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ADVOCATE

SUMMMER EDITION



Editorial Note



The chaos theory dictates that within all the seemingly random chaos in the universe, there is patterns, and paradoxically, there is order. For our Summer Edition 2021, we invited our writers to articulate the order that stood out to them within our chaotic world, essentially to find the ‘Order within Chaos’. It seemed a fitting theme to encapsulate one of the most unprecedented, chaotic and uncertain periods in history that most of have ever experienced in our lifetime. Our writers delivered, and this edition includes an array of thought-provoking articles, from the inequalities of the Covid-19 vaccine rollout, to tensions and conflict arising across Asia, to a look at criminal liability in the street art world. It has been a fantastic year for Advocate, and it has been a true privilege overseeing the publication of the magazine. I would like to thank our dedicated committee members, and fantastic writers for all their hard work in making this edition come to life. And finally, to our readers, I am delighted to be able to present to you our Summer Edition 2021.

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Waitlisted: The World's Waiting List for Immunity

Jennifer Oweka

A waiting list often sounds like an opportunity; wait your turn and eventually you could be granted some sort of benefit, generally on a first come, first serve basis. On the other side of this spectrum, we have instantaneous access – a feature which has become increasingly prevalent in today's society. Developments in technology have made it possible for the human race to be able to instantly access a myriad of resources. Take movies, books, or music, for example. All it takes is the mere press of a button to connect us. Similarly, scientific advances have made it possible to develop a vaccine to eradicate a global pandemic in the space of under a year, which would otherwise have taken decades to manufacture. The vast majority of those living in the western world have witnessed the seamless rollout of vaccine distribution. However, a large number of developing countries have essentially been told to wait their turn. They have been waitlisted.



The New York Times has reported that more than 190 million people have been vaccinated against the Covid-19 virus worldwide, but almost none in Africa.

What is even more disturbing, is that only 10 countries have administered a total of 75% of global vaccines, while as many as 130 countries of the world have not received a single dose. Reflexively, we must ask how could this be?

The answer is simple: wealth. Most developing countries are relying on Covax—a WHO-led initiative which seeks to provide poorer nations with equitable access to vaccines free-of-charge. On the other hand, developed countries such as the UK and US can rely on their vast amount of resources in order to ensure their citizens' access to the vaccine. Canada in particular has come under criticism as it was revealed that they have ordered enough vaccine doses to protect each Canadian five times, whereas in contrast, around 70 poorer countries will only be able to vaccinate one in ten of their population.

WHO has warned that the world could be "back at square one" if some countries went ahead with their vaccination campaigns and others were left behind. The longer that it takes to suppress the virus everywhere, the more opportunity it has to mutate in ways that could make the vaccine less effective. This provides a motive for wealthier nations to aid vaccine rollout across the world. Boris Johnson has pledged at the most recent G7 summit that the UK will donate surplus vaccine doses to poorer countries while both Russia and China are battling to win an escalating vaccine diplomacy war by sending their vaccines directly to Africa. Despite these initiatives, it is difficult to deny that their reasons for facilitating world-wide vaccination attempts are self-serving. For example, the UK government has suggested that it might be difficult to open Britain's borders to the world again until most countries are fully vaccinated. While contributions to worldwide vaccination may just be a strategic phase of the roadmap to a more robust British economy, it could make a life or death difference for the masses in other countries.

In addition to stockpiling, issues with vaccine distribution also flow from pricing. South Africa is being charged nearly 2.5 times the price paid by most European countries for the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine, despite a promise from AstraZeneca to cap prices at \$3 per dose. The discrepancy in price is reported to be due to other countries' contributions to research and development of the vaccine. Such "vaccine nationalism" could result in a repeat of history of the fight against polio. In wealthier countries, the worry of catching polio has been non-existent for decades since the release of the vaccine in the 1950s and 60s. On the other hand, Africa only declared itself free of polio in August 2020, and polio remains a prevalent disease in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Notably, countries affected by conflict and political insecurity are particularly at risk of being left behind in the race to vaccinate. This is due to the fact that these countries do not have concrete plans for procuring and distributing the vaccines. Vaccination attempts are not only hindered by poor administration, but also a distrust of the political leadership. For example, in Jordan, the vaccination programme has already begun, however only a small percentage of the population have signed up to receive which according to health officials is due to a lack of trust. Similarly, in Israel, the country is on target to vaccinating the entire country by the end of March. However, there are no vaccination campaigns taking place in Palestinian areas, leaving 4.5 million Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza without injections. Dominic Raab, the UK Foreign Secretary, has called for a ceasefire to allow vulnerable people to be vaccinated. Without which more than 160 million people around the world in countries such as Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia are at risk of being excluded. Ceasefires have been used to facilitate vaccinate efforts in the past. In Afghanistan, there was a two-day ceasefire in 2001 which enabled the vaccination of 5.7 million children against polio.

Thus, while richer countries have been given the green light as a result of their wealth and resources, many poorer countries are still stuck at the red light, watching all the other cars drive past without them towards a COVID-free zone. Unfortunately, the world may really find itself in a dire situation if we refuse to adjust vaccine distribution so that it is fairer and more equitable, to reach a broader range of countries across the world. We do not have the luxury of waiting until it is too late to realise that a steady and balanced vaccine distribution programme is better because the longer we wait, the more lives we lose. The course of action that we are currently following is counter-productive to our ultimate goal: the eradication of COVID-19 as a global pandemic. Our vaccination efforts must also be global to stand a chance of achieving thus. Nonetheless, it is not too late to turn it all around. AstraZeneca has promised to provide 64% of their vaccines to those in poorer countries and this is certainly a step in the right direction. Moreover, Ghana received their first delivery of coronavirus vaccines through the Covax scheme on 24th January which serves as a glimmer of hope in closing the gap regarding vaccine disparity.

Bitcoin, Protest & Police Brutality

Banke
Awosope

Amid a global pandemic and increased lockdowns, 2020 presented complete uncertainty now known as the "new normal". Across nations and states, individuals took to the streets to impose their definitions of "normal" on existing structures. From Belarus's Lukashenko flawed election protests to the Black Lives Matter and anti-mask lockdown protests in the United States. Within the chaos of furloughs, mental health crises and the unfamiliar, the right to protest was realised more than ever before.

Among the new movements was the Nigerian #EndSars protest. Beginning in October 2020, after a viral tweet of a grieving father whose son was victim to the brutal special police anti-robbery task force, "SARS" raised a trending discourse among the Nigerian youth. Accounts of profiling and harassment became known, with horror stories of kidnapping, and unlawful killing of thousands being discussed. Anti-SARS sentiments quickly spread across social media platforms, calling for the disbandment of SARS. The initial online protest gained online traction following on from the Black Lives Matter protests where thousands took to the streets nationwide. The movements soon went beyond mere disbandment of the police force and expressed defiance of the elite Nigerian ruling classes.

Current President Muhammadu Buhari has branded the young protesters as inactive and "lazy". This is problematic, as Nigeria has more than 60% of its 200 million population under the age of 24. However, those of working age struggle to find formal employment, and there are few opportunities to obtain a good education. Due to this lack of education, the average Nigerian youth is often frozen out of politics. Dr Angela Ajodo-Adebanjoko, a Nigerian professor, described the current situation as "they are not too young to run, in practice, the youth [are] too poor to run [in elections]." Despite growing evidence of youth activism and mobilisation, Nigerian youths have yet to achieve the level of inclusion required to gain representation in politics.

This lack of representation has naturally led to a leaderless movement. However, several individuals and groups have had vital roles in organising protests and ensuring longevity. One such group which has shown leadership is The Feminist Coalition. This relatively unknown group rallied support for the protests and shook the foundations of Nigeria, accumulating huge donations from within the country and the diaspora. As of 22 October 2020, The Feminist Coalition collected ₦147,855,788.285 (approximately \$387,818), ₦60,403,235.00 (approximately \$158,434), which has been deployed to aid 128 protests across the country, according to the Coalition's website.



Initially, donations were made through traditional bank accounts, but as the protests gained popularity and donations, especially from the diaspora, increased. In response, the government shut down bank accounts used for crowdfunding. This closure of accounts did not stop their efforts; like clockwork, cryptocurrency provided a way to circumvent the Government's measures.

According to the 2020 latest Statista Global Consumer Survey, 32% of the respondents in Nigeria said they used or owned cryptocurrency; this is one of the highest worldwide. Nigeria is second only to the US when it comes to the amount of Bitcoin traded over the past five years.

Furthermore, the Nigerian community, diaspora and ex-pat community are no strangers to apps such as Paxful to send funds back home and trade with countries like China. However, Bitcoin is "not popular among the masses yet" and there are considerable barriers such as education which stand in its widespread adoption.

Despite this, young Nigerians are now starting to adopt cryptocurrency even during a ban by the Government.

