that prevents him from competing in football, his original aspiration - but he has found joy and success in being a sprinter. He competed in the 2020 Paralympic Games in Tokyo, where he qualified to represent Cameroon, and competed again in the 2024 Paralympic Games in Paris, where he chose instead to compete for the refugee team, in addition to being their flagbearer. His ambition was to break world records, win a medal in the Paralympic Games, and show the world "what refugees can do." He also stated that "the Paralympic movement is galvanizing for refugees and it is an honor for me…" The Paralympic Refugee Team, as a result, has a total of two medals among their eight players.

The efforts of the Paralympic Refugee team have not gone unnoticed, and they have begun to have ripple effects both within the Olympics and outside of it. On the individual level, the celebration of Zakia Khudadadi and Paralympic coach, Haby Naire, has gained the attention of thousands worldwide. Khudadadi has become an inspiration for many, garnering many fans who sported posters with her name in bold during her final winning round. For the Paralympic team, the presence of two medals among so few players is unprecedented, and showcases that this is not only a team that wants to win, but does. The United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, Ruvendrini Menididwela, stated that "this has been the summer of dreams for refugee athletes around the world and builds a strong platform for the 2028 Los Angeles Games and beyond." Internationally, they are an inspiration for refugees worldwide.

The Paralympic Refugee team has taken great strides towards changing the way refugees are addressed in international conversation. They showcase that there is power, individuality, and diversity of skills among refugees, and that there is humanity to them and their stories. Their experiences have also highlighted important international struggles, such as the struggle to achieve citizenship abroad as in Ngamba and Atagana's case, or the struggles of women and those with disabilities under certain governments, such as in Khudadadi's case. This creates important, needed precedent for changing public and governmental perceptions surrounding refugees and immigrants as a whole, in a manner that showcases the power and importance of these individuals.

LOCALIZE TO GLOBALIZE

The Consequences of Data Localization to Combat Digital Exploitation

By Nadia Chestnut: Nadia is a freshman Data Science major at Clemson University.

If Matthew McConaughey, dressed in cowboy chaps and bearing his sweet southern drawl, told you that "data is the new gold," would you believe him? While he was paid to say this in a Salesforce advertisement, the statement is no less true. Now, what if large tech companies were stealing that gold? If these large companies are the only ones participating in the gold rush, then where does that leave everyone else? A new wave of globalization occurred in the mid-1990s as a result of the widespread introduction of the Internet. Seemingly boundless opportunities for trade and influence emerged. Consequently, it opened the doors to advanced and rapid forms of exploitation in developing nations. Danielle Coleman, J.D., wrote a paper in the University of Michigan Ann Arbor Journal of Race and Law that explains how companies such as Google and Facebook have access to and sell billions of global users' data to third-party companies, and a limited number of countries have access to the entirety of that data. These domineering technology companies, often residing in wealthy nations, do not allow companies in less privileged countries a chance to compete and grow their digital economy. This would be the result of the perpetual domination of global superpowers and the race to project technological supremacy, emphasizing the preexisting economic gap between the Global North (typically associated with economically advanced countries such as the US, Canada, nations in the EU, and Australia) and the Global South (historically disadvantaged countries with rapidly growing economies in Africa, Asia, and South America, and Oceania, excluding Australia and New Zealand). In turn, nations in the Global South are attempting to find new ways to combat this divide: a specific method of tackling this growing issue is using data localization laws to restrict data flow.

While this seems like a promising solution, this legislation creates online embargos between nations. With the increasing research and use of technologies such as machine learning, data flows are quintessential to educational, economic, and social development. International services rely on large databases to produce efficient services to users. While the idea of laissez-faire principles cannot be applied to data, considering it harbors swaths of private information for citizens, companies, and governments, harsh restrictions create overwhelming economic drawbacks for municipalities struggling to compete with advanced economies. Although data localization laws are a potential solution to digital colonialism, they are not a healthy solution for either party. However, an overview of the root nature of these legislations can encourage proactive policies and protections for the digital economy.

The European Parliament's International Crime Court recognizes overt colonialism as a crime against humanity; however, modern methods of exploitation subtly perpetuate similar imbalances. A primary example of this is digital colonization: the extraction of user data for economic and socio-political dominion. Jacqueline Hicks, a researcher at the University of Nottingham's Asia Research Institute, brings to light that most Facebook users are in India, yet almost all of its data centers are in North America. The one data center Facebook has in Asia is not even in India: it's in Singapore. This is an issue because the nations with more data centers have the opportunity to continue digitally industrializing through cloud computing and an expansive information technology (IT) industry. A 2018 study commissioned by Facebook revealed that its investments in data centers in the U.S. had generated tens of thousands of jobs and added $5.8 billion to the United States' GDP in six years; where is that money for India? Currently, no unifying methods exist to combat this rising form of exploitation. Still, members of the Global South have recently become partial to using restrictive data localization legislation to obstruct it.