The Feminist Coalition started by using sendcash, a platform that converts Bitcoin payments into naira and then deposits these funds into a recipient's Nigerian bank account. However, it carried the risk of a lack of anonymity, leading to the Government shutting down accounts again. Because of this shortcoming, Alex Gladstein, the Chief Strategy Officer of the Human Rights Organization, created a BTCPay server for their use. "Because it operates obliquely to the banking system, the censorship-resistant payment portal is an essential tool for the Feminist Coalition's fundraising". By adding the BTCPay Bitcoin donation option on 14 October, the coalition has amassed roughly 3.14 BTC (approximately \$36,000).

As one of the members of the Feminist Coalition has said, "Bitcoin is only one tool in Nigeria's fight for civil rights – it is not a cure-all for its citizens. What is needed is concrete reform."

The Government strengthened its resolve even further with its 5 February statement, and cited the need to protect the public and safeguard the country from potential threats posed by "unknown and unregulated entities" that are "well-suited for conducting many illegal activities". Despite this, many Nigerian senators are opposed to the current Central Bank of Nigeria's ban on all forms of cryptocurrency. Nevertheless, there is still no state acceptance of this mode of payment, with some Nigerians reporting that their bank accounts have been frozen due to cryptocurrency-related activity.

On 12 October 2020, President Muhammadu Buhari agreed to disband SARS, calling his decision "only the first step in our commitment to extensive police reform." However, after an investigation surfaced of promises of previous SARS disbandment in 2016-2019, the movement took to the street once again. This resulted in the deadly suppression of a peaceful demonstration in the affluent Lekki district of Lagos on 20 October 2020.

There is no doubt that cryptocurrency has altered Nigerian politics; protesters have realised its power and how it can assist in uniting them. Even more significantly, the younger generation who have typically lacked the financial support to oppose the Government may have found a new avenue to seize economic power and affect real change. Cryptocurrency could now emerge as the new tactic of protest and a catalyst in movements globally.

The Black Boom Cycle: The Predictable, Inconstant Spotlight on Black Issues

Deontaye
Osazuwa

In June 2020, Bernadine Evaristo and Reni Eddo-Lodge became the first Black British women to top the UK's fiction and nonfiction paperback charts. This achievement was rightly celebrated across the media and became an indicator of the changing times, where Black voices and stories were given the attention they deserve. Unsurprisingly, this boom of awareness and recognition came after the death of a Black man. The death of George Floyd sent shockwaves of grief and anger across the globe, swiftly followed by protests and calls for justice. Many people decided to channel their anger to support Black authors. Books centred on racism, Black history, and identity were suddenly selling out at Waterstones. Books such as *Natives* by Akala, *Black and British: A Forgotten History* by David Olusoga and of course, *Girl, Woman, Other* by Bernadine Evaristo and *Why I'm No Longer Talking To White People About Race* by Reni Eddo-Lodge.

While this is welcome, it isn't surprising. It is symbolic of the greater cycle that occurs after the highly publicised death of a Black person. This is the Black Boom cycle. Black issues that are tied to systematic racism are ignored until a Black person dies, or a situation which is more unjust than what usually occurs. There is an intense spotlight on racism, politicians claiming to solve racism, Black business' get a boost of commerce, and people start listening to Black people without interrupting. The sudden interest in Black literature fits in and causes Black books to dominate Best-Seller lists.

Then, weeks and months pass. The attention and publicity fade away until we are left in the same position as we were before. The lack of fundamental change means that things settle back to normalcy. Until another Black person dies, or civil unrest arises, restarting the cycle.



This is a boom that can be traced back to the aftermath of World War Two. The arrival of what is now called the 'Windrush Generation' opened up a lot of opportunities to people of Caribbean descent in publishing. While this could be attributed to some curiosity and fascination white people held towards their new neighbours and colleagues, Diana Athill, a famous British literary editor and novelist, calls the post-war boom in writing from then-colonies a result of short-lived "liberal guilt" in her memoir. Her words strikingly resonate with the current times. A similar Black British writing boom can also be linked to the 1981 Brixton uprising and New Cross fire, which sparked protests in south London after 13 young black people were killed.

The literary world is akin to a microcosm for the wider conversations taking place in society. Today, conversations around race and racism tend to be online. In 2016, On the tenth anniversary of Twitter, the site published a list of the most used hashtags related to social causes. Two of the top three were directly related to issues of race: #Ferguson and #BlackLivesMatter. Conversations on race in 2020 weren't new in any shape or form.

It is telling that this buzz of conversation did not translate into anything tangible. Legal changes that were suggested by the Movement of Black Lives, a coalition of more than 50 groups that represent the interests of the Black community in America, were left unheard and dismissed in 2016. Maybe the timing was too late. It was a full year after the most recent spike in attention - when Sandra Bland was found hanged in her Texas jail cell.

It is reasonable to question the slow pace of change regardless of the recurring conversations. Part of the problem was visibility. Police brutality, the abuse of stop and search powers or racial discrimination in the workplace were not visible to the people who had the real power in the country - the white, middle and upper class. Social media has rectified this issue in recent years and now incidents that have always been happening can now be recorded and shared to millions of people in seconds.

The reason the Black Boom Cycle exists, is because people forget to continue caring. This is exacerbated by the masses becoming desensitised to Black pain and hurt. Constantly viewing videos of violence against Black people are making these tragedies embodied in the norm. Desensitisation has been in the making for most of the 2010s, with Black death after Black death being put on display online. The injustice isn't shocking anymore. People can watch an act of brutality, be angered for a week or two, then slowly fall back into complacency and inaction.

It explains why Boris Johnson can say "You are right, we are all right, to say Black Lives Matter," and yet preside over a pandemic that has disproportionately killed people of Black and Asian ethnic backgrounds. It also explains why books about anti-racism and British history can sell out in the summer, but then the history of the Empire can be forcibly denied and unchallenged in the winter.

Unique from America, the Black Lives Matter protests in Britain triggered national conversations about colonialism and the legacy of the Empire. This was visually symbolised by the polarising statue debate. While this topic could at times become hysterical and unproductive, the fact that this was even discussed was a step forward, a tentative acknowledgement of the misplaced glorification of the Empire. Another example of the Black Boom is in the form of discussion and debate. However, the cycle continues. Oliver Dowden, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport since 2020, believes he is fighting a battle against erasure of British history this year. Recent actions include the summoning of 25 of the UK's heritage bodies and charities to stop the alleged purging of our history. The summit was Dowden trying to "defend our culture and history from the noisy minority of activists constantly trying to do Britain down".

The attention that was on the recognition and education of the dark history of the Empire has faded and has predictably turned into a squabble about nationalism. The Black Lives Matter protests about historic injustices have been ignored in favour of returning to the old normal ignorance.

The Black Boom Cycle is bigger than statues. It is the promise of change, the hope that this time there may be a difference, and the predictable disappointment that follows. It is an aspect of being Black that goes unnoticed by many, the constant fatigue of hope that the cycle brings. The only way to break the cycle is to enact the change that is promised under the intense spotlight and attention that the media suddenly gives to Black issues. If this change can't be enacted, then making empty promises is worse.

Burma's Coup: Revolution or Remilitarisation?

Shanahan Prabowo

History seems to be repeating itself in the South-East Asian country of Myanmar, formerly Burma. After a coup following the November 2020 electoral disputes, mass civil unrest emerged with the biggest protest movement so far, dubbed the “22222 Revolution”.

Referencing the date of the largest protest so far on 22/02/2021, whilst also paying homage to the similarly named protest movement, the “8888 Uprising” which peaked on 08/08/1988. 33 years later, the people of Myanmar are protesting the same entity yet again, their military. In 1988, economic mismanagement and arbitrary state violence among other matters, ignited mass protests against the incumbent government led by Commander-in-Chief Ne Win who overthrew the previous democratically elected government.

Originally a student protest, society at large started to voice their grievances with a largely ineffective and corrupt government. In response, Ne Win resigned in July, balefully stating on his departure that “If the army shoots, it has no tradition of shooting into the air. It shoots straight to kill.” He appointed incumbent Commander-in-Chief, Sein Lwin, as his successor. Lwin earned the nickname, the “Butcher of Rangoon” after confirming Ne Win’s words and opening fire on protesters on 08/08/1988 resulting in hundreds of casualties during the protests.

Further protests followed but eventually failed to realize their ambitions as a coup established another military junta under Lwin’s Commander-in-Chief successor, Saw Maung. Within the first week of their rule, thousands were killed and thousands more were arrested or fled, foreshadowing their future administration.

The “22222 Revolution” is a current developing situation that stems from the arrest of the democratically elected leaders of the National League for Democracy (NLD) and the subsequent establishment of yet another military junta led by another Commander-in-Chief, Min Aung Hlaing. Aside from electoral fraud, which both international and local election observers claim to be untrue, the motive is speculated to be to preserve the political role of the military in Myanmar and strengthen Hlaing’s political position. The end-results are unclear, the military elite seems hesitant in letting back unconditional civilian rule, yet the protesters are similarly hesitant in letting the military simply act above the constitution.

Despite the uncertainty, we can look at Myanmar’s neighboring states to get an insight into how a movement can progress. More specifically the state of Thailand and Indonesia. Thailand is known to many as the land of coups, 22 coups had occurred over the last century alone, 13 of which were successful with 2014 being the most recent year of a Thai coup. Such history emphasizes the power of the military as a “fourth branch” of government and the strongest of the branches.

Juntas and Civilian Governments switch places almost periodically, following the most recent 2014 coup, the subsequent military junta ruled for 5 years before they held a general election in 2019. The 2019 Thai general elections are claimed by many as not free and fair. Prayut Chan-o-cha became the new Prime Minister of Thailand, previously the Army-in-Chief of the Thai army which led the coup in 2014. The Human Rights Watch claimed that “structural flaws” subverted the elections and stated that repressive laws restricting freedom of speech, association, and assembly were one of many flaws plaguing the elections.

What followed the elections was a strengthening of military presence in civilian politics. A military-drafted constitution was adopted after a widely disputed referendum including a military-appointed senate with powers including approving the parliamentary vote for future prime ministers. The regression of democracy after a coup is one possible direction which the Myanmar coup could head. During the immediate aftermath of the 2014 Thai coup, Chan-o-cha strengthened controls on media, internet censorship as well as arresting anti-coup activists and politicians. Measures that parallel the steps taken by the Burmese junta following the coup today albeit now with more brutal measures including arbitrary detentions.

If speculations of Hlaing's ambitions are correct, if the "22222 uprising" fails to achieve its purpose, Myanmar could very well head the same path as Thailand today. One of regression of democracy and a strengthening political role of the military in Myanmar, with Hlaing as her new head of government. However, this is only a possibility, a myriad of circumstances present in Myanmar was absent in the 2014 Thai coup such as the lack of civilian support in the coup.

When the 2014 Thai coup occurred, there was widespread civilian support for the action, including a prominent pressure group, the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD). PAD members include a majority of the upper and middle-class Thai people who hold significant de-facto political power in the country. In contrast, the Myanmar coup prior and current has seen little popular support with an almost daily mass protest opposing the junta.

Indonesia, another South-East Asian country was led by a junta from 1965 to 1998, falling amidst the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis after a mass movement originating from a student protest. What followed was a relatively peaceful transition from a military junta to a civilian government. Led by Suharto, the Indonesian junta overthrew a previous authoritarian civilian government led by Indonesia's founder Sukarno after what was effectively a counter coup.

During Suharto's 33-year term as president, there was significant socio-economic progress that legitimized his government including falling poverty rates from the start of his rule at 45% to 11% at the end as well as an increase in life expectancy by up to 20 years. What followed however was an epic rise in corruption, such that Suharto was named the most corrupt modern politician by Transparency International, causing a loss of \$15-35 billion in state funds.

The 1998 protests turned to riots after the shootings of four students following an order to open fire on protesters. As a result, thousands were killed and injured during the riots. Suharto attempted to re-establish the status quo and authorized the military led by his loyalists to take any measures to restore stability. Surprisingly, the military did not comply. Occupations of government buildings such as the parliament were largely ignored by the military.

This lack of military support among other factors was key in Suharto's downfall, factionalism within the army is speculated to have hindered a harsh military crackdown on protesters. The Myanmar army also has a history of a high degree of factionalism, however, currently, it is relatively less so.

Regardless of the outcome of the coup amidst the COVID pandemic, the most vulnerable in Myanmar will be the most affected. Like many other countries, Myanmar's economy was severely affected by the pandemic. Now with banks closing and many sectors of the economy frozen as a result of the protests, much of the population is expected to not receive their income for the near future.

In response to the pandemic, the powerful have seized the opportunity to centralize their powers amidst the chaos, establishing their own personal order. Whatever motives these powerful figures might have, they must remind themselves that they are accountable for their actions, if not by the law or the people, then by those closest to them.

The UN Security Council—Maintaining Security or Securing Political Interests?

Al-Fayad Qayyum

Article 24 of the UN Charter stipulates that the Security Council has the “primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.” It seemed very noble and virtuous for the victors of World War II to be the world’s peacekeepers going forward. Who would issue polemics against this? The reality now is that ongoing global conflict is occurring with the complicity of the Security Council, in particular the five permanent states on the Security Council – China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and United States, the only members with the power to veto draft resolutions and stop them from being formally tabled. This article discusses how the purpose of the Security Council is not being adequately fulfilled.

Politicians have a reputation for acting in self-interest, and the Security Council demonstrates that such actors on the domestic stage may also do so internationally. The veto power is an immensely effective tool for any one of the permanent members to stifle unanimously proposed international action against a state or even basic discourse. The greatest example is the United States’ paternalistic defence of its ally Israel in the face of repeated Security Council resolutions regarding the latter’s military occupation of Palestine. Recently, the US vetoed a draft Security Council Resolution that would disregard any legal effect of Donald Trump’s controversial move to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. There are various reasons why vetoes occur, depending on the particular situation. In the case of the Syrian conflict, Russia and China will veto any proposed intervention in Syria on grounds that this would violate Syria’s sovereignty. This might be considered similar to the US position regarding Israel, that because of the strong links between the Russian government and the Syrian military, Russia is acting in defence of her ally.

Ultimately, different political motivations can lead to a stalemate when trying to solve global issues and the veto power, central to the adoption of Security Council resolutions, is a reason for that.



Secondly, the permanent members of the UN Security Council are wholly unrepresentative of the nations which constitute the membership of the United Nations. With such a limited number of countries allowed to exercise the coveted veto power, it ignores and silences vast swathes of the globe. Where is the permanent member representing the African or South American continent? Why is there no Muslim majority state in that role even though Muslims comprise of a quarter of the world’s population? Furthermore, European and Western representation accounts for nearly half of the total seats on the Security Council despite constituting under 20% of the world’s population. A reason for the imbalance could be the cynical view that free market capitalism has permeated global diplomacy. Larger and wealthier nations are able to efficiently lobby to retain their seat on the Security Council and maintain their power. For instance, Japan has spent twenty-two years on the Security Council compared to Nigeria’s ten.

Implicit in the idea of an exclusive collection of countries with veto power gives rise to the notion that these countries are the most important, relevant, and responsible in passing Security Council resolutions. It can be argued that the rationale for giving the most powerful countries these positions is a sensible one, bearing in mind the primary objective of the Security Council. The permanent members consist of the victors of the WWII — the ‘Four Policemen’ — and France. Although it was clear in 1945 that United Kingdom and France were economically decimated by the war, both nations held large colonies and consequentially global power. This is no longer the case. Both the United Kingdom and France have relinquished major colonies and play considerably smaller roles in the global geo-political sphere. One struggles to think of contemporary reason justifying the two West European states having permanent membership. Economically, they have been superseded by WWII adversaries Japan and Germany as well as the former jewel of the British Imperial Crown—India. Alternatively, if the metric is military power, India, Israel and Pakistan also have nuclear weapons alongside the permanent five members, so should these nations also be granted the coveted privilege of the veto power?

However, it is apt to highlight that the status quo has maintained tepid security. One should take credence of the notion that a conflict reaching the heights of WWII has not occurred, which the Security Council should be credited for. However, disastrous wars such as the ones in Vietnam and Iraq and mass genocides of the Darfur in Sudan and the Rohingya in Burma are examples that highlight inadequacies of the international legal system and frailties of inter-governmental organisations charged with maintaining peace such as the Security Council. Just because WWII has not occurred does not mean we stifle discourse on reform, especially on the imperfect Security Council.

As aforementioned, there are numerous countries vying for a permanent Security Council seat and interestingly, the United Kingdom and France seem open to that idea. If expanding the Security Council to include more permanent members is done correctly, it could potentially halt criticism of lack of representation. However, would it improve the pursuit of international justice? Would this end deadlock on contentious issues? Most likely not. New countries would be just as susceptible to abusing their power to serve their interests as well as their allies. Arguably, having more countries could increase stalemates on more issues, just like the old adage goes: too many cooks spoil the broth. Figuratively, the broth is already spoilt and increasing the number of permanent members will not improve matters.

It is frustrating to enunciate an opinion without offering a solution, but suggestions and recommendations can be made. Requirements for states to demonstrate and explain the reasoning behind their veto and how it would uphold the cause of international peace and security could be introduced. This would make it more difficult for “powerful” states to arbitrarily block Security Council resolutions or for unmerited justifications. However, international law is extremely malleable and states often find very imaginative ways to justify actions that would otherwise be illegal (one would direct the reader to investigate how the US and UK legally justified the Invasion of Iraq in 2003). For all the solutions proposed by academics, there is an air of resignation as to the actuality of reform. Any changes to Security Council membership arrangements or voting procedures would mean surrendering some form of power on the part of permanent members. That does not look likely.

Could Banksy be Liable for Criminal Damage?

Olivia Rodriguez
Molinero



Through his street art, Banksy is able to comment on a range of prevalent socio-political issues, including war, consumerism and immigration. In the past, his work has sold for millions of pounds, and it is often protected in an official capacity by local councils. And yet, despite all this, creating street art remains an illegal act, unless the property owner's permission is obtained beforehand. Why then is it that when Banksy spray paints the side of a building, it's considered a valuable piece of art, but when another street artist does the same thing, it's seen as vandalism—despite the fact that both have committed the same illegal act?