In the past few years, numerous countries from around the world have passed data localization laws, hindering the exploitation of domestic user data. Data localization laws mandate data storage within a nation's borders. These mandates heavily impact the technological, financial and health industries. Data localization policies would make it difficult for companies like Google, Meta, and X to extract data from countries that implement these laws, thus slowing digital colonialism. Most nations have some form of data localization legislation, but some are more prohibitive than others. Neha Mishra, an international trade researcher at the London School of Economics, establishes that nations in the Global South—specifically Kazakhstan, China, Indonesia, and Nigeria—enact these stricter laws under the influence of national security. Western governments practice other forms of data localization. Of particular note is Germany's Telecommunications Act, which limits how long companies can store user data while preserving metadata within German borders. More nations are adopting some form of data localization legislation, as it seems like a simple solution to data privacy and usage concerns. At the 2019 G20 Summit, South Africa, India, and Indonesia refused to sign the Osaka Track, a draft of policies for free data flows that would prohibit strict data localization policies. These three nations were interested in data localization legislation and still think that free data flow would not benefit them. Nations that implement strict data localization policies do so thinking this would strengthen their local economies. The US Chamber of Commerce and the Hunter Andrews Kurth Law Firm conceive that policymakers often

" **data...harbors** swaths of **private information** for citizens, companies, and governments... "

DATA LOCALIZATION RISKS ISOLATING COUNTRIES FROM VITAL DIGITAL NETWORKS

believe that, by requiring data to be kept within the nation's borders, local technology industries and digital commerce will begin to thrive. These policies attempt to encourage domestic tech businesses to focus on domestic consumers. This is also an attempt to create a sense of economic sovereignty and independence in developing nations. Different nations have varying levels of strictness with their data localization policies. Some are purposefully vague and confusing while others are overtly restrictive, negatively impacting large tech businesses like Google. The belief that these policies will promote local industry becomes a narrow-minded view when ignoring the complexities of international and local trade. It is essential to understand examples of these policies to critique them.

Let's take a look at country case studies to give real-world examples of the impact that data localization has on domestic economies. Kazakhstan enforces uncompromising data localization legislation. Kenddrick Chan, head of the Digital IR in the Information Age project and Research Associate at the London School of Economics foreign policy think-tank "IDEAS," mentions in his report on data regulatory regimes that, since 2005, websites using the Kazakh top-level domain ".kz" must host its information locally. He also mentions that, in 2016, the country required the local storage of all personal data collected in Kazakhstan. Bill Coughran, a former senior vice president of engineering at Google, recalls when Kazakhstan enforced a policy that would have required Google to build a data center in Kazakhstan. A requisite for the policy was that any domain using the ".kz" at the end of it would be required to host a data center in Kazakhstan. Google's Kazakhstani service, "google.kz", would have forced Google to allocate funds to hosting a data center in that nation which the company was not partial to. Instead, Google rerouted "google.kz" to "google.com". By redirecting users from google.kz to google.com, local businesses in Kazakhstan could lose the advantage of localized services, such as region-specific search rankings, advertisements, and language features. Businesses that rely on being prominently featured in local search results, or on serving ads to a domestic audience, might see a drop in visibility, making it harder for them to reach customers and grow their operations. Furthermore, Kazakhstani consumers might face reduced access to localized content, resulting in an inferior user experience. This could weaken the local e-commerce and digital services industries, slowing economic growth in these sectors. As such, domain rerouting was the only way to avoid building a data center in the country, which would have been too steep of a cost for the company to bear.

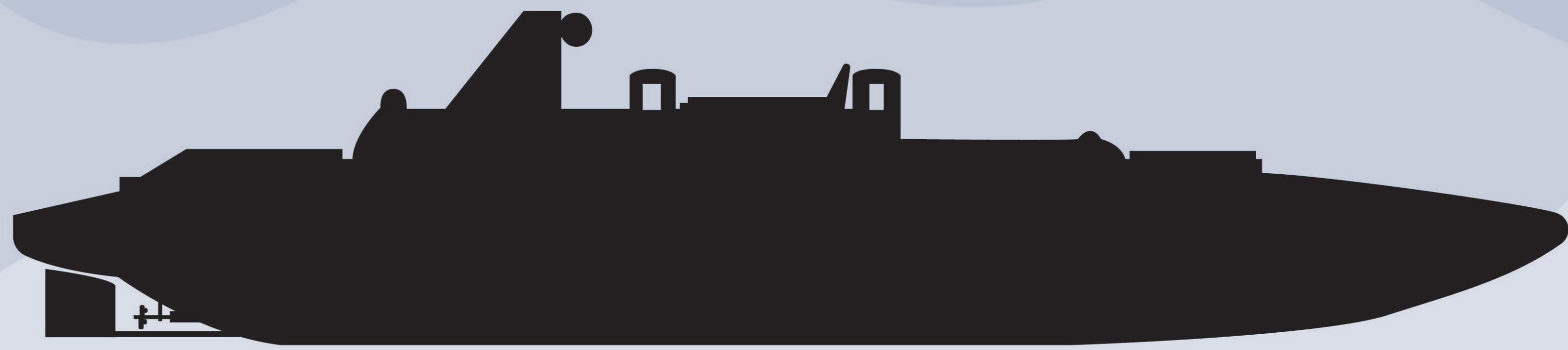
Another country that faces economic challenges with data localization laws in place is Nigeria. Nigeria has vague and confusing laws concerning data localization. Passed in 2013, reaffirmed in 2015, and then amended in 2019, the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) requires storage of "subscriber and consumer data within the country [to be] in line with existing legislation" and for "indigenous companies to build network infrastructure." The confusion with the law comes from the vague wording. It can be easily assumed that these rules require both foreign and domestic businesses to store all data about Nigerian citizens within Nigeria. The 2024 US National Trade Estimate Report on Foreign Trade Barriers notes that these policies require "information and communications technology (ICT) companies to use Nigerian businesses for the provision of at least 80 percent of all value-added services on their networks." Foreign ICT companies may face higher costs if they are forced to rely on local service providers who may not be as efficient or as cost-effective as international alternatives. This could make doing business in Nigeria less attractive to multinational ICT firms, as they have to allocate more resources to maintain compliance, potentially reducing their profit margins. Fortunately, these policies are not stringently enforced but could be an area of concern for trade barriers.