Banksy seems to operate within a legal grey area, within which art critics and legal professionals nervously skirt around the thorny issue of what makes some art exempt from the law. The act itself is illegal, and yet he continues to surf above the law through local council protection and the goodwill of property owners. In 2014, having mistakenly destroyed a Banksy mural based around racial prejudice, which would have greatly benefited the town both financially and culturally, Tendring District Council released the following statement: "We would obviously welcome an appropriate Banksy original on any of our seafronts and would be delighted if he returned in the future." In theory, Banksy could be arrested and prosecuted under the Criminal Damage Act 1971. But in practice this is highly unlikely either due to his anonymity, the social value of his work, the financial value of his work or perhaps a combination of all three. Blaze, an international street artist whose work can be seen throughout Europe and America, believes that it is the financial value of his work that affords Banksy legal immunity: "The kid that's done a tag gets his house raided and his life fucked up, but if it's Banksy it's non-vandalism—money on a wall, so to speak."

Section 1(1) of the Criminal Damage Act 1971 provides that, "A person who without lawful excuse destroys or damages any property belonging to another intending to destroy or damage any such property or being reckless as to whether any such property would be destroyed or damaged shall be guilty of [criminal damage]". A diminution in value is sufficient for liability for criminal damage. However, Banksy's work, paradoxically, tends to enhance a property's value instead. Indeed, one owner of a Banksy-adorned property in 2007 put up the mural for sale "with a Victorian house attached". In this way, it is unlikely that any such owner will want to sue the artist for criminal damage; it just wouldn't be in their interest to do so.

In legal terms, there isn't really a clear distinction between thoughtful street art and casual vandalism that carries little in the way of reflective, social comment. In both cases, the wronged party (usually the property owner) may bring legal proceedings against the responsible party, regardless of who that might be. But Banksy has never been arrested, adding to the illusion that he is ostensibly above the law. In relation to how some street artists may view Banksy, the journalist Alex Horne has contended, "Surely it must be frustrating to spend half your life running away from cops, cans clattering around in your backpack, all because you're not famous enough to be above the law?"

Banksy is undoubtedly able to turn an ordinary brick wall into a canvas displaying a thought-provoking and impressive piece of art. Banksy himself has suggested that what separates—he might say elevates—his work from other street art is the level of emotion he invests. For many, his work is aesthetically pleasing, a clever, rapid system of monochromatic stencilling which has a topical message about society, guaranteed to register with every passing viewer. In 2017, the British public voted for 'Girl with Balloon' as the best loved art piece of that year. In contrast, Jonathan Jones writing in *The Guardian* derided this populist vote as evidence of a trite and simplistic understanding of the true power of art. Of Banksy, he wrote: "He has invented the artistic equivalent of a tweet. You see it, you get it. Is that really all we want?" So, if Banksy's work is not 'great art', without genuine nuance or depth, should it still be held above the law?

According to author and journalist Peter Hitchens, "If Banksy wants to paint on a wall, let him ask permission. Artists, be they never so great, buy their own canvases." In line with this view, Banksy should be treated like any other street artist. The law should come down with the same force on Banksy as on anyone else.

In October 2020, a mural depicting a girl using a bicycle tyre as a hula hoop appeared on the side of a building in Rothesay Avenue, Nottingham. While many suspected it to be the work of Banksy, this was only confirmed by the artist via his Instagram account on 17 October. By February 2021, however, a mere five months later, the piece was sold for six figures to an art collector and subsequently removed from the wall. It does seem a shame—and rather contradictory—to display his street art in an art gallery. But then again, where street art has been applied to the wall of a property belonging to another, that physical piece of art belongs to the owner of that property. So, the property owner can choose to do whatever he likes with the piece. Timmy Fisher has noted, "In an ideal world we could separate art from commercial enterprise. But we do not live in an ideal world, and for art to flourish an element of commercial enterprise is required."

In short, Banksy's pieces do amount to criminal damage in law. It follows then that he could be held liable for the offence. However, he remains one of the few street artists whose work is unlikely to ever be the subject of a criminal damage case. It isn't, after all, in anyone's interest to prosecute and, in turn, expose him.

The Impact of Societal Morals on the UK's COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy

Alice Rowe

Matt Hancock has recently discussed his intention to avoid "a huge row about the order of priority" regarding the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination. A January 2021 study found that 71.3% of the UK's population exhibited 'willingness to receive the COVID-19 vaccine'. Such national eagerness to receive the vaccine could have sparked anger from individuals who are not prioritised by the government's programme. However, the Health Minister has avoided this chaotic 'huge row'. Social order and harmony have been maintained by ensuring that the vaccine is distributed in accordance with public morals, motivating citizens to interpret the programme as equitable, ethical and ideal.

The Health Foundation argues that the COVID-19 vaccination should be distributed with the intention of reducing mortality. Age is the 'biggest factor affecting risk of mortality from COVID-19', therefore the prioritisation of the vaccination of the elderly exhibits a governmental strategy of striving to reduce mortality. Curiously, the prioritisation of the vaccination of older citizens is not universally recommended. French Minister Clement Beaune recently criticised the UK's distribution of the AstraZeneca vaccine to elderly citizens, due to 'doubts regarding the [vaccine's] effectiveness in people above 65'.

Interestingly, Beaune's claim is also doubtful, and the degree to which the AstraZeneca vaccine is efficacious in the elderly is unclear.

The UK Government has prioritised vaccinations of the elderly despite the uncertainty of this strategy's effectiveness. This can be rationalised according to governmental estimation of the public's reaction to the distribution of the vaccine. It is unlikely that the public would have instigated a 'huge row' in reaction to the government's prioritisation

of the elderly for vaccination, as there is a common understanding that age increases clinical vulnerability. If the Government abandoned the vaccination of the UK's most vulnerable citizens, due to unvalidated doubts regarding AstraZeneca's effectiveness, many citizens may accuse the Government of irrationally endangering lives. Hence, the prioritisation of the elderly can be justified by the desires to reduce mortality and to maintain public order.

Contrasting the prioritisation vaccinations for older citizens, the most vulnerable individuals will not always receive vaccinations first. It has been found that men are more likely to die of COVID-19 than women. Despite this, men are not receiving the vaccine earlier because of their gender. While the prioritisation of men's vaccines may be considered scientifically rational with regards to the impact of COVID-19, by deprioritising the vaccination of women, it is probable that the UK Government would be considered misogynistic. Recognising this, the government may have resolved to not prioritise men's vaccinations due to the expected outrage this strategy could receive.



Both men and the elderly are found to have higher mortality rates following contraction of coronavirus. However, there is a clear disparity regarding the vaccination programme's prioritisation of these social categories. The government is aware of societal morals and the way that certain vaccine strategies may contradict common values and spark public outcry, their avoidance of controversial strategies indicates a desire to maintain order. If the vaccination strategy was not respected by the public, this could catalyse a boycotting of other governmental policies including self-isolation, which would exacerbate transmission rates. Furthermore, if the public regards the vaccination strategy as irrational and immoral, respect for the order of prioritisation would likely collapse and demand for the vaccine could increase. The government has also negated this concern of queue jumping by ensuring that the vaccine cannot be purchased privately.

In 2019, I was required to demonstrate proof of my yellow fever vaccination in the form of a Yellow Card, in order to gain entry to Lagos, Nigeria. A vaccination passport providing proof of receiving the COVID-19 vaccination is comparable to existing documents such as the Yellow Card; countries such as Denmark, Greece and Estonia have commenced development of such technology. The UK's Minister for COVID Vaccine Deployment, Nadhim Zahawi, has referred to vaccine passports as 'discriminatory'. This attitude can be rationalised because vaccine passports would restrict the international mobility of citizens who are unable to receive the vaccine. Individuals who would be impacted by the vaccine passport's limitations would include pregnant people and younger members of the public. The UK Government's initial decision to dismiss a vaccine passport scheme can be justified by estimating the public's reaction to the concept. Paralleling the likely disapproval of men receiving earlier vaccinations, the vaccine passport would doubtlessly catalyse complaints regarding discrimination against individuals who are medically incapable of receiving the vaccine. The vaccine passports could also be criticised due to infringement upon the freedom of those who refuse to take it, denying the vaccine according to ethical or political beliefs.

When discovering that I was required to provide a Yellow Card in order to achieve entry into Lagos, I never doubted my ability to receive the yellow fever vaccine. Furthermore, the necessity of the Yellow Card enhances motivation to receive the injection. The Yellow Card's incentivisation of receiving a readily available vaccine establishes that such documents can have healthy and positive consequences. It is arguable that the public would not interpret the COVID-19 vaccine passport as striving for similar incentivising results. This is because it is not currently necessary for the UK Government to persuade its citizens to receive the vaccine, as 71.3% of UK citizens are already strongly motivated to receive the vaccine but are incapable of receiving it. It is probable that the vaccine passport would instead be regarded as a tool for restricting the movement of those who have not yet received the injection.