Data localization poses many economic consequences that are often overlooked when these policies are implemented. While some claim this legislation will improve the local economy, studies conclude the opposite. These policies cause a negative economic impact and reduce digital trade. Conan French, Brad Carr, and Clay Lowery, members of the Institute of International Finance, state that the value of data relies on the flow of that data. So, if it cannot flow through different economies, business transactions become constrained. Castro and Mcquinn of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development conclude that 50 percent of all traded services are enabled through telecommunications. International trade is increasingly becoming a form of e-commerce, so data localization laws are creating a threat to the global economy. French, Carr, and Lowery calculate that the costs of building data centers are tremendous, costing between $350 million and $800 million. Furthermore, the high level of automation in data centers results in minimal job creation. And if that wasn't enough, data centers are environmentally taxing, using copious amounts of energy and water to be maintained. Lee Casey, who heads the Technical Solutions Group at Nephos Technologies, determined that data centers consume about 0.8% of global electricity and generate 0.3% of worldwide carbon emissions.

Data localization laws are a reactive countermeasure in a constant battle for power and control. Foreign markets want control over developing nations, and these nations counteract that by enforcing their forms of control. As a result, economies suffer, as do their security and overall development. Instead of solving the problem, data localization often creates new barriers that hinder economic growth and collaboration. While it may limit some aspects of data extraction, it risks isolating countries from vital global technologies and digital networks. The implications of the current research on this topic suggest that the Global South would accidentally diminish its chances of growing economically with data localization policies. While a concrete solution to this issue has yet to be available, better solutions to data exploitation could involve multilateral agreements on data flow or the decentralization of data infrastructure. In order to make concrete steps towards implementing better guidelines to prevent digital colonization, attention—gained through articles such as this one—must be brought to the issue first.

SILENT SMUGGLERS

The Escalating Battle Against Narco Submarines



By Nicholas Kuzmin: Nicholas is a junior Government major at Wofford College.

When glancing at the S&P 500, you are likely to find the typical high-performing public companies, ranging from Apple to Meta to Berkshire Hathaway. However, what you will not find is stock performance from transnational drug smuggling operations, which have reached an estimated annual value of 652 billion dollars, second only to the 1.13 trillion-dollar global counterfeiting operations(GFI). In order to effectively run such a successful operation, cartels have long moved on from Pablo Escobar's private airstrips and fleets of airborne drug mules. Rather, a relatively new, cheap, and efficient program of building these so-called "Narco Subs" has been undertaken in order to smuggle tons of cocaine at a time from South America to Mexico and subsequently into the United States. Additionally, more subs have recently been noticed going from South America to Europe transatlantically and to Australia transpacifically. All of this has led to a game of cat and mouse between the subs of traffickers taking ever more daring routes and their counterparts in various law enforcement groups such as the DEA alongside the various Coast Guards of countries that find themselves on the frontlines of these counter-drug smuggling operations.

The term "narco submarine" is a colloquial, all-encompassing name given to vessels purposely designed to smuggle drugs. Most of these "Narco subs" are not submersibles, thereby not technically fitting the definition for a submarine, and can be sorted into five categories. The main type, or "first series" that was noticed were classed as LPV-IMs (with "LPV" standing for "low profile vessel" and "IM" for "inboard motor"). These began to be seen from around 2005 to 2015 after which they were superseded by other classes of sub.

These subs, much like their later iterations, were constructed in mangrove swamps out of steel, fiberglass, rebar, and plywood in workshops scattered throughout the jungles of South America. Typically resembling a sailboat without its sails and keel, LPVIMs are built for the purpose of one-way trips, with the intention of scuttling the vessels after they reach their destination.

By late 2015, counter-drug operations began to seize LPV-OMs, LPV again standing for "low profile vessel" and the "OM" for "outboard motor" (also known as LPGFVs or "Low Profile Go Fast Vessels"). This second iteration of narco subs retained the sailboat-esque look of the LPV-IMs but, per the name, contained more powerful outboard diesel motors, typically an Enduro 75 HP two-stroke motor or another readily available cost-effective motor that is difficult to trace. These vessels saw the cabin be moved towards the rear of the boat, with the cargo hold taking up much of the bow of the vessel. This cargo hold is generally loaded through the rear of the vessel, with the cocaine typically having to be cut out at its destination, as these LPV-OMs do not have a hatch allowing access from the top of the vessel. Typically, these vessels have been seized with around 1.5 tons of cocaine on board, but other incidents involved as much as three tons of cocaine on board, and these ships are recognized as being capable of storing more.

Shortly after the introduction of LPV-OMs, 2016 saw the emergence of a modification of that design in the form of LPV-OM-VSVs. Much like the previous design, "LPV-OMs stands for "Low Profile Vessel - Outback Motor" with the suffix "VSV" meaning" very slender vessel". This design, with a 10 to 1 length-to-width ratio, allows for a smoother and more efficient trip for the smugglers who are often at the mercy of ocean storms and freak waves throughout their journey. With that said, only one of these vessels has ever been seized, with the Colombian navy seizing one, which measured 30 meters in length and was carrying 3.37 tons of cocaine.

A disparate design for the LPV-OM-VSVs followed a similar path as its ancestors, the LPV-OMs, with subsequent designs dubbed "LPV-IM-VSVs" with "IM" standing for "inboard motor.' These bear an uncanny resemblance to its sister class of vessels, but with integrated inboard motors to allow for stealthier and more efficient travel.