Boris Johnson has addressed the fact that 'we can't be discriminatory against people who can't have the vaccine'. The government has dismissed the vaccine passport regardless of its potential to hinder transmission, as it could be considered discriminatory. This decision can be justified by a governmental desire to evade disapproval of their vaccine strategy and maintain public order.

It is apparent that COVID-19 and governmental methods of controlling the virus have taken a widespread toll on mental health. Hence, consideration of appeasing the nation and ensuring public order is an entirely rational approach to take when adapting a programme which is defined by its treatment of the public. The UK's vaccination programme exhibits an adherence to and respect for societal morals. The prioritisation of vaccinations for the elderly exhibits a faithfulness to care for those who are acknowledged to be most vulnerable. Treating individuals equally regardless of their gender or ability to receive the vaccine also indicates a respect for public values and a prioritisation of avoiding chaos and maintaining order.

Democracy in Chaos: Democratic Tyranny in Sri Lanka

Max Johnson

Democracy. The West's greatest export. The Greek system of governance has touched large swathes of the world and provides stability, growth and most importantly a voice to citizens within a State. It has allowed for the development of political equality, human rights and economic growth as demonstrated by numerous fledgling states which transformed into modern financial powerhouses. Despite this, there are inherent downsides, as Plato once questioned "does not tyranny spring from democracy?" and his words ring true. The benefits of democracy are increasingly being outweighed by its growing limitations as countries across the world are furnishing a perversion of its inherent virtues. One such example is the island-nation of Sri Lanka, a former colony and now a country embroiled in political scandal.

Sri Lanka is an island off the coast of south India in the Indian Ocean, known predominantly for its beach resorts, its prowess in cricket and its 37-year civil war. It was also once a British colony and gained its independence in 1948, which marked the beginning of a rocky struggle for stable government. The key issue dominating Sri Lanka, which is divided along religious and ethnic lines, is how to reconcile decades of war and provide a system of governance that is not discriminative and provides equality to all its citizens. This is where democracy has failed. The successive election of Sinhalese nationalist governments has marginalised the minority Tamil and Muslim communities by propagating the supremacy of the Buddhist Sinhalese majority. This has been entrenched by generational nepotism, corruption and intimidation leading to a perversion of the democratic system.

The election of S.W.R.D Bandaranaike as Prime Minister in 1956 was a turning point for the ethnic tensions on the island. Bandaranaike's nationalist policy was an outright slap in the face to the Tamil people as their linguistic identity was demoted when Sinhalese was made the official language of Sri Lanka through the passing of the Sinhala Only Bill in 1956. What followed was the start of the Tamil resistance to their systematic oppression, leading to outright war, resulting in over 100,000 deaths. The removal of Tamil suffrage sparked the Sri Lankan civil war which itself was marked by atrocities committed by both the Sri Lankan Army (SLA) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The SLA had committed war crimes towards the end of the war in

2009 through indiscriminate shelling and targeting of civilian zones. Whilst the LTTE had resorted to terrorism through suicide bombing, political assassinations and the use of child soldiers. This was a perfectly avoidable escalation of conflict but-for the intrusion of extreme Sinhala nationalist ideology within the executive level of government. The Crisis Group reported that historic nationalism based on Buddhist revivalism has acted as a "powerful unifying force" which provided radical parties "a platform for populist agitation and established a diversion from their failure to address economic weakness, social concerns and pervasive corruption" which highlights how ideology has destabilised a supposed 'democratic' country.



Fast forward to today - after years of fighting, thousands dead, thousands more missing and generations of physical and emotional trauma, Sri Lanka has managed to remain a country embroiled in dirty politics. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Sri Lankan authorities have denied Muslim communities the right to bury their dead according to their religious rites. Instead, forced cremation took place requiring bereaved families to travel hundreds of kilometres to bury their loved ones on the Tamil island of Iranaitivu in the North of Sri Lanka. The policy drew criticism from the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, who raised their concern at the UNHRC in Geneva, as cremation is prohibited under Islamic law.

Although, since stating this intention the government has backtracked, the sentiment remains a sting on the Muslim community. More recently, Public Security Minister Sarath Weerasekara signed a cabinet order banning the wearing of the burqa stating they were “a sign of religious extremism” which affected national security. This blatant attack on minority groups, citing counter-terrorism as the reason, is being deployed in order to further implement the ‘Sinhalisation’ of the country along hard-line Buddhist ideology.

Not only has the Sri Lankan government denied Muslim communities the right to practice their religion, it has also directly provoked Tamil communities by further encroaching on their lands. This continued trend of mass land grabbing, militarisation and intimidation is being deployed by Sri Lankan forces in the Northern and Eastern regions of the country. Recently in February 2021 Tamil communities marched for five days over 465 kilometres from Pottuvil to Polikandi, the two delineating ends of the Tamil homeland, in protest over government impunity and intimidation, demanding justice and accountability. Sri Lanka has one of the highest number of enforced disappearances with an estimate lying between 60,000 to 100,000 people, which adds more salt to the wounds as various ethnic and religious groups seek to broker post-war reconciliation. However, the continued failure by the government in accounting for these disappearances, as well as failing to prosecute the offenders, has led to a loss of confidence in the political system both domestically and internationally amongst the diaspora.

More recently, the UN Human Rights Council passed Resolution 46/1 on promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka on 23rd March 2021. The Resolution strengthens the OHCHR in ‘the collection, consolidation, analysis and preservation of information and evidence to allow for the development of strategies for future accountability processes.’ Although the Resolution has been welcomed as a step in the right direction, it has been criticised for failing to fulfil the demands for immediate action in delivering justice, accountability and preventing recurring violence. Tamil civil society groups, both domestically and internationally, have denounced the resolution as a weak instrument failing to implement long awaited de facto justice.

The Resolution also fails to reflect the warnings of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, who highlighted weeks prior that there are “early signs of more violations to come” whilst urging for “international action to ensure justice for international crimes.”

Despite recent developments, it was clear since the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks, which claimed the lives of 269 people, that the government was on a trajectory of human rights abuse by using the democratic process to pass draconian laws to consolidate its power against minority groups. A report by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) also identified negative trends which are hindering the reconciliation and accountability process, including militarisation of civilian government functions, erosion of constitutional safeguards, mass surveillance and exclusionary majoritarian rhetoric. These trends demonstrate how nationalist ideology, corruption and majoritarian tyranny have infiltrated the Sri Lankan government thus undermining all its efforts in reconciling decades of conflict.

The long list of actions taken by the central government can only be described as something tantamount to ethnic cleansing. From land grabbing, mass surveillance, intimidation, unlawful detention to restrictions on basic human rights; Sri Lanka is ruining its opportunity for unity and growth. Repeated failure requires addressing, the current UK government must not cower behind the likelihood of opposition from China and Russia in the security council, instead it must demonstrate firm opposition by meeting the demands of the Tamil masses, namely, by imposing sanctions against the perpetrators of war crimes, establishing an International Independent Investigative mechanism (IIIM) and referring Sri Lanka to the International Criminal Court (ICC). Unless the international community collectively holds Sri Lanka to account, there will be a new international norm whereby tyranny by the majority prevails, thus setting the precedent that occidental democracy is an export worth imposing an embargo on. History repeats itself, and without action the path to repetition is clear.

Why Exercise is Even More Important Than We Think

Othniel Michael

The prevailing focus of the global pandemic strategy has been primarily to isolate individuals and provide treatment. However, there has understandably been an apparent lack in focus on long term preventative measures against future pandemics. Virus outbreaks, especially novel ones, have the potential to cause chaos and are almost completely contingent on factors out of our control. Interestingly, it turns out there is an element of control that we do have on disease outbreaks. “The COVID-19 Pandemic and Physical Activity”[1] is prudent in observing that odds of survival are primarily determined by the immune system. Therefore, we should be taking all necessary and possible steps to improve our immune system. But how do we do this, and to what degree?

The current medical advice is that we should aim to complete approximately 30 minutes of daily exercise, or, as the World Health Organisation puts it, 150 minutes a week. The conversation of exercise and how much we should undertake has become extremely prominent. Evidently, we are designed to exercise for prolonged periods of time. Yet, generally, physical activity plays a reduced role in our day-to-day lives with 1 in 5 people being completely inactive.[2] An interesting thought experiment, posited by Dr Chris Attia of “The Drive” podcast, is the excursion into what he calls the ‘Centenarian Olympics’.[3] Whilst thinking about the possibility of carrying out physical activity at the age of 100, it becomes apparent that one must be in tune with the body and reduce the effects of aging and disease.