> **"Led to a game of cat and mouse between subs of traffickers...and the DEA alongside the various Coast Guards..."**

Only when exploring the fifth category of narco-trafficking vessels can we use the name "Narco sub" in its literal sense. "FSVs," which stands for "Fully Submersible Vessels," are the only examples of true narco subs. These vessels are able to completely submerge and surface under their own power beneath the waves to transport their contraband to millions of cocaine enthusiasts worldwide. None of these vessels have ever been seized en route, only being found prior to their launches, suggesting that when they are launched, they manage to successfully evade maritime counter-narcotics operations. These subs can only submerge a few meters, nothing like their military counterparts. Nonetheless, this makes the challenge of catching these drug runners infinitely harder for their maritime opponents. These subs can be easily recognized due to their submarine-like design, which necessitates a cylindrical hull and watertight hatch in order to evenly disperse the pressure along the sub, as well as hydroplanes to enable the sub to dive and resurface when needed. These FSVs, when in fact fully submersible, are generally battery powered, with a variant of them being "snorkel subs," which use a diesel motor with a snorkel to allow fumes to be released. Notably these subs do not fully submerge but are able to do so given they do not submerge the snorkel under the ocean.

The prevalence of narco subs has been exponentially increasing not just in the waters of the Pacific and the Caribbean but across the Atlantic as well. The previously recognized routes of these subs tended to originate in Colombia, after which they would travel either along the Latin American Pacific coast to Mexico or to the Galapagos. From there, the subs would cut back east towards Mexico, where the drugs would be unloaded and smuggled across the border into the US. In the case of the Caribbean, cartels tend to use fast boats to hop from island to island, but over the past several months, a significantly higher number of subs have been captured in the Atlantic. Newly plotted routes for these vessels originate in Guyana, Suriname, Venezuela, and Brazil, with destinations including Cape Verde, the Azores, or the Canary Islands. From there, they likely sail to Spain, where all known instances of cargo drop-offs have been recorded. However, given the approximately 5,000 miles of coastline across the UK, Ireland, France, and Portugal, it is highly probable that these vessels do not limit their travels to Spain alone. Many of these vessels require support ships, which usually serve to feed and resupply the crews along their journeys. While it is rare for these ships to be intercepted, their existence is implied, given that most narco subs lack the fuel capacity to cross the Atlantic on their own, let alone the Pacific. For instance, on February 14th, 2024, a narco sub attempting a journey almost twice the length of the transatlantic route to Australia was caught, an impossible feat without a support ship rendezvous.

This journey used to be considered perilous, given its length and the harsher waters of the Atlantic. Despite these dangers, early indications showed that this trade was not only ongoing but thriving. In 2014, an LPV-OM was captured in the jungles of Guyana, and in 2015 and 2018, two more were seized in the jungles of Brazil and Suriname, all destined for European waters. By November 2019 and March 2023, two subs were seized off the coast of Spain, along with a fast 4-engine motorcraft designed to refuel or unload these LPVs. These seizures indicated a robust trade that showed no signs of faltering in its mission to bring Colombian snow to the nostrils of Europeans. The designs captured were all part of the LPV-IM-14 “transatlantic” group, which again resemble a sailing yacht without its keel or sail and are used in the Pacific as well. By 2024, it was clear that the routes had been established, and the cartels were putting considerable effort into maintaining them, as evidenced by the string of seizures from February to June 2024. On February 14th, a vessel was found in the Brazilian jungle before embarking on its voyage. On March 21st, an LPV was seized off the coast of Guyana heading east by the USS Leyte Gulf with 2,370 kilos of cocaine. On June 18th, an LPV was seized off the coast of Cantabrico in the Galicia region of Spain, heading west, suggesting it was making a return trip after completing its mission.

Finally, on June 26th, an LPV with a relatively small load of 900 kilos was seized