The set of activities involve setting your own functional targets that you would like to be able to do at 100. For example, to be able to walk up and down the stairs with a bag of shopping, being able to squat a certain amount of weight, and other functional activities. To be able to perform these, a lot of strength is required; Attia expounds on this further by saying your ability to front squat 10kg (say, for the purpose of lifting up your great grandchildren from the ground) depends on the ability to do a certain amount by ages 50, 70, and 90. Accepting the aging process, but maximising the activity buffer is vital, such that the descent into sarcopenia (age onset muscle loss) is delayed by as much as possible. Living to 100 also requires a certain grit which can be acquired through mental resilience to adverse life events and through habitual exercise to maintain the body’s ability to physically cope. Exercise is a gradual process, but fundamentally must be habitual to capitalise fully. Literature tells us that gradual means placing mild stress on the body through increasing physical longevity[4]; continually increasing your tolerance for a said exercise regimen. Of course, it would be unwise to suddenly adopt World Champion Eliud Kipchoge’s marathon regime tomorrow!

Alongside physical activity sits mental resilience – the process of becoming more accustomed to performing difficult tasks regularly. An analogy could be formulated to visualise this better. Mental resilience can help us accept life's stresses and misgivings and turn their volume down. Through regular exercising, the mind and body can work synonymously, and the mind gains an increased tolerance for mental stressors. Whilst physiologically, the connect between exercise and increased mental wellbeing is thoroughly documented. However, philosophically, the link between a mental armouring by accepting and challenging life's unpredictability may, for some, seem abstract.

A remarkable example of how one can armour themselves for the fight against life's tragedies is Kevin Hart's recollection of his near-miss with death. Kevin was involved in a brutal car accident, with his car descending 10 feet into a ditch.[5] His claim is that the surgeon informed him that the fracture that required surgery was millimetres from a life altering injury. Hart went on further to explain that he believed that his recovery was expedited due to the intense physical effort he had put into improving his body. [6] Notwithstanding, let us consider the negative effects of putting in such intense efforts to set up a good (ideally daily) training regime, which covers both strength and cardiovascular endurance. Perhaps time, for some it may simply be too much to invest into exercising without neglecting other responsibilities. Money might be a factor, but exercise is possible away from an expensive gym. While it is common knowledge that exercise is beneficial, most people are simply unaware of the incredible benefit gained and unfortunately view exercise as simply too hard, too costly, and too time consuming.

The prevalence of a pandemic is essentially life's unpredictability giving everyone a warning. Returning to the study by Woods et. al, it is clearly plausible that COVID-19 can accelerate muscular atrophy and this plausibility should give us the clear indication that exercise is a useful tool that we all must use.

At the age of 70 the investment in your body through exercise will pay off - not just for the reduction of disease risk, but also for the substantial gain in years of independence. There are many ways that we have found, and continue to find, to tolerate the hardships of life. Exercise allows our bodies and minds to flourish and by doing so, we move towards a more joyful and longer existence.



The Current Duality of Online Investing During the Pandemic

Aaliyah Javed

The ongoing pandemic has unequivocally enhanced the power of online platforms in interfering with social life. Suffering fluctuations of stock value between the appearance of a vaccine and notable user actions have placed immense spotlight on online investing. During the new normal of lockdowns and quarantines, the uncertainty of the direction the pandemic will progress towards, coupled with increasing unemployment rates, has influenced some individuals to consider a more viable monetary option of online investing in their spare time. The pursuit of income has saturated the market whilst also democratising investing for a new generation outside of the established norm of upper-class wealth. Has the sphere of investing been redefined and what does this mean for the existing order of the stock market?

The stock market has always been somewhat speculative, but the commonly accepted order of online investing has taken a newly volatile form under the climate of the coronavirus. A stark example of this was the highly publicised Gamestop Reddit incident. In short, Reddit users on the thread 'WallStreetBets' noticed that numerous hedge funds were shorting stocks in Gamestop, an electrical and video game retailer, in plans that they would clear a profit as the stock price decreased in light of the pandemic and overall declining operation of the store. In a complete turn of events, Reddit users tried and succeeded in artificially driving up the Gamestop stock price by buying up the stocks to where the underlying value of the stock significantly exceeded its real value. Market fundamentals were disregarded and Gamestop acted simply as a tool in a larger scheme to short squeeze hedge funds. The message

'Hold the line' on Reddit was trending as users required a collective effort to hold the stock and maintain the heightened price. Moreover, traditional power dynamics inherent to online investing were blurred momentarily with this incident and cut short when the Reddit board was removed and labelled as hate speech. Critics have pointed out that this action against the Reddit users was verily to halt communication and undercut investing in order to retain a sellable market.



It is important to consider how this incident pronounced a victory to online users and why this is consequential to the functioning of online investing. This vigilante narrative enhances the progressing notion that the online investing space encompasses a generational conflict. The considerable effects of this reverberate on the users engaged and whether their losses or gains are a wider reflection of society. Critics have detailed the capitalistic undertones around this incident in that the hedge funds did not truly value the retailer Gamestop except for their interest in clearing a profit. From another perspective, the incident has been reflected as a modern-day Ponzi scheme to plunge late comers and reward insiders. Moreover, simply recognising this incident as a noteworthy prank to imperil the

wealthy would negate the deeper message of social and financial inequality. Particular acts of security fraud are legal in the U.S and account for open market manipulation, allowing online users to successfully challenge market integrity through distorting prices, prompting the question of whether the understood order of the stock market has been invaded by its users?

The user outrage was further exacerbated when online investing and trading platform Robinhood restricted its facilities imminently after the Gamestop stocks unexpectedly soared. They claimed it was to assess technical errors and 'market volatility'. However, critics have argued that because Robinhood considerably profits off wealthy hedge funds, that the restrictions were rigged. The limitations significantly halted individual trading whilst allowing hedge funds to continue regular trading. With large operators such as Robinhood disavowing users and seemingly siding with the affluent hedge funds, a distinct class divide is visible between a younger generation of investors and the traditional investors who will protect their place in this historical hierarchy.

A comparison has been floating around of this incident and the meltdown of the financial markets in 2008. In this way, the present-day actions are a portrayal of retribution and regaining potency from Wall Street by placing it into the hands of the people. However, the 2008 crisis demonstrates a structural issue within the stock market where the housing market was overwhelmed, rather than our current reality where life as we know it was abruptly paused because of the pandemic. In some ways, this incident can compare to the financial crisis where at both periods of time the hedge funds were greedy in intentionally shorting vulnerable stocks for their gain. As a result, new players have become involved and adopted a vengeful agenda against corporate and institutional hedge funds. The pandemic has intensified pressure on the investing market where risk attitudes towards investing have changed dramatically.

The rise in online investing has also paralleled itself to the prospect of a vaccine. It appeared that the FTSE 100 accounted its best month since 1989 with an announcement of a 90% effective vaccine.

Populating the vaccine would allow government officials to reduce lockdown restrictions leading to a boost in the economy and financial markets. Although Britain's economy is in a recession, vaccine optimism is enabling investors to look confidently into the future. The chief economist of the Bank of England, Andy Haldane, asserted that companies should avoid the 'fog of uncertainty' amidst the pandemic and be ready for recovery.

Furthermore, the money consumers have saved is optimistically a financial buffer to the day when it can be openly spent. It will be of interest to examine whether the arrival of more detrimental strains of the virus will affect this hopefulness.

Overall, the duality and uncertainty of online investing during the pandemic has proposed a new stream of worries and opportunities for many investors whilst also increasing the rise of casual amateur investors. The social and economic implications of this influence are apparent, where power dynamics are shifting and a new generation of investors with novel attitudes are arising. It is up to this younger generation to define the accessibility and potential equitability of its users in online investing.

The Yemeni Civil War: An End in Sight?

Daniel Gates

The Yemeni Civil War has taken the lives of over 100,000 people, been responsible for the biggest cholera outbreak in modern history, and left the country on the brink of one of the harshest famines seen in decades. The country of 30 million people is in the grips of a catastrophic humanitarian crisis, and yet little attention seems to be paid to this country on the tip of the Arabian Peninsula.

Conflict in Yemen has been close to bubbling over the surface for the past half a century. Since the height of the cold war in the 1970s, Yemen has been largely split into Northern and Southern regimes; the North tending towards greater religious authority while the South towards greater secularism. The success of Northern forces in the 1994 civil war brought Ali Saleh to power, under whose governance the Zaydi, a Shia Muslim ethnic group comprising around 40% of the population, felt increasingly marginalised and some formed a rebel group named the Houthis. Fighting between government forces and the Houthis ensued, but even after Saleh was toppled and Abdarabbuh Hadi succeeded him, the Houthis were still enraged by a lack of Zaydi representation in government and continued to distrust the establishment.

In 2014, the conflict came to a boiling point. The Houthis stormed the capital, and with assistance from Iran swept southwards, until they held the majority of Yemen later that year. President Hadi fled to Saudi Arabia and requested Saudi assistance in fighting back. In response, Saudi Arabia organised a coalition of Sunni Islam states that included Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait and the UAE. Beginning in early 2015, the coalition begun an air campaign that, alongside local coalition forces, pushed the Houthis out of Eastern and Southern Yemen to their Northern stronghold, where they remain impenetrable. While fighting since 2015 has led to minimal transfers of territory, what has been achieved by the civil war is unprecedented levels of humanitarian suffering.

Coalition air strikes have levelled factories, destroyed food-storage silos, pockmarked roads, and decimated houses, but rather than assist the government in taking back control, the air strikes only inflict suffering on civilians caught in the cross-fire. In the Houthi-controlled North, water, education, and healthcare systems have been crippled and food supplies have vanished. The rest of the country has been no less ravaged by the conflict. It comes as no surprise then that the UN has declared the Yemeni war the largest humanitarian crisis in the world, with 80% of the population in need of humanitarian aid.

What has the UK, a global power and permanent member of the UN Security Council, been doing to help bring the war to an end? Very little. In fact, both the UK and the US have been supporting their long-time ally in the region, Saudi Arabia, by providing weapons through lucrative arms deals, intelligence and strategic support. In the past couple of years, widespread condemnation of western support for Saudi Arabia has brought some change. In 2019 the Court of Appeal concluded that UK bombs and missiles were responsible for the deaths of civilians in Yemen, and ordered a halt to all arms sales to Saudi Arabia until the risk to civilian life had been properly assessed. But the break was short-lived, and in the first quarter after weapons sales resumed in the summer of 2020, the UK sold almost £1.4bn of weapons to the Kingdom. Similar levels of arms sales between the US and Saudi Arabia had dominated US policy under both the Obama and Trump administration, with both men fearing another entanglement in a Middle Eastern conflict after the Iraq and Afghanistan failures.

Oil is the second consideration of the West. Yemen is situated on the Bab-el-Mandab Strait, the sea passage to the Suez Canal. As a result, Yemen holds extreme importance in global oil markets, as any interference in the flow of oil through the strait would severely disrupt global oil supply and prices. Aware of the need to stabilise the gulf region, Western powers have been happy to support their ally in Saudi Arabia, if it means that oil prices remain steady.

While the people of Yemen suffer, their country is being used as a playground for powers to assert dominance and influence, and as a litmus test for the power struggle in the region between Iran and Saudi Arabia. These two countries are the most powerful in the region and while both Islamic, each practice a different form of Islam; Saudi Arabia's Muslims are mostly Sunni but Iran's population is overwhelmingly Shia Muslim. The relations between these two branches of Islam have been increasingly politicised and polarised, and have been used to fuel conflicts in the Middle East such as the Iran-Iraq War and build organisations such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS. This undercurrent of sectarianism also plays a part in the Yemeni war, which has often been called a proxy conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

To make matters worse, the crippling of the healthcare system in Yemen has left the country incapable of coping with the coronavirus pandemic. While official figures for case numbers are relatively low, the actual number of cases is likely much higher. The implications of COVID-19 are also having a knock-on effect on foreign aid received from governments that provide support towards humanitarian crises. The UK government has slashed foreign aid to Yemen by half for this year and there is fear that other nations will follow suit in light of the costs of the pandemic.

However, there is cause for optimism. The coalition's enthusiasm for the conflict is beginning to wane. In 2019 the UAE withdrew from the conflict and thus Saudi Arabia is unlikely to persist. After six years



of stalemate, it is becoming increasingly difficult to justify a conflict costing so much and producing so little. Saudi Arabia is entertaining the possibility of peace talks, and engaged with the Houthis over cease-fires to allow for humanitarian assistance to intervene.

The UN must also play a key role in ending the conflict. While not yet successful in producing conclusive peace talks, the work of the UN Envoy to Yemen is crucial. Their continued co-operation and interaction with both sides of the conflict is crucial in bringing both to the negotiating table and ultimately committing to a peace treaty.

The recent election of Joe Biden as US President could also go a long way into cooling the flames of conflict. Apart from his experience in foreign affairs, Biden's renewed commitment to the Iran Nuclear deal is a sign of hope that relations between the West and Iran are on the mend. The US has also halted support for Saudi 'offensive operations', with only defensive arms allowed to be sold.

In the meantime, the UN and other global powers must do all they can to limit the conflict in Yemen, reduce the harm towards civilians and ultimately bridge the divide between Sunnis and Shias in the Muslim World. In a country as chaotic as Yemen, at last there is hope that order may not be so far away.

“En avant vers la Méditerranée”: French expansion into the Mediterranean and a renewed foreign policy

Deniz Mykola Dirisu

French President Emmanuel Macron's visit to Beirut following the August 2020 explosion reflects the trend of growing French activity in the Eastern Mediterranean; French involvement has particularly been noted in Libya and the Gas/Oil conflict between Turkey and Greece. In the face of increasing competition from other global actors, this operation represents an effort to curb the weakening of French influence in the region. The Mediterranean has also become an important area in France's war against jihadist groups, following the wave of terrorism that France has experienced in the last decade.



France views itself as a first-class power in the region with a number of aces up its sleeve. It is the only country in the region with a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, and it maintains one of the strongest army's in the region. Although in recent years France has prioritized military deployment in

Africa, French forces are also deployed in a number of key points along the Eastern Mediterranean seaboard and are involved in its own operations, as well as the operations of the European Union and NATO. In addition, France relies on its soft power in the region based on its historic ties with many regional actors (such as Lebanon, Syria etc.), complicated though these ties may be. French is a spoken language among various Mediterranean nations, and the broad French diplomatic and educational network in the region also serves France as a means of influence. France has recently displayed increasing involvement in the region, which, although consistent with its ongoing interest in the region's developments and trends, also reflects the personal desire of French President Macron to have a more significant role in region.

French policy in the Mediterranean region is based on two main pillars: national interest and realpolitik (geopolitical pragmatism), which contain two principal goals. First, France wants to maintain and, possibly, improve its influence in the Mediterranean evident from the increased amount of military exercises conducted by France in the East Med region as well as the stationing of French Aircraft on the island of Cyprus which helps also achieve the second goal of: combatting Islamic terrorism in the region after the spree of radical Islamist attacks on France in the last decade.

In Libya, the French government sees General Khalifa Haftar as an essential actor for combatting jihadist groups in Libya. On this basis, France has remained Haftar's main supporter in all stages of Libyan civil war. This has poised France to do questionable things such as aligning itself with Russia and its mercenaries in Libya in their campaign to topple the UN-approved government in Tripoli in favour of General Haftar who used to be an ally of the former Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi; Haftar has sought to become the new strongman in Libya, at the price of a devastating civil war. Hence, France has attracted criticism from the international community for turning an eye away from serious human rights abuses by forces it

supported, as well as its own suspected violation of the arms embargo imposed by the UN Security Council.

French National interests also concern fossil fuel supplies. After the finding of Gas/Oil reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean region many nations within and outside of the Mediterranean including France rushed to “get a piece of the pie”.

As a result of the finding of Gas, tensions between Turkey and Greece have escalated due to both sides disputing each other's EEZ (exclusive economic zone). In the showdown between Turkey and its Hellenic neighbours, France has expressed its support for the Greek and the Greek Cypriot position, while viewing itself as the guardian of the interests of the European Union in the region. France provides outside support for the East-Med Gas Forum and has issued a large number of joint statements denouncing Turkish activity there. It has also increased its military presence in Greece and Cyprus via conducting military exercises with Greece and the stationing of aircraft and personnel on the island of Cyprus. Most of these French geopolitical developments have been implemented during the presidency of Macron. One must ask what are Macron's wider ambitions for expanding French influence?

For nearly half a century, every president of the Fifth Republic of France has had to define his politics and policies in relation to the man who founded it; Charles de Gaulle. This is especially true with what, in effect, was de Gaulle's *raison d'être* for the new French republic: “the ability to undertake what he called *grands travaux* (great projects) in the global arena”. For this reason, Macron did not hesitate to emphasize his view on what France's position in the world must be. Apart from the Gaullist François Fillon, Macron cited de Gaulle's name more often than any other presidential candidate in 2017.

More specifically, in an interview during his presidential election, Macron fully endorsed the “Gaullio-Mitterrandist” approach to foreign affairs. However, unlike his previous peers Macron has little experience in foreign policy. Most French politicians climb

the ranks of French policymaking for two or three decades before they make a mark in national politics. On the other hand, Macron is 39 years old and lacks extensive experience in policymaking. He has never been elected to office previously, he only entered politics (as an advisor to President Hollande) about eight years ago, and his only official political position was briefly as the Minister of the Economy from 2014-2016.

In France, foreign policy is central to national identity (many international treaties and agreements have been discussed and drafted by French diplomats in Paris, evident from the amount of treaties called the “treaty of Paris”), and the president has extensive authority on defence matters. Macron's inexperience means he needs to reassure the electorate that he can manage the security of the state as well as project power on the international stage. Following his foreign policy approach, Macron does not spend much time on the “soft” foreign policy issues that are popular on the centre-left, such as global governance and development assistance issues. During his election campaign, Macron, whose background is in economic issues, has increasingly placed an emphasis on security, articulating a willingness to act forcefully abroad to defend French interests. This hardened approach conveys the sense that Macron is no inexperienced leader.