SIGNIFICANTLY
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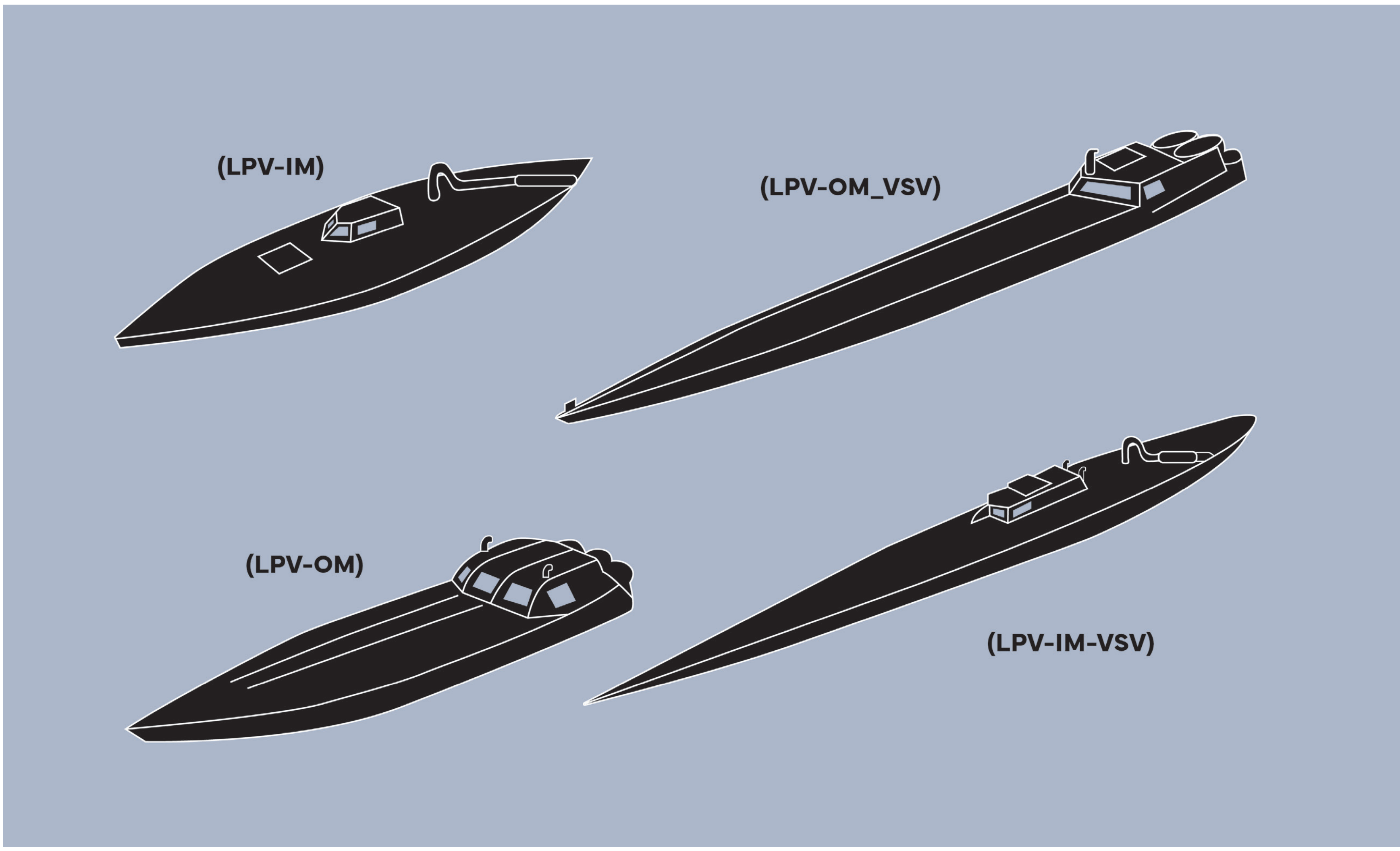
off the Canary Islands, indicating that part of its cargo had likely already been dropped off. Though more subs are being seized than ever before, the more significant indicator of a bigger trade would be the practice of building these subs in "batches," which can be identified by key design features of the boats, such as differences in the shape of the hatches and the design of the stern, along with other smaller less discernible features. The vessel seized off the coast of Spain in November of 2019 matched the design of the one later seized by Spain in March of 2023. These two boats matched the designs of boats seized in the Pacific. Several LPVs seized in the jungles of Brazil matched the builds of several that were intercepted in the Pacific Ocean, but in regards to the last four, the three seized on March 21st, June 18th, and June 26th were all from different designers, signifying a growth being complimented by a significant expansion and diversification of builders and designs, which are all indicative of a larger trade.

In summary, the emergence and evolution of narco submarines exemplify the ingenuity and resilience of drug trafficking organizations in adapting to counter-narcotics efforts. These vessels, whether classified as low-profile boats or fully submersible crafts, facilitate the transportation of significant quantities of narcotics across international waters, underscoring the vast scale of the illicit drug trade, valued at approximately $652 billion annually. Despite the nearly $1 trillion spent on counter-narcotics by the United States Government since 1971 and heightened law enforcement activities enabling the increasing frequency of seizures, the ongoing development of new designs and routes signals a robust and adaptive network of traffickers. This dynamic necessitates enhanced international collaboration and innovative strategies among law enforcement agencies to effectively disrupt these operations and mitigate the impact of drug trafficking on global security.



INDIAN CHAI

AND IMPERIALISM

A History and Persisting Repercussions

By Tulsi Patel: Tulsi is a sophomore Philosophy major with a concentration in Medicine, Health, and Human Values at Clemson University.

What can be found in an obscure back alley in India but also in a Starbucks on campus? With its milky golden hue and warm spiced aroma, the popular drink of chai has become a staple for many consumers globally. A milk-based drink made of steeped black tea with spices and sugar, chai can now be found in both iced and warm versions as it has evolved to serve different consumer populations. The golden brown drink has its origins in the lush green tea fields of Assam, India where tea leaves have been cultivated for global consumption for decades. However, while chai is considered uniquely "Indian," as with many features of modern Indian culture, it has its roots in the imperial occupation by Britain during the more than 300 years when it served as a royal colony. As such, chai carries more than just flavors; it also carries the long history, intentions and repercussions that imperialism can have in creating symbols of national identity from artificially generated cultures.

While modern tea originated from the British involvement in India during colonization, it is important to bring light to more minute cultures that may have enjoyed tea in their form for ages prior. There are written accounts of a very different form of chai possibly being served in an ancient royal court in India and also amongst the Singpho tribe in Assam which had been cultivating and using tea leaves to make a type of tea beverage in their isolated community. However, modern imperial tea culture in its most basic form has been first traced to ancient China. Initially used for medical purposes, tea slowly grew as an industry as soon as European nations began to tap into trade resources in Asia along the Silk Road in the mid-15th century. In a key power struggle between the Dutch and English, Chinese tea became a rare commodity for the English for which they paid hefty prices. Infamously, the English are known for causing the Opium Crisis in China in order to have a valuable trade asset in return for tea. With the Chinese caught in a strong addiction, trade became a mutual relationship that the British took advantage of.

Realizing that larger profits could be made by planting the tea themselves in their crown territory of India, the British then smuggled Chinese tea leaves out of the country, along with stolen practices of tea farming to then be brought to India. However, without mirroring the same altitude and temperature changes as China, this farming operation failed. Unbeknownst to the English, the very lush green hills that populated Assam contained their own variant of tea that had been misunderstood by botanists at the time. Upon examination, the Assamese tea leaf was identified and quickly cultivated in Darjeeling, the Nilgiris of Tamil Nadu, and Kangra of Himachal Pradesh. Genetically equipped for the climate of India, tea production exploded in India and entirely took over China's role as a global tea producer with its cheaper and more lucrative prices.