While many individuals and matters on the European sphere have changed over the past fifty years, Macron believes, just as de Gaulle did, that France must play a leading role, in fending off the forces of populism and illiberalism in Europe as well as asserting French national interests in the global stage. This is especially important to Macron as the balances of global power are shifting with the rise of secondary powers such as China, Russia and Turkey that threaten French interests in the Mediterranean and globally. Whether Macron is up to the task remains to be seen. It should be noted that, along with de Gaulle's memoirs, one of the other books on the desk in his official photograph as President, is Stendhal's *The Red and the Black*: the story of Julien Sorel, a young man who scales the heights of power only to fall at the very end.

Advocate is excited to partner with ELSA Nottingham and publish the winning essay selected from an essay competition they held with ELSA Leicester on prisoner voting rights

“The right to vote should be extended to all prisoners under new laws.” To what extent do you agree?

Sarah Mercat

This statement implies that, nowadays, only a limited number of prisoners (e.g.: on remand) in the UK retain their right to vote whilst serving their sentence. Indeed, the Representation of People Act 1983 (RPA), s.3(1), provides that convicted prisoners should be deprived of this right during their detention period. The aim of this essay is therefore to assess whether prisoners' right to vote should be extended to all the prison population in future legislation.

In order to answer this question, we shall discuss three main reasons why most (if not all) prisoners should retain their right to vote during their sentence: firstly, we will consider the democratic issue in depriving prisoners from such a right; then we will evaluate the nature of this right known as “fundamentally human”, and how depriving prisoners of it only satisfies a social bloodlust; finally we shall appraise the contradiction between the RPA provisions and the Purposes of Sentencing.

Taking first the democratic issue, depriving prisoners from their electoral voice has serious consequences in a democratic society.

Ethnic minorities are over-represented behind bars because of institutionalised racism: the Scarman report in 1981 upheaved evidence of racism in the judiciary; and it was found that 27% of the prison population last year were from ethnic minorities, compared to less than 11% if it reflected the ethnic make-up of England and Wales. As well summarised in Unlock's “challenge of the electoral ban on prisoners” abridgement, “minority ethnic groups are disenfranchised” in this process. So, depriving them of their electoral voice is preventing a fair proportion of already-underrepresented groups to have their say in elections. This is undoubtedly an infringement to democracy.

Also, political agendas affect prison population as much as they affect anyone else in society. Although physically segregated from society, prisoners are subject to the criminal justice system which figures in most political programs. For instance, PM Boris Johnson in 2019 proposed to make “tougher sentencing for criminals”. Hence, prisoner's life fluctuates according to decision made by politicians. So why should they not be allowed to contribute to the elections of such decision-makers? MP's work for the people and groups of people who elect them, not pro bono for politically mutes. Unlock's summary explains this as “political will is otherwise weak”. If prisoners are deprived from their right to vote, who would be devoted enough to move heaven and earth to help them? Nobody.

But the prison system is far from perfect. “Services need improving” says Unlock's encapsulation. Politicians can make it work again instead of cutting the necessary resources of the criminal justice system. But they will not because prisoners do not vote for them. The Secret Barrister in his eponymous book alludes to this recurrently, as on p.54: “the cost (...), the Ministry of Justice insists, is already too high”. Improving the prison system would probably become more of a priority if prisoners had the right to vote. We can parallel it with the NHS service. The NHS' struggle during the Covid-19 pandemic has been widely acknowledged and financed by the government because its electorate needed it: The Health Foundation's Spending Review 2020. But if patients admitted to hospital were deprived from their right to vote, there is few doubts that government would be less keen to let go of millions of pounds as they did.

Thus, to ensure a fairer democracy, convicts should be allowed to vote in prison. However, some might say that patients admitted to hospital are not the same as prisoners convicted of an offence, because patients suffer unfairly while convicts “deserve it”.

The social demand for retribution is a sensitive issue. A common misconception is that convicted prisoners cannot complain about how they are treated because “they deserve it”. This misbelief is often used by political parties to support their projects. For example, Baroness Scotland of Asthal said to the Lords, in 2003 Parliamentary questions, that: “prisoners convicted of a crime serious enough to warrant imprisonment have lost the moral authority to vote.” But this statement seriously undermines the risk of miscarriages of justice, such as the Belfast Six, being unjustly deprived from their rights for a crime they did not commit. Not to mention those who serve a very short prison sentence for minor offences. If miscarriages of justice are quite rare (29 cases referred to Appeal by the CCRC in 2019/20), innocent people are still jailed and, although voting may be the least of their priority, we should not aggravate their sufferings by adding restrictions on their rights. Also, considering short prison sentences, does it seem proportionate that, for minor offences (e.g.: theft), someone can be deprived from their right to vote? Because there are not just horrible murderers and paedophiles behind bars, as reminded in Dr David Honeywell’s talk on his experience in prison. And if offenders miss an election whilst incarcerated for a short amount of time, once they return in society, the decision-makers have already been elected for the next five years with or without their opinion.

Moreover, asking for such retribution threatens fundamental human rights. Baroness Scotland of Asthal also said in her answer to the Lords that “[t]his temporary disenfranchisement pursues a legitimate aim and is proportionate and is considered a reasonable restriction within the terms of Article 25.” Article 25 here refers to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that “recognizes and protects the right of every citizen to (...) vote”. The legitimacy question would parallel the political aim to please the electorate in their misconception (discussed above), and the proportionality aspect undermines potential miscarriages or the question of short sentencing. If depriving horrendous criminals from certain freedom is understandable, most prisoners are not guilty of such crimes and it would be unfair to restrict their human right because of their offences. This violation of basic human right has also been condemn by the European Court on Human Rights in the 2006 case of *Hirst v UK (No.2)*. But the misconception of “deserving their sufferings” is too deeply rooted in society to let go. Even PM David Cameron declared being “physically sick” at the idea of giving prisoners the right to vote, as reported in *The Times*.

This shows that the balance between human right and social bloodlust now rules in favour of the latest. But isn’t it time for a change?

It seems reasonable to ask for reform in this area of law, but not only for democratic or humanitarian reasons. The law must change because it does not fit with more understandable values such as the Purposes of Sentencing established in the Criminal Justice Act 2003 (CJA), s.142(1). Restricting an offenders’ rights and freedoms goes well only with the first of the five purposes of prison sentence: “the punishment of offenders”. Despite this legitimate aim, removing prisoners’ right to vote is useless, and may even be antagonistic to many sentencing goals. Unlock gives three bullet points to this idea: depriving prisoners’ right to vote “weakens community”, “bears no relation to the cause of the crime”, and “achieves little or nothing”.

They go even further by affirming “[i]t is an unjust additional punishment rather than a proportionate response to crime”. Indeed, the second limb of s.142(1) CJA, “reduction of crime” is not fulfilled either. Have you ever heard someone beg for mercy a jury because they are terrified of losing their right to vote? They have many other issues to deal with first, such as their deprivation of liberty. So, the privation of their right to vote is only a useless additional burden we put on prisoners’ shoulders. Not to mention that prison itself is not an adequate method to reduce crime, as we can compare the well-known prison system of Norway and their reoffending statistics to ours: 61% of convicts sentenced for less than a year in prison reoffended in the UK in 2018, compared to about 20% in Norway where prison sentences are less systematic. This can be explained by the rehabilitation culture much more developed in the northern country.

Which leads us to our third Purpose of Sentencing. Making prisoners understand that their acts have consequences, preventing them from reoffending by making them learn from their mistakes, and helping them reintroduce society with a fresh start are praiseworthy aims. But impoverishing their interest in politics and social life by denying their right to vote is not the right way to meet such aims. Unlock describes it as “civic death”.

Arguably, the right to vote could “protect the public” (fourth aim of s.142(1) CJA) from extremist ideas.

But, safe for terrorists, people are not sentenced to prison, nor found guilty of any offence, for supporting extremist parties. For instance, Tommy Robinson’s trial in 2019 was for contempt of court, not for his extreme political ideas. And it would be shocking to most in a democratic society to be imprisoned for such, because citizens are protected by their freedom of opinion and speech. Analogously, why should prisoners not be protected by their right to vote? Depriving them of such a right to protect the public would be meaningless as all prisoners are not extremists and all extremists are not in prison. So, here again, this punishment fails to complete the Purposes of Sentencing.

Last aim is the “making of reparation by offenders to persons affected by their offences”. Safe for the satisfaction of bloodlust of victims, the additional privation of prisoner’s right to vote is completely unrelated to the purpose of reparation. This emotion from victims is understandable but unwholesome. And the fact that it not only contradicts human rights (as discussed above) but also opposes commendable legislation proves the wrongness of such deprivation.

To conclude, depriving prisoners the right to vote was probably a mistake from the start for democratic, humanitarian, and legislative/moral reasons. Hence why I would agree with the statement. Prisoners whose offences are directly related to their right to vote (e.g.: cheating in elections) are more likely to fulfil the Purposes of Sentencing, and therefore restricting such a right for a while might be meaningful. But all other prisoners should maintain their right to vote in prison.

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