As Britain's royal colony, tea soon became the impetus behind the British East India Company (BEIC) allowing for joint stock trade to create wealthy trade relationships and monopolies to other nations. Thousands of indentured servants were brought to the colony to work on the tea farms. To meet this increasing demand in global markets, tea became synonymous with the social culture back in Britain where tea culture started to become appealing as a sign of privilege and dignity. "Tea Times" became standard break sessions in sports and business, symbolizing turning tea into a social practice. However, realizing that profits could be increased if tea was expanded, the British began to integrate tea or "chai" (derived from the ancient etymological roots of cha in Chinese) into native Indian communities, encouraging Indian communities to make it a lifestyle. Street posts would include infographics detailing the process of making chai with the new addition of milk and sugar to make it more appealing to the Indian population. Public demonstrations would be held

> "Chai carries **more than just flavors;** it also carries the **long history,** intentions and repercussions that **imperialism** can have..."

where visitors were handed free chai in an effort to force a culture of economic reliance onto the British while simultaneously creating a uniquely imperial Indian identity. Chai stalls were opened up at any large gathering area, such as railway stations, bazaars and neighborhoods, creating internal jobs that profited the British.

As such, chai began to serve as a way to further solidify the class rankings in India, even down to the form in which it was drunk. The lower class was (and is still) known to drink chai from clay earthen cups while the fine china of porcelain was used by the wealthy constituents of the British occupation. When chaiwalas, as chai vendors soon were endearingly named, started adding spices to their chai in the 1930s, British vendors intervened by opening more stalls of non-spiced chai in order to maintain control over its method of consumption. Various instances such as these show the way in which this culture created by the British was artificial and exploitative. Ironically, upon the eve of the Indian independence movement, chai turned from a symbol of British imperial control to a motif reclaimed by the Indian subcontinent in an effort to highlight the diversity yet unity of the Indian people. Important freedom propaganda included various regional cultures holding their cups of chai prepared in various forms, and various group discussions on peaceful demonstrations were centered around teatime. During this time, chai was reclaimed as a form of controlled culture and remained in this role after successful independence that focused on the creation of a national identity that reconciled with its history.

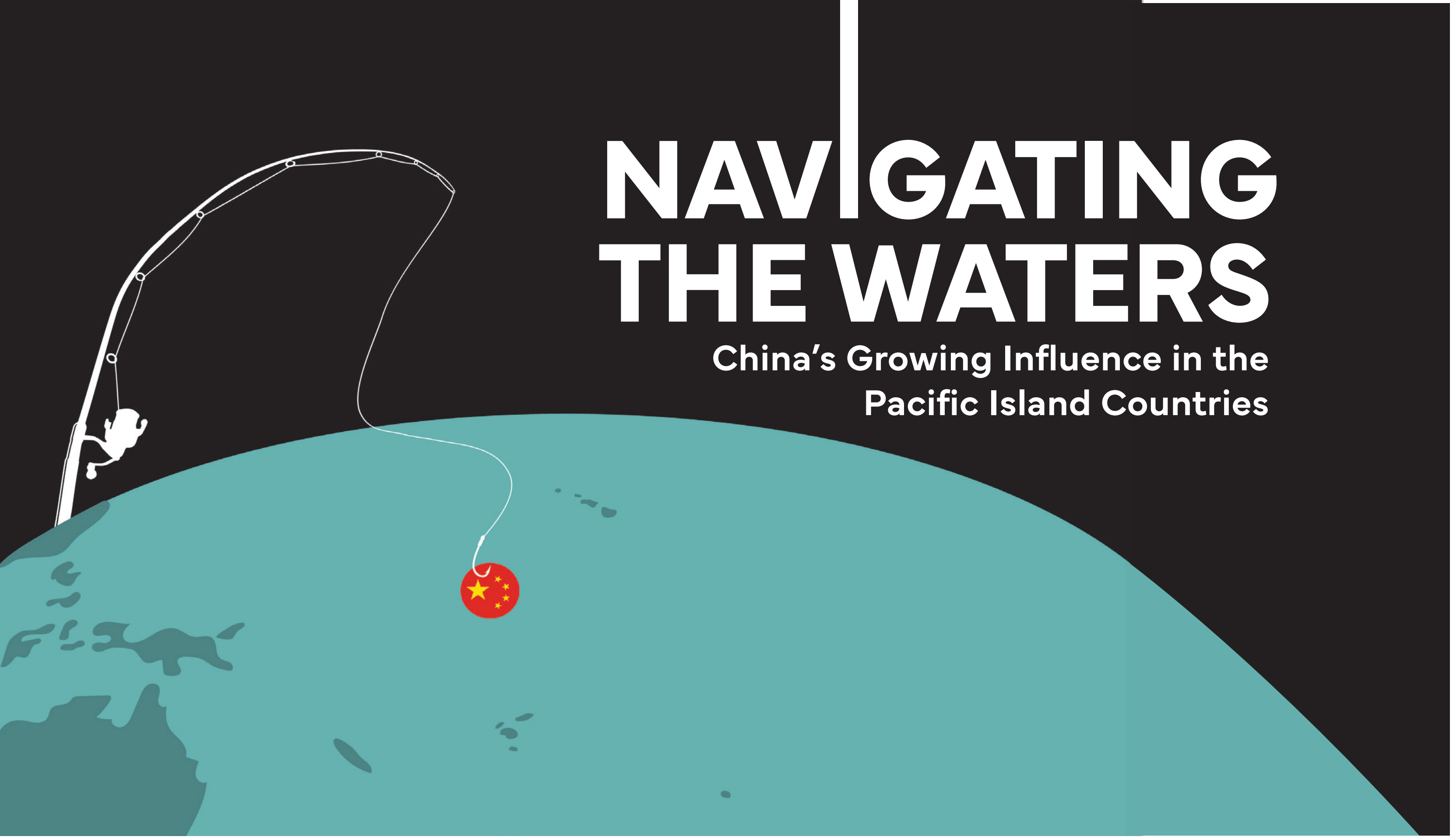
However, chai still symbolizes the nuance that "independence from imperialism" still has on India and the ways in which it still grapples with the status quo left behind by its role as a royal colony. While tea has earned India a name globally, earning it millions of dollars in exports and business models, it also hides a darker truth. While areas like Assam produce the vast fields that make chai possible, they still operate in the same manner the British employed. Companies pay workers close to nothing for their intensive labor, with salaries averaging less than three dollars a day. The culture of chai which was once reclaimed as a sign of Indian identity is still problematic but now is perpetrated by internal forces who adopted the practices left behind by rule. In terms of the status quo, the same sub-groups that were established by the British through chaiwalas still exist and perpetrate the issues of socio-economic fluidity in India. More personally, while it can be beautiful to witness the effects of globalization in spreading unique Indian culture, chai as Indians know it has been watered down and is being used by other countries to create their own profits without acknowledging the imperial and historical importance of the drink. This has created competition against neo-traditional forms of tea with external forms of chai generating an almost forced redefinition of what was reclaimed from imperialism only to be lost to inauthenticity.

It is interesting to then consider whether this dissimilation of chai highlights another imperial era of Indian history, now without direct interference but under the guise of globalization. Despite the geopolitical split of the Indian subcontinent after decolonization, many factors of previous imperial control over India can still be seen in present-day India. This includes the use of cheap labor for external markets and the control of means of production to "suit" foreign markets while disregarding the South Asian identity (see "chai tea latte"). While India has been largely successful economically and politically it faces internal struggle between its current nationalism in tandem with the globalization that has gotten it some feet on the global market. With its current majority control political party lying with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has seen a resurgence of religious and sectional nationalism with a focus on maintaining traditional and conservative forms of thought. However, simultaneously India is also attempting to build strong foreign relations and faces a "bombardment" of globalized and Western thought amongst its social culture.

In the midst of these conflicting political values, motifs of India's imperial culture and previous grievances with occupation bleed through. The British may not still occupy their Indian colony, but the Western world still largely controls how they navigate their culture. With this confluence of different political and social ideologies, chai serves as an inconspicuous symbol and warning of the need to understand the possible influences of globalization on previously manipulated cultures. There is a need to analyze the now implicitly directed forms in which larger global powers may be causing divides within the ideological growth of developing countries. It will be fascinating to view how India develops economically and socially over the coming decade as an emerging notable player in global affairs and how it balances its chai in a network of new political connections and growth.

NAVIGATING THE WATERS

China's Growing Influence in the Pacific Island Countries



By Kennedi Ratcliffe: Kennedi is an Economics and Political Science major at Appalachian State University.

Since President Xi Jinping took office in 2012, China has significantly intensified its engagement with the Pacific Island Countries (PICs). This has not gone unnoticed, as it has attracted the attention of Western powers and highlighted the role of PICs in global affairs. China's involvement has included diplomatic efforts and economic investments, both of which have given it a stronger influence in the region. While this has provided the PICs with the opportunity to garner strength and build themselves up as nations in the international order, there are concerns from other countries about the rise of Chinese influence. Ultimately, China's strategic engagements with the PICs are reshaping the geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific region as the PICs seek to protect their sovereignty and security.

The Pacific Island Countries (PICs) are comprised of thirteen nations: Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Niue, Palau, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. Each nation has its own unique culture and history, but they share common challenges. Recognizing that the PICs are connected through these shared challenges in addition to their shared culture and geography, the term "Blue Pacific" is often used to describe the region. One of the most pressing issues that the PICs face is the direct effects of climate change, including rising sea levels and greenhouse gas emissions, which are further exacerbated by their dependency on fossil fuels for energy consumption.

Another problem for the PICs comes from their need to maintain a strong presence on the international stage to advocate for themselves. Their geographic isolation leaves them vulnerable to economic and political instability, making diplomatic relations essential to their development and security. Factors such as limited access to international markets, costs associated with importing and exporting products, and difficulty attracting foreign direct investment all contribute to the PICs economic vulnerability. This amplifies political instability, which is already influenced by the geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific region. The PICs colonial history has also impacted their ability to address these challenges. Early Pacific Island societies had hierarchical cultures with chiefs as leaders chosen for their capability to maintain social order, in contrast to European hierarchies, which were based on hereditary succession at the time. When Europeans encountered the islands, they failed to recognize and respect this social structure. As a result, the influence of Western culture forever changed the culture and lifestyle of the island inhabitants.

Out of the thirteen PICs, the Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, and Palau are unique because they are involved in the Compacts of Free Association (COFA). The COFA agreements govern the free association between the United States and these nations. Designated as Freely Associated States (FAS), Micronesia, Marshall Islands, and Palau maintain their sovereignty and receive U.S. economic assistance while allowing the United States to operate military posts in the islands. The agreements with the Marshall Islands and Micronesia first entered into force in 1986, with Palau following in 1994. In 2003, U.S. Congress approved amendments to the agreements between the Marshall Islands and Micronesia, extending American assistance to 2023. Similarly, in 2010 assistance for Palau was extended until 2024. In March 2024, legislation implementing the new agreements for all three nations was once again enacted by Congress.

Western powers, however, have been inclined to reassess their priorities in the Pacific because of growing Chinese influence. The Indo-Pacific region is a strategic region for defense and security matters, and so numerous countries, like the United States and Australia, have promptly acted to demonstrate their interests in the PICs. China has become a key player in this geopolitical landscape, offering aid mainly through grants and loans that appeal to the PICs. Compared to loans from Western countries, Chinese loans are often more accessible and convenient because they require less application materials and do not have requirements regarding good governance and financial reform. Due to the PICs rising demand for infrastructure — particularly for environmental infrastructure such as solar panels, coastal protection structures, and energy storage systems — they have increasingly turned to China for financial support.

> **"Their geographic isolation leaves them vulnerable to economic and political instability..."**

Total Chinese development finance through grants and loans summed to approximately $334 million in 2016 according to the Pacific Aid Map produced by the Lowy Institute. Although this aid has not disappeared, it has begun to steadily decline. Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Chinese development financing dipped to $187 million, the lowest annual level recorded. This decrease is mainly reflected in a reduction in loans, and this trend has continued as financing in 2022 totaled roughly $125 million. Yet this change in financial assistance does not correlate with an overall reduction of Chinese engagement in the PICs. Instead, it appears that China has substituted the decline in aid with a focus on strengthening diplomatic relations.

In April 2022 China signed a security

cooperation agreement with the Solomon Islands after a draft of the agreement was leaked in March. The agreement focuses on cooperation on security matters, but also includes coordination for humanitarian assistance, disaster response, and social order efforts. Many Western countries were alarmed by the security agreement, as it poses
a threat to the stability of the Indo-Pacific region. Expressing their thoughts about the agreement, former Australian Minister for International Development and the Pacific Zed Seselja and former Minister for Foreign Affairs Marise Payne said in a joint statement that "we are concerned about the lack of transparency with which the agreement has been developed, noting its potential to undermine stability in our region." There were also concerns from countries about the possibility of China establishing a permanent military base in the Solomon Islands. U.S. Department of State spokesman Ned Price said that "the broad nature of the security agreement leaves open the door for the deployment of P.R.C. (People's Republic of China) military forces to the Solomon Islands." Such reactions to this security agreement underscore and bring to light the battle for influence in the Pacific.

In response to the security agreement, the United States sent the highest-level delegation to visit the region in years. Kurt Campbell, then Deputy Assistant to the President and Coordinator for the Indo-Pacific Affairs on the National Security Council, alongside Daniel Krittenbrink, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific affairs, met with the Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare and members of his cabinet and senior staff. Less than a year after this meeting, the United States reopened its embassy in Honoria, Solomon Islands for the first time since the end of the Cold War. The United States has also established additional new embassies in Tonga in May 2023 and Vanuatu in July 2024. There are also plans for a new embassy in Kiribati pending parliamentary approval.

Along with the opening new embassies, the PICs have seen more direct interactions in Washington, D.C. President Biden hosted the first ever U.S.-Pacific Island Country Summit on September 28-29, 2022, at the White House, followed by a second summit on September 25-26, 2023. During these events, the United States reaffirmed its commitment to the PICs and efforts to address pressing issues such as climate change and economic development. In his remarks before the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders at the 2023 summit, U.S. President Biden announced that "alongside our partners in the Blue Pacific, we're increasing our climate assistance, including more than $20 million for new investments to prepare for climate and natural hazards."

Most recently, at the 53rd Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) meeting held in Nuku'alofa, Tonga on August 26-30, 2024, the evolving dynamics of regional politics were on display. The PIF is an organization consisting of eighteen member countries that aim to build cooperation and support collaboration in the pursuit of addressing crucial issues the region faces. The PIF has twenty-one dialogue partners, including both the United States and China. In attendance as dialogue partners for the 53rd PIF meeting, the United States sent a delegation led by Kurt Campbell in a new role as Deputy Secretary of State, while China sent its largest-ever delegation. Previously in 2023, Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield led the U.S. delegation. The continuity of high-level representation at these meetings, demonstrated by sending the Deputy Secretary in place of an ambassador, reflects the U.S.'s desire to strengthen relations with the PICs to counterbalance Chinese influence.

The United States has not been the only country to respond to the Chinese influence in the Pacific region. In September 2021, the United States, along with Australia and the United Kingdom, signed a trilateral security agreement known as AUKUS, emphasizing the importance of the Indo-

Pacific region. The deal saw Australia purchase at least three nuclear-powered submarines from the United States and will see the development of a new class of nuclear submarines with the help of the United Kingdom. This commitment reflects the intent of all three countries to counter Chinese influence in the wider Indo-Pacific region.

Australia was critical of the 2022 security agreement between China and the Solomon Islands. Solomon Islands Prime Minister Sogavare said that Australia was being hypocritical of the deal, pointing out that Australia did not consult PICs when the AUKUS treaty was formed. Sogavare said that "Solomon Islands and members of the Pacific should have been consulted to ensure that this AUKUS treaty is transparent, since it will affect the Pacific family by allowing nuclear submarines in Pacific waters." Meanwhile, the UK is also focusing on building engagement with the PICs, however, their role in the region has not been as prominent following Brexit.

The PICs and the broader Indo-Pacific region are of growing relevance in contemporary geopolitics. As countries escalate their engagement in the region, whether through diplomatic or economic relations, the Pacific is gradually becoming a critical area filled with competition. Issues like climate change, security, and trade emphasize the importance of this area, as the PICs navigate the challenges and opportunities before them. As the battle for influence continues, the PICs find themselves at a crossroads that will not only determine their future as the Blue Pacific, but also the future of the Indo-Pacific region.

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